SpeechTech Therapy

DETERMINING GRID SIZE IN AAC

One of the most common misconceptions in AAC is that grid size should start small and "grow" as the child learns language. ***This not evidence-based practice.***

Grid Size is NOT about Language Level

It's about:

- **Motor Access:** Can the child accurately touch or select icons?
- **Visual Access:** Can the child see the icons clearly?

In other words, do they NEED larger icons?

So, How Do We Choose the Right Grid Size?

- Can the child **physically** access smaller icons with support (keyguard, touch guide)?
- Can we modify visual supports (padding, high contrast symbols, decluttering) to support **visual access**?
- What is the largest grid size they can access (i.e., what is the smallest icon size they are able to access)?

Support Tools and Strategies

Just because we are starting with a **large grid size** doesn't mean we need to start with all the icons visible. If a child can only handle 10 icons at a time, that doesn't mean you should choose a 10-icon grid. Instead, **select the largest grid size they can physically/visually access**, and **mask icons** so that only 10 are shown. This ensure you are supporting their **current regulation and readiness** without sacrificing their **long-term access and learning potential.**

Why it Matters

Starting with the largest accessible grid size, even if many icons are initially masked, lays the foundation for long-term success.

1. **It doesn't limit communication attempts:** We can't predict what the child wants to day. Starting with a small grid size limits their ability to explore, initiate, or express a wide range of thoughts/needs.
2. **It provides greater opportunity for modeling:** Aided language input is most effective when we model a variety of words in natural contexts. Can you provide meaningful language input with just four icons? Probably not.
3. **It supports motor planning:** Consistent icon placement helps children build motor patterns from the start- leading to faster, more automatic communication.
4. **It promotes long-term language growth:** A larger grid offers room to grow without needing to overhaul the system as the child develops new skills.