# AAC USER ABILITIES: *AAC COMPETENCIES*

∼definitions of "4 + 1" skill areas for guiding AAC intervention∼

Successful use of AAC includes proficiency in key four areas of competence. A fifth area (emotional competence) is suggested by Blackstone and Wilkins (2009). AAC Competencies guide our intervention and goal creation. Depending on the needs and abilities of the user of AAC, various AAC Competencies will be targeted in treatment and intervention. Goals are then based upon the user competencies and individualized for the user.

Use the descriptions below to determine which competencies are most appropriate to target with your user of AAC.

- [ ] **Operational Competence:** the skills required to use the AAC system or device.
  - o   Power device on and off, navigation, volume control etc.

- [ ] **Functional/Social Competence:** social skills that are involved in communication, such as skills in initiating, maintaining, and terminating communicative interactions in a socially, culturally, and contextually appropriate manner.
  - o   Use of SGD to complete interactions, communicate intent, repair communication breakdowns, etc.

- [ ] **Linguistic Competence:** the degree of receptive and expressive language development and knowledge of the linguistic code that is intended for use on the AAC system
  - o   Improving language use, expanding utterances, using appropriate grammar, syntax, etc.

- [ ] **Strategic Competence:** special skills that are unique to AAC-based communication, such as the ability to gain the listener's attention prior to selecting a symbol on a communication board, checking for partner comprehension, and repairing communicative breakdowns
  - o   Identifying communication breakdowns, knowing which AAC system to use in a given situation

- [ ] **Emotional Competence:** the development of an emotional vocabulary and utilizing that lexicon to relay feelings, beliefs, and thoughts.
  - o   Awareness of emotions; empathy, self-regulation, self-efficacy
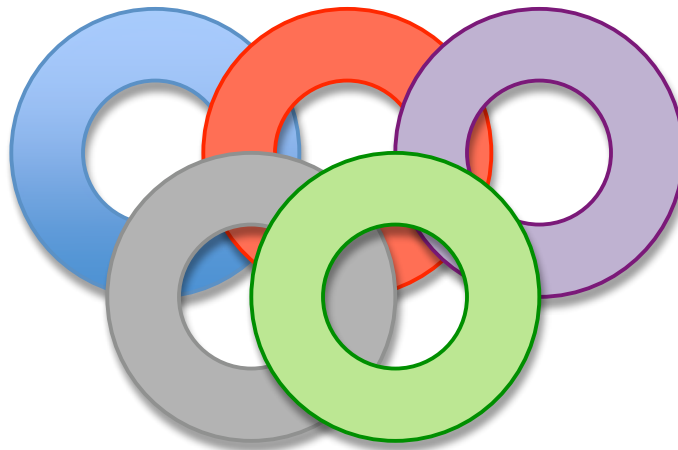
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Sarah W. Blackstone and David P. Wilkins (2009). *Exploring the Importance of Emotional Competence in Children With Complex Communication Needs.* In: Perspectives on Augmentative and Alternative Communication, 18, 78-87.

Additional references at http://rastresources.com