

Video Transcript

Project Core Overview

Slide 1. [Project Core Presents]

Slide 2. Welcome to the Project Core professional development modules. Project Core is being conducted by the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies, a unit in the Allied Health Sciences Department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This module, *Project Core Overview*, is designed to provide an overview of the Project's implementation program including its focus, goals and intended outcomes.

Slide 3. Project Core is a multi-year effort aimed at creating an implementation program for teachers. It began with two years of development during which time the Project Core team worked closely with teachers and students with significant disabilities in more than 25 classrooms. Beginning in the fall of 2017, the pilot phase of the Project provided an opportunity to evaluate the impact of the program across more than 50 classrooms. The Project will move into the final scale-up and dissemination phase in the year 2019.

Slide 4. The program targets teachers. It offers the training, tools and resources they need to take ownership of communication instruction for their students with significant disabilities. The program emphasizes evidence-based teaching practices and uses a core vocabulary approach to augmentative and alternative communication, also known as AAC.

Slide 5. Underpinning this work is the belief that communication is a basic human right, and that all individuals, regardless of the severity of their disability, have the right to instruction that will help them develop versatile communication skills. For students with significant disabilities, this instruction should permeate their school day and their life to the greatest extent possible.

Slide 6. There are no prerequisites to participation in Project Core. The program is designed to build on all forms of communication – even if those forms are not conventional or even intentional. In fact, Project Core focuses specifically on

teaching students who are not yet using speech, sign language or symbols in flexible ways, for varied purposes, across topics and partners.

- Slide 7. Central to the implementation program is the belief that teachers and other classroom staff can acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to help students with significant disabilities acquire versatile communication skills using a core vocabulary approach.
- Slide 8. Teachers and other classroom staff have a lot of contact with students on a day-to-day basis. This allows them to maximize opportunities for teaching and learning each day. Providing them with training and resources required to teach communication all day, every day leads to greater opportunities for speech-language pathologists to provide more specialized support in the classroom.
- Slide 9. Successful teaching and learning rely on good communication partners. Project Core is designed to help adults become good communication partners by emphasizing a number of strategies.
- Slide 10. For example, Project Core helps teachers and other adults learn that good communication partners attribute meaning to student behaviors. This means they watch students and decide what they might be trying to communicate with each behavior. Then the adults name the behavior and act on it. For example, an adult might see a student reaching for a book on the table. The adult would say, "I see you reaching for that book. Do you want it?" And then the adult would hand the student the book.
- Slide 11. Project Core also emphasizes the fact that good communication partners ensure that students have access to augmentative and alternative communication or AAC systems at all times. Good communication partners also ensure that there is an AAC system they can access to demonstrate how to use symbols to communicate at all times.
- Slide 12. Project Core also focuses on the fact that good communication partners encourage communication without requiring it,
- Slide 13. and provide sufficient time for students to initiate and respond,

- Slide 14. while making sure there is something worthwhile to talk about. Each of these good communication partner practices is discussed throughout the Project Core professional development modules.
- Slide 15. The Project Core implementation program embeds communication instruction across the school day. Following the recommendations of decades of research, the implementation program supports teaching communication during common academic routines and daily activities, along with specials like art, music and PE, and therapy times with related service providers like SLPs, PTs, and OTs.
- Slide 16. The core vocabulary approach to AAC that is at the heart of the Project Core implementation program is not new. For decades, core vocabulary has been recognized as a relatively small set of highly useful words that are useful across purposes, places, and partners.
- Slide 17. Core vocabulary is conceptual. It includes words such as LIKE, WANT, NOT, and GO. The fact that these words are not concrete with single meanings is what allows for their flexible use.
- Slide 18. The core vocabulary in Project Core is called the Universal Core.
- Slide 19. It is a prioritized list of 36 words.
- Slide 20. Each word is meaningful as a single word
- Slide 21. and can be combined meaningfully with other words in the Universal Core.
- Slide 22. All of the words in the Universal Core are useful across purposes, places, and partners.
- Slide 23. The Project implementation program calls for all students to have personal access to the Universal Core vocabulary. Access to the Universal Core vocabulary may be provided on an AAC communication app or device, in the form of a print-based communication board or book, or through 3D symbols. Whatever form best suits the access needs of the student should be provided.

- Slide 24. Several print-based formats are available for the Universal Core vocabulary. Each of these formats can be explored and downloaded from the Project website. These formats are intended as initial solutions.
- Slide 25. The program includes an online selection tool that helps guide initial decisions regarding the format that is most appropriate for each student.
- Slide 26. Each of the formats is available with four different types of symbols: PCS, PCS high contrast, Symbol Stix, and Widgit Symbols. This allows teachers and teams to match existing symbols if they have been using them.
- Slide 27. The Universal Core vocabulary words are available on many AAC systems with voice output, including communication apps or other speech generating devices. When students have existing AAC systems, a simple key can be downloaded from the project website. It will help teams record where the Universal Core words are found on the student's existing system, and help them find and demonstrate the use of words more easily.
- Slide 28. Finally, three-dimensional (3D) symbols are available to represent select core words. Each tactual symbol includes a unique raised element, the printed word and braille. The program recommends starting with the 3D symbols for GO, LIKE, and NOT. These three words are flexible enough to use across environments and contexts to meet a variety of needs. For example, present the symbol for GO each time the student is going to move. Present LIKE each time the student expresses pleasure, and present NOT when the student expresses refusal or displeasure. Students have many reasons to go, express pleasure and express displeasure or refusal every day. This means the symbols can be used with enough frequency that students with significant visual impairment and cognitive disability can learn to use them over time.
- Slide 29. The aim of our Project is to create a comprehensive implementation program that empowers teachers and classroom staff to provide communication instruction in the classroom. In order to realize this goal, teachers need training and resources that build knowledge, skills and dispositions. Additionally, they need opportunities to reflect and refine their practice.
- Slide 30. School-level instructional coaches play an important role in providing ongoing constructive feedback and support. Instructional coaches do not need to have prior training or experience with AAC, but they must be able to support the

use of well-defined intervention practices. Coaches typically facilitate the delivery of the professional development modules that are part of the Project implementation program. They also support instructional planning using tools that are provided and help teachers engage in self-reflection and constructive discussions as they put the teaching practices in place in the classroom.

- Slide 31. All of the implementation program components are available on the Project web site at project-core.com
- Slide 32. You will find a series of Professional Development Modules with versions to support facilitation of group instruction, as well as versions designed for self-directed learning on each topic. These formats are intended to allow schools to pick and choose which approach will work best based on the available days for professional development.
- Slide 33. There is an Instructional Planning Guide that details the preparation and content needed for embedding communication instruction into common academic routines.
- Slide 34. There are also self-reflection and observation checklists for each of these academic routines to support teacher reflection and constructive discussions with coaches. Each of these routines are discussed in detail in this series of professional development modules.
- Slide 35. Additional resources include the Universal Core Vocabulary Selection Tool and each of the print formats described in this training.
- Slide 36. There is a collection of 1-page implementation resources on various topics like aided language input and partner-assisted scanning; and a growing list of answers to frequently asked questions.
- Slide 37. You will find students' success stories that detail the ways that students have progressed as communicators as a result of Project Core.
- Slide 38. Finally, there are guidance documents for school administrators and coaches to support making an initial determination about the fit of the program for meeting the needs of students and teachers. These documents also provide guidance on how to move the program forward if the need is determined.

Slide 39. Pause for activity 1.

Slide 40. Getting started with Project Core begins with a determination of the fit of the program to meeting the needs of your students and teachers.

Slide 41. After you have determined the implementation program has potential to address your needs, create a plan for completing the professional development modules and accessing the resources for the program.

Slide 42. Finally, practice the new strategies in the classroom, engage in self-reflection, and seek and provide ongoing helpful feedback along the way.

Slide 43. This concludes the module. Your feedback is important to us. Please take a couple of minutes to complete a brief survey about this module by going to project-core.com/pdsurvey. Thank you for your participation. To learn more about Project Core and to access free resources and materials visit the website at project-core.com.

Slide 44. [disclaimer]