

How to Support AAC with a Team Approach

Michelle Andrews: Hey everyone. I'm Michelle Andrews. And I'm your host for the pep talk podcast. This episode is all about how to support AAC with a team approach.

Shannon Archer: Are you looking for ways to increase your student support with their AAC device? Are you wondering how to get all of the professionals and loved ones in your students life to not only get on board, but become involved and understand their role in helping their students succeed and make more progress, well, we are about to share all of this and more

Michelle Andrews: I have AAC specialist Shannon Archer with me today. She is going to lead the way and teaching us all about supporting AAC with specified team roles and a designated plan. Before we dive in, I want to tell you that Shannon has graciously created some helpful visuals for you guys to follow along with while you listen, you can download these at no cost from the link in the show notes, or if you are on our website, the link will be on the course page.

If you are driving or on a run, just listen along and [00:01:00] download the visuals later on. If you would like they are not required, but they are very helpful. First, we need to go over some formalities for the course by going over our financial discipline. My financial disclosures include, I have a teachers pay teachers, boom, learning and teach with medley store all under pet talk, LLC. I am also the founder and manager of pep talk and the pep talk podcast teach with medley is also a sponsor for this podcast. My nonfinancial disclosures include, I have a stock participation plan with teach with medley.

Now, here are the learner objectives for this course, AKA the important things you will learn. Number one, you will be able to identify AAC support tasks that can be established for the AAC team members. number two, you will be able to explain how to implement an AAC plan with other members of the AAC team number.

You will be able to describe a strategy for getting team members on [00:02:00] board with supporting AAC. All right, let's get started. This episode of the pep top podcast is one you don't want to miss. If you are wanting to learn more about implementing an effective treatment plan with AAC, this is for you. I am very excited to have Shannon Archer here with me today. Hi there, Shannon.

Shannon Archer: hi. Thank you for having me.

Michelle Andrews: Hi, I'm so excited. Shannon is going to teach us ways we can support AAC with a team approach.

Shannon has been an SLP for over 14 years before becoming an SLP. She worked in family support services, supporting children and families. She was born and raised in Texas. Like me, after college, she married and followed her Navy spouse all over the us.

She returned to Texas, in 2006 and went back to school to become an SLP. She worked in Frisco, Texas for seven years in the school system, as well as private practice. She [00:03:00] moved to San Diego in 2015 and worked for a small school district. She slowly rebuilt her private practice where she specialized in childhood apraxia of speech and AAC for the last four years, she has been the at and AAC specialist for her district.

She recently opened up her course, the talk back team for AAC for the first training cohort. She has two adult children in a labradoodle who is part of her therapy dog team. I know what you're thinking. You want to know more about SLP therapy dogs. Me too. I'm hoping we can do a whole episode, on that topic. That would be so cool.

Michelle Andrews: Shannon Archer's financial disclosures include Shannon has a teachers pay teachers store, boom learning store called a gift of speech where she sells materials related to treating speech and language disorders. Shannon has an AAC course, the talkback team for AAC, her non-financial disclosures include [00:04:00] no relevant non-financial disclosures, Shannon. So I just introduced you there a bit, but why don't you tell me a little bit more about yourself

Shannon Archer: awesome. Thank you, Michelle. So I have been a speech language pathologist for 14 years. I have, I started in the school system and then started to build a small private practice while I was in Frisco, Texas. Um, I moved to San Diego about seven years ago and I started working for a small school district in Southern California. And then I also started to build a private practice as well. Uh, in my private practice, I specifically work with individuals with childhood apraxia of speech as well as AAC. I have two adult children. So after 23 years of building my career around the needs of my kids, I get to Def redefine my [00:05:00] trajectory. So I look forward to continue on the path to creating a speech therapy clinic where I can focus on AAC, evaluations, therapy, and coaching. Along with my two adult children, I have a labradoodle named chewy and he and I are part of a therapy doc team. He is a great SLpupologist.

Michelle Andrews: I love that. That's so funny.

Shannon Archer: I kind of made it up.

Michelle Andrews: That is so cute. I love it. All right. Well, tell me how you began to specialize in AAC.

Shannon Archer: So my CFY year, I had two self-contained classrooms for individuals with autism. I had multiple students that were non-speaking and some were in the process of getting AAC systems and some were not. So I was supposed to be the expert, but I will admit I have the little to no training in graduate school.

I think I had a three hour seminar and that was about all of the [00:06:00] formal or training that I had on AAC. Okay. So I will admit, I've always been a bit of a tech nerd, so I was honestly super excited to learn how to support my students and the kiddos that I worked with. I, but I quickly realized how much, I didn't know about how to support kids with AAC. So I started seeking out trainings. I went to as many ASHA and TSHA sessions as I could. I also sought out other AAC and AT conferences. When I got to California, I took a graduate level course on AT and AAC. So I started to specialize very early in my career just because I fell in love with AAC.

And I saw such amazing things. I saw AAC just completely open up doors and communication for the students that I was working with, but I didn't find [00:07:00] that I knew as much as I needed to support them. So I had to seek training in a lot of different locations.

Michelle Andrews: that's awesome. You really went out there and made it happen. You found all the courses and you just, did it yourself there. I know it's like in grad school, I think. I had one class too. And you kind of just have to go out there and find continued education courses and learn it all yourself. That's awesome. All right, Shannon, tell us all about why a team approach for AAC is.

Shannon Archer: So Michelle, when I first started to support this, my students with AAC, I was literally sometimes the only one supporting it. I would create activities and model using their different devices during group and individual. I realized I was literally the only one using the device. I would come in and I'd be like, oh, we're so, and so's device. And they'd be pulling it out of a drawer or [00:08:00] out of a backpack. And I know that there's a lot of other, um, therapists out there that have the same things happen to them,

Michelle Andrews: Yes, I am nodding my head yet. You all can't see me, but I'm nodding my head. Yes. I can't tell you how many times that has happened. Yeah. Or it's not charged in the backpack or it's not even there it's at home. They didn't even bring it or they

Shannon Archer: Oh yeah. Well, and I'll admit too, I got thrown under the bus at a couple IEP meetings and I was sitting there going, wait guys. I'm like, I've shown you these activities and I'm doing this, so what I realized was I was really the only one using the device and the other members of the team, really, they weren't using it, but I think honestly, they, they didn't know how to use the device. And I kept hearing from different team members that, you know, the individual wasn't learning how to use the device, that there was too many buttons on the device and that things weren't [00:09:00] working. But I realized that the root of the issue was that it was just me supporting AAC. It wasn't necessarily that the student wasn't getting the concepts and how to use their device. It was that they just weren't getting enough exposure. So I found that the AAC devices weren't getting used as much as they could be because honestly, a lot of times they were being used when I was in the classroom and oftentimes they weren't even being sent home. So it wasn't really that my team didn't want to help. Cause honestly, I think they really wanted to help.

I think they just didn't know how, and you know, it's hard as an adult to ask for help. And honestly, sometimes if, if you've been doing things a certain way for years, you don't even know that there's a different approach or that you should be doing something differently. So I think about how much exposure and practice an individual would get if we [00:10:00] simply added one or two people to the mix.

So I was looking at these students and I was like, okay, if it's just me right now, supporting them, what if I could get. One of the instructional assistants to really be excited and to feel confident. So what I started doing is I started to pull aside, you know, this instructional assistant or starting to work more with the teacher so that they could then in turn, train this instructional assistance. And what I realized is that the more people that were on board, the more people that were modeling the device, taking it to, to this classroom or that classroom, the more exposure and practice that the AAC user was getting. So another thing that was happening for us was that we were not including one of the most important parts of that team.

And that was the family. Now this isn't always the case, but. What I saw was that we weren't working with [00:11:00] the family enough. We weren't creating a team where the school and the family and the outside therapist weren't really

effectively working together. And I realized I didn't include the family as much as I do now.

So now when I get started with AAC, I mean, in the IEP meeting, I set up time with the family right away. Also provide training videos and resources, because really, if we don't have the family on board, if we don't have the teacher, you know, a couple of instructional assistants on board, then we have one person going in and modeling and showing an individual how to use their device and honestly, that's, that's oftentimes where I see AAC fail. And it's honestly, really, because we're not working as a team.

Michelle Andrews: Yes. I know. I wish that I wish that I knew you during my CFY year because that's when I was working in the schools I [00:12:00] could have really used this information. I don't think I even realized I had the authority to go up to the teachers and any other professional that worked with my student in and give them roles to do. I don't know. I think I was just so new. I didn't know. And I, this is just, this is great information for, everyone that's great. Shannon. So why are assigning roles so helpful?

Shannon Archer: So Michelle, I have a question. Have you ever shown up to work with a student or client only to discover their AC device wasn't charged still in their backpack or not where they are currently?

Michelle Andrews: Absolutely. I cannot tell you how many times.

Shannon Archer: So many times, so many times. I've actually walked into a classroom where they'll see me walking in and people will like run over to the backpack to get a device.

Michelle Andrews: Yep. I'm I can see it happening. Absolutely.

Shannon Archer: You know, and honestly this has happened to all of us and it happens too [00:13:00] often. It, it is frustrating. And honestly, I'll admit, I was like, how do I get this? So I was researching for one of the kiddos that was on my caseload. And I found an example of an AAC rolls chart. And most of the issues that I saw taking place were because people weren't sure who was in charge of doing what.

And so they got missed. And I was like, huh, what if we take those things, take all those, you know, getting things that you think are simple, like getting the item out of the backpack or charging it. What if we make a list and make sure that all of those activities are delegated? Because honestly, I believe that our

team members want to support the AAC user, but they're overworked just like we are. And you know, it's really hard to keep track of all the stuff that we have to keep track of. So assigning those roles kind of takes the guesswork out of it. We give people [00:14:00] different responsibility, but also the thing that we do is, is we build the idea that we're a team that it's not just the speech therapist responsibility, or it's not just the AAC specialist responsibility, because honestly, that's what I got a lot.

When I took over as an AAC specialist, I even found that sometimes with, um, the campus SLP is that there was the assumption that it was just the AAC specialist that was in charge of it. But when we build that idea of a team and we make sure that other, you know, all of the team members are part of that, then, you know, not only are we kind of putting something in place to make sure things happen, but we're also building that concept of team and sharing those responsibility.

Michelle Andrews: Yeah, that's, that's very true. I think those small tasks like getting the device out of the backpack or making sure it's charged. These are not small because everything else is contingent on these steps. [00:15:00] These steps are crucial. So we really can't sit back and play the game of, did you get the device out today? Did you charge it or should I -eliminating the guesswork out of it with the signed roles is a game changer.

Plus. What about larger tasks? What if a student has a new and complex device like an I gaze or a new program? No one is used the SLP has never used before. It shouldn't all fall on one person because this student needs and deserves a team rooting for them.

Michelle Andrews: And what you said about thinking that the AAC specialist that a lot of the jobs and roles just defaulted to that person. That's how I felt my CFY year. There were so many things I wanted to change to a device. And I didn't even feel like I could, I think it was password protected. I wish I had, okay, what is my role or who do I even go to specifically if I want to change something or, all the different things. This is, this is [00:16:00] so needed. This is so needed information okay. So next teaches all about assigning these roles to the AAC team members.

Shannon Archer: Awesome. So when you take a look at the AAC team roles chart, what I've done is I've separated it into three main sections. The school day. Device maintenance, programming and modifications. And you know, some of these things you may find are applicable to your student and some of them, they may not be, I've tried to put in some extra space, so you can add

other things. But if this chart isn't exactly what you need, then steal the ideas from it and create one for your team. So when we set up the AAC roles chart, one of the things that I do, which I think is super important is I work with whether it's the special education teacher or the campus SLP, or a member of the [00:17:00] team to work on what roles are most appropriate to whom. So we go through and we look at okay, during the school day, who is the best person to make sure that the device is taken out of the backpack and to make sure that the student has access to it during the morning, um, who is the best person to keep track of it across the day.

Now this might be a situation where you have multiple people, so you might have, someone who, you know, depending on how your student's schedule is set up and where they go. So there might be multiple people in that across the day section, the end of the day, this is the person that's going to confirm, confirm that the AAC device goes home with.

Or it's placed on the charger because I can tell you that there've been a couple of Fridays where I've had to take devices home, um, to the family because it didn't get put in their backpack. so in those roles, I just put, you know, the name of the individual or individuals, and then, [00:18:00] you know, just put the position of the individual. So under device maintenance, you know, probably one of the, what you think is just the most basic and easy, but really gets missed a lot is charging. So we want to have the person that's going to be in charge of making sure that, if it comes in the morning and it's not fully charged, making sure it gets on a charger as soon as possible, so it can be ready to go.

And then another thing that's super important is who is going to be the person to contact the AT or AAC support person when there's issues. So it could be that. You contact the campus SLP, maybe it's the, um, case manager for the student, but there's going to be one specific person that contacts, because we don't want five people contacting him. But then sometimes what happens is there's a problem, but nobody knows exactly who's contacting them. So nobody does. The other thing is who backs up the vocabulary. [00:19:00] So I had a student too, and it was actually during the summer and the family contacted me frantically because the iPad had ended up in the fish pond. Well, ipads don't do-. Yeah, they don't do well in fish ponds!

Michelle Andrews: oh, no.

Shannon Archer: So thankfully we had done a backup before school was over. And during the ESY in Texas, we would have two weeks on two weeks off. So thank goodness we had made an update before one of those breaks. So We had a

backup of the vocabulary. So we were able to easily back up the vocabulary and we were all really thankful that we had now some programs have an automatic system for backing it up and some of them, you need to manually do that. , but super, super important because it can save you when ipads get broken or thrown into fish ponds. And then, oh yeah. Oh,

Michelle Andrews: that sounds terrifying. I'm sure everyone was, just panicking of like, oh no, it wasn't backed up.

Shannon Archer: oh, trust me. I [00:20:00] was, I had a student, um, at the high school a couple of years ago and I came in and the teacher was like, oh my gosh, something happened. And literally, somehow the student turned all the buttons to brown. And I honestly, I wasn't even sure how he did it, so I had to research it and then I was like, okay, there's a reason why we make sure that the edit button is turned off.

Um, so, but, and that's where, when we create a roll start, then some of those things, we have systems in place for when an iPad is broken or, you know, something happens. The other thing is updating the AAC system now, depending on your district, some it's, you know, the, it is in charge of that. So that may depend on your school district and how that set up, but that's where you would put contact it and maybe put the name and the email address of the person that you're going to contact.

And then other programming and modifications. I [00:21:00] think this is really important because we want to make sure that. Who is the one that is in charge of programming, the device, who is able to do updates with the vocabulary and who identifies and tracks those vocabulary. Change us. Now, I will tell you, in, in my district, the school SLP, and I always worked really close together.

And you know, my attitude is that, Hey, if they need to make changes, , you know, they're going to make some changes, case manager, the teacher, kind of the same thing. Now I will tell you, I had a teacher who didn't necessarily agree with, , some of the ways that I set up the vocabulary. And so that was kind of awkward, but I had to eventually add some passwords and just because it was also going home and the, um, the ABA therapist was changing stuff.

That's where, and that's where, honestly, at that time I didn't use a roles chart. And I really [00:22:00] think that had, I had a roles chart and had we spoken about who was to do what I really don't think that those problems would have happened because I really think being able to communicate about, Hey, you know, this is how we make updates.

This is how we make changes to the vocabulary and, you know, and, and putting that person's name. So if they wanted to make some changes with the vocabulary, they would know to contact either the campus SLP or the, um, you know, the case manager. So I think it really, it protects the vocabulary. It also makes sure that, you know, if there are some variances in opinions or disagreements about how things should be set up, you know, people know who to talk to. And I think that had I had that, that would have, at that time, that would have helped.

Michelle Andrews: Yeah. That makes sense. I think the ABA therapist maybe thought that it was fine to add those. She probably didn't know that she was [00:23:00] confusing, you know, the school SLP and all of that, that makes a lot of sense to have those rules.

Shannon Archer: So the other thing that I did want to share about the roles chart, and this is something too, um, when I talk a little bit about innate AAC implementation plan is that it's really important that this is a team approach. Now, so I might sit down and I might do the majority of the work, but I really make sure that I'm communicating with the teacher with the SLP, because honestly, if I just create it, then it's just me. But if I bring the team on board to communicate and to create it, then, you know, it becomes, this is the team creating it and not just the AAC specialist.

Okay. So I recently asked some of my fellow SLPs SLPAs and educators, you know, what were some of the biggest challenges that they faced with AAC? And I will tell you that getting their team on board was one of the biggest issues. And, and I get this because, you know, [00:24:00] I've had the same.

And I know most of you listening have probably had the same issues. You know, you've walked into do therapy at 2:00 PM in the afternoon only to find that the student's voice was still in their backpack or not charts, you know, and this is why I created this chart for my team. The chart is simple and it doesn't take much time, but what it does do is it gives responsibility to the team and not just one person. And I think this is an important step in getting your AAC team to work well as a team, you have to treat it as a team.

Michelle Andrews: that's so true. Shannon. think this is going to be so helpful for myself, for other selfies out there. Just, this is clicking in my head so well, I've just, I wish I even thought to do this especially when I worked at a school, but I spent a lot of, my time working.

In a private clinic, but I still think that there could have been conversations to be had with the school SLP or with parents and just making sure that there was [00:25:00] a plan there, there were roles. Cause sometimes that device didn't even come with them to therapy at the clinic. So, there's definitely a lot to be learned , from this topic.

Shannon Archer: So one of the things in working as a team is that we want to, it's not just a school team versus like a private therapy team or, the family it's really about us working with. So I had an individual that , they'd gone through, gotten an AAC assessment and we'd been probably working with them for about a year, was doing really, really well with, , their device.

Well, evidently the parents went out and got an outside assessment. So what happened at this situation was that the parents really didn't even know or understand that their student already had a device. This was actually [00:26:00] before I took over as AAC specialist. And so what I realized what had happened in this situation is that while the parents were at the IEP meeting and we had talked about using an AAC device, , the device, it was going home, but. I think that parents, you know, we just didn't do the training. We didn't meet with them. We didn't, , share information about what we're doing in the school day. And so the parents, you know, this was, this was really, this was our fault. So this was us as a team, not including the most important part of the team, which was the family. So thankfully what happened, , when I found out the parents were doing a private assessment, which honestly was a great, which was a positive thing, because then they would have their own device for their kiddo.

I contacted the mom and I was like, Hey, would you mind if I communicated with the outside therapist that was doing the assessment? And she was like, no, no [00:27:00] problem. So she, um, gave the information and I contacted the individual. And what had happened was that she was actually recommending a different program for the individual.

And so when I talked to her, I said, you know, I wanted to, um, talk to you about, you know, the assessment we've done, what we've been doing so far, what we've been working on. And the outside assessor wasn't even aware that we had done so much work on the device. And wasn't aware that we already had a vocabulary set up.

So this situation really reminded me of, you know, just this lack of communication between team members. So what happened in this situation was that. Once I was able to talk with the outside provider. We all got on the same

team. So the kiddo, we were actually able to, she ended up changing to the program that we had already been using.

And I sent her copies of the vocabulary. So we were able to [00:28:00] make sure that the, the vocabulary that we were using at school was the same at home. And then we actually met as a team to talk about, what are some things that we need to do to update the program so that it was, working for school and at home as well. So I think the situation for me was I've really a huge reminder of what happens when the team isn't working as a team. But when we were able to get all of the team members on board, we were able to actually, uh, I mean, this sounds silly, but we were actually able to work as a team, but then the kiddo, he was using his device more and he was using his device, not just a school and not just at home, but in both places. And we were all working on similar goals and, kind of from the same page and it just made such a huge difference. But I tell you what had we had an AAC roles chart? Had we had an AAC implementation plan in place? I don't think that that would have [00:29:00] happened.

Michelle Andrews: This really shows how important it is to advocate for a team approach how necessary that really is. I can think of times when I've asked parents about the school speech therapist and what they're working on. And sometimes they're not really sure that's not to put blame on anyone, but just to realize now, wherever you are seeing a child, if you're in the schools, private practice, home health, whatever, be the one to start the team, Start creating roles, create a role sheet, create a plan, create the team that will help the child. I can tell you starting now, I am going to advocate for a team. Every chance I can.

Shannon Archer: Yes, absolutely.

Michelle Andrews: Tell me all about how the AAC implementation plan works?

Shannon Archer: So I learned about using an AAC implementation plan during a four day AAC training that I participated in at the Southern California diagnostic center. And it was a fantastic training. One of the things that we did is we practice [00:30:00] creating these when we were doing evaluations and I, it was like one of those things, Michelle, you were just talking about how you're like, how did I not think of this earlier? I was like, how did I not think about this early.

Michelle Andrews: because it makes so much sense. It makes so much sense. It's like a light bulb.

Shannon Archer: Total light bulb. I was like a, I wish I had incorporated this earlier and I'm like, why did I not think about this?

I mean, because I think in my mind, I was like, okay, I'm going to go in, and I'm going to work on this, this, this, this, and this, but then that's something I do. And so, you know, it's already, it's the way I think about when I do therapy, when I do activities, because I've kind of, I've, I've worked with AAC for years, but you know, if you haven't done that, it can seem really overwhelming.

And this is a question I get asked a lot as well as well. How do I implement AAC? How do I use it across different settings and in, and with different [00:31:00] individuals. And so I realized that using an AAC implementation plan SU. Super effective. We'd gotten this new student and the student had an eye gaze device and I'll tell you, we were all intimidated by this \$15,000 device.

I was as well. And the assistant that was working with the kiddo really, really wanted to know how to support the kiddo, but it never really worked with a C before. And what I did was I used this AAC implementation plan and I picked about five different activities during that kiddos day. And I created a plan for the assistant to support and for the teacher. And it was amazing. It was, it was amazing to see what happened with the kiddo, with the assistant. I mean, they were actually working on goals and they were working on, using the device in different activities. And it was all because of. [00:32:00] Of this implementation plan, because I think the individual wanted to, to know how and when to support the kiddos, but really just wasn't sure. So I always start off with a simple, a simple plan. Now, when I first started my AAC implementation plan was super basic and I've updated it a few times and I actually have a couple of different version. The reason why I have a couple different versions is really depends on who's using them. And where, like when I'm now I might have an AAC implementation plan that has the same information for, you know, because we're working on the same activities or goals, but the data that I might want to take is different than maybe the instructional system I want to take.

So therefore I've, I've created some different versions of the AAC implementation. But what I found was just amazing was how this helped everyone support the individual better. Because like I said before, I really, our team [00:33:00] members want to support AAC, but it can seem overwhelming. And really honestly, they're just not sure what to do when and how, but the AAC implementation plan really helps with this. It gives them a guide so that they can support the AAC user. So one of the things that I do like with the roles chart as I create, and the AAC implementation plan with other team members now, Sometimes, I mean, we're all have busy schedules and we're oftentimes, you

know, going in 10 different directions. So sometimes it's about having just a phone call with the teacher. I might say, Hey, these are a couple activities I was thinking of. Can you give me a couple more activities? And then a lot of times, the first time we do an AAC implementation plan, I will do that either with the campus SLP or with the teacher, or try to get the three of us together to do that.

But the idea is I want to teach them how to do this, [00:34:00] the plan, so that then they can take that back and work on it themselves. So when we create the AAC implementation plan, what we're essentially doing, it's just a fancy word for a lesson plan, so to speak, but a lesson plan for an AAC device. So what we're going to do is we're going to, I kind of. So I kind of call it the wh questions of AAC implementation. So first of all, what we're going to do is we're going to list what the activity is. So say it's circle time. So for example, I have a four-year-old and one of the activities and the implementation plan has to do with their circle time. So the, what, is interacting with the ABC song. So why, the goal or objective, so for this kiddo, it was to be able to identify to follow along with the song [00:35:00] and identify or following with at least 10 of the alphabet letters. And then each of the letters also was an object. And so the goal was for. The communication partner to model those different objects, because we also wanted to model finding things and locating things on the device, the, who was the instructional assistant and the teacher who was doing the circle time. And then where would be in the classroom at circle time. And then the duration and frequency.

Now this is going to vary sometimes, you know, for this situation, it was a 10 minute circle time. And then the other thing I would write down is what are some of the target words? So for this situation, I went through the alphabet song and I picked some words, five different words, and those were some of the targets. So our targets were 10 different letters and then five different words. [00:36:00] And then in the implementation plan, there's also a place for data collection and notes. So that's an example of one activity. So what I would do is I would take five or six different activities during the day, and I would map this out.

Now I'll tell you it does not have to be fancy. It can be fancy, but it doesn't have to be the idea behind the implementation plan is you're teaching the team how to take an activity and how to support them with AAC. So do I do this with every activity? No, because that would just, that would have to be so, oh, no, no, no.

Um, so I'm gonna pick some activities during the day. I'm going to write the activities into the implementation plan. And then go over this with the individuals who are going to be using it. So the idea behind it is we're just, we're

teaching them how to implement AAC, how to support AAC. And so what I found [00:37:00] is that the kiddo that I told you about that I kind of, one of the first times I use the AAC implementation plan.

What I found is once the team members understood how to use this, they used a more simplified version. And, but they, but then they realized this, they didn't need this for every activity. So what ended up happening was they had figured out, okay, these are the things that, you know, I do in an activity, and this is how I support the individual. So it's kind of one of those things where yes, it helps for data collection. Yes. It helps for making a plan, but also it really just teaches us how to think about implementing a.

Michelle Andrews: right. I, I bet that helps the teachers feel comfortable knowing what to do as well. And it allows for them to know exactly what to do and to actually do it. That makes a lot of sense.

Shannon Archer: Yes.

Michelle Andrews: Awesome. I love how you gave that specific activity example that really made sense to me while I'm listening here.[00:38:00]

Shannon Archer: So one thing to know about the implementation plan is it can be used with any activities. Like I said, I typically pick five to six activities throughout the day and, you know, I pick things in kind of at different settings in different situations. So they make sure that we're practicing different things. Like we don't want to have six activities revolving food. We might have one activity that has to do with requesting food, but I want to have, , a variety of, language activities. So maybe some commenting, maybe some asking questions, some are responding to questions.

So I'm going to choose different activities throughout the day that have different purposes. So I've had people ask, you know, if they should do every activity. And like I said before, new it's just too much. , but I think once individuals start to. Look at the activities and create the implementation plan. So [00:39:00] what I've found out is that as my team started to use the implementation plan, it became easier for them to identify how to support different activities.

Michelle Andrews: right. And I can imagine at first, maybe not everyone just jumps on board immediately. Do you have some helpful strategies for making sure that you can get all these team members to follow through?

Shannon Archer: So bribery sometimes works. I'm just kidding, but no, um, I always find, you know, I'll bring coffee, I'll bring. Donuts? Uh, no, I mean, I do find that motivation sometimes. Like if I'm going to have a team meeting and we're going to talk about something new, I might bring something to motivate team members. But honestly, what I have found is, one of the key strategies to get team members to connect as a team is to make them a part of the team. So I make sure that I [00:40:00] communicate with the various team members. I ask them how I can help them, what questions they might have. I make sure that they know that they're part of the team and that they're critical to the team. Now, I wish I had a magic wand that just made everybody want to be a part of the AAC team and, you know, to follow the rules and really to support, but the honestly, So I make sure that they know that I'm here to answer questions, to help them and just to give them some guidance. Because you know, oftentimes individuals who may not have had any experience with AAC. And so they're just really not sure what to do and it can be overwhelming. So training for team members is super important, listening to two team members, simple. So another thing with the AAC implementation plan or the roles chart is we want to make sure that it's readily accessible. So with the AAC [00:41:00] rolls chart, I have it printed out. Sometimes I'll laminate it. So then you can write the names or if you need to change things, but then we put it somewhere where people can see it, because if people don't see the AAC implementation plan and they don't see what the roles are, it's a lot easier to forget but if we have something that. Easy to see readily accessible, then individuals are like, oh, Hey, what is, what is, what am I doing? Oh yeah. You know, I'm the one who's taking it during the middle of the afternoon, making sure that it's going from class B to C. So putting it somewhere in a classroom or, it could be, depending on, you know, how your school is set up, but finding a place where it's appropriate for you to place that. So that individuals have access and kind of gives them a nice little reminder of what are their roles and, how they're supporting their, their student.

Michelle Andrews: Yeah, so that serves as a great reminder, so they [00:42:00] don't forget what their role is and they can refer to that. That's so smart.

Shannon Archer: Now I will admit, I have had holdouts. I have had individuals that didn't work as a team. I have had individuals that didn't agree with my approaches. I've had people who have been, well, I've done it this way for a long time. So this is the way I'm going to do it. And that, that does not feel good. And that was not easy. So there have been times where I have had a meeting with admin and talked about, Hey, you know, this is something that we're struggling with as a team. Do you have any recommendations? Oftentimes, you know, sitting down with the individual, talking with them helps, I've gone to admin and just, you know, talked about this situation and, you know, and really asked for some guidance in how to deal with that. And, you know, we, we, at

one point had to have an admin step in, um, because the individual was not [00:43:00] respecting my role on the team and, and that's hard. And I don't like doing that, but sometimes we do have to do it. And for me in the end, it was about what was best for the team as a whole and for the AAC user. And so sometimes people have been doing stuff for a long time and it's hard to change that or do something in a different way, but I just really honestly found that. When I started to bring people on as a team and they felt confident and they felt like they had the skills, then the team came together.

Michelle Andrews: Right. I was just thinking how, even with that hiccup with that other professional, it sounds like having a plan in place helped that get resolved as quickly and as smoothly as possible without a plan or roles in place. I feel like it could get real confusing who, who should do what when you went to the principal, when you went to the admin, you actually had a specific plan that you, that you were trying to [00:44:00] follow. And that, that probably made a lot more sense to the principal of what was happening one thing I was thinking about is whenever you do get some of these other professionals to buy in to, initiate, to start taking on their role. I bet when they do start seeing that success start seeing that child using their device more, you know, in the classroom, without the SLP in the room. because of things that they're doing, because they're following their role, I can imagine how that can be a motivator for, for teachers and other professionals to follow through with their roles. So you talked about these meetings that you have with, with the other team members. Um, and I'm wondering when, when do you have these meetings in your busy day? How do you plan these times to talk with the other team members?

Shannon Archer: So that's really the million-dollar question, but I have found that I had to get creative. I schedule short [00:45:00] meetings. I honestly do not. It's funny cause my coworkers laugh because they know how much I load the meetings. Um, so I keep meeting short and sweet. I communicate with campus admin to find out what our options for working with various team members in California and, you know, different states, they have different rules on training within the day and outside their service hours. So I work with, I worked with admin to find some options. And then one thing I did do was I asked admin, I said, listen, I need to work with these people for this specific amount of time. What do we need to do to make that happen? Do we need to get us up? You know, how can we make this happen? And then I will admit at first, you know, some admin were like, well, what, because they just weren't used to that happening but then when I kind of talked to them about why, and, I talked about the fact that. Once we get some individuals with the training. It's not a, [00:46:00] we have to do training all the time. Every time we get a new kid, it was that if we do training with the team members, yes, there's going to be new

people. But the more team members that have the training, they can support their fellow teammates. And it's, it's kind of that, that domino effect. So I also make sure that I connect and offer support via email or phone for things that don't need to be done in person. So like I said, I don't love meetings, so I make sure that the meetings, if we do meetings in person or zoom, that there are things that need to be done and I'm in a meeting and not something that could, could be emailed. I will tell you, it's gotten a lot easier to do meetings now that we do zoom it's, you know, And the AAC specialist for a district and I have seven different campuses and I can't be at all the campuses. And so being able to meet via zoom has been really helpful. [00:47:00] The other thing I try to do is that I try to record the trainings and, you know, I, I actually created a YouTube channel for work so that we would have those videos that, that individuals could watch if they weren't able to attend. But I will tell you that it's not, it's not easy to get that, but, if you go with this strategy of, okay, let's talk to the team, what are some options? And then also talking to principal or admin about, you know, what do we need to do to make some time happen? That's how I've been able to create those team meetings. And honestly, once people started to see the value in the meetings and people were more interested now, there's still those people. Weren't really interested in doing the trainings. And so that's where making some of the recordings has helped as well.

Michelle Andrews: that's a great idea to record it and then they can watch it as needed when they have time. That's, that's very, that's brilliant. That's so [00:48:00] smart.

Shannon Archer: So I know that I've thrown a lot of information at y'all. So I want to kind of summarize some of the most important components about getting a team on board. So getting the team on board is really about how can we support the AAC user. And I feel like tonight, we talked a lot about getting the team on board, but really. Getting the team on board is how we are going to best support the AAC user. So I want to give you just a recap of some of the important things that have helped me in building my teams. So one of the first things is communicating with the team and making sure that each member knows that they have someone that they can communicate when they have questions and making sure that, you know, individuals know what their role is in supporting the AAC user.

And I think in the end is really. Talking with the individuals about how important [00:49:00] each one of their roles are for the team. So that's where setting up the roles chart can be super helpful. One of the things that I do when I'm setting up the roles chart, as I have this placed, say, if the individuals in a specific classroom, I'll have them print out and put this in a place where people

can see, and they're reminded of what the roles are. And remember just like with the AAC roles chart, and they see implementation plan is that we're working with this as a team. So we're going to communicate with the team when we set up the roles, we're going to maybe take some volunteers who would like to do this, or who feels like they could best support that. And some situations, you know, the. Case manager or the special education, teacher's going to have the best information for that, but also to, um, you know, taking, taking volunteers, Hey, who would like to be in charge of making sure this is in the [00:50:00] backpack? So giving people some, I guess, some connection to the team, because they're, you know, they're part of the team and just making sure that people understand what their role is in that team and, and why it's so important. And then when we are putting together the AAC implementation plan, just remember that this isn't about making a list of every single activity that an individual is going to do during the day. It is about taking, you know, five to seven activities and putting them in a plan so the individual team members have strategies and ideas and activities that they can do to support the individual.

It's a way of making sure that not just one person is working on one activity, it's that multiple people are working on different activities, and it's a way to support the team members so that they know, Hey, what do [00:51:00] I do? Like how do I support this kiddo drawing? Whether it's during a group time or if it's during a reading opportunity. So we're going to put that implementation plan to work for the team so that they know how to support the individual across the day. And you can make it as simple or as intricate as needed. And you might use a little bit different versions depending on who's using the implementation plan. I will admit, I typically wait.

I make an implementation plan for my speech. Um, it's just kind of part of how, when I'm doing, language lessons, I've actually used this for my own sessions. And then typically I have an implementation plan that I use for the team. And I talk with the special ed teacher about, which plan is going to be the most effective for the team. And then we talked about what is the most [00:52:00] important information on this and what are some things that, aren't as important? Like sometimes the data collection isn't as important as just the activity and the interaction. I'm going to say that again, because I think it's important. Data collection is not as important as the interaction and the activities and the communication. So you're going to work as a team to build these tools. So that you can better support the individual as a team, because honestly, you know, we don't communicate in isolation and in AAC user, isn't going to learn to use their device. If the speech therapist is the only person supporting it, or if the special education teacher is the only person supporting it, we really want to make sure that the individual is accessing and using their device as often, and in

as many different situation and getting the team on board is critical for [00:53:00] that.

Michelle Andrews: This is gold. Shannon. I'm fired up about this now as an SLP, I might see each kid for 30 minutes, one to two hours a week, depending on the situation. Think about how small of a percentage that is of the child's day or week building a team is so important. When I can't be there all the time, I can't always be the one to make sure the iPad is charged every single day of the week. Having roles having a set plan is what will set your child up for success. Shannon. This information has been so helpful. It is so incredibly needed. This information is so tangible. I feel like I can just take this lesson and actually. Start tomorrow and implementing a plan, assigning roles. Uh, I can download some visuals and some charts that you even already made for everyone to, to help make a plan. This, this is so, so helpful. My only wish is that I had a time machine and I could bottle this up [00:54:00] and send it to myself. Um, what 2014 is when I started, I wish I could send it to myself when I first started. Especially since I was in the schools and this would have been great information for me then, this has been so, so helpful.

Shannon Archer: I wish I had it. I wish I had it 14 years ago as well. I think about, supporting my, supporting the kiddos, what I did. And honestly, I just, I didn't really understand back then how important it was to have everybody on board. I was like, I'm the speech therapist and I love AAC. You know, it's great. The kid did great when I was in the room, but I wasn't supporting the team and I wasn't really supporting the AAC user because, you know, I just, I didn't have enough team members on board. So it, you know, I learned a lot. I wish I definitely wish I could go back in time. And that's why as I started to, take on this role and working with more families, I was [00:55:00] like, you know, this, this is for me, this was a game changer. And I know it will be a game changer for other teams as well.

Michelle Andrews: I think so too. I think this is going to, it's going to change the game for sure. Well, thank you so much, Shannon. Everything that you have taught us today is so helpful and I really appreciate you coming on here today and teaching us all about supporting AAC with a team approach. This has been so helpful. Thank you so much.

Shannon Archer: Michelle. Thank you for having me. AAC is a passion of mine, and I love being able to share things that I've learned because I didn't come out of grad school knowing how to support my AAC users and their team. But I'm hoping that by helping other team members, they will feel more confident and be able to support their AAC users so that they can talk back.

Michelle Andrews: yes. And you are you're, you're helping SLPs out [00:56:00] there by giving them this information and helping us all. I'll do better out there. This is, this is awesome. If you wanna learn more about Shannon, make sure you go follow her on Instagram at a gift of speech. She shares a ton of information, tips and tricks and hilarious reels that we all like to

Michelle Andrews: Thank you for listening. We hope you have learned something today. All of the references and resources throughout the episode are listed in the show notes and also listed on the pep talk podcast for SLPs website. If you've been listening while you're driving on a run, doing the dishes, this entire episode is transcribed for you to refer back to easily. Shannon. I'd love to have you back on the podcast. Sometime we can chat about therapy, dogs, or more AAC, tips and tricks. You have been so incredibly helpful sharing all this information today. I'm looking forward to hearing what else you have to teach us.

Michelle Andrews: Thank you again for joining me here today.

Shannon Archer: [00:57:00] Thank you.