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Abstract

Poster

Major: Speech Pathology and Audiology

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Current Preparedness and Perspectives of Special Education Teachers on AAC

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Introduction: Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is any form of communication other than verbal speech, such as gestures, pictures, or high-tech devices that generate speech. Any person who is non-speaking or experiencing communication breakdowns may utilize AAC. The introduction of AAC often begins in childhood and many AAC users are placed into special education programs. Effective implementation of AAC requires a collaborative effort between teachers, Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs), and other school professionals.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate special education teachers' knowledge, experience, opinions, and training regarding AAC.

Methods: Participants for this study included 20 special education teachers who taught in central Illinois in K-8 self-contained classrooms. Data was collected through an online survey which provided insight into each teacher's knowledge, experience, perspectives, and preservice training on AAC, as well as their relationships with SLPs. Data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively to identify themes among the teachers' knowledge and experiences with AAC.

Results and Conclusions: Results identified that most teachers who participated in the survey had very limited access to both formal education and opportunities for professional development pertaining to AAC despite the fact that the majority of participants currently had more than 10 students utilizing AAC.

Interestingly, despite the lack of education and professional development opportunities, most of the participants still reported a high level of preparedness and comfort with AAC. These teachers reported experience and SLP support as the main reasons for their success supporting students with AAC.