Aided Language Modelling

What is it Aided Language Modelling (ALM)?
Synonyms: Aided Language Input (ALI), Aided Language Stimulation (AlgS), Focused Language Stimulation

ALM is the strategy of modeling language by using the AAC system as you speak. This provides both visual and auditory input for the student. ALM can be done on a variety of communication systems (e.g. core communication book, speech generating device, etc.).

ALM can involve:
- Pointing to pictures while speaking your own message.
  E.g. "I like it" (pointing to the symbols "like", "like + it", or "I + like + it" while speaking)

- Modelling what a student might say verbally and pointing.
  E.g. "You like it" while pointing to 'like'

- Reflecting back and expanding on what a child has communicated by 1 to 2 words.
  E.g. If a student points to 'like,' the adult could reflect back and expand saying, "like it", "you like it", or "You're telling me… 'I + like + it'."

Tips for the communication partner:
- Model a variety of communicative functions (e.g. directing, requesting, commenting, asking questions) and word combinations.
- It is not necessary to model every word that you are saying using ALM. Aim to model 1 or 2 words beyond the student's current expressive language ability.
- Assume competence and RESPOND to the student's attempts to communicate. Provide natural consequences to the message even if it seems like it may have been a mistake. This will help the student learn the meaning of what they have communicated if it was an error.
- Words may be modeled and used in multiple meanings and forms when needed.
  E.g. look/see, do/did/does, is/am/are.

Is it really that important to use ALM?
YES! ALM is a critical strategy to implement with AAC users in order to achieve successful implementation of a communication system. We cannot just place a communication system in front of a student and expect them to become skilled communicators. If the communication system is not modeled, it would be similar to expecting someone to learn to speak a language that they had not been exposed to.

"[An AAC system] alone does not make someone a competent communicator any more than a piano makes a musician or a basketball and a hoop make an athlete." (Beukelman & Mirenda, 1998)

Who could benefit from the use of ALM?
All children/students/learners benefit from modelling of language and vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

Who should implement ALM?
Everyone! This is not a strategy reserved for speech-language pathologists.   Some of the best implementers will likely be people that are in most frequent contact with the student – school teams and families. Peers can also be great language models by using the AAC system when they communicate with the student.

What words are most important to model and elicit?
It is most important to model *core vocabulary*. Core vocabulary words are words that are used frequently and across contexts. 80% of the words we use daily come from a set of 350-400 core words. E.g. want, help, finished, again, I

The other 20% of vocabulary that we use is called ***fringe vocabulary***. Fringe vocabulary is used in a limited number of contexts and for a limited number of functions. E.g. museum, funny, coniferous, Jupiter, potato

When asking students questions or trying to assess a student's knowledge…
- Try to ask questions that allow the student to respond using core vocabulary.
  E.g. "Tell me about Jupiter?" Answer: 'big', 'round', 'blue'
- Avoid asking too many questions that require a student to respond using fringe vocabulary that will not be useful in more contexts and may not be in the student's AAC system.
  E.g. "What is the name of this planet?" Answer: "Jupiter"

How often do we need to model?
People should aim to use the AAC system to **model 20 times per hour.** - Pat Mirenda, 2014

"The typically developing child will have been exposed to oral language for approximately 4,380 waking hours by the time he begins speaking at about 18 months of age. If someone is using a different symbol set and only has exposure to it two times a week, for 20 – 30 minutes each, it will take the alternate symbol user 84 years to have the same experience with his symbols that the typically developing child has with the spoken word in 18 months."   - Jane Korsten

Typical children hear 4000-6000 words per day for about a year before they say their first words. They then hear 4000-6000 words per day for a second year before they start to put two words together. Typically developing children may hear 'Daddy' modelled 5000 times before they say it.
                                                                                                                    - Dr. Caroline Musselwhite
Videos
- *Aided Language Modelling Explained* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flFNMky22-U
- *One Kids Place Aided Language* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUY6oQoSTXw
- Mother modelling ALM at home https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sz41DBj6aUY

Webinar
- *Language Stimulation – Make It Interactive and FUN!* By Dr. Caroline Musselwhite.
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOr7MO7ZnzM