

*An AAC needs assessment assists the educational team in determining whether a student's current systems of communication (including any aided supports) are meeting the student's needs for showing what they know or understand; building independence; and building relationships or social connection. If additional supports are indicated, the process includes evaluating the underlying skills or factors that impact the identification and selection of appropriate communication strategies and tools in order for the team to discuss potential solutions and next steps.*

## Student Information:

Name: <i>Kendall</i>	Birthdate: <i>5/2015</i>	Age: <i>5</i>
School District: <i>Ackerman</i>	School of Attendance: <i>Bowman</i>	
Date of Report: <i>10/21/2020</i>	Assessor: <i>Jennifer Wright, M.A., CCC-SLP AAC Specialist</i>	

## Primary participants for reviewing/determining AAC supports:

Name(s):	Role:
<i>Jessica</i>	<i>Mother</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>SLP</i>
<i>L</i>	<i>SLPA</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>Kindergarten Teacher</i>

## RECORDS REVIEWED

*IEPs dated 10/23/2019 and 12/18/2019; Speech-Language Annual Report and other testing information 12/16/2019; Neurological Consultation, Dr. Asaikar 1/15/2020*

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

*Kendall is a delightful 5 year old girl currently attending Bowman School in a Kindergarten Classroom that is currently in a Hybrid In person/Distance Learning model. Kendall receives Speech-Language Therapy. She is a very happy, social, and easy going girl.*

## PURPOSE/CURRENT NEED FOR THIS ASSESSMENT

*Kendall was referred for this Augmentative and Alternative Communication by her parents and school team. She communicates verbally at this time, but her ability to communicate functionally is significantly impacted by her difficulty with coordinating speech sounds accurately. She has a speech diagnosis of Apraxia. According to her team, Kendall appears to understand the majority of what is said to her, but cannot express herself effectively at this time in relation to her language skills.*

## THIS ASSESSMENT INCLUDES:

1. A summary of Kendall's current communication strategies
2. A description of any aided supports currently available
3. A summary of current skills as they relate to the use of AAC supports
4. Recommendations for the IEP team to consider

*All tools/activities used were valid for the specific purpose for which they were used and were selected as most appropriate when considering the student's cultural and individual needs, and language and cognitive levels. No standardized tests were administered as assistive technology (AAC) is not an evaluation for eligibility (see description above). Information gathered will be reviewed with the educational team in order to make team-based priorities and decisions.*

## PHASE 1: HOW DOES THE STUDENT CURRENTLY COMMUNICATE?

### Data gathering tool:

*Observation, Interview, and the Communication Sampling Analysis (CSA) (Buzolich, Russell, Lunker-Bergh & McCloskey (2007)) A communication performance assessment tool (transcription in a time/event sample) for observing and analyzing communication behaviors in natural settings.*

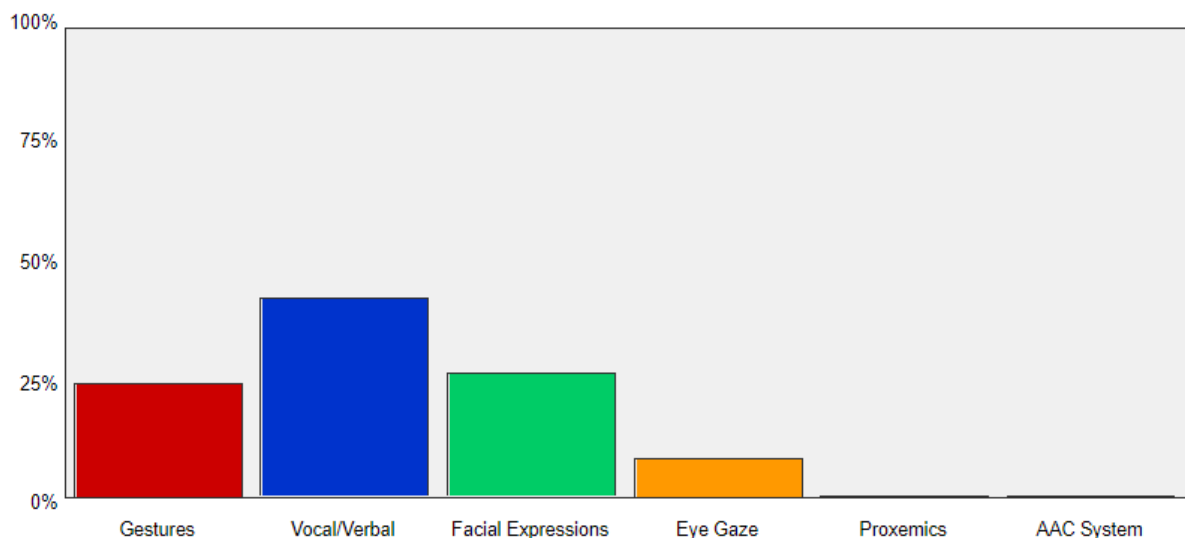
### Observation/settings:

*At school during a Speech-Language therapy session.*

### Describe the student's current range of communication behaviors:

*Kendall is primarily a verbal communicator. In a sample of 25 communication events, Kendall used single modality means in 32% % of the sample and multiple modalities in 68% of the sample. This indicates that Kendall combines communication behaviors (means) in order to communicate with a partner. These communication means included verbalizations/vocalizations (38% of sample), Gestures (24% of sample), Facial Expression (26% of sample), eye gaze (8% of sample), Proxemics (0% of sample), and AAC System (0% of sample). Verbalizations/Vocalizations made up almost half of her communication means and she typically paired these with eye gaze and facial expressions. It is important to note that these percentages are in relation to total means used throughout the sampling, and that Kendall actually used verbalizations/vocalizations in 21/25 interactions.*

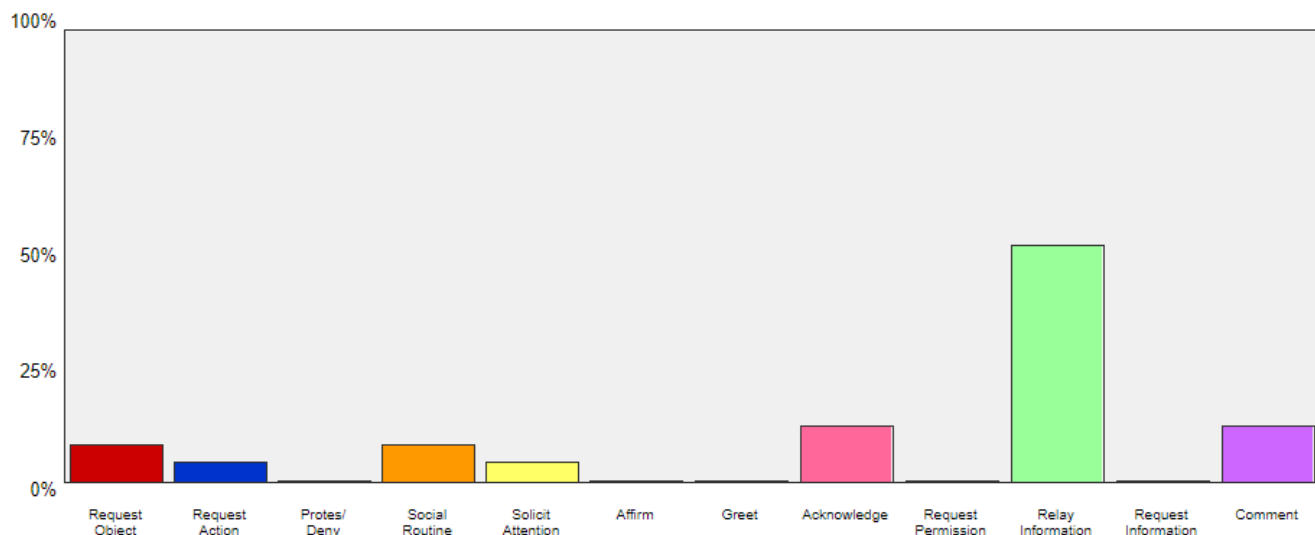
### Communicative Means Graph



### What does the student communicate for and about (communication functions):

*Kendall demonstrated a variety of communication functions in this sample. She primarily communicated for **Joint Attention** in order to **relay information**. Within the category of Joint Attention there are other functions measured including **requesting information** (0 instances) and **commenting** (3 instances). These functions were much more limited. This may be due to the fact that the majority of the communication interactions with partners were initiated by the partner and were typically in the form of some type of question for her to answer. She demonstrated the communicative function **acknowledging** in the **Social Interaction** category. This indicates that her communication partner would have initiated a communication interaction and Kendall's response indicated that she noticed or recognized a partner's behavior. She also demonstrated that she could **solicit attention and request social routine**. On observations, but not during the data collected for this measure, she demonstrated that she also could **affirm, greet, and request permission**. In the category of **Behavioral Regulation**, Kendall demonstrated the functions of **Request Action and Request Object**. In observations not measured in this sample, she also demonstrated the function of **Protest/Deny/Reject**. This communicative function category was the least demonstrated in this sample. It was observed that Kendall is very agreeable and seems to enjoy the interactions with familiar adults.*

## Communication Functions Graph



### Describe verbal behavior:

Kendall is primarily a verbal communicator. She speaks in multiple word sentences, but typically only 1-2 words are intelligible and/or understood by the listener when the context is known and if context is not known, then this may decrease. Kendall will vocalize for her communication interactions and uses speech to attract others attention. Her vocalizations vary with content and the intent of her message. She is willing to use speech primarily to communicate with familiar and unfamiliar partners on known topics and novel topics. At times her messages are understood by people both familiar and unfamiliar with her speech. She sometimes attempts to repair or clarify her meaning if she isn't understood, but more often will just let the opportunity pass.

### Summary:

At this time, Kendall's vocalizations/verbalizations and nonverbal communication means are not meeting her needs to support successfully showing what she knows and understands, building her independence, or building relationships and social connections with peers and adults. Although verbal communication is her primary means for communicating with partners at this time, she is rarely understood at greater than one word level, but continues to speak in multiple word phrases or sentences. Kendall would benefit from augmentative alternative communication strategies and tools to augment her verbal communication while continuing to develop her articulation skills to support her verbal expression. In order to increase Kendall's success using any potential aided supports the following priorities are identified for the team to consider: Training communication partners (peers and adults) in the fundamentals of interacting with a student with complex communication needs (e.g. modeling, prompting, wait time, and engineering communication opportunities); Increasing opportunities for participation and interaction; Increasing settings in which Kendall has access to aided supports, and Support of skill development for independent access to any potential tools.

## PHASE 2: OBSERVATIONS/DATA COLLECTION OF STUDENT'S CURRENT SKILL LEVELS (related to using aided communication tools)



### MOTOR ~ ACCESS

Data gathering tools: *Observation, Record Review, AAC Genie*

Summary of mobility/positioning: *Kendall is fully ambulatory and utilizes a regular chair.*

Summary of access skills: *Kendall appears to be primarily right handed, but does use both hands to complete tasks. She can cross midline to access a target, such as reaching for a toy. She demonstrated full active range during reach. She did not demonstrate any tremors or involuntary movements. She can isolate fingers for pointing. On the AAC Genie subtest for Visual Identification on the iPad 10" with specific targets to access, Kendall was able to target small icons (.5") in a field of 45 with 100% accuracy.*

Overall **Motor-Access** considerations for potential communication tool(s): *Kendall would be able to access and potential tools through direct selection. Any tool considered for her must be lightweight, protected and easily portable as she will need to carry with her throughout her daily activities.*



### SENSORY ~ PERCEPTUAL

Data gathering tools: *Record Review, Interview, Observation, AAC Genie Subtest for Visual Discrimination*

Summary of vision/hearing/tactile: *Kendall's hearing and vision appear to be functional for access to any system that may be considered. She was noted to have passed both her vision and hearing screenings on her IEP dated 12/18/2019. She does not appear to have any tactile issues that would impact her access to any system that may be considered. On the AAC Genie Subtest for Visual Discrimination she was able to locate and identify a .5" target in a field of 45 with 100%.*

Overall **Sensory-Perceptual** considerations for potential communication tool(s): *Kendall's hearing, vision, and tactile function appear to be within functional limits. She should be able to visually regard symbols on any display presented to her, as well as hear the voice output via a tool if applicable.*



### COGNITIVE ~ LINGUISTIC

Data gathering tools: *Record review, Interview, Observation, AAC Genie Subtests for Vocabulary Knowledge*

Summary of general cognitive/language skills: *Kendall processes and responds to information without many modifications. She has demonstrated that she can attend for an appropriate time in 1:1, small group, and whole class settings.*

Summary of symbolic skills: *Kendall does not have a strong base of visual icon experience at this time, but demonstrated that she could identify symbols that were photographs, realistic pictures, line drawing, and has a beginning knowledge of printed text. She has primarily been an auditory in/verbal out communicator using some sign language for expression. She demonstrated that she understands that objects, photographs, and realistic pictures can represent language. She was observed to be able to carry out tasks with up to 3 simple steps On the AAC Genie Subtests for Vocabulary Knowledge, Kendall was able to do the following: Noun Vocabulary 80%, Function Vocabulary 100%, Verb Vocabulary 90%, Category Recognition 100%, Word Association 90%, Category Inclusion 60%, Core Vocabulary 10%. On the picture description subtest following a model and some cuing, she was able to put together 7 utterances with a Mean Length of Utterance with 4.42.*

Summary of literacy skills: *Kendall has demonstrated that she understands that spoken words can be used to construct phrases and sentences to express herself. She attends to age appropriate stories and rhymes. She anticipates events and repetitive lines of familiar stories and songs. She also follows pages and pictures corresponding to stories. She is demonstrating that she is understanding the Kindergarten skills.*

Overall **Cognitive-Linguistic** considerations for potential communication tool(s): *Even though Kendall has not had experience with utilizing line drawings for expressing herself, she demonstrates the potential to be able to learn to use symbols and printed text combined with auditory output to potentially support and augment her expressive communication. She has the linguistic knowledge that putting multiple words together is expressive and therefore any tool or system considered for her will need to have features to support his continuing language development and robust vocabulary.*



## SOCIAL ~ STRATEGIC

Data gathering tools: *Record review, Interview, Observation*

Motivation to communicate: *Kendall uses natural behaviors for social interaction and her communication behaviors express both emotions and intent. When presented with a 40 word core board that the examiner was providing her with aided language modeling, Kendall began to start to point to symbols without prompting and at times initiated the use of the tool.*

Partner considerations: *Kendall's primary communication partner at home is her mother. However, her most skilled communication partner is her brother. At this time she has peers that will attempt to interact with her, but they do not necessarily know how to interact effectively with each other.*

Summary of social skills: *Kendall is intrinsically motivated to communicate. She appears to enjoy interactions with the people in her environment. She would benefit from increasing the number of partners she communicates with effectively and increasing the settings in which she can meaningfully interact with peers and adults.*

Summary of strategic skills: *Kendall demonstrates communication behaviors that are conventional and recognizable to communicate intent. She uses meaningful attention-seeking behaviors, followed by acceptance or rejections signals. She at times will attempt to repair communication breakdowns by using strategies such as signing or gesturing to assist with comprehension for her communication partner.*

Overall **Social-Strategic** considerations for potential communication tool(s): *Any potential tool or system considered for Kendall will need to have a robust language system that will support her developing her pragmatic skills with peers and adults. Kendall has demonstrated that she is motivated to be in social interactions with those around her, but does not have an effective way to build these social relationships through meaningful intelligible conversations at this time.*

### SUMMARY:

**Skills student currently demonstrates:** *Based on the information gathered, Kendall demonstrates the characteristics of having an 'Intermediate Level Communicator Profile', with the following description: Students who can use pre-stored messages on aided systems of communication to interact and take turns in familiar routines and activities. They are resourceful in using their unaided communication (e.g. verbal and nonverbal) to supplement aided systems. They have the ability to categorize words.*

**What outcomes are we working toward?:** *Our goal for all individuals with complex communication needs is to support them in developing the skills needed to participate fully in all aspects of life including expressing wants and needs, exchanging information, building social closeness and participating effectively in social routines. In order to support Kendall in moving closer to achieving these long-term outcomes, the following priorities are identified for current skill building:*

- *Accessing larger vocabulary sets, through navigation to new page sets, using direct selection;*
- *Associating symbols to basic topic or grammatical organizational categories;*
- *Providing access to core word vocabulary to support constructing 1– 6 word sentences;*
- *Learning to respond to and generate a variety of question forms;*
- *Learning to effectively transition to other topics of conversation.*

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### 1. Recommendations for STRATEGIES to support current priorities for skill development:

*At this time, Kendall would benefit from continuing to use multimodal communication which will allow her to build language skills through increasing the range of communication forms and functions she has access to. The focus of using a multimodal approach is to increase meaningful and active participation in the learning environment and building relationships and social connection with peers, staff and family.*

#### **Specific multimodal and communication partner strategies to consider:**

*Continue to honor and pair Kendall's vocalizations/verbalizations, gestures, eye gaze, facial expressions, and signs with any additional tools and supports that are explored. Use of the strategy of Aided Language Modeling by support providers to develop core language and the understanding that talking with pictures is meaningful and effective. Use of this strategy will begin to build the foundation of language concepts represented in symbol format that Kendall will need to understand in order to begin to use additional tools and supports meaningfully and successfully. This will facilitate developing her ability to*

associate symbols with language concepts for an increasing symbol set, and to begin to understand and use the visual symbols to further augment her language.

## 2. **Recommendations for TOOLS to support current priorities for skill development:**

Kendall would benefit from a tool/s that has the following critical features:

- Dynamic system to support independent navigation to vocabulary/page sets
- Digitized (recorded) or synthesized speech
- 40-60 locations/messages per display

Examples of tools that can meet Kendall's current needs include:

<b>Tools</b>		
<b>iPad 10"/iPad Mini</b> 	<b>NovaChat 8</b> 	<b>Communication Flipbook</b> 
<b>Description</b>		
Appropriate application: TouchChat with Word Power, Proloquo2Go, CoughDrop	Preloaded vocabulary for emerging through literate communicators. PCS or Symbol Stix symbols.	40-60 Core Words with personalized fringe categories

## **NEXT STEPS:**

The team may consider and prioritize tool(s) for exploration or trials. It is recommended that the team re-convene following any exploration or trial to review outcomes and make final recommendations. At that time, the team may want to consider specific IEP goals/objectives to support Kendall's skill development (e.g. across the areas of social-strategic, linguistic, and/or operational competencies).

In order to build shared beliefs, responsibilities and priorities for supporting Kendall in obtaining these outcomes, the team may want to consider using one or more of the following collaborative team processes once a system is in place:

**☒AAC Snapshot:** A shared summary of information that all team members need to know and understand as we work together to "move students forward" with communication competence using aided tools.

**☒AAC Roles and Responsibilities:** A plan for defining "who is doing what" when it comes to managing all of the support needed for a student with a more robust, aided communication system.

**☒Communication Access Plan:** A team-based collaborative process to identify current challenges, consider current settings and supports, and identify priorities for taking small steps towards implementing successful strategies to support skill development and communication competence for the student.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. I look forward to discussing these recommendations and supporting Kendall and her team in further developing her communication skills and competence.

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 AAC Specialist  
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 Placer County Office of Education