

By: Teresa Loos, EC-SEAT Scholar When people think of assistive technology, the assumption is some sort of device they can use. However, according the Assistive technology is a broad range of and practices, assistive technology is a broad range of device they can use. individual with special needs (Cook & Hussey, 2002). Assistive technology can also be low-tech and does not require a device but rather some other sort of accommodations could include adaptations by using common household items or cheap materials from the store. Assistive technology is also not only for those that have a significant impairment, disability, or special needs. It is important to note that these strategies can also be used with my students that are not identified and fall into the average range of development. In my inclusive preschool classroom, we have many developmental delays in fine motor skills and children who have low muscle tone. As part of the preschool curriculum, books and reading need to be accessible to everyone. In my inclusive preschool classroom, we use stories as a theme for each month and have the children independently look at books throughout the day during book look. I supported a child with down syndrome to turn pages independently with a few inexpensive materials around the classroom. This adaption took minutes to accomplish and was able to save time and frustration for the child. I focused on page fluffers give spaces in between the pages to allow room for the childs fingers to turn the pages. Each of the materials listed below should be trialed depending on the child. I found some materials that worked with one child did not work for another. Page TurnersPage Fluffers Popsicle Sticks Velcro Blinder Clips Rubber Weather Stripping Large Paper Clips Foam Index Tabs Popsicle Sticks Loose Leaf Paper Rings Pom-poms on Paper Clips Small Post-it Notes Beads of Hot Glue or Puff Paint Craft Foam Bottle Caps Clothespins Binder Clips I also used the classroom iPad to create an album of the theme book we are using for the month. After taking the time to teach the child how to use the iPad as a tool, the child was able to use the iPad to go through the pages, or pictures of the book I took, to follow along with the story. Pages can easily be modified with low cost and low tech materials and allow individuals to access information, explore, and become independent with a skills that enriches daily life. Read on to Learn more and see examples In one of my internships working in an inclusive preschool classroom, reading stories is a huge part of the curriculum. Therefore, the students that have difficulty turn pages of a story independently may need an accommodation which can include a low-tech assistive technology strategy to allow them to access and participate in activities surrounding the stories we are reading. Turning pages may be a small and simple action to most people. However, there are many students in my preschool classroom that have low muscle tone and developmental delays in fine motor skills that prevent them from actions such as turning pages which is an important skill in a preschool classroom and later on in life. I chose to use a 3 year old boy identified with Down syndrome to experiment different solutions for turning pages. This student is very behind in all areas of development, especially his physical development, especially his physical development, especially his physical development and has overall low muscle tone. He just learned to walk two weeks before turning 3 years old and starting preschool and is progressing with his gross motor skills but had made little progress with his fine motor. Currently, he is doing better but still needs assistance with fine motor skills such as turning pages. Even though there are other students in the classroom that can benefit from the strategies and need help turning pages. others who have trouble turning pages. I also chose to only use low-tech assistive technology solutions because we are a school with a budget and wanted to share the possible strategies with the childs family so they can implement them at home. One of the strategies I started to implement was low-tech ways for page turning such as Tips for Home or School: Making and Using Page Turners (Demchak, MaryAnn, 2008). I first tried Thereses materials of foamies and double sided tape. I attached a 2 inch strip of foamies onto a small cut of the double sided tape. I attached a 2 inch strip of foamies and double sided tape. I attached a 2 inch strip of foamie blocked some of the pictures and words if not places in the right spot. Also, this particular child was getting distracted by the foam and how it felt instead of the story. After that strategy, I realized that I needed to find a material. I tried using solutions I found online as well as materials I had around the house such as clothespins, binder clips, paper clips, paper clips, post-its, popsicle sticks and more. I explored the binder clip and clothespin idea first by clipping them onto the pages in a scattered way with some up top, some in middle, and some on the bottom. When I was reading the story with the child, the clothespins often broke and were unclipped from the pages in the spaces it made in the spaces it made in between the pages. When using the post-it notes, they were too flimsy, lost its stickiness, and fall off too often. I attached the paper clips thinking they could be used as a page spacer but it was too small of a space for the child to turn. Therefore, I came up with a different idea to try. With the page turners, the binder clips seemed to be the most successful. With the paper clips, I attached one to the top of each page. This strategy can also be implemented with the binder clips. With a magnetic wand, or a stick tool with a magnetic wand, or a stick tool with a magnetic wand, or a stick tool with a magnetic wand is a material that the child was familiar with which is why I chose to use it. While some children who are not familiar with the tool may become distracted and not listen the story, this child was able to use the strategy was most successful out of the many materials that I tried with him for turning pages. After showing him a few times what to do, he was able to do it independently. I am not sure I would use this strategy for other students in the classroom because they would get distracted, impatient, and tired. Looking at books is a motivator for this child so he was able to sit and work with the materials. The limitation to this strategy is having someone put the paper clip or binder clips on each page before the child can look at the book. The magnetic idea, I also went further by and is not a common household item. Therefore, the childs family would have to purchase him one if they wanted to use the strategy at home. thinking about the elderly and other ways to use magnets. If a magnetic piece into the finger of a glove may also help so the individual just has to swipe their finger over the paper clip for the magnets to stick. I came up with this idea on my own but did not test the strategy with this particular child because of sensory needs and distraction. However, on a side note, I am wondering how it would work with the elderly or someone with arthritis. In addition to page turners, I also looked into page fluffers for when the child develops more in his muscle tone and fine motor skills. The page fluffers are adaptions to a story that provides spaces in between the pages. I got most of my ideas from looking around the classroom and through research with an article suggested hot glue dot on the corner of pages, Velcro, rubber weather stripping, foam, paper clips with pom-poms, popsicle sticks, bottle caps, and more. Many of these items can be found around the house. However, I found the paper clips with hot glued pom-poms to be the most simple and useful because I had already found solutions that worked but looked more into it for future reference and to possibly try with another child in the same class. As the child I am working with grows in his fine motor skills, the size of the pom-pom can also be reduced to scaffold his development. Many of the low-tech articles that I found on page turning
consisted of page fluffer ideas that can be made with various household items. In my preschool classroom, we have a circle time story that involves a group setting in which the teacher reads the story and the students look at books individually. Therefore, I found one solutions for each of the occasions that he interacts with a story. During book look, I am choosing to use the binder clips with him to get him accustomed to turning pages. Eventually, I would just like to use the page fluffer strategies with paper clips and pom-poms or just the blinder clips in which he has to touch the pages. However, he needs to be scaffolded and gain more muscles for fine motor skills. However, during group story time we often give students that need one-on-one aids or student needs to follow along more guickly. Therefore, I decided to use the iPad and take pictures of the pages and create an album for the book like we learned in Thereses J-Term class. The students one on one would have to go into the album to open up the pictures. However, the child has learned over time to swipe through the pages. This child has limited exposure to the iPad but is becoming more familiar with it overtime. At first, the iPad was a distractor and toy to him until I was able to teach him how to swipe and keep up with the story. An adult often has to sit with him to prompt turning the pages but this strategy is more successful for him for this particular activity. Out of curiosity, I also looked into page turning devices you could purchase for a variety of needs and ages. There are clear vinyl triangle page pockets that are magnetic wand to turn pages (Demchak, M, 2008). There are also wearable page turning tools that an individual wraps around their hand that connects to a rod with a rubber end that can turn a page in one motion. In addition, there are also electronic devices are costly and range from hundreds of dollars. The wearable page turners can be recreated with Velcro and dowel rob and possibly a pencil eraser. I think there are alternative materials that can be easier to obtain. Overall, I found the need of simple page turning to be necessary with individuals with disabilities and the elderly population. It is finding the right tool for the unique individuals with disabilities and the elderly population. It is finding the right tool for the unique individual that is important. The two solutions are also the most low-tech and cheapest solutions I could come up with. Because I am in this internship two times a week and am constantly using these strategies, I am always adapting and fixing them to be better. The stories that he reads are often board books. As he progresses with this fine motor skills and gets older with paperback books, I would like to rethink some of the strategies I am using with him and choose different materials next time. Many of the strategies I researched I would also love to try on other children or individuals. I think this particular accommodate this skill using assistive technology because it seems like a simple action but can create frustration to those it does not come easy to. These solutions also prove how a few materials and children time in their daily lives. Pages can easily be modified with low cost and low tech materials and allow individuals to access information, explore, and become independent with a skills that enriches daily life.RESOURCESCook, AM & Hussey, SM (2002). Assistive Technology: principles and practice. (4th ed) St. Louis: Mosby.Demchak, MaryAnn (2008) Tips for Home or School: Making and Using Page Turners. Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project: Reno, NV.Elquist, Marty (2005) Tips for Home or School: Page Fluffers. Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project: Reno, NV.National Association of Education for Young Children and Department for Early Childhood (2011) Position Statement on Inclusion Concord, NH. AAC Apps for Children and Department for Early Childhood (2011) Position Statement on Inclusion Concord, NH. AAC Apps for Children This site uses Akismet to reduce spam. Learn how your comment data is processed. TouchChat HD foriPad / iPod / iPhone(\$149.99 USD + tax) is a full-featured communication solution for individuals with Autism, Down Syndrome, ALS, apraxia, stroke, or other conditions that affect a persons ability to use natural speech. Please note that the WordPower suite of vocabularies is not included in this version of TouchChat. TouchChat provides English, Spanish, Canadian French, Arabic, Hebrew, and Mandarin Chinese options in a universal app supporting iPhone, iPod touch and iPad. Learn more here: English Spanish Hebrew Arabic Canadian French Mandarin TouchChat fits into the category of assistive technology known as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and includes features that were previously only available in much more expensive dedicated devices. Words, phrases and messages are spoken with a built-in voice synthesizer or by playing a recorded message. Voices for English, Spanish, Canadian French, Arabic, Hebrew, and Mandarin are included in the app. TouchChat can be used for individuals with a wide variety of access needs. Included in the app is: Integrated head tracking (*with applicable iPad/iPhone models), configurable switch scanning, and a range of touch Chat gives an individual the app. ability to navigate through page sets and speak messages. Page sets are linked pages, each of which is divided into a number of buttons. The buttons are programmed to have specific actions, such as speaking a message, navigating to a different page, changing the volume or clearing the display. Various page sets are included with TouchChat: Each page set targets individuals with different communication needs. Additional page sets, including WordPower, Gateway, and Pixon are available asin-app purchases. Text generated with TouchChat pages can be shared on social media or via iMessage and email using a wireless connection. Generate a message, push on the text window and choose a service. Additionally, text can be copied to/from TouchChat and other applications so it can be spoken out loud.. The pages, grid layout, buttons, messages, and symbols are fully customizable. Buttons can be copied and pasted into a different location or rearranged by simply dragging them to the desired new location. The styling of a button (colors, borders, fonts) can also be copied and pasted into another button. Provided page sets can be modified to create new custom page sets. Select from over 45 button actions and nearly 40,000 Symbolstixsymbols* when creating new buttons. You can also choose to use an existing image or take a photo with the built-in camera. Additionally, gestures can be used to navigate to new pages, speak messages, etc. *Please note: PCS symbols are only compatible with the TouchChat app if PCS is also purchase.Button activation timing can be adjusted to meet the needs and capabilities of the user. Adjustments include button dwell time and button release time. Buttons can also be configured to activate on release. Users can program buttons to play audio files such as music from the media library or videos from the camera roll or a YouTube link. Once programming is complete, be sure to protect custom files. Vocabulary files can be imported to a computer through iTunes file sharing, DropBox or Google Drive. TouchChat also enables users to subscribe to iShare and store custom files for safe keeping(not available to customers residing in the earby hitter in the realm of AAC apps for iPhone and iPad. And the autism community is better because of it. TouchChat has settings galore and functionality like crazy. Right along the same lines with Proloquo2Go, the app that pretty well sets the standards among AAC apps. Well, TouchChat is setting standards of its own and those standards are high. Theres not much TouchChat is setting standards of its own and those standards are high. Basically, TouchChat does everything that every other AAC app does and MORE. Plus, with in-app purchases you can add functionality which really makes it skyrocket in usefulness. For example, you can purchase additional vocabulary sets and get the ability to exchange vocabulary sets with other people. Woa. TouchChat offers voice recording functionality for exchanging messages between, say, your kids teacher and you. It also gives you the ability to change the background color of individual cells for visual learners! And thats just the tip of what this app offers. It uses the same PixelStyx images that Proloquo2Go uses and the same high quality voices too. Optionally, you can record your own voice if you like.OK, let me back up a little. TouchChat is an augmentative and alternative communicate by spelling or selecting icons from a visual display. But, as Ive stated above, this is one app that goes way beyond simply touch and talk.Text-to-Speech? Yes. Using your own images and your own voice? Of course. Word prediction? Yep. Pleasing, easy-to-use interface? Check. Multiple keyboards to choose from to best meet an individuals need? Uh huh. Ability to read your mind? Well, maybe in a future version of TouchChat. The developer even says the app can invoke Apples built-in keyboard if you like and it can even be used with Apples Bluetooth keyboard for iPad if you properly customize your vocabulary set for it. I couldnt test this feature, but Im not surprised that TouchChat to present in front of his or her class. Hows that for inclusion? With all the amazing functionality this app offers I am humbled at the thought of suggesting improvements. But, the full name of this app, the version for the iPad that Im reviewing, is TouchChat HD AAC with Wordpower. HD is a misnomer because this app is not in high definition. The developers would be wise to make it in true HD since iPad, iPhone, and iPod Touch all have high definition displays OR the developer should eliminate HD from the apps name. (Regarding the HD thing, its
important to note that since TouchChat contains over 10,000 symbols having it at standard resolution saves memory and makes the app perform faster. Thanks to the developer for reminding me of that fact.) Also, their wipe text and back and home buttons on the right side of the screen blend in with the other icons way too well. They need to do something about that to make it visually less confusing. And TouchChat gives the user the power to customize these buttons, so technically, you can handle this issue yourself. In conclusion, anybody with autism or any other disability looking for a serious AAC app for iPhone or iPad would be a fool not to consider TouchChat. Its one of the most pricey apps Ive seen, but it packs a very big punch, and its incredibly less expensive than buying a DynaVox or any other stand-alone AAC device. The bar just got lifted higher. In a world where communication is key to human connection, many individuals with varying levels of speech and language abilities seek alternative communication (AAC) devices provide a lifeline for those who face challenges with traditional modes of verbal interaction. nnovation and inclusivity at their core. AAC devices empower users with the means to convey their thoughts, needs, and emotions, thereby fostering greater autonomy and engagement with the world around them. This essential guide aims to delve into the intricate workings of AAC devices, exploring their function. individuals with autism, and the wealth of options available to meet diverse communication needs. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices are tools designed to aid or replace speech or writing for those with impairments in the production or comprehension of spoken or written language. They work by providing a means to communicate through symbols, pictures, gestures, or text to speech technology. Users can select symbols or inputs which are then translated into speech or written messages. AAC devices can significantly boost the communication abilities of individuals with autism, providing them a voice to express their needs, desires, and thoughts. These tools can decrease frustration, enhance understanding, improve social interaction, and support the development of language skills. AAC devices range from low-tech devices, including speech-generating devices (SGDs) and tablet apps designed for communication. Selecting the right device involves assessing the individuals motor, cognitive, sensory, and communication skills, preferences, and needs. A team approach involving speech-language pathologists, educators, and family members, alongside the users preferences, plays a crucial role in making the best choice. Communication) device requires careful consideration of the individuals unique communication needs, abilities, and environment. Factors that should guide this decision include the individuals skill set, the settings in which the device will be used, available support for the individual, and the cost of the device. When assessing these factors, consider the following: Communication Needs: Assess the individuals current communication skills and challenges. Determine whether the AAC device is needed for expressing basic needs, social interaction, or more complex communication. Cognitive and Motor Skills: Choose a device that matches the users ability to understand symbols, icons, or text, and their ability to use touchscreens, buttons, or switches Sensory Preferences: Some individuals may prefer visual over auditory feedback, or vice versa. Its important to take into account how the individuals may prefer visual over auditory feedback, or vice versa. Its important to take into account how the individuals may prefer visual over auditory feedback, or vice versa. Its important to take into account how the individuals may prefer visual over auditory feedback, or vice versa. Its important to take into account how the individual processes sensory information. easily transported among different environments like home, school, or the community Customization: Look for devices that can be customized to grow with the user, allowing for vocabulary and functionality to be expanded as the individuals skills develop Support available from the device provider, and the training needed for the individual, family members, and other communication partners. Cost: AAC devices range from low-cost to high-end solutions. Evaluate the cost against the potential benefits for the individual, and explore various funding sources such as insurance, Medicaid, grants, and school district support Trial Period: If possible, use a trial various funding sources such as insurance, Medicaid, grants, and school district support Trial Period: If possible, use a trial various funding sources such as insurance, Medicaid, grants, and school district support Trial Period: If possible, use a trial various funding sources such as insurance, Medicaid, grants, and school district support Trial Period period or rental option to ensure the AAC device is a good fit for the individual before making a purchase. View Amazon AAC devices on Amazon | Note: This is an affiliate link By considering all of these aspects and consulting with specialists in speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, or a behaviour analyst with expertise in AAC, families and support teams can make an informed decision that best meets the communication needs of the individual with autism[1]. When evaluating the pros and cons of different Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices, its important to consider how each device aligns with the individual users needs. generally more affordable and simpler to use but may offer limited communication options. High-tech devices provide extensive communication of the pros and cons of various types of AAC devices: For example Picture Exchange Systems Like the PECS, Printed Boards, Communication Sheets or Books, Sign Language Pros: Affordability: Typically less expensive than high-tech alternatives. Durability: Simple construction with fewer electronic components that can be more durable. Ease of Use: Straightforward to learn and implement for both users and communication partners. Portability: Generally lightweight and easy to transport. No Power Required: They can be used in any setting without concern for battery life or charging. Cons: Limited Vocabulary: Often have a limited number of words or phrases that can be communicated. Less Dynamic: Users may not be able to express complex thoughts as easily. Manual Exchange: Slower communication as the user must physically point or show their choice. This is a type of medical equipment that provides an individual who has a speech impairment the ability to meet his or her functional speaking needs, the user can use eyes or other forms of motion to initiate communication | See Example Pros: Voice Output: Provides a synthesized or digital voice, which can be essential for social interaction and communication. Expandable Vocabulary: Can store a large vocabulary and more complex language and accessibility needs. Dynamic Screens: Can display complex communication pages that change based on selection. Cons: Cost: Often expensive and may require insurance or other funding sources. Maintenance: More likely to need repairs and updates over time. Power Dependency: Requires charging and may not be usable if the battery is depleted. This includes AAC apps that can be installed on portable devices: Proloquo2Go, TouchChat HD, and Speak for Yourself. Pros: Multifunctional: Can also be used for other purposes like internet access, educational apps, and entertainment. Familiarity: Many individuals are familiar with smartphones and tablets, reducing the learning curve. often be customized for individual users needs. Cons: Durability: Can be fragile and often require protective cases for users with motor difficulties. Battery Life: Limited by the battery Li For example this free PASS software Pros: Full-featured: Often have robust options for customization and languages. Cons: Portability: Computers, like switches, eye gaze, or head trackers. Vocabulary and Languages: Likely to support a range of vocabularies and multiple languages. Cons: Portability: Computers, especially desktops, are less portable than handheld devices. Boot Time: May take time to start up and may not be as readily accessible for quick communication. Cost: Software can be expensive, and you need a compatible computer. Pros: Flexibility: Combine features from both low-tech and high-tech systems to offer flexibility in communication. Continuity: Can be used in conjunction with high-tech solutions when those might not be viable, such as during device repair or power outages. Cons: Complexity: May require the users personal needs, abilities, and environments in which the device will be used. Professionals and families should carefully consider these factors when matching an individual with an AAC system. Recent innovations include eye-tracking technology for users with limited motor control, AI and machine learning for predictive text and personalized communication solutions, and increased integration with smart home devices and educational software. The integration of state-of-the-art AAC systems with artificial intelligence (AI) and deep learning (DL) has marked a significant advancements aim to improve and alternative communication devices. access to high-tech devices, enhance the speed of output generation, and offer customization and adaptability of AAC interfaces to meet the unique needs and requirements of each user. This integration is pivotal as it could transform how individuals with autism communicate, offering them more tailored and efficient ways to express themselves. AI and DL applications are being researched for their potential to advance AAC systems significantly. These technologies are making it possible for AAC devices to better understand and predict the users intended
communication, thereby making it possible for AAC devices to better understand and predict the users intended communication. their ability to adapt and learn from the users behavior and preferences, continuously improving the communication needs, including autism, are being developed. These include advancements in high-tech AAC methods and devices aimed at creating an optimal user experience centered around the users desired activities[1]. Its clear that these innovations are focused on breaking down the barriers to effective communication for individuals with Autism, AAC devices often need to be tailored to address unique sensory sensitivities, interests, and the potential for selective focus or fixation. This customization disorders stemming from other causes, such as cerebral palsy or stroke, where physical motor control might be a more significant barrier. Costs can vary widely from a few hundred to several thousand dollars, depending on the complexity of the device. Insurance coverage is variable and requires documentation of medical necessity; some health insurance policies, Medicaid, and educational provisions under IDEA might cover costs. Heres a more detailed breakdown of potential costs: Types of AAC Devices and Their Costs: Low-Tech Devices: These might include simple picture boards or communication. Speech-Generating Devices (SGDs): These are high-tech devices that can speak text aloud when a user selects symbols, words, or phrases. Prices can vary widely from about \$500 for basic devices to \$8,000 or more for advanced models equipped with eye-tracking or other sophisticated technologies. Mobile Devices with AAC Apps:Many users opt for tablets or smartphones that can run AAC apps. The initial cost of the device (e.g., an iPad) might range from \$329 to \$1,000+ with AAC apps varying from free to around \$300. Popular AAC apps include Proloquo2Go, TouchChat HD, and Speak for Yourself. Software for Computers: Computers from \$100 to \$500. This software can be installed on existing computers, potentially reducing the overall expenses. Additional Costs: Customization and Accessories: Customizing devices to meet specific needs, mounting systems, or protective cases can add extra costs. Training and Support: Training and Support: Training for users, family members, and educators is crucial for effective AAC use. software updates, and potentially necessary repairs also contribute to the total cost of owning an AAC devices. Insurance policies cover part or all of the cost of AAC devices. Insurance policies cover part or all of the U.S., these are updates and Medicare in the U.S., these are updates and medically necessary. programs may cover AAC devices under durable medical equipment. Grants and Scholarships: Numerous organizations offer financial assistance specifically for purchasing AAC devices. School Districts: For school-aged children, local education agencies might provide devices as part of an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Its important for individuals considering AAC to explore all available options, including trials and rentals, to find the best-fit solution at a manageable cost. Challenges include finding the right device, gaining proficiencies, the time and effort required for effective implementation, and ensuring consistency across env ironments. Limitations may stem from the users motivation, sensory issues, and the need for significant support from those around them. Support can involve embracing for the individuals right to communicate. ASHA (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association):ASHA AAC Provides detailed information about AAC, including resources specifically tailored for different stakeholders like parents and educators. Autism Speaks: Tech and Autism, including guides on choosing and using AAC devices. AAC Institute: AAC Institute A resource-rich platform offering information, certification programs, and research updates in the field of AAC. PrAACtical AAC Provides practical tips, strategies, and information on AAC implementation, contributed by speech-language pathologists and educators with extensive AAC training. Best practices include integrating AAC use into all natural communication opportunities, consistency of use across environments, setting realistic goals, and collaborative efforts among all stakeholders in the individuals life. Integrating Augmentative efforts among all stakeholders in the individuals life. supportive, interactive, and inclusive environment that enables all students, especially those using AAC devices, to thrive. Here, based on insights from the Independent Living Centre WAs Top Tips for Implementing AAC in the Classroom, we explore effective strategies for making AAC a successful tool for communication and learning in educational settings. Make the Device Accessible: Ensuring the AAC device is easily accessible to the student at all times is crucial. This means having the device on a mounting system or the student device is operable throughout the school day. Know Your Device and Student: Spend time understanding the functions and features of the AAC device. Simultaneously, get to know your students current language abilities and how they use their AAC system. Working at the students AAC language level is imperative to adjust the educational material appropriately. Create Strong Partnerships: Collaboration between the student, educators, and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) is essential. Set goals that are relevant and ensure these goals are understood and shared by everyone involved. Invest in Training: Teachers and support staff should receive proper training in how to use the AAC device. This includes understanding how to interpret the output and how to model the use of AAC in everyday classroom interactions. Model and Expand: One of the most effective techniques for teaching AAC users is modeling. Teachers and classmates should use the AAC system themselves to communicate, demonstrating in real-time how to utilize the device effectively. Create Communication Opportunities: Design classroom activities that necessitate the use of AAC for participation. This could range from simple question-and-answer sessions to complex group projects where communication attempts Respond to these attempts promptly to encourage ongoing interaction. Wait and Prompt Appropriately: After posing a question or a prompt, give the AAC user ample time to formulate their response. This waiting period is critical for them as they navigate their communication device. If needed, provide appropriately: After posing a question or a prompt, give the AAC user ample time to formulate their response. the right symbols or words. Incorporate Various Resources: Utilize digital resources like the Tar Heel Reader or the AAC learning. Engage in activities that both AAC users and non-users can enjoy together, such as shared reading or playing barrier games, which encourage turn-taking and expressive language uses and non-users can enjoy together, such as shared reading or playing barrier games, which encourage turn-taking and expressive language uses and non-users can enjoy together, such as shared reading or playing barrier games, which encourage turn-taking and expressive language uses and non-users can enjoy together, such as shared reading or playing barrier games, which encourage turn-taking and expressive language uses and non-users can enjoy together, such as shared reading or playing barrier games, which encourage turn-taking and expressive language uses and non-users can enjoy together, such as shared reading or playing barrier games, which encourage turn-taking and expressive language uses and non-users can enjoy together, such as shared reading or playing barrier games, which encourage turn-taking and expressive language uses and non-users can enjoy together, such as shared reading or playing barrier games, which encourage turn-taking and expressive language uses and non-users can enjoy together, such as shared reading or playing barrier games. Peer Involvement: Encourage classmates to interact with the AAC users confidence but also fosters an inclusive classroom environment. Real-life Teacher Insight: A classroom teacher reflected on the transformative impact of AAC, noting a significant boost in a students confidence and engagement with peers. Successfully implementing AAC devices in the classroom requires thoughtful preparation, and consistent, supportive strategies. More From the Blog: What app is the most effective? Proloquo2Go and TouchChats AAC apps have some key differences. Proloquo2Go offers extensive vocabulary and natural voices, making it ideal for early communication and motor planning. In the table below, well compare features like pricing, vocabulary, and ease of use to help you decide which AAC app is best for your needs. By:Melissa Giconda, EC-SEAT ScholarApp Name:TouchChat HDWhere: \$149.99 (USD + tax)About the app:TouchChat HD is an app that functions as a communication impairments. This app is used to help children or students who may be non-verbal. It helps students to be able to communicate without actually being physically verbal. It has many options to edit vocabulary and is limitless with flexibility; you are allowed the opportunity to add familiar people, places, snacks, and much more. It is simple enough for a student who has the ability to read written language but also accommodates students who are pre-reading (or not reading at all) and allows them to select icons based on pictures. TouchChat HD is easily able to be personalized to any individuals communication needs. It can be modified for their specific demands and requests. The app comes with preset icons but of their specific demands and requests. allows you the option to replace them with real photos. Con: The application interface can appear to be very busy. You have the option to categorize icons but it is not done for you and can be very time-consuming. Below is an
example and description of the use of TouchChat HD with a 5-year-old student in my class who is diagnosed with Autism: VIEW and can be very busy. THIS VIDEO FIRSTThe app was introduced to CG through his private at-home speech service. She taught him how to navigate the app and first and foremost request wants and needs, for example, I want binky (Which you will see him use in the video at school). He currently uses his AAC device with TouchChat HD with private speech, at home with ABA services and throughout his school day with us. During school we currently use TouchChat HD to prompt CG to ask for breaks, request wants/needs, participate in whole and small group activities, answer questions, and socialize with peers. With CG becoming more familiar with navigating the app and understanding that this is how he can communicate, we began to use it throughout the school day. He currently is prompted to use it frequently, but, will ask for certain things independently. When doing discrete trials, upon completing a task, he will either as for a break (roll, squeeze, tickle, walk, etc) or a treat (cookie, cheerio, veggie stick, etc). We are also beginning to use his app to socialize with peers, playing games (as seen in the video, Your turn, my turn). CG also uses TouchChat HD during whole and small group activities, including singing, counting, calendar, etc, to participate in regular education. This process and device are very new to CG. With the main goal in focus, of him being able to communicate his wants and needs, we want to shift the focus on how to do that appropriately. As you can see in the video he frequently requests that he wants his binky, which is an at home item. He is prompted, while playing a game with his friends, to use your turn /my turn, but is choosing to avoid the task, because he would prefer to ask for preferred items. His speech therapist attempts to prompt him, and eventually uses hand over hand. He typically does better in this activity, but I thought it was great for the purpose of this assignment because it shows the struggle between user and teacher and how things can sometimes be unsuccessful. One thing we did talk about was specifying the app for CG specifically for certain tasks. If he were indeed playing a game or socializing, we could create a specific category or folder just for that where he would not be able to access preferred items as easily, such as, I want binky. By: Kimberly Chouinard, ECSEAT Scholar Over the past few years I have taken a few courses in Assistive Technology though my program here at the University of New Hampshire. I have learned to use what you have for support or to make things accessible for learners. This semester I had a great experiences motor delays started to grow. Thats great! We love growth! But, this growth caused seating issues and it takes time to fit, order and receive new equipment. He seemed to be growing out of his support any longer. This growth caused his feet to slide off the foot support, kick out and limit accessibility to table activities with peers. I took my concerns to our team. His nurse, Physical Therapist and I were able to trial a few different programs something I had never gotten to do previously. Because a lot of them are quite expensive, theyre not ones I couldve tried out on my own. I did a short series of AAC reviews during the trial period specifically because I knew a lot of people have the same issue with access. If youve been following me on Instagram, youve likely already seen these videos, but for those who dont have Instagram this post is for you! I figured out how to upload these videos to Facebook and YouTube, and Im hoping that I can embed the videos here to be helpful. Friendly reminder that Im not a speech therapist or assistive technology professional. Im just an AAC user sharing their experiences with what works for them. Some people benefit from different types of AAC and different methods, and its important to keep that in mind. Some of my friends use eye gaze, switches, letterboards, and other forms to communicate. Light tech, high tech, no tech at all all communication is important and should be valued regardless. Video thumbnail is of an AAC device showing the screen of GoTalk Now. The device is on a purple weighted blanket. First impressions: Feels a little limiting; Ill explore settings in a minute. There is no message window. How am I supposed to remember/keep track of what Ive just tapped? No seriously. I have the memory of an axolotl. My overall thoughts of GoTalk after exploring it: I was ready to throw that tablet across the room. I didnt (it was a trial device, after all), but it definitely got tossed onto a pile of pillows a couple of times. It felt very limiting, and I didnt like that. People deserve access to more than just requesting and colors. How else can we tell you if were in pain or what happened at school? I also didnt like that be manually added to every page.Considering all of the other programs I tried that were way more extensive than this (some even cheaper!), I didnt like it. I did like the visual scene page though, and I think that might be very helpful for some people. I also liked that it had a keyboard page so small bonus, I guess? Theres a few other features that make it useful, but I dont know if its worth the price tag personally. Video thumbnail shows an AAC device with the Sono Flex screen. Its resting on a weighted blanket. The caption says: First impressions: The large buttons are easier on the eyes. Also happy that the icons are SymbolStix! Yes, weve got fringe words! Its less limiting than the other one already. Compared to the last one I reviewed, this is a massive improvement in terms of having a more robust vocabulary! Some of the things I liked was being able to have context folders based on what youre doing for the day which makes it easier to access the vocabulary you might need. I thought that was neat! In the video, I showed how I was able to change the shopping one to doctor which made the medical words more easily accessible. I also liked that the icons were SymbolStix, which is a personal preference for me. I wasnt a big fan of struggling to figure out how to change the tense of words, because it can really change the meaning of your sentences. I didnt like the alphabetical keyboard, but I know a lot of AAC users who love those! Thats just a personal preference for me; it might be able to be changed to a QWERTY one but I cant wait to show some cool features on this thing though. It took me a minute, but I found the symbols on this one too! From first thoughts on using Predictable, its primarily focused on typing. I liked the predictive text (always good for the aphasia!) and that it has a button that will automatically play a message to tell people to be patient while I type or choosing symbols but sometimes Ill tap VERY loudly on my device instead, depending on my mood) For this app, I also liked that some of the emojis had sound effects with them! It adds a little more emotion and expression, which I always enjoy. I struggled guite a bit with navigation, but I know others may find this app more intuitive than me! I also had trouble understanding the layout of the symbols and making sense of some of them. Being able to have things stay consistent helps my brain, and it didnt quite feel consistent to me as I was switching around. There might be settings that I didnt get a chance to mess around with too, so keep that in mind! Again, I know some people who really love this app so it comes down to personal preference! Video thumbnail of an AAC device with the Lamp home screen, with the device on a purple weighted blanket. The caption says I hope you all are ready for Lamp, considering over 100 people voted for it. First thoughts: I have to be honest, not a fan of the symbols. It threw me off when I was trying to figure it out. But woah, look at that motor planning. Ill show you what I mean in a second. Needs more fringe words, but its customizable! Im not a big fan of the symbols personally, but the more I used the device the more I really liked Lamp! Why? Motor planning! I was honestly surprised by how fast I got at learning how to navigate it. I was so happy flappy about it that I rushed to show my caregiver the next day once I figured out how to work the program! It still needs more fringe words, but it can be customized and honestly, all programs should be customized and edited to fit each person who uses it anyway. It reminds me a bit of Proloquo2Go with some of the motor planning stuff especially as P2G is one of the primary apps I use, which makes sense as to why I liked LAMP! Video thumbnail of an AAC device with Grid home screen, with the device on a purple weighted blanket. The caption says And were back to evaluating AAC! Im only doing Grid tonight because there are several programs in one on here. First thoughts: thats a lot of programs. I have problems making decisions, this is a terrible idea. Ill show you them individually, at least the first two rows. The last row is kinda self-explanatory. The thing I like best from Grid is that it has a lot of options! Theres a lot of different programs to choose from, with some being better than others. You can get rid of the ones you dont like from the screen. I know people talk about how you can just transition programs over time to grow, but I think its important to start with a robust program from the beginning. I dont think some people realize how much muscle and motor memory goes into using AAC, and how learning a whole new grid size or even program can be overwhelming for us. Besides kids deserve all the language. They have a lot to say! Symbol Talker A and B seemed just a little limited to me, but C and D werent so bad and I especially liked the symbol word prediction! Super Core was especially fun because I liked the sound effects. I made the frog noise to my physical therapist once when they
asked me how I was doing, and I just lost it laughing; thats the height of comedy and you cant tell me otherwise. (Super Core Learning is the GoTalk of Grid though, so you can imagine how I feel about THAT.) Beeline was very extensive which was nice, and Vocabulary for Life is aimed for young adults/college age which was nice, and Vocabulary for Life is aimed for young adults/college age which was nice, and Vocabulary for Life is aimed for young adults/college age which was nice, and Vocabulary for Life is aimed for young adults/college age which was nice, and Vocabulary for Life is aimed for young adults/college age which was nice, and Vocabulary for Life is aimed for young adults/college age which was nice, and Vocabulary for Life is aimed for young adults/college age which was nice, and Vocabulary for Life is a keyboard, a camera function for using AAC to discuss them some different things like that. I think I also saw an option for PODD for Grid, but dont quote me on it because I didnt get to try it. Video thumbnail of an AAC device with TD Snap home page on the screen. The caption says Snap used to be called Snap Core First and is from Tobii Dynavox. Major takeaways: Snap is actually the first symbol-based high-tech AAC I ever tried! It has a free trial without sound in the iOS app store, and full version was around \$50 for iPad at the time. I like how extensive it is, as well as the adult options. Its also customizable. For me though, it always took forever to construct sentences with it. It never flowed right for me. Snap was one of the first symbol-based, high tech AAC programs I ever used so I was excited to see this one on the trial device. I eventually switched over to Proloquo2Go (which is the last one III be showing from the original reviews!), but I really like how robust the vocabulary is! Theres a good mix of both childrens related things, and it can be tailored to what the AAC user themselves prefer. Having access to all the language can be incredibly important, because you never know when a word might come up in conversation! Its pretty customizable; I ended up changing up the main core board considerably after doing this review. It looks a lot similar to Prologuo2Gos, but with some prediction buttons! TD Snap also has a nice feature called Topics. Topics has different pre-programmed sentences for various subjects, which comes in handy! Im also really fond of the dry erase board function, the photo album feature, and the visual schedule section in the aphasia board! These things are huge for me, and make the app worth it. I also have a neurocognitive disorder along with the traumatic brain injuries, aphasia, and being autistic so my memory isnt always the greatest. Having those supports is helpful! I do wish the voice customization was a little better, though. You can change the speech rate, but not necessarily the pitch. As an important side note: Snap also comes with supports for things like scripts and visual schedules, but please use this only as a way to help support someone not as a behavior management/compliance tool. AAC is our way to communicate, and its our voice. Dont use our own voice as a way to do that. If you try to turn AAC into a behavior/compliance tool or make it into simply another chore, we will learn to hate it. Augmentative communication can be a beautiful way to access the world around us. Its like an entire language. Dont take the joy out of that! Video thumbnail of an AAC device with Proloquo2Go screen. The caption says Finally the last of the trials. Things to note: Proloquo2Go is what I currently use on my own tablet, along with Proloquo4Text. I love how things stay the same, the colors, the symbols, and a few other features Ill point out in a moment. If it had a few more features, it would be perfect for my brain. Prologuo2Go is one of the main programs I use for AAC, along with Prologuo4Text! I switch based on what the situation is. Sometimes AAC users need more than one program and even if we can type, symbol support can still be beneficial for us. We actually learned in my speech therapy that Ive been making more progress with short term memory recall when I rely on symbols and images to help support rather than lists! Some of the things I like about P2G is how you can hold down a button to change the tense of the word or get its possessive. The color coding is also nice! For some reason, the colors make more sense to my brain. Its also got a storage section that has a lot more words options in it, and Ive found the program fairly easily to edit for the most part. I do wish it had word prediction in a symbol format specifically or a white board function like TD Snap has but it does have very good voice customization options compared to some other programs! You can set as well, which can be fun. It does have a keyboard and typing function in two different ways through your regular keyboard (with text prediction!) or through a button-like keyboard on a page. An AAC device showing someone using Proloquo4Text in white letters. As always, Id like to point out that Im not a professional just an AAC user. This time, its Proloquo4Text made by AssistiveWare, who also made Prologuo2Go. This program is text-based instead of symbols. Its a bit less pricey than Prologuo2Go, but it can be expensive for some people. (It goes on sale in April and October though, if thats helpful!) I generally keep mine on dark mode, but I changed it for this video so its easier to see on camera. One of the best things about this app is that its great for storing long things of text, phrases, and more! I rely on it for things like presentations, conferences, and conversations that require more depth. Like Prologuo2Go, its also compatible with the Apple Watch which is helpful! The word prediction is also very beneficial for me, especially with my aphasia. Video thumbnail of an AAC device that displays Speech Assistant AAC. The color scheme is a blue combination. Speech Assistant AAC! This is the app that I used for AAC, until I finally got access to the Assistant AAC! This is the app that I used for AAC, until I finally got access to the Assistant AAC! This is the app that I used for AAC, until I finally got access to the Assistant AAC! This is the app that I used for AAC. which is quite good for an AAC app! My version is the iOS app, which is what this review is based off of. The Android app does not cost, but it does have an option to unlock more features in general especially as it allows symbols/images to be added to the buttons! Other neat features include an alert noise button, which lets people around you know that you have something to say. I also like being able to change the color scheme, and the ability to flip the message window upside down. Thats very handy if someone is sitting across from you! One of the downsides for me is that it uses the default voices on your device. I got a little frustrated when I was using it, because it sounds a bit too robotic for me. People always told me I sounded like Siri, and that was a little stressful. I also wouldve needed to add a lot more categories and phrases to make it more robust in terms of being able to select things, but it does allow for typing (and writing if you use an Apple Pencil!). Overall, its definitely a decent app if you cant afford the more expensive ones, and if you need more of a text-based solution. A video thumbnail showing an AAC device with the Proloquo2Go. This is new. This is new. This is new. This is new app, Proloquo! If you have Prologuo2Go, it seems like theres a free trial version of Prologuo you can try. I saw the option for it, and figured I would investigate it. Prologuo is based on core words, and uses motor planning/memory. That means words stay in the same place, which makes it easier to use the more you practice! The vocabulary is guite robust, which is good. It also has a keyboard too. On the right side of the screen, it also shows words that are related to whatever you selected as well as the different grammar forms. The predictive/related words is a feature I really love, especially with my aphasia. I also love the ability to turn on dark mode, which is good for migraines and post-TBI processing in general. For other apps I use, I have to customize them to create my own dark mode (although Proloquo4Text does have a decent dark mode option). Its important to note that the home grid size for Proloquo cannot be changed. Its fixed to have 48 symbol buttons, along with 12 text buttons. It didnt feel overwhelming to me, which was nice. The program is also subscription-based, instead of a one-time cost. From what Ive read, there are monthly and yearly options. While that may be a more affordable option for some people compared to other apps, others may find it expensive. Its a new app though, so things might be changed or added over time. All of that said: one of the things I like the best about Proloquo is that its got a companion app (Proloquo Coach). It can be super helpful for people who are helping a child learn to use AAC, and give families more confidence with the program. A big part of AAC is modeling words, practicing, and playing around/investigating and the companion app may help a lot with supporting that. And that concludes the reviews! Other programs Ive tried and liked include CoughDrop, and some other programs. Many of these AAC apps Ive reviewed are on sale in April and in October which is usually when I recommend getting them through speech), and sometimes they re on sale for up to 50% off! But because of this, its important to note that high tech AAC and speech generating devices can be inaccessible for a lot of people. Funding can be hard to find or get, insurance doesnt always like to cover it, not everyone is able to pay out of pocket, and some people have specific access needs like switches, keyguards, scanning abilities, or eye gaze technology. A lot of popular apps can adapt to
switches and a few do eye gaze, but the equipment can sometimes be costly too. And not only that, but for many people who need AAC others dont presume competence or even consider AAC as an option. They either push only for speech or give up on communication as a lost cause, when thats not the case at all. For more information on Augmentative and Alternative CommunicationOptions! It covers information about what AAC is, different types, some of the different AAC apps and resources for funding ideas and links to other AAC users and nonspeakers works! I hope that these reviews are helpful! Image description: purple background with white letters that say Just Keep Stimming, Autism Advocacy and Resources. There is an illustration of three overlapping circles around the words, along with flowers and butterflies in different tones of purple. Just Keep Stimming 2017byCourtney Johnsonis licensed underCC BY-NC-ND 4.0 January 2022 S M T W T F S 1 2345678 9101112131415 16171819202122 23242526272829 3031 AACaccessibilityADAPTadhdAdvocacyaprilautismAutism Acceptance Monthautism awareness monthautism speaksbacklogcatsChristmaschronic illnesscollegecontroversycoping skillsday of mourningdirect-support-professionalsdisabilitydspdysautonomiaexecutive functioningfaithFDAgriefHCBSholidayshopehospitalidentity-firstinformativejrcLeiamedicalmental healthparentingperson-firstpositivityPOTSreligionrespiteschoolsensorystimming features within the app, here are some useful ones: Introduction Settings your app, Special features Touch Chat to assist with programming your app, Special features and support The app can be used in many different waysFor a fee, you can have a trainer teach you to use TouchChat in personCons: The program is overwhelming firstIt can be difficult to figure out where to start with the program References: TouchChat HD - AAC. Retreived from

Cons of touch chat. What is touchchat. Disadvantages of chat. Touch pros and cons. Difference between touchchat and proloquo2go.