# Parent Perspectives on an AAC Camp Experience

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## INTRODUCTION

- Parents play an important role in their child's language development, as they are commonly the child's first language model (Robert & Kaiser, 2011)

- For parents of children who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), the task of supporting language development can be challenging (Beukelman et al., 2013)

- AAC camps provide opportunities for parents to gain knowledge/skills in supporting their child's communication through direct training (Fainsinger, Jaeb, Mahe, Urish, & Pollock, 2018)

- Parents also benefit from networking with other parents at camp (Anderson, Balandin, & Stancliffe, 2015)

- The purpose of this study was to examine perspectives of parents who participated in an intensive weekend family AAC camp on their experiences and training received

## METHODS

- Parent training at AAC Camp Alberta in 2017 included 2 one-hour sessions on aided language stimulation and implementation activities

- Parents (n = 7) who attended camp participated in semi-structured interviews 6 months post-camp

- Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo for recurrent themes, shared experiences, and uniqueness
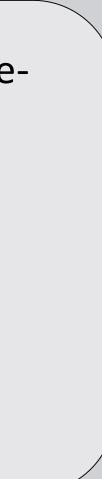
## RESULTS

| Themes & Nodes | Definitions | # ref | # sources |
|---|---|---|---|
| Intervention | A program or a plan used to facilitate communication | 9 | 6 |
| Strategies | Methods used to carry out the plan to facilitate communication | 51 | 7 |
| Aided Lang. Stim. | Parent uses the AAC system while they are simultaneously verbally communicating to their child. | 7 | 3 |
| Modeling | Parent demonstrates the message the child will communicate using the AAC system | 23 | 6 |
| Context | Activity/situation in which the child uses the AAC system | 23 | 5 |
| Communication | The exchange of information from one individual to another | 10 | 5 |
| Modality | Means (e.g. speech, low-tech, high-tech, gestures) used to communicate | 30 | 7 |
| Partners | Individuals with whom the child communicates | 37 | 7 |
| Attitudes | Feelings parents have towards programming and device use | 38 | 7 |
| SGCD | Comments related to a speech generating device | 46 | 7 |
| Challenges | Difficulties related to the use and programming of the AAC device | 77 | 7 |
| Strengths | Ability to use and program the AAC device | 27 | 7 |
| Programming | Changes made to individualize the AAC system to the person/situation | 20 | 7 |
| Camp | Comments related to AAC Camp Alberta | 57 | 7 |
| Family | Family (e.g. parents, siblings) participation at camp | 27 | 7 |
| Parent Training | Parent training opportunities at AAC Camp Alberta | 32 | 7 |
| Suggestions | Ideas for future parent training opportunities at AAC Camp Alberta | 24 | 7 |
| Activities | Activities parents/campers experienced at camp | 34 | 7 |
| Staff/Volunteers | Individuals involved in carrying out camp activities | 20 | 6 |

*"It was really good networking with people and having a get away where we could do something as a family."*

*"It's all about modelling. It's just drilled into us as parents. Model, model, model, cause if you're not doing it, they're not going to do it."*

*"It's just time. It takes a lot of time when you don't know what you're doing."*

*"...there was so much sharing from other parents about things that had worked, ... things to try and ways of engaging other people with the device."*

*"I love that it's so inclusive."*

*"There's a big learning curve with AAC, and it's not that well known yet."*

*"There's always something you can learn if you're looking to learn."*

*"Maybe we could have a couple breakouts . . . [to] make it [training] a little more specific."*

## DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS

- Parents value camp and see it as a learning experience

- They appreciate the opportunity to engage with other families

- Parents were satisfied with camp as a whole, but felt steps could be taken to make it better

- In general, parents feel under supported (e.g., at school) in facilitating their child's AAC usage

- Parents require more information and more training outside of camp to facilitate AAC use in everyday life

- Future research should explore implementation of improvements in parent training at camp as well as additional opportunities for parent training outside of camp

## REFERENCES

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