

Appendices

A.01 Glossary

accommodation

An *accommodation* is an environmental change or approach put in place to help a student overcome or work around an area of need or challenge. Accommodations are used when the individual has a challenge, deficit, or disability that prevents her from accomplishing a task successfully but she has the capability to do part of it. They are put into place to bypass, eliminate, or reduce the challenge so she can devote energy to a more limited area to reach success or mastery.

ADEF

The Transition Curriculum's *Awareness Development and Executive Functions (ADEF)* module. The ADEF is designed to build self-awareness and strengthen executive functioning. Through an individualized process, students are exposed to experiences, concepts, activities, and interactions designed to strengthen the skills needed to become as independent as possible. The sequence, scope, depth, detail, and instruction methods used in delivery of the ADEF module are adjusted according to the *Student Individual Profile (SIP)* to ensure that content is delivered at a rate, volume, and complexity that suits individual learning and emotional needs.

affect

Affect is facial, vocal, gestural, or body language that shows the experience of feeling or emotion.

affective skills

Affective skills are the ability to show emotions and feelings.

affinities

Affinities are beloved subjects and activities that have great meaning to an individual and are a pleasure to participate in.

assistive or facilitated technology

Assistive or facilitated technology includes a wide range of devices and services used by individuals with disabilities to assist in the performance of tasks or functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. This can include computers (hardware and software), peripheral devices such as special keyboards and screens, mobility devices such as wheelchairs and walkers, etc.

auditory processing

Auditory processing is “The ability to hear auditory messages, distinguish between similar sounds or words, separate relevant speech from background noise, and the ability to recall and comprehend what was heard.” (Source: Stroke Terms in Plain Words, <http://www.speech-therapy-on-video.com/stroketerms.html>, accessed January 17, 2013)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to all types of communication (with the exception of oral speech) that are used to make known one's wants, needs, ideas, and thoughts. ACC includes both low-tech approaches (gestures, facial expressions, sign language, drawing pictures) and high tech devices such as computer- or web-based software, speech synthesizers, handheld devices, etc.

ASD

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurobiological disorder defined by impairments in social interaction and verbal and nonverbal communication, accompanied by restricted interests and repetitive behaviors.

autonomic nervous system

Autonomic nervous system is the part of the nervous system that regulates involuntary systems such as gastrointestinal functions, heartbeat, blood pressure, etc.

Awareness Development and Executive Functioning

See ADEF

causal relationship

Causal relationship is the connection between one event (cause) and a second event (effect) where the second is understood to be the result of the first.

code switching

Code switching is the ability to understand how social contexts change the meaning of language – that social communication varies depending on the context and the people involved.

cognitive capability

Cognitive capability is brain-based skills needed to understand information being presented and to carry out tasks such as planning, problem solving, perception, and using language.

cognitive regulation

Cognitive regulation is the ability to control the rate, volume, patterning, and complexity of thoughts. Because of the effect biochemistry and the endocrine system has on cognition, cognitive regulation is strongly tied to emotion, attention, motivation, and memory.

complexity

Complexity is the depth, detail, and breadth of information being presented; the details, components, and nuances inherent in a task or activity.

concept formation

Concept formation is the extent to which an individual can understand both concrete concepts (example: “a frog”) and abstract concepts (example: “democracy”).

concept mapping

Concept mapping (also called mind mapping) is a means of visually representing information using words and pictures related by lines drawn amongst them in a similar way to how sentences are diagrammed in English grammar textbooks.

critical thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to evaluate information, draw connections, make conclusions, and apply logic.

depth and detail of processing

Depth and detail of processing is the extent to which an individual is using her attention to stimuli in such a way that it can be processed and encoded into memory. The extent is indicated by the degree to which the individual has a comprehensive, detailed level of understanding rather than just a superficial understanding. Often memory recall problems are linked to weak depth and detail of processing (example: “in one ear and out the other”).

descriptive language

Descriptive language is words used to describe an object, image, event, etc. that appeals to the senses.

discovery phase

Discovery phase is the initial period after the student enrolls lasting about three months. During this time the student is under minimal stress, giving her time to adjust to the new environment and form new relationships. It also gives staff the time to gather more information so they can tailor the program to the student’s needs. Guidelines covering how to do this are detailed in section 4.0 Intake and Individualizing the Transition Curriculum.

distractibility levels and triggers

Distractibility levels and triggers are the degree to which an individual is distracted by internal thoughts and feelings or external environmental sensory inputs. Example: student pays attention to an itchy tag instead of a lecture.

down-regulate

Down-regulate refers to calming or soothing.

dyad work

Dyad work is work done by two individuals working together

dysregulation

Dysregulation is a failure of the regulatory mechanism for some system or function of the physical body (such as immune response or metabolism), of the emotional aspect of one's personality (such as becoming explosively angry when the situation does not call for it), or of one's cognitive processes (such as compulsive thoughts).

emotional hijacking

Emotional hijacking is a condition where one's emotional reaction to some stimulus overwhelms her cognitive abilities and self-control.

emotional regulation

Emotional regulation refers to how an individual experiences emotions, attempts to influence them, and the contexts and triggers that dictate when the emotions surface (Gross, 1998b).

endocrine system

Endocrine system is a system of glands in the body that secrete hormones to regulate the body's activities including growth, development, metabolism, mood, and organ and tissue functions.

engagement

Engagement is the extent to which an individual can participate in a shared emotional experience.

evaluative thinking

Evaluative thinking is the ability to reflect upon or judge the value – positive or negative – of some event or experience. A person with good evaluative thinking can evaluate an experience and draw meaningful conclusions about her performance, success, challenges, and what to do differently in the future.

executive functions

Executive functions are cognitive abilities to perform activities such as organizing, problem solving, planning, strategizing, paying attention to and remembering details, verbal reasoning, and managing time and space. Also used to manage emotions, attention, and behavior.

expressive language

Expressive language is the ability to use spoken language and body gestures to communicate emotions, thoughts, needs, and preferences.

focal maintenance

Focal maintenance is the extent to which an individual can sustain concentration for the appropriate amount of time needed given the task, lecture, etc.

higher order thinking

Higher order thinking is a concept that some types of thinking and learning require cognitive processes beyond simple memorization and repeating back of what was learned. Higher order thinking involves manipulation of information and ideas in ways that transform their meaning and implications. The additional skills required may include *strategic thinking*, *critical thinking*, creativity, brainstorming, *problem solving* and an understanding of *causal relationships*.

humor regulation

Humor regulation refers to the ability to make use of tasteful, appropriate humor. Also includes the ability to detect and respond appropriately to other people's jokes and humorous statements.

IDEA

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a U.S. federal statute that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children (birth to age 21) with disabilities. In 1975 the U.S. Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, which established federal standards for the provision of special educational services to children with disabilities. Until that time, public schools either excluded these children or segregated them into separate facilities with little or no appropriate instruction or assistance.

ideational range

Ideational range is a wide or narrow range of ideas about a given subject.

IEP

Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a documented program mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that defines methods, approaches, and objectives tailored to the specific needs of a person with a disability. It is intended to help the individual more easily reach educational goals than would otherwise be possible.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

See IDEA

intake process

Intake process is used by a skilled educator or clinician to tailor the Transition Curriculum to each individual student.

intermittent reflective thinking

Intermittent reflective thinking is the ability to reflect on personal feelings in relation to one's internal sense of self. Example: "It's not like me to feel so angry" or "I shouldn't feel this jealous".

language processing

Language processing is the way spoken or written language is processed. This ranges from the construction of spoken or written messages to the abstraction of meaning from language.

limbic resonance

Limbic resonance is the capacity for sharing non-verbal, emotional states.

meta-skills

Meta-skills are skills used to acquire or make use of other skills. For example: a person who is good at teaching herself new skills has the meta-skill of being able to learn things; a great teacher is someone who has the meta-skill of being able to learn any subject and then teach that subject back to others.

Meta-cognitive skills are abilities to examine and change how one is thinking or evaluating information.

mindfulness

Mindfulness is the focusing of one's attention on each present moment as it occurs with curiosity, complete acceptance, and without judgment.

mindset

Mindset is a set of attitudes or beliefs about the self, others, and the world that dictates the perspective one uses to interpret information and draw conclusions about one's experiences.

motor planning

Motor planning is the ability to plan out body movements to bring about coordination, balance, and spatial awareness in relation to the body.

neuropsychology

Neuropsychology is the study of the relationship between function and structure of the brain as related to psychological processes and behaviors.

noble certainties

Noble certainties are fixed beliefs one has about the world that one will go to great lengths to defend as absolute truths.

olfactory

Olfactory relates to the sense of smell.

OT

Occupational therapist (OT): "In its simplest terms, occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants help people across the lifespan participate in the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of everyday activities (occupations). Common occupational therapy interventions include helping children with disabilities to participate fully in school and social situations, helping people recovering from injury to regain skills, and providing supports for older adults experiencing physical and cognitive changes."

(Source: About Occupational Therapy, <http://www.aota.org/consumers.aspx>, accessed January 17, 2013)

pacing

Pacing is the ability to adjust and control the rate at which one approaches, engages, and performs a task. (Examples: not rushing, not moving too slowly).

parasympathetic nervous system

Parasympathetic nervous system is one of the two major parts of the autonomic nervous system that regulates the functions of the body's glands and organs. It is intimately involved in supporting a large number of functions that occur when the body is not involved in a "fight or flight" response such as urination, defecation, digestion, and reproduction.

parts-to-whole thinking

Parts-to-whole thinking is the notion that understanding the parts of a subject is important to understanding the subject as a whole; the ability to grasp how the parts or elements of some topic add up to a conceptual whole.

performance consistency

Performance consistency is the ability to keep up a reliable and predictable flow of mental energy to function dependably over time. (Examples: Being able to do something competently one day and not the next, being unreliable, inconsistent task performance.)

person-centered approach

Person-centered approach is a psychological approach that provides an individual with the awareness to see how her beliefs, emotions, and behaviors affect her life as well as her decision-making ability, and helping to find her own solutions to problems.

phonological processing

Phonological processing is the ability to detect and discriminate differences in speech sounds.

previewing

Previewing is the ability to project and anticipate what comes next; visualizing consequences.

prioritization

Prioritization is the extent to which an individual can identify and order key information within what is being discussed; the ability to recognize, emphasize, and act upon key components inherent in a task or activity; the ability to order what is important when communicating oral or written information or when trying to produce some end result.

problem solving

Problem solving is the ability to approach problems, work through the details, and seek solutions.

proprioceptive

Proprioceptive is awareness of posture, movement, position, weight, and resistance of objects as they relate to the body.

PT

Physical therapy (PT); physical therapist (PT); “Physical therapists (PTs) are highly-educated, licensed health care professionals who can help patients reduce pain and improve or restore mobility - in many cases without expensive surgery and often reducing the need for long-term use of prescription medications and their side effects. Physical therapists can teach patients how to prevent or manage their condition so that they will achieve long-term health benefits. PTs examine each individual and develop a plan, using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability. In addition, PTs work with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness- and wellness-oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles.”

(Source: Who Are Physical Therapists?, <http://www.apta.org/AboutPTs/>, accessed January 17, 2013)

rate

Rate is the speed at which the flow of information is disseminated and absorbed (receptive, cognitive); speed of the flow of a task or activity (experiential, physical); speed at which an individual speaks, writes, or performs a task (expressive).

receptive language

Receptive language is the ability to hear and derive the intended meaning from spoken and written language. It involves several skills, such as the abilities to pay attention, to hear or read what was said or written, to comprehend its meaning correctly, etc.

reciprocity

Reciprocity is the ability to understand the give and take and timing of social conversation or interactions.

reinforceability

Reinforceability is the ability to use previous experience to correct behavior and work output; to learn from experience. (Example: “Last time I rushed through my math test and failed it. I should slow down on this math test”; “Last time I teased her she broke into tears. I should take a softer approach next time and know she is not a good person to tease”.)

representational thought

Representational thought is the ability to imagine, think in analogies and metaphors, understand symbols, and infer meanings from them.

RVCP

Rate, Volume, Complexity, and Prioritization (RVCP). See each term for its definition as it applies to the Transition Curriculum.

saliency determination

Saliency determination is deciding what incoming stimuli is important to attend to; when exposed to information, the individual is able to identify what is important and what is a small detail; the degree to which an individual gets distracted by or over-focused on information of lesser importance. (Example: Not knowing what to take notes on in class.)

satisfaction threshold

Satisfaction threshold is the level of interest needed for an individual to sustain attention on a subject. A person with a low threshold of satisfaction on a subject can pay attention to what is being taught even if it is “boring” whereas a person with a high satisfaction threshold will only pay attention if the subject can be linked to some activity for which she has a passion.

self-regulation

Self-regulation is the ability to take control of, evaluate, and regulate one's own learning and behavior.

self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is “An individual’s ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions.” (Source: Transition and Self-Advocacy, <http://www.ldonline.org/article/7757/>, accessed Jan 17, 2012 quoting Van Reusen et al., 1994)

self-marketing

Self-marketing is the ability of a person to intentionally build and display an image that is appealing to others.

self-monitoring

Self-monitoring is the ability to watch, analyze, and evaluate self as one is doing a task. (Example: “How am I doing? “What/Who do I need to accomplish this task?”)

sensory processing

Sensory processing is the nervous system's ability to receive messages from the senses, organize and make sense of the different kinds of sensation entering the mind at the same time and turn them into appropriate motor and behavioral responses.

sensory reactivity

Sensory reactivity refers to how an individual reacts negatively to some particular sensory stimulus (smell, taste, etc.).

shared attention regulation

Shared attention regulation is the ability to regulate one’s attention and behavior while being interested in a full range of sensations (sights, sounds, smells, own movement patterns, etc.); the ability to enter into a state of shared attention with another person; the ability to process one’s environment, filter out distractions, and engage with others, attend to games, activities, or tasks.

SIP

Student’s Individual Profile (SIP) a multi-purpose hard copy or electronic portfolio created during the Transition Curriculum intake process and used throughout the student’s participation in the program; a tool for individualizing the curriculum that allows staff to store sample work and information about the student as well as track ongoing changes in patterns, gains, goals, strategies, accommodations, difficulties, achievements, and personal experiences.

sleep/arousal balance

Sleep/arousal balance is getting enough quality sleep at night to be able to wake in the morning and stay awake during the day.

SLP

Speech-language pathologist (SLP) is a clinician who assesses, diagnoses, treats, and helps to prevent speech, cognitive, language, communication, swallowing, voice, fluency, and other related disorders.

social awareness

Social awareness is the ability to perceive and understand viewpoints and feelings of others and act in a manner that shows understanding of such.

social cognition

Social cognition is the way in which cognitive processes play a role in social behavior in relation to the encoding, storage, retrieval, and processing of information in the mind; the way people think about others and the effect this has on social behavior.

social information processing

Social information processing is the ability to understand underlying meanings and agendas in social interactions (reading between the lines, getting the big picture of a discussion, etc.)

social-emotional development

Social-emotional development allows young children to interact with others and show their emotions to express themselves. Social Emotional development includes the ability to initiate and maintain secure relationships. During this development a child learns how to approach other children, how to negotiate issues, how to take turns, and how to communicate effectively.

somatic nervous system

Somatic nervous system is that part of the nervous system that regulates the voluntary systems of senses and movement. Includes sensory regulation, which involves both the physical ability of the brain to detect through the senses and how that input is processed.

special education

Special education is instruction specifically designed to meet the needs of a student with disabilities. Includes classroom instruction, home instruction, instruction in physical education as well as instruction in institutions and hospitals.

speech-language pathology

See SLP

step wisdom

Step wisdom is the sense of proper order and sequence as applied to processes or tasks in life. It is composed of:

Sequencing – the ability to order steps, tasks, and priorities in a logical sequence to complete a task successfully

Visualization – the ability to visualize the sequence in which one is to perform a task

Prioritization – the ability to itemize all the demands, expectations, and parameters of a task and detect priorities.

strategic thinking

Strategic thinking is the ability of an individual to design or apply strategies to approach tasks in an organized, sequenced, and successful manner; the ability to think in a manner that best exploits existing or emerging resources or possibilities.

strategies

Strategies are techniques used when an individual needs support to approach, navigate, and complete a task successfully. They are methods for approaching learning that increase an individual's ability to absorb information successfully, make experience or study meaningful, and generally become productive based on exposure to learning.

strengths and challenges assessment

Strengths and challenges assessment is an analysis of what the individual is able to do well versus not do well throughout the execution of a task.

stressor

Stressor is anything that causes stress in an individual.

Student's Individual Profile

See SIP

sympathetic nervous system,

Sympathetic nervous system is one of the two major parts of the autonomic nervous system that maintains the internal stability of the basic properties (such as temperature, pH levels, etc.) and also controls the body's flight or fight response mechanism.

temporal-sequential processing

Temporal-sequential processing is the way in which we recognize and follow time, including the skills we use and steps taken to accomplish things in a given time, place, and order.

Theory of mind

Theory of mind (also known as mind reading) is the ability to attribute a mental state (intentions, emotions, beliefs, desires, knowledge, etc.) to another person in order to predict or understand that person's behavior and recognize they may be similar to or different from those held by others. Individuals with ASD often have deficits with respect to this ability.

transition services

Transition services are services that meet the unique needs of young adults with ASD and other developmental disabilities and help to prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.

triad work

Triad work is work done by three students working together.

up-regulate

Up-regulate is to stimulate in order to provoke action.

vestibular

Vestibular is the sense that provides orientation in space using motion, gravity, and balance perceptions from the inner ear.

visual-spatial processing

Visual-spatial processing is a set of cognitive skills that allow one to organize and interpret meaning from visual information.

volume

Volume is the amount of information disseminated; the size and scope of a task or activity; the amount of oral or written information and end result individual can produce.

A.02 Communication Strategies and Accommodations for Students with Low or No Verbal Ability

Communication is not one size fits all, nor does it always follow consistent patterns. Since communication capabilities and styles are related to a multitude of factors, it is essential that the approach to designing communication support is comprehensive, flexible, and dynamic.

Communication is affected by:

- Phonemic awareness and other phonological processing issues
- Receptive language skills (vocabulary, language comprehension)
- Expressive oral language skills (word retrieval, vocabulary, syntax, pragmatics)
- Expressive written language (graphomotor, grammar, motor planning, idea generation, letter formulation, visual-spatial processing)
- Auditory processing
- Visual processing
- Visualization capability
- Higher order thinking
- Memory
- Motor planning, oral-motor functioning, and articulation
- Learning differences
- Processing speed
- Anxiety
- Saliency determination (process of selecting and thinking about which information stands out or is most important)
- Thought organization
- Executive function
- Regulatory issues (sensory, emotional, physical)
- Habits and learned behaviors
- Personality and temperament
- Mutism (inability to speak - elective, selective, etc.)

Since the range of potential communication strengths, challenges, and barriers is so vast and highly specific to each individual, the communication plan must be tailored to fit. Furthermore, one's communication needs change over time as interests, goals, and preferences evolve and the activities and demands in life change. For this reason, communication plans must be flexible.

For individuals who are nonverbal or have low verbal ability, the need to individualize communication approaches becomes even more important. Life opportunities expand greatly when avenues are available for an individual to initiate and sustain emotional and social connections, show preference and opinion, display

humor, express will and personal desires, share joy and accomplishments, convey pleasure and displeasure, request assistance, and convey affection. Those for whom traditional forms of communication do not work well depend upon their caregivers, educators, specialists, and friends to connect and communicate with them in other, equally as valuable communication formats.

Examples of successful communication approaches and modalities for non-verbal and low verbal individuals include:

- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) approaches and devices. *See Appendix 7.03 for further information about this.*
- Story-boarding (drawing a story-based pictorial representation)
- Art
- Photography
- Writing notes
- Facilitated writing
- Keyboarding
- Movement (gestures, pantomime, etc.)
- Pictorial images
- Vocalizations (sounds, utterances)
- Sign language
- Use of objects
- Symbolic representation (use of symbols to communicate)

Transition programs should offer a wide range of communication interventions, techniques, and methods so all individuals are able to access and respond to the content in a manner that meets their individual needs.

A.03 Use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in Transition Curriculum

For many decades sign language has been instrumental in opening up a venue for many individuals with expressive language and articulation challenges to enable them to communicate their thoughts, feelings, preferences, and desires. As the field of technology and specifically assistive technology exploded in scope and complexity, practitioners, families, and educators have expanded their thinking of communication support in ways never imagined before. Technology offers a new future for individuals with expressive language challenges and a much needed expansion of options in addition to and above and beyond the more traditional method of sign language, which is not a viable option for all individuals. The field of Augmentative and Assistive Communication holds tremendous promise in Transition work with adolescents and young adults with ASD and other developmental disabilities across a wide spectrum of capability and severity.

The benefit of technology's speed, accuracy, specificity, and flexibility of design means that it can be individualized and adapted to meet the complex and varied challenges of non-verbal individuals. AAC devices and methods enable an individual with expressive language challenges the opportunity to develop a relationship with language that otherwise would not exist. Its use spans a wide range of possibilities:

- Opening up avenues for relationships
- Developing spontaneous language expression
- Increasing self-advocacy
- Better identifying interests and affinities
- Permitting more specificity and nuance in communication exchanges
- Practicing the reciprocity and flow of language and rapport
- Building emotional language understanding and expression

Now with the help of AAC devices, participation in community outings, group activities, and navigating public places becomes much more possible. In addition, as jobs become more technology based, an individual's skill level, comfort, and familiarity with AAC devices can form a bridge to learning new technology associated with an internship, job, or career.

The cultural trend towards technology as a tool for everyone in everyday life encourages practitioners to think beyond applying devices just for their non-verbal clients. Some practitioners have begun to use AAC technology in their work with individuals who have expressive language skills but need remediation and help with cognitive difficulties.

- Those with slow processing speeds could benefit from the increase in momentum, reciprocity, and response time that an AAC device offers
- For students with weak symbol decoding (letters or shapes), assistive devices provide opportunities to work on and strengthen symbol recognition
- As remediation and assistive tools for writing instruction, devices can help with brainstorming during the idea generation phase of writing or as a replacement for writing for those with high writing anxiety or difficulty with graphomotor and keyboarding

- Individuals with challenges in syntax and language sequencing could benefit from using devices to decelerate the language process and practice sequencing and word choices
- From an interpersonal standpoint, AAC devices can help individuals with more advanced skills to communicate with peers who have reduced skills, and help them understand that non-verbal individuals can have a lot to say, reducing the false impression that they are not intelligent
- It may be a great exercise to have students strong in language have to adjust to communicating through a device as an activity to get first-hand experience in what it feels like to have a different relationship with language. Examples can also be drawn from individuals without ASD who have a great mastery of language and strong cognition but need AAC devices to communicate it to the outside world (e.g., Stephen Hawkins, a brilliant author, physicist, and Professor of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge who had a motor neurone disease and was unable to communicate).
- Lastly, technology- or communication-based affinity classes for students with more advanced skills can include AAC information and research.

Amidst all the new AAC devices on the market, it is still important to understand the low tech approaches (such as sign language), which may be valuable tools for certain individuals with expressive language challenges.

A Comment on Sign Language

Because sign language requires a certain level of motor planning and hand dexterity and because it requires an investment of time and staff training, it is not a good fit for all programs and students. However, it can be an effective alternative for many:

Individuals with more advanced skills, particularly students seeking degrees may opt for sign language to fulfill their foreign language requirements. Individuals needing to improve their motor planning, body awareness, and motor sequencing might find that learning sign language can help to remediate their challenges.

Learning sign language can be a wonderful way to practice decelerating expression for those who engage in rushed or pressured speech.

It may also offer tremendous benefit for students who have weak visual and auditory memory for language but have strong motor memory, as signing enables them to enlist their muscles and body memory systems as a means to strengthening language.

Lastly, the process of learning sign language affords a student the chance to work 1:1 with a staff member on engagement, reciprocity, and learning through mirroring.

A Comment on Supported Communication

“Supported communication is the term used when a child is given emotional, communicative and sensory-motor support (a parent's or therapist's hand supporting the child's hand or arm) so that he is more

able to use an augmentative communication device (most often a keyboard) to point to pictures, letters or other symbols in order to express his feelings and thoughts. In the past, research into supported communication indicated that the communication was being directed by the therapist rather than the child. As a result this technique has been disregarded by many, which is unfortunate. When used properly, supported communication can be an incredibly effective resource for children with severe motor-planning challenges, especially for those who can't point reliably. Many have progressed from supported to independent typing. The most effective means of providing these children with a "voice" that I have encountered in clinical practice is supported communication on a keyboard, which the child uses to type.” (Robinson, 185)

In Summary

There is little doubt that technology is here to stay and that its effect on how people communicate socially and professionally is immense. It is vital that we equip our young adults with the ability to use technology if we wish them to be able to participate in their communities, have a voice among their neurotypical peers, and compete for jobs and careers. AAC builds bridges across the communication gaps many individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities experience on a daily basis.

For young adults with ASD who are in transition, taking advantage of both traditional and innovative uses of these devices reduces their chances of social isolation, increases their capacity for functional and creative expression, and widens their job and career options.

References

Robinson, R. (2011). *Autism Solutions: How to Create a Healthy and Meaningful Life for Your Child*. New York, NY: Harlequin.