

00:00.65

Sasha Long

Hi, Laura. Thank you so much for joining me.

00:02.87

Laura Hayes

Thank you so much for having me on. I'm so excited to be here.

00:06.26

Sasha Long

I'm excited to have you on because I'm particularly excited about this topic. We've talked about AAC, I think somewhat frequently on this podcast, but you're a true expert in this area. And I was telling Laura prior to the interview, I kept writing more and more questions because I kept thinking of more things to ask you.

00:23.96

Laura Hayes

It's such a big topic. So I think let's just dive in.

00:25.59

Sasha Long

yep Yes. So I personally feel like in the last even like, let's say five, 10 years, AAC has grown a lot in visibility. Like we're seeing teachers use AAC on Instagram and on Pinterest. I remember as a new teacher back in the day, i didn't i wasn't seeing that as much. And I think social media has helped a little bit. Are you seeing shifts in the field on how professionals understand and support AAC users, especially non-SLPs? Yeah.

00:54.71

Laura Hayes

Definitely. i think that one of the biggest things that I always direct people back to is the era of 2010. It was 16 years ago, believe it or not. And i think, you know, when we look at that year, that was the birth and the introduction of the iPad.

01:10.70

Laura Hayes

And I think that changed everything.

01:11.00

Sasha Long

Yeah.

01:13.30

Laura Hayes

I truly believe that is why things have become so warm so much more mainstream and why, You know, yes, now we have social media, meta is out there, people have more information more readily available. But

that shifted everything from being behind, you know, the the curtain, if you will, right?

01:34.10

Sasha Long
yeah

01:35.03

Laura Hayes

People had a market, things became more affordable, things became more mainstream, once the birth of the iPad came. we slowly started to see dedicated devices that were behind insurance paywalls and barriers to getting evaluations, very formal, very lengthy evaluations, and it became way more accessible. You now have devices devices and apps that you can purchase same day, some of which are even free. And I think that makes a huge difference for our teams and families.

02:08.20

Sasha Long

That's such a good point. And I actually was talking about this with my aunt on Friday. My cousin is 24 and he's an AAC user. And we were talking about him getting an iPhone because he originally had a Dynavox.

02:19.67

Sasha Long

And you know those original Dynavoxes. They were like, you know, 36 pounds and clunky. He never, ever would use it. And once he got an iPhone, things really clicked for him, not only related to communication, but honestly related to literacy because he wanted to text.

02:26.88

Laura Hayes
Yep.

02:35.02

Sasha Long

He wanted a Snapchat. He wanted status updates. And it really, in a huge way, changed things for him.

02:43.00

Laura Hayes

And we might be jumping the gun a little bit and talking about this, but I think those are the things that when I talk to families that are hesitant to going the route of AAC, right, there's some there's some level of grief with it We want our kids to be able to talk to us.

02:55.29

Sasha Long

Yeah.

02:58.96

Laura Hayes

We want them to be able to fluently communicate. But one of the things I think that... needs to be brought to the table is this idea of we live in a technology-driven world and everyone communicates in different modalities.

03:12.47

Laura Hayes

Everyone texts, everyone emails, everyone jumps on social media to provide captions.

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Sasha Long

Yep. yep

03:17.35

Laura Hayes

And so when we think about it, it's just a different form of communication. I think that we can look to that buy-in more readily. And we even look at autistic self-advocates and AAC users themselves.

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Laura Hayes

They talk about how they readily have these tools available at their disposal so that they have communication for a variety of purposes, like you like you just mentioned in that personal example.

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Sasha Long

Yeah. And you're right. I mean, we do live in this world where these types of communication modalities are so common. And I remember having that conversation with my aunt all of those years ago of like your other kids that are teenagers, your teenage daughters, they're they're not picking up a phone and talking on the phone. They're texting. Like this is how all of his peers are communicating. And man, I mean, what a time. Like thank God for these devices and this technology because it really is like changing people's lives.

04:16.77

Sasha Long

Hello?

04:19.78

Sasha Long

Hello?

04:24.63

Sasha Long
Laura?

04:34.68
Sasha Long
Hello?

04:40.36
Sasha Long
Hello?

04:41.24
Laura Hayes
Oh, I'm here. Okay. i lost I lost you for whatever reason.

04:42.33
Sasha Long
There you go

04:45.24
Laura Hayes
Maybe it's the snow. um I lost you right as you were talking about
peers and texting.

04:49.66
Sasha Long
Yes. i Yeah, I just basically was like, yep, that's how all of our
teens are communicating. And then I was like, oh, maybe she doesn't
agree with me. Yeah.

04:57.88
Laura Hayes
No, no, totally agree. Totally agree.

04:59.58
Sasha Long
yeah

05:00.60
Laura Hayes
I think that we we just need to look at it differently, right? We have
this information that's readily accessible. We have our you know, are
the next generation, if you will, telling us that things have shifted.
And so I think we just need to follow suit.

05:17.94
Sasha Long
What other kind of misconceptions or like hesitancies do you see with
families and also educators when introducing AAC?

05:27.74

Laura Hayes

The biggest one we just talked about, which is that it's going to prevent that speech development. I still, even though I feel like so many people preach it and the information is there, the research tells us this, it will not prevent speech development.

05:42.40

Laura Hayes

In fact, it could enhance or support speech and language development. And it's still, even despite of that, it's one of the most persistent and most ah debunked myths that I kind of have to go back to because families are concerned.

05:58.15

Laura Hayes

Like I mentioned, there's a level of grief with seeing your child have difficulties with. spoken or oral speech and even some SLPs and educators.

06:09.05

Laura Hayes

It's like this last resort. And the once we get over that hump, I feel like so many more doors are open, but it is still the biggest thing.

06:11.21

Sasha Long

Oh.

06:17.74

Laura Hayes

I also still see... that if they can talk at all, then they don't need AAC. Maybe they can repeat words or they are Gestalt language processor who can have some signs of echolalia. And so if they have any of those things, then they don't need AAC. And so I'm working with a lot of people to kind of show that AAC, the augmentative piece of AAC, right? It stands for augmentative and alternative communication. The augmentative piece is that portion of it fills the gap. It supports them when speech is unreliable or effortful or they are dysregulated and they cannot access their spoken words. That it doesn't need to be an all or nothing. It can be a tool in our toolbox.

07:06.26

Sasha Long

I think there is, yeah, still that mentality, like you said, of all or nothing and the last resort. Like when I do trainings oftentimes with preschool teachers or like very early childhood, it's like, oh, no, no, we don't have that yet. And it's like, well, and maybe some of your kids could benefit from this.

07:22.62

Laura Hayes

I think, too, just helping staff know that it's not going to it's not going to hinder. In fact, it's probably going to help all of your students in the classrooms I support where they have full access to editing software or more robust apps on teacher device to be able to see language in action.

07:42.78

Laura Hayes

We know that visuals support all of us, right? Think about how many times you're scrolling through your phone or you give yourself a visual reminder on a post-it. We know that that enhances our own cognitive linguistic abilities.

07:55.18

Sasha Long

Mm-hmm.

07:55.90

Laura Hayes

So why would it not help everyone? And this idea of we have to have other things before we go to that tool in our toolbox, I think is just something we need to continue to squash because So much of AAC is built through language connections and learning. And so there's not like a prerequisite list that we need for them to pass before we give them access. It's just even even the idea that they have to learn a symbol.

08:26.42

Laura Hayes

that idea of whether it be pecs or whether it be like four symbols before we fully open a device, you don't, that's not language connections are made. That's not how language development works, right?

08:36.48

Laura Hayes

We don't talk to a little baby and say, oh, now they say mama and dada. Now we can model cup, drink, eat, all done, right?

08:42.29

Sasha Long

Yeah.

08:45.72

Laura Hayes

we We fluidly support them and we give them full access from the beginning.

08:45.98
Sasha Long
yeah

08:50.34
Laura Hayes
And so I think continuing to share that message is important too.

08:54.94
Sasha Long
And you kind of touched on the next thing I wanted to ask about, you know like a teacher device and modeling. Like these are all strategies that are really rooted in like the structure and setup of the classroom, which you can walk into a class and think, you know, right away.

09:07.78
Laura Hayes
you

09:08.14
Sasha Long
It's like, was the AAC device an afterthought or not? Or is it truly integrated into the room? What are some things that you've seen be successful on incorporating all of these strategies to create a very communicated communication supportive environment?

09:23.99
Laura Hayes
So the term that I like to use with my teachers that I think really hits home for them is making language visible. How are we making language visible? So it's again, not just a device, it's do we have visuals across different areas of the classroom? Maybe they have some mid-tech switches at the doorway to say I need to go or around the bookshelves to say it's time to read. Let's read or I need some help. Those are the kinds of things that I might see and use across the classroom. Do they have editing software for free on their smart board that they can project?

10:01.05
Laura Hayes
But the idea, it's not just modeling. Yes, yes, I want their AAC device. I want it out of the backpack. If it's not, and if it's still in the backpack, we've got, yes, we've got to have access to it, right?

10:08.22
Sasha Long
Yeah, step one.

10:11.74

Laura Hayes

But then if if we have access to it, if access is not the issue, there's no barriers to access and it's available at all times, then we're going to make sure that the access looks rich in connection, meaning that my communication partners are modeling, modeling both what they're saying and what they think the AAC user might want to say. We sometimes see this pitfall of teams getting stuck into just academic curricular ask response types of situations where it's like, okay, now it's time for you to respond. So now I'm going to pull the device out and I'm going to make sure you have the characters of the book we just read programmed on your device. And so part of my teaching and coaching is how do we use more descriptive vocabulary? How do we use core words? How do we use potentially gestalts that mean something to their child.

11:03.74

Laura Hayes

How do we reduce yes, no questions that are very partner driven but might be difficult for an AAC user who doesn't have a lot of language yet to be able to say. Those are the strategies and implementation.

11:17.24

Laura Hayes

tools that I'm going to be focusing on. And then you also mentioned the thing that I wanted to add here as far as access to literacy. I still don't see enough teams recognizing that powerful tool that, you know, to me, first step is making sure they have a device and access to language. But the next key to unlocking autonomous communication is access to literacy. So I think if if you've done the first thing, then the next step is making sure you have resources like Karen Erickson and David Copenhaver's Comprehensive Literacy for All. They have that book. It is life-changing if you haven't read it.

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Laura Hayes

Well worth the money. ah And then the tools that they have to support it. So out of California, like those websites, Jane Farrell, she's the one who does comprehensiveliteracy.com. Those are resources, give the structure, give the lesson ideas, give the background information for my staff to be able to be successful, to give them the tools to teach complex communicators how to think about and use

12:37.26

Laura Hayes

pre-literacy and literacy topics to be successful.

12:41.08

Sasha Long

And I think that's where sometimes people get stuck is they're like, I

got the device out. He's requesting snack. And it's like, well, okay, what's next? and i And you probably see this as well. I see oftentimes older students that they're like, well, we've tried reading and it didn't work. Well, you didn't try it in this framework with access to this device with these goals. And it's kind of looking at it in a different perspective.

13:05.72

Laura Hayes

And again, I think it's this mindset shift too of, I see this with stimming too. It's, oh, well, we tried it and it didn't work. And then it's like a stop. It's a full stop. And I'm like, but but that's a lifelong skill. If we don't have it, then we never really can unlock what someone working.

13:24.44

Laura Hayes

thinking in their head. You know, I can program thousands of words onto a device, but if they don't have access to literacy, they can't truly tell me exactly what they're thinking.

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Sasha Long

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

13:35.51

Laura Hayes

what What's their Starbucks order? Like, I don't know.

13:37.72

Sasha Long

yeah

13:38.91

Laura Hayes

What's, you know, what what are they thinking about

13:38.94

Sasha Long

yeah

13:42.65

Laura Hayes

ah you know, the the show that they're watching on Netflix that I don't have programmed because it just came out this week, right? These are the things that they have to have access to literacy for. And so even if we've tried it, like you said, try try something different. When something is going wrong, I always encourage my teams to think about it's not it's not the flower we're trying to make bloom, right? It's the water, it's the rocks around it. Like we need to shift our

style, our structure, our resources, our access, things like that to give them

14:19.77

Laura Hayes

the tools that they need to be successful. It's not them, right? And I think we we oftentimes say, oh, it's them or it's the device, let's switch the device or they just can't they just can't figure it out.

14:22.65

Sasha Long

Yes.

14:29.40

Laura Hayes

And I think that that is one of the biggest barriers we can run into.

14:35.06

Sasha Long

And because, I mean, let's face it, it's easier to be like, oh, yeah, let's swap the device. so Let's do this. Or nope, that's just not a skill they're going to get. it is It is harder, like objectively harder to think about things outside the box and try something new. But I think that's such a great point that you made. Like these are lifelong skills. We live in a text-rich world. And, yeah, I mean, if someone didn't know my Starbucks order, I would be irritated. So we – and we can't – it's also so time-intensive to, like, program individual buttons – I remember when I first learned about core language, I was like, oh, my God, well how many years of my life did I waste, like, printing specific pics pictures and programming specific buttons when I started teaching?

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Sasha Long

It's not sustainable.

15:15.64

Laura Hayes

Yeah, same. And i when i i I think sometimes it can come across as really preachy when we talk about big concepts like this, right? Like, oh, you don't understand. I have the background.

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Sasha Long

Yeah. Yes.

15:26.80

Laura Hayes

I've done the mistakes. I get it. And that's why I think the best thing that you can have as a coach is someone who's done it tap into

people that, you know, whether it be your SLP or whether it be the the teacher down the hall that's been doing it a little bit longer or having some success, tap into the AAC user advocates that we can see on social media and that present nationally.

15:50.55

Laura Hayes

There's podcasts, you know, there's so many resources we can tap into so that we can see it in action and and recognize it. We're not we're not just in our own little world on an island, even though it feels like it.

16:04.41

Laura Hayes

And knowing that, you know, I made every single mistake you can make. So all of these things that I'm talking about come from a place of good heartedness and I do get it. I know how hard it is. I know that you've got 12 kids in a classroom or, you know, you you hardly slept last night because you're a parent and you have medical things that go alongside this diagnosis. And you can only take take it in small steps as it comes.

16:30.10

Sasha Long

Yeah. And it's, but it's, it's worth it in the long run for everyone. And, and yeah, and I love that advice to just go out there and seek advice because there are so many places now to get good advice from people.

16:43.80

Laura Hayes

And I think too, just that idea of when we unlock it well, communication is connection. That to me is why it's everything. That's why i will preach till the cows come home.

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Laura Hayes

That's why like I will work extra.

16:55.29

Sasha Long

Yeah.

16:56.40

Laura Hayes

i will do I will help my staff make the visuals. I will go into the classroom as much as they want or need me to because... when it is When we give them access, when we see their bodies calm down because they're regulated and they hear they know they're going to be acknowledged and understood, it's not just it's not a one-off.

17:18.58

Laura Hayes

It unlocks everything for both them and their communication partners. It reduces the stress of everybody in the classroom. So that's why it's so important because it's not just a word or getting a need met.

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Sasha Long

Yeah.

17:29.82

Laura Hayes

it's It's the connection piece.

17:32.15

Sasha Long

And like, and we, which you do what you just kind of touched on, and problem behavior too. I mean, so many teachers, that first high priority thing is, is problem behavior, which I get because if it's dangerous or could cause injury, I understand the priority, but like, this is how you get here. Like we could just name this episode, like proactive interventions. Cause it is, it's going to help decrease any, you know, potentially dangerous behaviors. This is the avenue to get there.

17:57.02

Laura Hayes

Yeah. And as someone who works for a pretty large metropolitan school district, I can tell you I've seen when someone, a student might transfer from an environment where they feel acknowledged and heard and understood felt and they feel regulated and into a new environment.

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Laura Hayes

And then you see that dysregulation dramatically increase and it puts everyone at risk. And so

18:19.48

Sasha Long

Yeah.

18:20.54

Laura Hayes

It's it's crucial. It's it's incredibly crucial. And I think that as much as we can possibly meet them where they are first, that that's what has to come. So, yeah, I totally agree.

18:34.01

Sasha Long

So you brought up something a few minutes ago that I wanted to pick your brain on. You brought up stimming. And I want to talk about and have you explain like the connection between stimming and communication and why it's important for teachers and families to understand stimming through this lens.

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Laura Hayes

So I think STEM in and of itself is right a big, big concept. And I have done multiple presentations on it. And I think that we can sometimes put it in a box like we do some of the other things we've mentioned and that it becomes a way to gatekeep communication.

19:08.60

Laura Hayes

So we say, oh, they're stimming on the device. It's not functional for them. They they can't use communication. they just They just stim. And so then we remove access to the thing that they need the most. So when we talk about stimming, I think it's really important to first define stimming, which, you know, stimming is that ability or is is that tool that someone might use to help them with regulation. But oftentimes it's seen as something perseverative or disruptive and,

19:38.26

Laura Hayes

not communicative. And so one of the things that we can do when we look at the connection between STEMI and AAC is first understand what it is, but then also look at it more closely and ask this question of, instead of asking, well, how do I stop this?

19:47.39

Sasha Long
you

19:58.81

Laura Hayes

Really start getting curious and asking, what is this telling me? What is this action telling me? Whether it be someone perseverating on the same button on their device or multiple messages on their device, or let's say they script with their device, those things, tough those are questions we can ask and then get the answers from and then find more supportive solutions versus kind of pathologizing the behavior without really truly understanding where it's coming from.

20:32.70

Sasha Long

i hear I've heard that before, that comment you made, you know, they're stimming on their device and we're just going to take it away. And again, it's like the easier solution, but not looking at long-term

goals.

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Sasha Long

What do you say when teachers say that to you? Like, oh, you know, they're just stimming on their device, so I took it away. Because obviously that's a big conversation to have.

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Laura Hayes

It is. and And there's multiple reasons that someone might say it, right? First and foremost, they think it's not functional. So that's a piece of it. And then also it can be quite disruptive to to their lesson, their planning, other students. so the first thing that we talk about is that the idea that it's maladaptive, right? It needs to be eliminated. We talk about, well, what strategies are in place for regulation? What does that look like? Do they have a sensory diet?

21:18.68

Laura Hayes

Because if we're not regulated, that nervous system is going to use it as a tool, understandably so, to help with regulation.

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Sasha Long

Yeah.

21:28.02

Laura Hayes

The other thing that we talk about is any predecesing behaviors or things that might be occurring before it happens, because Also, if we remove the device, they can't advocate to tell somebody that they're becoming dysregulated. So we look at, well, what does that look like? How are they communicating in those moments? Because if we don't have access to vocabulary, we are going to use universal communication, like behaviors, like gestures, like you know um vocalizations, potentially self-harming, self-injurious, or injurious to other people, behaviors that

22:08.76

Laura Hayes

because they don't have access to to words. If we've gone through those things, we that I then start start to talk to them about how stimming is an adaptive tool. And so if we then look at why, we answer those questions as to why.

22:27.32

Laura Hayes

Is it that they're brand new to their device and they're exploring the pages of their device? We know that children babble, that's part of

language development. So it could be that that is what's going on. They're trying to learn their device. Even if you hand a neurotypical child a device they don't that doesn't have literacy in particular,

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Laura Hayes

They're going to explore it. They're going say, oh, what does this mean?

22:51.07

Sasha Long

Mm-hmm.

22:51.95

Laura Hayes

They're going to get that feedback. So that's an important learning tool. So that is one of the things that I tackle the most is this is actually a learning tool. We just need to unlock why it's a learning tool and how they're using it.

23:05.34

Laura Hayes

So the first, I usually frame it in four different types of behaviors that someone might be, uh, characterizes stimming.

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Laura Hayes

One is the exploratory behaviors are babbling. The second is if they really hone in on a specific word. I had someone I supported one time who just loved to say chicken nuggets.

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Laura Hayes

I mean, chicken nuggets was his jam.

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Sasha Long

Mm-hmm.

23:29.62

Laura Hayes

Chicken nuggets. it was If it was like a um a DJ, I'd be like chicken nuggets, chicken nuggets, chicken nuggets, chicken nuggets, right?

23:34.36

Sasha Long

yeah

23:35.81

Laura Hayes

And I think that giving that feedback of yes, making sure they're acknowledged. Yes. Making sure that they know what chicken nuggets means is so, so crucial. And then just as somebody who would be saying the word chicken nuggets using their mouth words would be doing, I would give that natural feedback of, Oh,

23:58.20

Laura Hayes

Chicken nuggets is, I love chicken nuggets too, but you know what, we can have, we can talk about that at lunch, right? We can talk about chicken nuggets or we don't have chicken nuggets here right now. And then giving some modeling, giving some feedback because sometimes that missing piece is that it's just not acknowledged at all.

24:14.87

Laura Hayes

And acknowledgement is so crucial. My, well, I have four kids now, but at least three of them, because my youngest is not speaking yet, but three of them will say mom or a message to me until it is acknowledged.

24:28.00

Laura Hayes

and

24:28.02

Sasha Long

For sure. Yes, that's a great point.

24:29.27

Laura Hayes

Right? So we have to make sure we're acknowledging them and we have to give them that feedback or they're just going to continue to say the message. Then, and And then just making sure the second piece of that is acknowledging them and also modeling through the device.

24:44.08

Laura Hayes

So if we acknowledge them, but then we just move on and we're not touching the device, we're not actually talking through the device. We're not using their language. So how are they expected or how are we expecting them to be able to understand and use that language differently?

24:58.11

Laura Hayes

The third is the idea of scripting or using delayed epilogue on their device, whether that be I had one kid who was fast as lightning on their device, but would oftentimes go and script entire songs.

25:15.55

Laura Hayes

I've heard of some kids scripting entire passages of the Bible or books, and it's really difficult to break them of that on their device. And so again, then they're like, well, the device is a distraction because they're only doing that one function on it and they're not answering the questions I want them to answer.

25:31.94

Laura Hayes

But I think, again, the more we understand that idea of gestalt language processing and hold apart learning and scripting and ways that we can acknowledge and shape that for the better, the more we can really support through the device versus it being this, again, an all or nothing idea of, well, either they use it functionally the way I want them to use it or we pull it.

25:56.03

Laura Hayes

I think that's huge. And then there's the true, what I would call stimming or dysregulation piece of, I see their body, I see all the other things going on with them, and I can tell that right now is not an ideal time to communicate.

26:10.48

Sasha Long

Mm-hmm.

26:10.77

Laura Hayes

I oftentimes use my children or my husband or somebody that is worried a heated argument, right? And they, I can see that it's just really not the right time. I need to take a step back because they're not hearing what I have to say. It's not an ideal time for learning. Neither of us are a receptive.

26:27.86

Laura Hayes

Those are the moments where I truly think it's stimming and it might be looking at using either a light tech visuals where we have some picture supports or just kind of holding off on teaching in general until I see that regulation pieces is achieved. And then how do we achieve that? Right. How is their sensory system regulated? What is their best look like? That's a good question to ask if you see someone stimming a lot, because oftentimes it's accompanied by this idea of

26:59.35

Laura Hayes

while they're they're stimming and they don't want to communicate. And I just, that is like one of those things that is nails on a chalkboard

to me when someone says, oh, they don't want to communicate, nothing motivates them.

27:09.78

Laura Hayes

I just don't believe it.

27:11.26

Sasha Long

Yeah.

27:12.31

Laura Hayes

You know, people, non-speaking does not mean non-thinking. And I think that so much is going on underneath the surface, right? if We use that iceberg analogy. so It's just, you may not realize it, or they may not be wanting to communicate about what you want them to communicate, it doesn't mean that they're not thinking things. It doesn't mean that they don't have things that could be motivating. We just haven't figured it out yet. So what does their best look like? That is a question I often ask my teams when they're struggling.

27:41.40

Laura Hayes

Well, what does their best look like? And let's lean into that. Maybe we need to figure out ways to use things that are supportive when they're at their best in other ways.

27:51.29

Sasha Long

That was so helpful to break down kind of your four like frameworks and think about our different strategies based on really being curious. Like, is this a sign of dysregulation? Is this exploring? Is this just like, hey, I want to talk about chicken nuggets and how if we're curious and spend time thinking about what is this kind of, you know,

28:15.35

Sasha Long

communication attempt trying to get at that if we can pivot our strategies, we're likely creating a better environment for that learner.

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Laura Hayes

And another strategy I will sometimes use if we're still hitting a lot of roadblocks is I will actually say to them, I don't care what they said on the device. Like take that out for a second.

28:34.42

Laura Hayes

I want to know what happens before or after, you know, in the ABA world, we talk about antecedents, right? And consequences.

28:39.10

Sasha Long

Yeah.

28:39.94

Laura Hayes

And it's like, well, what what's happening before and after? That tells me as much, if not more sometimes as what is actually said on the device. And you'd be surprised at how many people have a hard time answering that question.

28:52.69

Laura Hayes

And I think once we start to look at it from that lens and we're more observatory in our strategies and our log notes, then we can really start to see patterns emerge.

29:02.97

Laura Hayes

And I think that can really be helpful in figuring out and and problem solving and getting over some of these um plateaus or back steps when we're having barriers with AAC success.

29:16.98

Sasha Long

Yes, that's a really good point. And I liked how you oftentimes use an analogy of a child that is speaking. How would we respond? And I think that like is really helpful for me to think about like, OK, yeah, if someone was just repeatedly saying chicken nuggets, what would I do?

29:33.47

Sasha Long

And i I use that analogy sometimes when talking to parents or or teachers that that want to take away a device or change a button on a device. I'm like, you can't like tape someone's mouth shut. Like if it was vocal, verbal right now, we couldn't just like press a magic button for this to stop. So same thing with this child.

29:50.23

Laura Hayes

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. And I think, Sometimes we'll say, oh yeah, I do do that. But the other piece of it is, do they also have rich opportunities where you're modeling on the device things that are important to them?

30:07.30

Laura Hayes

So if if we're only giving access or we're only modeling things that we think they should be saying in the classroom or basic wants and needs that they have access to other ways to get right at home,

30:07.58

Sasha Long

Mm-hmm.

30:22.90

Laura Hayes

it's not really meaningful for them. It's not intrinsically motivating. And so that's why that question of, well, what does their best look like when they're communicating with the device and you feel like you're seeing that connection and success. So it's it's both sides of the coin, right? It's making sure that we treat it as an extension of their voice and their their mouth words or their oral speech but also making sure that we are acknowledging it in ah in a meaningful way and we're giving access to meaningful language to build the connection piece.

30:55.70

Sasha Long

Yeah, that's such a good point because I was thinking about that. like if we're only using a device for like academic like questions, it's going to become aversive so quickly. Like, no, I want to talk about Minecraft or I want to talk about bubbles. Like I want to do something that I'm interested in, which is the same as we would do with another child.

31:10.58

Laura Hayes

And so much of that piece is you know, a teacher, right? I think about the response. I'm always thinking, okay, well, what would a teacher say to me in that in that instance? And they would say, but I have to, Laura, I have to meet all of these criteria. And this is, you know, I'm doing ULS or I have news to you or unique or something along those lines. And this is, I just don't have time to do all these other things that you're saying. So what oftentimes I will do in those situations is, well, let's embed Minecraft.

31:38.65

Laura Hayes

Let me help you find some some accessible videos or books about Minecraft. Or maybe we create quickly using ah using some resources on your PowerPoint slideshows and we put it in Google Slides and it's completely free.

31:55.03

Laura Hayes

And now, instead of just having academic curriculum, we have academic curriculum with their preferred interests. How much further would that go?

32:03.38

Sasha Long

Love that. And so much more fun.

32:07.16

Laura Hayes

Yeah. For everybody, right?

32:08.28

Sasha Long

For everyone, yes.

32:08.52

Laura Hayes

For, less yes. Yes. And again, like you're learning too. I love watching my seven-year-old, almost eight-year-old loves Minecraft. And so anytime I talk about it, I'm like, oh yeah, what is, what is the zombie?

32:20.54

Laura Hayes

And what is that thing? Right? So when, when my teams are learning too, it becomes way more fun and that connection is, is naturally built.

32:21.82

Sasha Long

i know, right?

32:29.20

Sasha Long

Awesome. Well, Laura, I could just like chat about this forever, but we'll wrap up here because I know people can go to, where can people go to learn more from you?

32:36.47

Laura Hayes

So I do have an Instagram, AAC underscore innovations, where I share a lot of free content. And I kind of run the gamut because AAC is such a big topic.

32:47.43

Laura Hayes

So I'll have things on there for beginners and for for more advanced learning. And then I have a website, which is tidyurl.com backslash AAC innovations.

33:02.17

Laura Hayes

I'm guessing these will probably be in the show notes too, but

33:03.77

Sasha Long

Yep. Okay.

33:04.95

Laura Hayes

But I have a lot of resources there, but I'm also i can put a teaser out. I'm also going to be part of a few conferences this year where I dive way more into stimming. And it will, if you've seen me present on the topic before, it will actually have a new resource that I'm working on to use. help and be more supportive because I it's just kind of how I'm built I want things that are practical and help in in the in the weeds right if we're what can we can be the most practical useful tool for teams so that is coming this year as well so definitely follow me and and kind of keep an eye out for those opportunities

33:41.04

Sasha Long

Oh, I love that. Okay, well, I will add all of those links to the show notes. And thank you so much, Laura.

33:46.46

Laura Hayes

thank you so much for having me it's been a pleasure