

# Communication

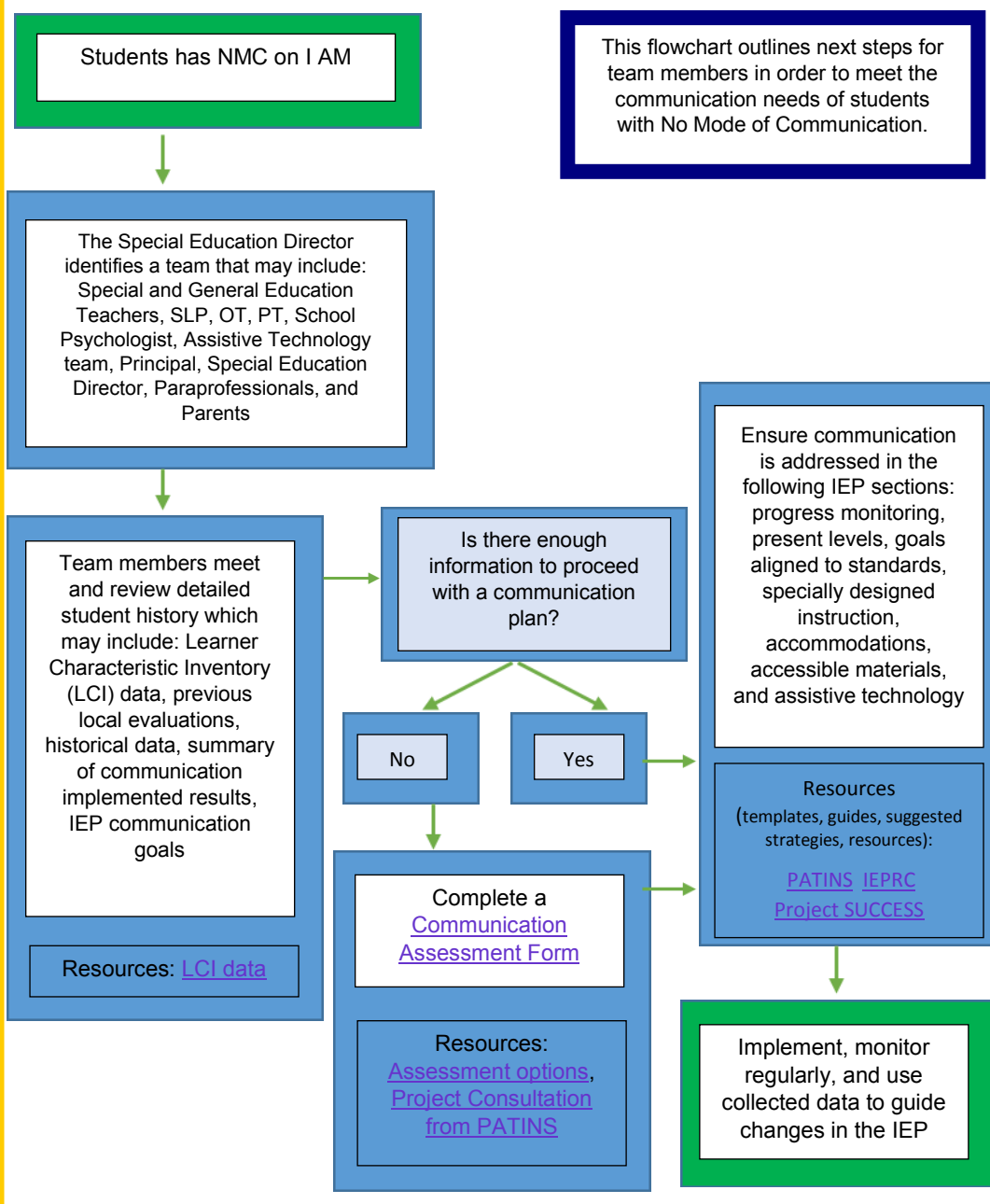
## 'No Mode of Communication' based on the Alternate Assessment

One of the goals in Indiana is that each and every student is able to communicate. This document was created in collaboration with the Communication Community of Practice and various Indiana Resource Network (IRN) resource centers. It includes important information to support educators who work with students identified as having No Mode of Communication (NMC). For the I AM assessment, similar to ISTAR, test administrators will be able to close a student's test if after the first four questions the student is not able to respond. Please see the flowchart below to determine the next steps for students identified as having No Mode of Communication.

## No Mode of Communication Counts Spring 2018

Out of the total number of students tested throughout Indiana on ISTAR, below are the number of students by grade and percentage who were submitted as No Mode of Communication.

Gr	NMC	%
All	474	6.5%
3	77	9.5%
4	68	7.8%
5	71	7.3%
6	67	6.5%
7	63	5.9%
8	72	5.8%
10	56	4.5%



I AM Individual Student Reports will indicate NMC in lieu of a proficiency rating. For more information about how to locate your student, school, and corporation reports for ISTAR or I AM, contact your Corporation Test Coordinator or Director of Special Education.

## What are some strategies we can begin to incorporate in our schools and classrooms? (PATINS Project)

### What is AAC?

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) "includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas." This can include facial expressions, pointing to pictures or a set of symbols, sign language, writing, etc. We are all users of some form of AAC. However, for a small population of people, AAC may be the only way they can communicate. The ultimate goal of AAC for students in educational settings is to provide a method for communication, social interaction, a sense of self-worth and engagement in academics, and other school-related activities.

### What do I do first if I have a student with No Mode of Communication?

ALL students have the right to communicate and be understood. Our high expectations make all the difference. First, assemble your team and determine how to support your student in developing communication skills.

The team should include the student, family, teachers, and speech-language pathologist. It may also include an occupational therapist, physical therapist, and teachers of the Blind/Low-Vision or teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing, paraprofessionals, and any others that may be needed.

You may want to consult with a specialist, such as one from the PATINS Project, to try AAC technologies, consult on your particular situation, or get training on how to support the student in developing communication skills.

### Strategies and Modeling

Imagine you had to learn another language. What would you expect to need to be successful? You would probably expect to have teachers who understood the language and use it in front of you. You would want lots of time to hear it and to practice with others. You would expect to learn lots of vocabulary, to hear that vocabulary being used to better understand it. You would want it to be interesting.

Learning AAC, even for the most complex communicators, is no different than learning another language. It takes modeling, practice, and lots of opportunities. A typically developing kindergarten student has already had over 20,000 hours of oral language modeling. New AAC communicators also need lots of hours of experiencing their new language, and everyone - staff, peers, family and community - can participate.

### Access

Accessing an AAC device often requires creative brainstorming by the whole team. Factors to consider include seating, positioning and alternative seating. Then, once a student is well positioned, look at the expectations of the task. Once you have good positioning and know what is expected communicatively, socially, academically, then you can identify alternative access tool options (i.e. switches).

Determine if direct select is useful and where/how it can be used. If a switch is needed, explore placing at various body parts i.e. knees, head, foot. Identify alternative access such as proximity switches, head pointing, eye gaze. Recognize that students often require more than one way to access a device due to factors such as energy level, positional changes, environmental and academic requirements.

Device placement is critical. Make sure the student can actually see the communication board. This may result in creative device mounting supports. It is also important to be aware of glare.

Lastly, review and revise. Moveable parts move, and the human body is anything but static. Review device and student positions throughout the day for maximum access by the student.

### References/Resources

[AAC Assessment Chart](#)

[Augmentative Alternate Communication \(AAC\)](#)

[PATINS Project](#)

## What are some strategies we can begin to incorporate in to our schools and classrooms? (Indiana Resource Center for Autism)

Communication involves not only how we express our wants, needs, thoughts, and feelings (expressive language), but also how we use our language in situations (pragmatic language) and how we understand what is expressed by others (receptive language). Helping students learn to be effective communicators requires an understanding and strategies for all three domains.

### Receptive Language

Receptive Language is the ability to understand information and gain meaning from one's environment. It involves understanding words & sentences; understanding what is said; understanding what is read.

A student's receptive language can be supported by:

- Providing visual supports to assist with comprehension
- Reducing the amount of verbal directions and instructions being given
- Checking for understanding by having the student explain back the direction or information
- Rephrasing verbal information to aid comprehension
- Offering a model to help the student "see" the concept

### Expressive Language

Expressive Language is the use of language to express needs, wants, and ideas. It encompasses using verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

A student's expressive language can be supported by:

- Expanding on what a student says and modeling appropriate use of vocabulary and syntax
- Using visual aids to support a student's word finding and vocabulary use
- Offering a student choices during times when the he is struggling to express himself
- Reading stories and asking questions to talk about the story
- Using pictures to sequence events
- Using scripts to act out scenes from plays
- Using Core vocabulary with AAC users

### Pragmatic Language

Pragmatic language is the use of appropriate communication in social situations. The ability to know what to say, how to say it, and when to say it. Some examples of pragmatic language abilities include conversation skills, asking questions, topic maintenance, humor, and asking for help or clarification.

A student's pragmatic language abilities can be supported by:

- Modeling and practicing conversation skills, such as greetings, starting and ending a conversation
- Practicing different ways to present a message, such as a polite way vs. an impolite way to ask to go to the restroom
- Using visual supports to cue students about the topic
- Using social narratives to explicitly teach skills
- Teaching perspective taking skills
- Teaching students to read, understand, and practice the use of nonverbal communication skills, such as gestures and facial expressions

If there are concerns about a student's communication abilities, a language evaluation will give more information about how to best design interventions to target specific skills. A variety of Speech & Language Evaluation tools are available to borrow from the Library at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community at <https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/>.

## Federal Guidance

### Frequently Asked Questions on Effective Communication for Students with Hearing, Vision, or Speech Disabilities in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

Students with disabilities, like all students, must have the opportunity to fully participate in our public schools. A critical aspect of participation is communication with others. Three Federal laws – the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) (Title II), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) – address the obligations of public schools, including charter schools, to meet the communication needs of students with disabilities, but do so in different ways. Public schools must comply with all three laws, and while compliance with one will often result in compliance with all, sometimes it will not.

### Center on Technology and Disability-Augmentative and Alternative Communication-AAC

We encourage you to view a series of archived webinars, released May 2-9, 2017 which address (1) the use of assistive technology to support children and students with disabilities, (2) Augmentative and Alternative Communication, and (3) identifying and supporting children with hearing loss.

For information about the IDEA requirements for children with disabilities and communication needs, school districts and parents can contact OSEP at (202) 245-7459 or consult OSEP's website. In addition, a list of OSEP's State contacts can be found here.

Below are links to several relevant Federal documents:

- U.S. Department of Justice. (2014). Technical Assistance Document on Effective Communication. Retrieved October 1, 2014, located here.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2013). Office of Special Education Programs Memorandum 13-08. July 23, 2013. Dispute Resolution Procedures under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Retrieved October 1, 2014, located here.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2013). Dear Colleague Letter from the Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and the Director of Special Education Programs. June, 19, 2013. Braille instruction. Retrieved October 1, 2014, located here.
- U.S. Department of Justice. (2012). K.M. v. Tustin Unified School District, 725 F.3d 1088 (9th Cir. 2013) amicus brief. Retrieved October 1, 2014, located here.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2011). Questions and Answers On Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Evaluations, and Reevaluations. Retrieved October 1, 2014, located here.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2011) Questions and Answers on Accessible Technologies. Retrieved October 1, 2014, located here.
- U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice. (2010). Dear Colleague Letter from the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, and the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Justice – Emerging Technologies in Education June 29, 2010. Retrieved October 1, 2014, located here.

## Communication Bill of Rights

All people with a disability of any extent or severity have a basic right to affect, through communication, the conditions of their existence. Beyond this general right, a number of specific communication rights should be ensured in all daily interactions and interventions involving persons who have severe disabilities. To participate fully in communication interactions, each person has these fundamental communication rights:

- The right to interact socially, maintain social closeness, and build relationships
- The right to request desired objects, actions, events, and people
- The right to refuse or reject undesired objects, actions, events, or choices
- The right to express personal preferences and feelings
- The right to make choices from meaningful alternatives
- The right to make comments and share opinions
- The right to ask for and give information, including information about changes in routine and environment
- The right to be informed about people and events in one's life
- The right to access interventions and supports that improve communication
- The right to have communication acts acknowledged and responded to even when the desired outcome cannot be realized
- The right to have access to functioning AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) and other AT (assistive technology) services and devices at all times
- The right to access environmental contexts, interactions, and opportunities that promote participation as full communication partners with other people, including peers
- The right to be treated with dignity and addressed with respect and courtesy
- The right to be addressed directly and not be spoken for or talked about in the third person while present
- The right to have clear, meaningful, and culturally and linguistically appropriate communications