



## DLM™ CORE VOCABULARY AND COMMUNICATION VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Slide 1 - The Dynamic Learning Maps™ Alternate Assessment System is a new assessment designed to more validly measure what students with significant cognitive disabilities know and can do. This presentation will provide information about the development and use of a core vocabulary for students with significant cognitive disabilities who require augmentative and alternative communication.

Slide 2 - This training, *DLM™ Core Vocabulary and Communication*, is one in a series of trainings that support teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities in their efforts to teach and assess. Sponsored by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, this training is part of the professional development efforts of the Dynamic Learning Maps™ Alternate Assessment Consortium.

Slide 3 - The DLM™ Essential Elements address a wide variety of communicative functions. As described in Claim 3, Students are expected to communicate for a range of purposes to a range of audiences in ways that become more complex over time. While this communication competence is the focus of English Language Arts Claim 3, it is also required for students to be successful across all of the Essential Elements, throughout their school day, and in life beyond school. While communication for a range of purposes and audiences can be challenging for any student with significant cognitive disabilities, it is even more challenging for those students who cannot use speech to meet their daily communication needs.

Slide 4 - These students require an augmentative and alternative communication system, also known as AAC, and the vocabulary we choose to include in that system is critical. How can we know what vocabulary is most helpful to provide to students who use AAC?

Slide 5 - One answer is to use an AAC system with a core vocabulary. A core vocabulary is a relatively small group of highly useful words that apply across contexts. These are words that students can use across their entire day, not just in one activity or setting. Because this relatively small group of words is used so frequently, students get lots of practice locating core words within their AAC system and using them to communicate in real life situations.

Slide 6 - The AAC research has shown that about 85% of the words that speaking individuals use everyday is made up of approximately 250-350 words. For our students who have challenges speaking and learning how to use AAC systems, this is good news. If we choose the correct vocabulary, students who use AAC can use this relatively small set of words to communicate many things across a variety of contexts.

Slide 7 - Look at the words in this example of a core vocabulary set. Notice that there are not any nouns included in this core vocabulary set. Few nouns are typically included because nouns are often specific to a particular situation. Instead a core vocabulary contains more pronouns, verbs, descriptors and question words. This variety of word classes allows students to express many communicative functions including asking questions, responding, requesting, rejecting, protesting, commenting, and describing. Use of a variety of communicative functions is specified in the DLM™ Essential Elements.

Slide 8 - The idea of core vocabulary is not new. Researchers in the AAC field began examining the vocabulary-use patterns of speaking individuals and individuals who use AAC as long ago as the 1980s and 1990s. This research was used to develop the DLM™ core vocabulary list that is the focus of this training. In addition, the DLM™ team reviewed the Essential Elements to determine words and word classes that the Essential Elements require and then checked to ensure that they were included in the core vocabulary list. Examples of specific words required for expressive use by the DLM™ Essential Elements are the “wh question” words, including who, what, where, when, and why. Examples of word classes include things like common verbs, personal pronouns, and describing words. Another consideration in determining the words that eventually ended up on the DLM™ Core Vocabulary list was how frequently students would encounter these words in written text. All of this information was then analyzed to create a list of 463 words ranked according to their usefulness in academic activities and everyday communication.

Slide 9 - If you work with students who are currently using an AAC system in an effective way, we are not suggesting that you would replace the AAC system with the DLM™ core vocabulary. However, you could cross reference the DLM™ core word list to see if there are any differences in the vocabulary sets and if there are any words from the core list you might want to add to the student’s AAC system.

Slide 10 - If you have one or more students who require an AAC system but do not currently have one that meets their needs, the DLM™ team is in the process of creating several core vocabulary

word sets that can grow with students within and across school years. Let's take a look at one way an AAC system could grow with a student over time.

Slide 11 - If you have one or more students who require an AAC system but do not currently have one that meets their needs, the DLM™ team is in the process of creating several core vocabulary word sets that can grow with students within and across school years. Let's take a look at one way an AAC system could grow with a student over time.

Slide 12 - As the student is able to understand and use more symbols, the system grows, but the original symbols remain in the same relative locations. That way, the student can focus on learning the new vocabulary and symbols that have been added to each page without having to unlearn and re-learn a new location for the original words and symbols. Here, the system has grown from 4 to 9 locations on each of the 10 pages. The system can continue to grow in this way making sure that words the student has already learned remain in the same relative place on the same page while new words are added around the boarder to increase the total number on each page.

Slide 13 - A few things to remember are that core vocabulary words can be used with any symbol set, and that core vocabulary layouts can be used on paper-based systems as well as with voice output devices. When deciding how many locations you should have on each page for a student, be careful that you don't underestimate what that student can learn. You do not have to start with 4 symbols per page and move to 9. You may have a student who uses 20 or 30 symbols on a single page from the very beginning. It is not expected that students can use every word or symbol when they start with the system. You want s system that they can grow into over time.

Slide 14 - When you initially give an AAC system to a student, it is likely to be very unfamiliar. Students who use AAC typically do not see other competent AAC users that they can learn from. These students hear spoken language or see sign language, but they cannot respond in the same way. Their expressive language involves a different process that requires selecting and combining symbols once they decide what they want to communicate.

Slide 15 - We can teach students who use AAC how their system works by pointing to one or more key symbols on the student's system while we are speaking our message. This is called aided language stimulation, or more simply, modeling, and it helps students see where symbols are located within their systems and how they can be used to communicate.

While adults model the use of the system by pointing to appropriate symbols while they talk, they should also point to the symbols to show students what they might say. For example, when a student is visibly excited about an activity, the adult might point to the symbol “like” and say, “you like it.” If the student points to like, the adult can expand on that by pointing to like and adding it, saying you like it. This repetition and expansion is critical to communication and language development.

Keep in mind that the fewer the number of words and symbols on a page, the more difficult it is for the communication partner to model language and expand a student’s messages.

Slide 16 – Pause for Activity 1

Slide 17 - This table shows the DLM “first forty” recommended core vocabulary words. In this table, the words are organized into 10 groups of 4 words each for students who need to start with 4 locations on a page. Students might need this limited number of symbols on each page because of sensory, motor, or significant communication challenges, but most students will likely start with a system that has more than 4 symbols per page. This is just one way of organizing these forty words, and it was developed with the idea that the student using AAC and the communication partner could have multiple communication exchanges without having to constantly flip through pages of the system.

Slide 18 - Educators in several DLM™ states have used the “first forty” vocabulary words to create their own core vocabulary layouts with 8, 9, 16, 32 or 36 words on a page. Some of the larger core sets have been programmed into communication apps and used by students on tablet computers. This 32-location overlay was created by a speech-language pathologist in Iowa using AssistiveWare’s Proloquo2Go.

Slide 19 - Many of the smaller core sets have been used on low-tech voice output devices. For example, here are 8 location and 9 location core vocabulary layouts developed by the speech-language pathologists and the emergent literacy coach from Fletcher-Miller School in Jefferson County, Colorado. They used Mayer-Johnson’s Boardmaker symbols to create overlays for the Tech/Talk 8 and Attainment’s GoTalk 9+.

These and other communication layouts will be posted on the DLM™ Virtual Community of Practice for your use.

Slide 20 - Now, let's focus on teaching and modeling language for students who might use a core vocabulary set. To help a student learn how to use the core vocabulary, we must take the time to teach the meaning of the words and the symbols that are used to represent the words. As stated previously, adults must also model how to use the system.

One way some teachers support this instruction is through the creation of a wall-sized version of the core vocabulary set their students are using. The teacher in the video you are about to see is using this wall-sized core vocabulary display to teach her students the words and symbols in their core vocabulary AAC systems. As you determine how many words and symbols a student will have on each page of his AAC system, consider that students need words they can use immediately as well as words they will learn over time given your instruction and modeling.

Slide 21 - When teaching students the meaning of the vocabulary words and symbols included in their core vocabulary AAC system, start by highlighting a specific word and symbol. Show the word and symbol to your students. Next use the word and symbol in a variety of examples and pair the new word you are teaching with known words.

Watch this short video clip. The teacher is teaching her students the core vocabulary word, *can*. Notice that the teacher is using the printed word *can* rather than a symbol. She made this choice because the symbol for the word is so abstract that she decided that it would be just as easy for her students to learn the printed word, and the long-term benefits of using the printed words were steps toward conventional reading. Notice also that she uses the word in meaningful sentences using other words and symbols her students already know.

{video} Eyes up here. I, I want to tell you guys something. You have a new word. Our new word is *can*, and that means that we are able to do something. So, when I tell you, I can do something, that means I can do it. I am able to do it. I can jump. (child in background, "jump). I can jump. (child in background, "I can jump). Stop. I can jump. Wait. Joshua, you can jump. You can jump! Go ahead. You can stop. Stop. All right. I can, our new word, can, sit. I can sit.

Did you notice that many of the children in class were able to use speech to communicate? The teacher included them in the lesson because it provided an excellent language learning opportunity for all of them. She did not have to isolate the students who were learning the core vocabulary system to support their communication, she could use it to teach all of the students more conventional language use.

Slide 22 - In this next video example, the teacher asks a student to use the word, *can*, in a sentence he creates. Here, the student gets the chance to apply the word he has just learned in his own sentence. Notice that the teacher uses the symbols on the large communication board to ask the student what he *can* do. This is an example of modeling language using the same system the student uses. Also notice that all of the students get involved at the end of the video. Teaching vocabulary is interactive and engaging in this classroom.

{video} What can you do? What can you do? Run! O, you can run. Run is pretty popular now. I – can-run. Go, go! [another adult off camera, “I’m going to get you! I’m going to get you! <child laughter> Oh! I got you. And they all can run.”] They can run. All right. You can go! You can go, go run, go-go-go!

Slide 23 - In that same lesson, the teacher reviewed the word and symbol, *on*. Watch as she helps her students learn different uses for the word, *on*. She teaches the concepts of putting an object *on* something, turning something *on*, and putting clothes *on* our bodies when we get dressed. The teacher is providing lots of repetition of the word, but using the word in a variety of ways.

{video – We’re going to talk about our word today. (student in the background, “Look!”) This one is look. We’re going to talk about on. Yup. I want you to look at them. On. We’re going to talk about all of the places that we can put our frog on. We’re going to use *put*. You guys know *put*. *Put* our new word. Our new word is *on*. (student whines) I need you to stop. (student in the background, “quiet.”). And we can put our frog on my foot. I can put it on Isaac’s head. *Put* on, on. I can put it on my chair. Another way I can use on is if I want to turn something on. Like, if I have the lights off. I can turn the lights off. You can turn them on. Turn on. We can turn them on again. Ok Isaac. Turn them off – turn them on again. Thank you. We turn them on again. We can use our word to put on, turn on, and Mrs. Devin is going to read a book about clothes you can put on (student in background, “coat.”). Coat is something you can put on. What else can you put on? Sarah’s coat, we can put on gloves. We put on shoes. There is lots of different things we can put on so we’re going to read a book about that.

Slide 24 – Pause for Activity 2

Slide 25 - As we conclude the module on the DLM™ Core Vocabulary, remember that in order to develop communication, language, and academic skills, students who use AAC need access to vocabulary that will allow them to communicate for a variety of reasons, with a range of audiences. Students need instruction, modeling of the AAC system, and expansion of utterances in order to learn what words mean, where they are located, and how they can be used. Because core vocabulary words are used frequently and in a variety of contexts, students get repeated opportunities to practice what they are learning about vocabulary and language in real and meaningful communication exchanges. This is part of the power of core vocabulary.

Slide 26 – Be sure to visit DLM™ Virtual Community of Practice to access core vocabulary resources. These include a ranking of the 463 words in the DLM™ Core Vocabulary, a paper explaining how words were selected and ranked, a list of the DLM™’s “first forty” words, and some core vocabulary overlays shared by DLM state educators. These resources will continue to be updated and expanded over time.

Slide 27 - For more information about the Dynamic Learning Maps™ Alternate Assessment System, please go to [www.dynamiclearningmaps.org](http://www.dynamiclearningmaps.org). Thank you for your participation.

Slide 28 – Closing slide