

# Let's Communicate

## Winter 2016

### Speech-Language and Assistive Technology Informational Newsletter

***A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a powerful new way of working together!***

#### **PLC Kick Off: Collaboration and Leadership Skills**

***Presented by  
Jennifer Abrams***

With an emphasis on student growth, the delivery of services through a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework requires educators to build a collaborative and professional culture.

Support Service Personnel began the school year with an opportunity to attend the collaboration & leadership workshop presented by Jennifer Abrams, who is an international educational and communications consultant. She provided evidence based professional development on successful instructional practices, communication strategies and effective collaboration skills. These skills included building trust, acceptance, and interpersonal relationships.

In [Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement](#), the University of Chicago researchers examined the role of social relationships in schools and their impact on student achievement. Their conclusion? That “a

broad base of trust across a school community lubricates much of the school’s day-to-day functioning and is a critical resource as local leaders embark on ambitious improvement plans.”

According to these researchers, there are four vital signs for identifying and assessing trust in schools. **Respect:** Do we acknowledge one another’s dignity and ideas? Do we interact in a courteous way?

**Competence:** Do we believe in each other’s ability and willingness to fulfill our responsibilities effectively? **Personal regard:** Do we care about each other personally and professionally? Are we willing to go beyond our formal roles and responsibilities to go the extra mile? **Integrity:** Can we trust each other to put the interests of students first, especially when tough decisions have to be made? Do we keep our word?

Information from the book, [CLASH! How to Thrive in a Multicultural World](#), by Hazel Rose Markus, Ph.D. and Alana Conner, Ph.D., was presented to support acceptance through the understanding of different perspectives. Educators should consider a variety of

factors when interacting with others: white vs people of color, men vs women, rich vs poor, religious liberals vs religious conservatives, east vs west, coast vs heartland, businesses vs nonprofits and governments, and global north vs global south.

***“In a world of increasing interconnectedness and rapid change, there is a growing need to improve the way people work together. Understanding the true drivers of human social behavior is becoming ever more urgent in this environment.”***

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Jennifer Abrams provided Support Personnel Staff with many practical strategies to increase their interpersonal skills, such as the seven norms of collaborative work, key rapport skills, and quick scripts for having hard conversations. Norms for collaborative work included pausing to allow time to think before responding, paraphrasing to encourage comprehension, and probing to clarify and confirm the information. Key rapport skills incorporated components of physical (posture, eye gaze, body space) and voice (tone/pace/ words) variables.

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#### **Inside this issue:**

PLC Kick Off	1
Google Drive	2
AT & Role of the OT	3
Closing the Gap	3
Core Vocabulary-Math	3 - 4
Aided Language Input	4

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Quick scripts for having hard conversations were also presented. See the example below:

“I Message Feedback Statements - Take One”

“When you do X (behavior), I think/feel Y (reaction).”

It would be helpful to me if you could do Z (behavior) instead. Would that work for you? What do you need?”

Example: “When you rolled your eyes at the meeting today when I said I didn’t have some information for you on hand, it really took me off guard and was hurtful. It would be helpful for me if you wouldn’t do that again. Can you see that from my perspective?”

From “Management Shorts” by Andrea Corney ([www.acorn-od.com](http://www.acorn-od.com))

For additional information refer to the book: [Having Hard Conversations](#), by Jennifer Abrams

## USING GOOLE DOCS & FORMS TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

*Presented by Autumn Bryant, School District 59 Speech-Language Pathologist*

Documentation is an essential component within the continuum of services provided by Support Service Personnel. However, it can be time consuming and labor intensive. A workshop presented by Autumn Bryant, D59 SLP, addressed this challenge. Participants were provided with information, templates, and examples to increase their efficiency utilizing Google docs & forms. These tools are accessible, valuable, and user friendly. Google docs & forms may be used to document new referrals, team input, attendance, data collection/progress monitoring, contact information, transition planning, and student feedback.

Autumn shared a simple tip for distributing new referral forms to educational teams. She embedded a link along with her email signature and on her webpage in the school directory. The link opens a Google

Form that prompts the educator to provide information. Autumn was then able to follow up on the Google Sheet by adding notes, color coding, and next steps pertaining to these new referrals. She even adjusted settings to receive an email notification that a new referral was submitted.

NSSEO Speech & Language Criteria team input forms were created in Google Forms and a blank copy in 'Templates' was stored. Additional features were utilized, such as automatically color coding responses to signal areas of discrepancy with automatic calculations (scores).

Automatic calculations also come in handy for monitoring IEP service delivery minutes. Keeping attendance on Google Sheets allows Support Service Personnel to access information from any location. Cells

on the Sheet can be set to automatically change color when minutes reach a predetermined level. In addition, Autumn applies this new Google-based approach to data collection and progress monitoring.

Google Drive applications support collaboration through shared documentation. This was especially beneficial for transition planning between SLPs. Autumn was able to obtain information about new students transitioning to the Middle School and add notes from future meetings in the editable spreadsheet.

Participants obtained new ideas but most importantly had time to explore templates and to modify Google Docs, Forms, and Sheets with information related to their practice. Autumn was available to assist during the 'hands on' segment of the workshop.



### ***A Culture of Collaboration***

***Educators who are building a professional learning community recognize that they must work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all. Therefore, they create structures to promote a collaborative culture.***

***Richard DuFour***

## Closing the Gap Conference 2015

*By Robyn Jung, NSSEO AT Facilitator*

### Assistive Technology & the Role of the OT

**Presented by Sarah Mazano & Maureen Neger, NSSEO DESC Program Occupational Therapists**

Sarah Marzano and Maureen Neger participated in an online summer course offered through the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), 'Understanding the Assistive Technology (AT) Process to Promote School Based Occupation Outcomes'. The highlights of this course were presented to NSSEO & member school district OTs, AT Facilitators and others through the PLC professional development series for OTs & PTs.

Participants learned the valuable role of the OT throughout the AT Process. OTs have a unique understanding of the impact of disability on functional and academic performance, the activity demands of identified daily living/educational activities, and the process of providing modifications and accommodations for students.

Four phases of the AT service delivery process were targeted with reference to the contribution of occupational therapists. The first phase is consideration of AT. The OT can identify and problem solve with the educational team to identify barriers related to fine motor impairments. For example, these barriers may negatively impact writing or access to technology tools, such as an iPad or android tablet

The second phase is the evaluation process. OTs have knowledge and skills in the area of adaptation, which may be all that is needed to improve upon a student's increased performance and independence while utilizing a continuum of technology options. The OTs perspective is unique as they consider specific skills and patterns, contexts, and activity demands that exist throughout the school day and may negatively impact a student's full participation.

The third phase is implementation. A Universal Design approach was described. This approach included tools and services that benefit most students. The OT may contribute to optimal positioning of technology tools, the posture of the student, and sensory factors (e.g. lighting, noise, length of instruction). These adaptations may allow additional students to access universal technology tools before exploring specialized options.

As a member of the educational team, OTs can support proper documentation of AT tools & services in the IEP and measuring outcomes. This documentation is necessary because it is a historical reference to track the types of supports which have been tried and have worked for a student. It enables others to easily identify what the student needs to be successful at school. Documentation should refer to the specific features within a tool to support the student's needs. As a member of the educational team, the OT plays a critical role in using assistive technology tools and strategies while collecting evidence and sharing their perspective to modify the AT plan. Measuring outcomes involves measuring the student's function in performance, quality of life, and participation.

**Remember** Assistive technology should be a team approach and involve: parents, teachers, OTs, SLPs, PTs and AT Facilitators (if needed).

A team of four NSSEO educators attended the 2015 Closing the Gap Conference. Closing the Gap is an Assistive Technology (AT) conference that focuses on the use of technology in special education, rehabilitation, and everyday living. Staff had the opportunity to attend workshops related to Google apps/extensions, AAC systems, switch accessibility, curricular programs (Unique, News-2-you, Start-to-Finish, etc.), apps for literacy, and many other areas. These sessions increased our knowledge and skills for application when working with students both in the NSSEO programs and in the member school districts.

One of the presentations by Dan Herlihy, **Access on the Fly to Printed Materials with iPads and Androids**, provided demonstration based learning of multiple applications that support the use of text-to-speech. He demonstrated different levels of apps from free to \$99.99. These apps could take printed materials of books, worksheets, or magazines, have the student take a picture of the material and then have it read to them. These apps were compatible with iPads and Android devices.

### **Core Vocabulary + Math = More Communication Opportunities!**

*By Vanessa Wilkinson, NSSEO AT Facilitator*

#### 1. Identify the Core Vocabulary embedded in Math lessons

Use Gayle Van Tatenhove's word lists

<http://www.vantatenhove.com/papers.shtml>

#### 2. Create Core Vocabulary materials and supports to use in your Math lessons

##### Low-tech:

- Categorize the Core Vocabulary and Fringe Vocabulary according to lesson
- Use large pull off classroom Core Boards, Individual Core Boards with Fringe Math Vocabulary, or Individual Fringe Math Vocabulary boards
- Determine how to structure your boards: Core Board Templates can be modified from 10 – 100+ words according to student needs

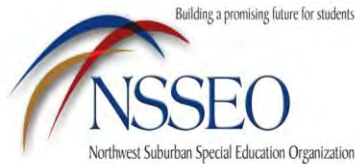
##### Mid-tech:

- Switches, All-Turn-It Spinners, GoTalks, Tech Talks, etc. can be used in creative ways (labeling ascending to descending order, listen to results, play numerical games, provided repetitive spoken responses, etc.)
- Label Switches!
- Interactive Core/Fringe Boards on the Smartboard

##### High-tech:

- Use the Core Vocabulary already in the students device
- Do Not recreate pages and pages of vocabulary
- NOT just a 1:1 correspondence between a word and it's referent
- A word can be used to mean different things depending on the setting, partners, topic, etc.





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- Use in Natural and Meaningful contexts
  - Words expand opportunity to express a range of language functions
3. **Descriptive Teaching Model**
- An alternate approach to helping students using AAC to participate within the classroom
  - Uses the Constructivist approach to teaching and learning
  - Supports THINKING over regurgitation of factoids

<http://rastresources.com/wp-content/themes/wpbootstrapnew/assets/pdf/Teaching%20Methods/The%20Descriptive%20Teaching%20Model.pdf>

[http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwir-Z3W6JXKAhVGZCYKHZXPAsQFggMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.asha.org%2Fevents%2Fconvention%2Fhandouts%2F2008%2F0904\\_van\\_tatenhove\\_gail&usg=AFQjCNGNnBcxchvDR7CkZ6wKRdDYIRZ3Q](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwir-Z3W6JXKAhVGZCYKHZXPAsQFggMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.asha.org%2Fevents%2Fconvention%2Fhandouts%2F2008%2F0904_van_tatenhove_gail&usg=AFQjCNGNnBcxchvDR7CkZ6wKRdDYIRZ3Q)

[http://www.asha.org%2Fevents%2Fconvention%2Fhandouts%2F2008%2F0904\\_van\\_tatenhove\\_gail&usg=AFQjCNGNnBcxchvDR7CkZ6wKRdDYIRZ3Q](http://www.asha.org%2Fevents%2Fconvention%2Fhandouts%2F2008%2F0904_van_tatenhove_gail&usg=AFQjCNGNnBcxchvDR7CkZ6wKRdDYIRZ3Q)

[http://www.asha.org%2Fevents%2Fconvention%2Fhandouts%2F2008%2F0904\\_van\\_tatenhove\\_gail&usg=AFQjCNGNnBcxchvDR7CkZ6wKRdDYIRZ3Q](http://www.asha.org%2Fevents%2Fconvention%2Fhandouts%2F2008%2F0904_van_tatenhove_gail&usg=AFQjCNGNnBcxchvDR7CkZ6wKRdDYIRZ3Q)

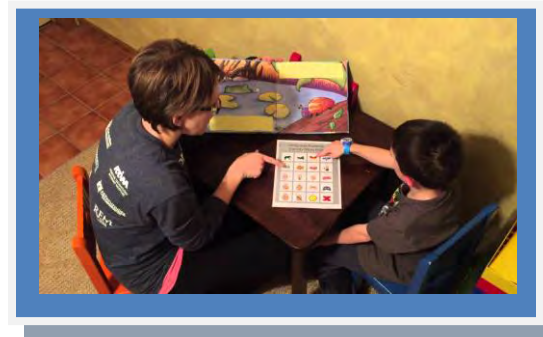
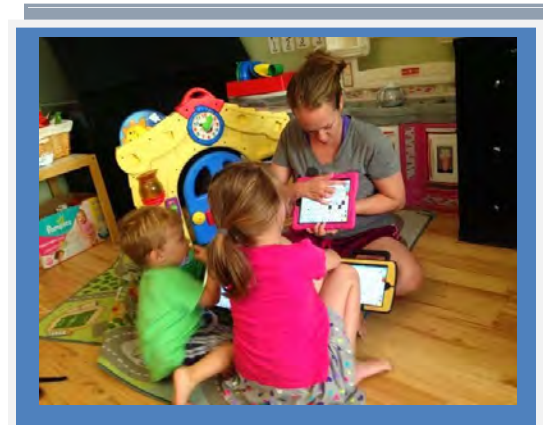
## Aided Language Input

*Presented by Kirk School Speech-Language Pathologists*

Pam Bollinger, Breanne Bockwoldt, Nancy Dean-Myrda, Elena DiSanto, and Katelyn Oeser presented information to Kirk School educational teams on the topic of Aided Language Input. It is a research-based strategy to help build a strong foundation for AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) use and **language** learning. In **aided language input**, when partners (parents, teachers, and therapists) talk with people who use AAC, the partners also use the same AAC system to communicate.

**How do our augmentative and alternative communicators learn to express themselves with these systems?** Let's compare to typical language development. By 18 months of age, children have been exposed to spoken language for approximately eight hours a day which is equivalent to 4, 400 hours. If we provide aided language input for 10 minutes a day it will take a student **84 years** to achieve that same level of input. There are benefits to the provision of Aided Language Input, such as anyone can do it in any context. As communication partners, we learn the aac system and choose our words more carefully. It slows us down assisting students with processing difficulties. It motivates the students to see others using their aac systems. It provides language learning opportunities utilizing a variety of communicative intentions-beyond requesting.

**How do you provide Aided Language Input?** Begin with core vocabulary which typically is located on the main or first few pages of the AAC system. Model one to two word combinations using concepts that carry the most meaning in the sentence (i.e. 'go + home' or 'want + home' for 'I want to go home.'). Take the student's comprehension of language into consideration to provide the best match for aided language input models (i.e. one to two word versus three to four word combinations). It is helpful to start with one target activity and then to expand to other contexts. Before you know it, you are doing it all day long! Choose an initial activity with predictable language, such as retelling or discussing a story during a literacy activity. Use Aided Language Input to describe your actions, as well as the actions of the student. Most importantly – Have fun and enjoy interacting with your student (s)!



<http://practicalaac.org>