



## The Effects of an Online Training on Pre-service Speech-language Pathologists' Use of Family-centered Skills

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Why are family-centered services important for this population?

## What are family-centered services?

No matter where SLPs work, **they will be working with families.**

The way in which SLPs support and work with these families has the potential to enhance or to hinder child and family outcomes.



## What are family-centered services?

**SLPs are expected to deliver family-centered services.**

### Family-centered SLPs

- Recognize that each member of the family is important
- Develop a partnership with families characterized by trust, respect, and open communication
- Work together with families to make decisions in the best interest of the child



## Why pre-service SLPs?



Despite the **role** and **responsibility** of SLPs to provide family-centered services---

**Research suggests that many SLPs do not receive family-centered training in their pre-service programs.**

In order to deliver effective family-centered services, SLPs must be trained in specific skill sets to work effectively with children and their families.

### Relational skills

- compassion, active and reflective listening, empathy, and effective communication
- beliefs and attitudes about family strengths, values, and attitudes

## Why families of children who use AAC?

Although SLPs should provide family-centered services across all children and families, evidence suggests one group in which family-centered services are especially vital, but critically lacking—children with complex communication needs who use AAC.

Parents of children who use AAC want SLPs:

- To listen
- To form a relationship with them
- To encourage them to have a voice



Unfortunately, research suggests that this does not always happen.

## Purpose of Study

If services are NOT family-centered, there is a decreased likelihood of positive AAC outcomes.

Accordingly, SLPs must be trained in how to deliver effective family-centered services.



The purpose of this study was to improve the relational skills of pre-service SLPs during interactions with parents of children who use AAC.

Specifically, this study developed and evaluated an online training to teach a relational skills strategy to pre-service SLPs.

## Methods

### Participants

- 15 first-year graduate SLP students enrolled in AAC course

### Design

- Switching Replications

Group	Time point 1		Time point 2		Time point 3
Experimental	Role play (pre)	Training	Role play (post)		Role play (maintenance)
Control	Role play (pre)		Role play (pre)	Training	Role play (post)

## Materials

### Online Training

- Training Content (*what?*)
- Training Instructional Procedures (*how?*)



### Simulated Role plays

- Design of scenarios
- Simulated parent training



### Training Content: LAFF STRATEGY



LAFF CHECKLIST		
Step	✓	SLP behaviors
<b>L</b> LISTEN and show interest	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greet the parent, and offer some small chit chat
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask about the reason for meeting
Empathize	<input type="checkbox"/>	Make a statement of empathy and understanding
Communicate respect	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thank the parent for coming to meet you
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Show appropriate body language
<b>A</b> ASK questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask the parent for permission to take notes
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask relevant open-ended questions
<b>F</b> FOCUS on the issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	Summarize the parent's concerns
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for accuracy
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask if the parent would like to add anything
<b>F</b> Find a FIRST step	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider the information provided and identify a plan
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan a follow-up meeting

### Training Instructional Procedures

Strategy Instruction Stages	Components of the Online Training
Introduction	①Pre-test and make commitment
LAFF Strategy	②Description of strategy ③Demonstration of strategy ④Verbal practice of strategy steps
Practice Activities	⑤Controlled practice and feedback ⑥Advanced practice and feedback
Conclusion	⑦Post-test and commitments ⑧Generalization

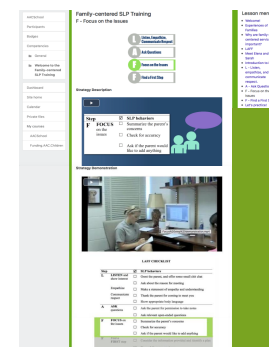


### Training Instructional Procedures

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Introduction	① <b>Pre-test and make commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video demonstrations of successful and unsuccessful parent-professional interactions</li> </ul>
LAFF Strategy	② <b>Description of strategy</b> ③ <b>Demonstration of strategy</b> ④ <b>Verbal practice of strategy steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text/audio description of the strategy skills</li> <li>Video model of the strategy skills</li> <li>Point-form open ended question to recall the strategy steps</li> </ul>
Practice Activities	⑤ <b>Controlled practice and feedback</b> ⑥ <b>Advanced practice and feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognition exercise: Video scenario with questions to assess recognition of the strategy skills</li> <li>Application exercise: Video scenario with pauses and prompts to demonstrate strategy skills               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed with the use of the LAFF checklist</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Conclusion	⑦ <b>Post-test and commitments</b> ⑧ <b>Generalization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final application exercise: Video scenario with pauses and prompts to demonstrate strategy steps               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed without the use of the LAFF checklist</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

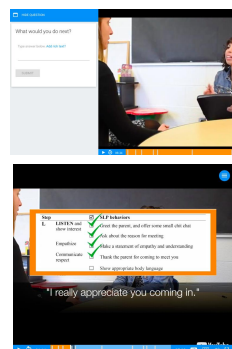
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### Simulated Role Plays

#### Simulated Parents

- Four doctoral students were trained to play the role of parents of a child who uses AAC.
- They were trained to use 4 statements during their interactions with the pre-service SLP.

#### Simulated Scenarios

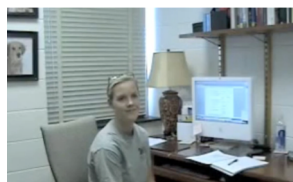
- Parents wanting a new AAC device
- Parents seeing no need for AAC, because of worries about the impact on spoken language
- Parents worrying about social isolation of their child because of AAC
- Parents feeling overwhelmed with the programming demands of the AAC device

## Procedures

### PARENT A—James Charles

Participant	Scenario Content
SLP	<p><b>Instructions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You received a message from the school secretary saying that Sarah's father, James Charles, would like to come in and meet you at 3:30, right after your last therapy session of the day.</li> <li>Read the background information and address the parent's concern as best you can.</li> </ul> <p><b>Background:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sarah is a 4-year-old pre-kindergarten student with Autism who was just added to your caseload. She received her diagnosis within the last year. She has been receiving speech therapy since 1 year of age. According to her intake report, she currently uses laminated picture symbols to communicate.</li> <li>It is the first week of school and you will start therapy with Sarah next week.</li> </ul>

Pre-service SLP received scenario 10 minutes before



Parent entered room where pre-service SLP was waiting

## Measures

### LAFF Scoring Rubric

DURING THE ROLE PLAY	
2) Did the SLP...	<input type="checkbox"/> Greet the parent <input type="checkbox"/> Ask about the reason for meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Make a statement of empathy <input type="checkbox"/> Thank the parent for coming to meet <input type="checkbox"/> Show appropriate body language
3) Did the SLP...	<input type="checkbox"/> Ask the parent for permission to take notes <input type="checkbox"/> Ask 2+ relevant, open-ended questions
4) Did the SLP...	<input type="checkbox"/> Summarize the parent's concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Check for accuracy <input type="checkbox"/> Ask if the parent would like to add anything
5) Did the SLP...	<input type="checkbox"/> Consider the information and identify a plan with the parent <input type="checkbox"/> Plan a follow-up meeting
Submit	

### Forced choice question by parent of child who used AAC

The parent viewed videos of the pre- and post-instruction role plays for each pre-service SLP, and answered the questions:

- If you were the parent in these videos, which interaction would you consider most effective and successful?
- In the video, what was the most effective behavior exhibited by the SLP?

## Results

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Mean LAFF Scores

Group	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
Experimental (n=8)	4.00	(.93)	9.00	(2.73)	9.38	(2.07)
Control (n=7)	4.43	(1.51)	4.00	(1.41)	10.14	(.90)

Mean Gain scores

Group	Time 1 to Time 2	Time 2 to Time 3
Experimental (n=8)	+5.00	+0.38
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All participants increased their use of the LAFF strategy following the completion of the online training.

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## Results

***If you were the parent in these videos, which interaction would you consider most effective and successful?***

- The parent selected the post-test video as more effective and successful for **14 of the 15** pre-service SLPs.

***What was the most effective behavior exhibited by the SLP?***

- The parent identified the following behaviors as "most effective":
  - Asking open-ended questions and taking time to ensure that the parent's concern is fully understood before proposing a solution (8x)
  - Keeping the conversation focused on the specific concern, and addressing it directly, without getting too carried away with suggestions and information (4x)
  - Showing empathy and understanding, and acknowledging the parent's concern as valid (2x)

## Results-Social Validity

100% of the participants stated that they would recommend that others learn the LAFF strategy.

88% agreed that an online environment was effective for teaching the LAFF strategy.

18% agreed that an in-person training would be more effective for teaching the strategy.



## Takeaways

Findings from this study suggest that an online training, that targeted an evidence-based strategy and incorporated strategy instruction procedures, was effective in teaching pre-service SLPs how to demonstrate a relational skills strategy during simulated interactions.

Many of the participants were also perceived as more family-centered by parents of children with disabilities, post-training.

## Takeaways

Findings from this study suggest that an online training, that targeted an evidence-based strategy and incorporated strategy instruction procedures, was effective in teaching pre-service SLPs how to demonstrate a relational skills strategy during simulated interactions.

### What are the clinical implications?

In this study, many of the pre-service SLPs were lacking in relational behaviors prior to training. Thus, there is a critical need for graduate programs to include family-centered content into their curricula.

For novice clinicians, strategies such as LAFF, can provide support, scaffolding, and improved confidence.

In this study, pre-service SLPs were taught how to demonstrate the relational skills strategy after a relatively short-period of online instruction.

Online environments may be an effective and efficient option for pre-service training and for teaching clinical skills in a non-traditional format.

## Limitations and Future Research

Small sample size	→	Larger groups of pre-service SLPs from a range of programs and geographic locations.
Use simulated parents, lack of generalization	→	Implementation with real parents of children who use AAC
Sole focus on LAFF and AAC	→	Consider other family-centered skills, and other populations
Lack of cultural diversity	→	Include scenarios with simulated parents from diverse backgrounds, and concerns that may stem from cultural diversity

Although relational skills are just one set of skills that contribute to a family-centered approach, they are vital when providing services to families with children with CCN.

Families want SLPs to listen to them, form a relationship with them, and encourage them to have a voice. By providing family-centered services, SLPs can increase the likelihood of forming trusting and collaborative relationships with families and promoting positive AAC outcomes.



This study investigated one approach to improving family-centered service provision, but future research in this area is essential, in order to improve pre-service training and ensure increased delivery of family-centered services.

Thank you!

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