

Single System AAC Design: Is it for my school district?

All students are provided access to Tier 1 instruction in the school setting, although some students just do it differently. Students with complex communication needs benefit from robust systems that are implemented and are modeled throughout the school setting. Therefore, should a school system consider a single system design for AAC, similar to our Tier 1 access for academics? Also, what are the strengths and limitations to this design? Also, what are some ways to teach academics through the use of an AAC device (high or low tech)? What are some tips and strategies to use with AAC users in the academic setting?

Learning Outcomes:

1. The participant will be able to define and understand a single system AAC design.
2. The participant will be able to determine if a single system AAC design is appropriate for their school system.
3. The participant will learn ways to easily implement high and low tech AAC systems into their school setting.

Notes:

History and Hypothesis...

In the last 5 years, our SLP team and teachers throughout our district have worked together to secure many AAC systems for our students.

An AAC process was set and defined and redefined many times.

During the AAC process, we noted that some of our teachers and staff were struggling to keep up with the demands of multiple systems in their classrooms.

So, we reviewed the data we had, met in PLC teams, met with stakeholders, and determined that following a single system design would be beneficial for our district.

We then collected the data to support our recommendations and proposed it to our supervisor.

So what is a single system AAC design?

The design parallels a Tier 1 approach to invention similar to our regular education students.

Tier 1 is considered the key component of tiered instruction, all students receive instruction within an evidence-based, scientifically researched core program. (Bugaj & Madel, 2021)

So if we use this methodology to teach math and reading...why would AAC/communication be different?

Single system AAC design focuses on the use of a particular program/app/core board/etc. with all students with complex communication needs in the beginning as an initial intervention, not a last resort.

Pros of a Single System Design

Increased Time for Training and Coaching	Less System Confusion and an Increase in Modeling
Mitigate Impact of Transitions	Students Aren't Waiting

Cons of a Single System Design approach

One Size Does Not Fit All	What If We Get It Wrong?
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- ❖ We never introduced AAC last...AAC, high and low tech, are embedded into our special education programs from preschool through transition ages.
- ❖ We start very early providing those visual supports, teach core language, and model the use of them throughout a student’s entrance and all the way to the student’s exit of our program.

What did we start to see?

- We learned that many students were not “losing” time, but actually gaining more growth in both academics and communication.
- Teachers and staff continued to feel more comfortable implementing core and AAC in their respective settings.
- Assessments and present levels were consistent between teachers and SLPs.
- SLPs spent less time programming during therapy or consult time because parents and staff were assisting.
- New students didn’t require years of trials as they were exposed day one.
- Professional development was already selected.
- And the list goes on...

Now, we could actually focus on academics...

<u>Reading/ ELA</u>	<u>Math</u>
Letter/sound knowledge	Number Identification
Letter/sound correspondence	One to One correspondence show video
Phoneme segmentation	Quantity Discrimination
Word Identification	Quantity Discrimination
Spelling	Basic operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division)
Reading Comprehension	Word problems (identify the operation and where to teach it)

In the end, we...

- Core word implementation was a great place to start.
- Modeling core language in all settings allowed for exposure and decreased stress on staff
- Found ways to implement basic reading skills
- Found ways to implement reading comprehension skills
- Found ways to implement math skills
- SLPs and teachers are working together
- Students did not lose time
- Staff was more comfortable with the implementation of AAC.