

Soto, G. (1994). *Teachers' beliefs toward students with severe communication impairments and their use of AAC systems*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, West Lafayette. Lyle L. Lloyd (Advisor): 146 pages of text, 97 references, 7 appendices, 11 tables, and 2 figures.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate special education teachers' attitudes toward the provision and use of AAC systems by students with severe communication impairments. Classroom teachers are assuming an increasing amount of responsibility in AAC training for students with severe disabilities. To achieve the cooperation necessary to provide quality services, AAC professionals need to be sensitive to how their programs are perceived by those delivering direct services, i.e., classroom teachers. A focus group of professionals serving AAC users was utilized to define the variable under study and to develop a survey instrument which was sent to 317 special education teachers of a Midwestern State. The survey instrument was designed to obtain information regarding respondents' (a) demographic characteristics; (b) past experiences using AAC systems; (c) exposure to formal information on AAC; (d) attitudes toward teaching communication skills to students with severe or multiple disabilities; (e) perceptions of their own abilities to facilitate the use of AAC systems; (f) perceptions of their students' abilities to learn to communicate more effectively; (g) perceptions of their role and responsibility in providing communication training to their students; (h) perceptions of practical constraints to the use of AAC systems in their classrooms; and (i) intentions to provide and use AAC systems in their classrooms.

Data from the survey were analyzed using structural equation modeling techniques. Results of the data analysis indicate that teachers' perceptions of their students' abilities to learn to communicate more effectively was the strongest predictor of their intentions to provide and use AAC systems in the classroom. However, teachers' perceptions of students' abilities appeared to be strongly affected by perceptions of their own skills and responsibilities to provide communication training in the classroom. Teachers' past experience using an AAC option also appeared to have a positive influence over their willingness to provide and use AAC in the classroom. Most of the hypothesized relationships among the variables could not be proven significant and, therefore, the overall model was not confirmed by the data.

Limitations involved in the methodology used to developed and test the model, implications of the results, and future research directions are presented in the discussion.