Augmentative Communication Assessment Protocol for Symbolic Augmentative Systems

(Gamel-McCormick & Dymond, 1994)

The questions in this protocol are designed to help you collect information with which you can make decisions about symbolic augmentative communication systems for the students with whom you are working. The questions are in no way comprehensive and can not anticipate all the needs and variables of all students and their communication environments. The protocol will, however, help point you toward the characteristics of a system that will work with the student you are assessing.

Part I: Student Skills

A. Expressive Communication

What methods does the student currently use to expressively communicate?

- Request objects, items:

- Continue an action:

- Stop an action:

- Request social interaction:

- Express a feeling:

- Make a choice:

- Initiate an interaction:

- Terminate an interaction:

- Request assistance:

- Other communication:
B. Cognitive Skills (including receptive communication characteristics)

1. Does the student have an awareness that objects continue to exist even when they are no longer visible (object permanence)?

2. Does the student have an understanding of cause and effect?

3. Does the student have an understanding of means-end actions?

4. Review the hierarchy of symbolic communication. According to his or her cognitive abilities, what is your best determination of which level the student understands symbolic representation?

C. Motor Skills

1. In what position is the student able to optimally move and respond?

2. What reliable, predictable motor movements does the student have?

3. Does the student have a hand preference? If “yes,” what hand?

4. Does the student have the ability to reach?

5. Does the student have the ability to grasp?

6. Does the student have the ability to grasp and release?

7. Is the student able to isolate a finger? If “yes,” which finger(s)?

8. Is the student able to point?

9. How much hand and wrist strength does the student have?

10. Can the student manipulate objects? If “yes,” what type?

11. Can the student sort through objects or pictures? If “yes,” what type?

D. Visual Skills

1. What is the students' visual acuity? (What size objects can the student see best?)

2. What is the optimal lighting/contrast for the student to see an object, picture, or drawing?

3. Can the student fixate on an object, photograph, or drawing? Which of these is his or her best medium?

4. What distance is optimal for the student to fixate on an item?
5. In what position should the object be for the student to be able to optimally fixate on it?

6. Can the student scan a visual display of items? If "yes," in what medium (objects, photographs, drawings)?

7. How many items can the student scan before losing interest?

8. How much time does the student need to scan an array of that size (in seconds or minutes)?

E. Auditory Skills

1. Does the student have normal hearing? If not, what are the results of the most recent audiogram?

2. Can the student localize to sound? If "yes," how precisely?

Part II: Settings Where Communication Will Take Place

A. Where will the student use his/her augmentative communication system?

- Setting #1:
- Setting #2:
- Setting #3:

B. What are the benefits and drawbacks of each of these settings in relation to the student’s skills and abilities?

- Setting #1:
- Setting #2:
- Setting #3:

Part III: Probable Content of Communication

A. What types of communication will probably take place using the augmentative system?

- Types of communication
  - greetings
  - initiations
  - requesting
  - request continuation of an action/activity
  - stop an action
  - request a social interaction
  - express a feeling
  - terminate an interaction
  - request assistance
o on-going discourse

**B. Will specific vocabulary be needed? ___**

If "yes," identify the preliminary vocabulary that probably will be needed from the students point of view (important events, activities, people, etc.)

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**Part IV: Communication Partners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who will the student talk to when using the device?</th>
<th>How does this group/person communicate?</th>
<th>What does the AAC user need to communicate to this person/group?</th>
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**Part V: Student Preferences**

**A. Tactile Preferences**

- Does the student have tactile preferences? If "yes", what are they?

**B. Visual Preferences**

- Does the student have visual presentation preferences? If "yes", what are they?
C. Positioning Preferences

- Does the student have positioning preferences? If "yes," what are they?

D. Interaction and communication preferences (include people, places, events, activities, etc.)

E. Other student preferences that may influence the use of an augmentative system:

Part VI: Family and Care giver Preferences for Communication Modes/Methods

A. What preferences/concerns do the student's family express regarding an augmentative communication system?

B. What do the student's family members want the augmentative communication system to do?

C. What preferences/concerns do the student's care givers express regarding an augmentative communication system?

D. What do the student's care givers want the augmentative communication system to do?

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