# ---Tip Sheet for Professionals---

**AAC**

## AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION IS...

- A system of communicaiton that is not verbal/vocal including aided and unaided communication systems
- Used to increase a target goal/behavior/skill and/or to decrease an interfering/inappropriate/challenging behavior

## WHY USE WITH LEARNERS WITH AUTISM?

- AAC provides an alternate means of expressive communication when a learner has limited words or verbal communication.
- AAC uses visual supports to make abstract social and communication concepts more concrete for learners with autism.
- The technology used in AAC devices may be motivating to learners with autism.

## INSTRUCTIONAL OUTCOMES:

- The evidence-base for this practice supports its use to address the following outcomes, according to age range, in the table below:

### TIPS:

- Work with your entire team lead by an SLP, to conduct an AAC assessment to identify the learner's present level of communication and the best AAC device for their skills and goals.
- Involve the learner and the learner's family in discussing tech and AAC preferences.
- Explore funding options in your area for acquiring an AAC device.

## EVIDENCE-BASE:

|  | ACADEMIC | CHALLENGING | COMMUNICATION | JOINT ATTENTION | MOTOR | PLAY | SOCIAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0-2 |  |  | Yes | Yes |  | Yes | Yes |
| 3-5 | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |  | Yes | Yes |
| 6-11 | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |  | Yes | Yes |
| 12-14 |  |  | Yes |  |  |  |  |
| 15-18 |  |  | Yes |  | Yes |  | Yes |

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication**
**AAC**

This sheet was designed as a supplemental resource to provide basic information about this evidence-based practice for professionals working with learners with autism.

For more information about this selected evidence-based practice, please visit https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/.

## STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING:

1. **PLAN**
   - Determine if an AAC assessment may be appropriate for a learner
   - Conduct an AAC assessment
   - Discuss technology and AAC preferences with family and learner
   - Identify available AAC resources
   - Select additional EBPs for teaching use of the AAC system
   - Plan opportunities for the learner to use AAC
   - Identify and train team members
   - Prepare and have materials ready and available

2. **USE**
   - Teach learner to use AAC device
   - Understand formalized AAC teaching approaches
   - Give reinforcement
   - Ensure consistent use of AAC across settings

3. **MONITOR**
   - Collect data and analyze data
   - Monitor use of AAC across settings
   - Troubleshoot issues if needed
   - Determine next steps based on learner progress

# ---Parent's Guide---

**AAC**

## Augmentative and Alternative Communication AAC

This parent introduction to AAC was designed as a supplemental resource to help answer questions about this practice.

To find out more about how this AAC is being used with your child, please talk with:

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For more information about this selected evidence-based practice, please visit **https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/** .

## WHAT IS AAC?

- AAC is a system of communicaiton that is not verbal/vocal
- Unaided communication systems do not use any materials or technology (e.g., sign language and gestures)
- Aided communication systems use some type of material or device and can include low tech systems (e.g., exchanging objects/pictures) or high-tech systems (e.g., battery powered speech output devices).
- AAC is used to increase a target goal/behavior/skill and/or to decrease an interfering/inappropriate/challenging behavior

## WHY USE THIS AAC WITH MY CHILD?

- Communication is a basic human right that is essential for student success in academic and non-academic settings.
- AAC uses visual supports to make abstract social and communication concepts more concrete for learners with autism.
- AAC can support communication across the school setting and at home.

## WHAT ACTIVITIES CAN I DO AT HOME?

- Encourage use of the AAC system during all daily routines, including extra-curricular activities, on errands and to visits with friends and family.
- Use the AAC system to support choice-making at home, for example during mealtimes or leisure time.
- Use the AAC system to allow your learner to respond to questions throughout the day.

# ---Additional Resources---

**AAC**

**Check out these resources, applications, books, and websites, to support your use of this evidence-based practice.**
**For more information about this selected evidence-based practice, please visit** **https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/** .

## APPLICATIONS:

| | Developer | | Available | Pricing |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Cboard org | *Cboard* | Mac App Store or Google Play Store | Free |
| | Digital Scribbler, Inc. | *Quick Talk AAC* | Mac App Store or Google Play Store | $24.99 |
| | Prentke Romich Company | *LAMP Words for Life app* | Mac App Store | $299.99 |
| | Prentke Romich Company | *TouchChat HD* | Mac App Store | $299.99 |
| | Prentke Romich Company | *Dialogue AAC* | Mac App Store | $99.99 |

## BOOKS:

Ganz, B., & Simpson, R. L. (2018). *Interventions for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and complex communication needs: Supports and Intervention Strategies (AAC).* Brookes Publishing.

McNaughton, D. B., & Beukelman, B. R. (2010). *Transition strategies for adolescents and young adults who use AAC.* Brookes Publishing.

Mirenda, P., & Iacono, T. (2008). *Autism Spectrum Disorders and AAC.* Brookes Publishing.

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# ---Glossary---

AAC

Below are the key terms that apply specifically to this evidence-based practice.

For more information about this selected evidence-based practice, please visit https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/ .

**Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)**
interventions that use a system of communication that is not verbal/vocal including aided and unaided communication systems

**Augmented Input (Aided Language Modelling)**
a receptive language training approach in which the communication partner provides spoken words along with AAC symbols during communication tasks

**Baseline data**
information gathered from multiple sources to better understand the target behavior, before using an intervention or practice; data collected on current performance level prior to implementation of intervention

**Core Vocabulary Approach**
an AAC teaching strategy that uses a board with commonly used vocabulary words that can be applied across settings

**Expressive Communication**
one's ability to communicate thoughts and feelings through words, gestures, or facial expressions

**Functional Behavior Assessment**
an evidence-based practice used to assist a team in understanding the function or purpose of a specific interfering behavior

**Functional Communication Training**
an approach that focuses on basic communication skills like expressing wants and needs for the AAC learner

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**High-tech AAC system**
an aided-communication system or device that relies on technology such as speech-generating devices (SGDs) and applications that allow other devices (e.g., phones, tablets) to serve as SGDs

**Implementation checklist**
the specific steps needed to accurately follow an evidence-based practice.

**Interfering behavior**
a challenging behavior that interferes with the learner's ability to learn

**Language Acquisition Through Motor Planning (LAMP)**
an AAC teaching strategy in which the learner selects works and builds sentences on a voice output device using consistent motor plans to access vocabulary

**Low-tech AAC system**
an aided-communication system, material or device that requires minimal technology such as exchanging objects/pictures or pointing to letters

**Modeling**
an evidence-based practice that involves the learner observing someone correctly performing a target behavior

**Pragmatic Organization Dynamic Display (PODD)**
a system of organizing and selecting words or symbol vocabulary on a low-tech or high-tech AAC system

**Peer-mediated Intervention**
an evidence-based practice in which peers receive training from an adult to deliver social initiations or instructions in a way that supports the learning goals of the learner with autism

**Prompting**
an evidence-based practice that will assist the learner in using specific skills; prompts can be verbal, gestural, or physical

**Receptive communication**
one's ability to understand thoughts and feelings expressed by others through words, gestures, or facial expressions

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**Reinforcement**
an evidence-based practice that provides feedback that increases the use of a strategy or target behavior/skill

**Speech-generating device (SGD)**
a high-tech AAC option that allows a person to communicate using a computer that generates an electronic voice

**Team members**
includes the parents, other primary caregivers, IEP/IFSP team members, teachers, therapists, early intervention providers, and other professionals involved in providing services for the learner with autism

**Time Delay**
an evidence-based practice used to fade the use of prompts during instructional activities by using a brief delay between the initial instruction and any additional instructions or prompts

**Total Communication (TC)**
a holistic approach to communication that promotes the use of all modes of communication including sign language, spoken language, gestures, facial expression, and environmental cues such as pictures and sounds

**Visual Supports**
an evidence-based practice that provides concrete cues that are paired with, or used in place of, a verbal cue to provide the learner with information about a routine, activity, behavioral expectation, or skill demonstration

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## ---References---

**AAC**

Listed below, in numerical order, are the references used in the module.

For more information about this selected evidence-based practice, please visit **https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/** .

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# ---CEC Standards---

**AAC**

Below are the CEC Professionals Standards that apply specifically to Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC).

The CEC Standards that apply to all 28 evidence-based practices (EBPs) can be found on our website at https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/ .

## Initial Practice-Based Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood (0-5 years; CEC, 2020)

### STANDARD 4: ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

4.1    Candidates understand the purposes of formal and informal assessment, including ethical and legal considerations, and use this information to choose developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate, valid, reliable tools and methods that are responsive to the characteristics of the young child, family, and program

### STANDARD 5: APPLICATION OF CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS IN THE PLANNING OF MEANINGFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

5.1    Collaborate with families and other professionals in identifying an evidence-based curriculum addressing developmental and content domains to design and facilitate meaningful and culturally responsive learning experiences that support the unique abilities and needs of all children and families.

### STANDARD 6: USING RESPONSIVE AND RECIPROCAL INTERACTIONS, INTERVENTIONS, AND INSTRUCTION

6.1    In partnership with families, identify systematic, responsive, and intentional evidence-based practices and use such practices with fidelity to support young children's learning and development across all developmental and academic content domains.

6.2    Candidates engage in reciprocal partnerships with families and other professionals to facilitate responsive adult-child interactions, interventions, and instruction in support of child learning and development.

6.3    Candidates engage in ongoing planning and use flexible and embedded instructional and environmental arrangements and appropriate materials to support the use of interactions, interventions, and instruction addressing developmental and academic content domains, which are adapted to meet the needs of each and every child and their family.

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### STANDARD 6: USING RESPONSIVE AND RECIPROCAL INTERACTIONS, INTERVENTIONS, AND INSTRUCTION (CONTINUED)

6.4    Candidates promote young children's social and emotional competence and communication, and proactively plan and implement function-based interventions to prevent and address challenging behaviors.

6.5    Candidates identify and create multiple opportunities for young children to develop and learn play skills and engage in meaningful play experiences independently and with others across contexts.

6.7    Candidates plan for, adapt, and improve approaches to interactions, interventions, and instruction based on multiple sources of data across a range of natural environments and inclusive settings.

### STANDARD 7: PROFESSIONALISM AND ETHICAL PRACTICE

7.2    Engage in ongoing reflective practice and access evidence-based information to improve own practices.

## Initial Practice-Based Standards for Grades K-12 (CEC, 2020)

### STANDARD 2: UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING EACH INDIVIDUAL'S DEVELOPMENTAL AND LEARNING NEEDS

2.1    Apply understanding of human growth and development to create developmentally appropriate and meaningful learning experiences that address individualized strengths and needs of students with exceptionalities.

### STANDARD 3: DEMONSTRATING SUBJECT MATTER CONTENT AND SPECIALIZED CURRICULAR KNOWLEDGE

3.2    Candidates augment the general education curriculum to address skills and strategies that students with disabilities need to access the core curriculum and function successfully within a variety of contexts as well as the continuum of placement options to assure specially designed instruction is developed and implemented to achieve mastery of curricular standards and individualized goals and objectives.

### STANDARD 4: USING ASSESSMENT TO UNDERSTAND THE LEARNER AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING

4.1    Collaboratively develop, select, administer, analyze, and interpret multiple measures of student learning, behavior, and the classroom environment to evaluate and support classroom and school-based systems of intervention for students with and without exceptionalities.

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### STANDARD 4: USING ASSESSMENT TO UNDERSTAND THE LEARNER AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING (CONTINUED)

4.3    Assess, collaboratively analyze, interpret, and communicate students' progress toward measurable outcomes using technology as appropriate, to inform both short- and long-term planning, and make ongoing adjustments to instruction.

### STANDARD 5: SUPPORTING LEARNING USING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

5.1    Candidates use findings from multiple assessments, including student self-assessment, that are responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity and specialized as needed, to identify what students know and are able to do. They then interpret the assessment data to appropriately plan and guide instruction to meet rigorous academic and non-academic content and goals for each individual.

5.2    Candidates use effective strategies to promote active student engagement, increase student motivation, increase opportunities to respond, and enhance self-regulation of student learning.

5.6    Candidates plan and deliver specialized, individualized instruction that is used to meet the learning needs of each individual.

### STANDARD 6: SUPPORTING SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND BEHAVIORAL GROWTH

6.2    Candidates use a range of preventive and responsive practices documented as effective to support individuals' social, emotional, and educational well-being.

### STANDARD 7: COLLABORATING WITH TEAM MEMBERS

7.2    Candidates collaborate, communicate, and coordinate with families, paraprofessionals, and other professionals within the educational setting to assess, plan, and implement effective programs and services that promote progress toward measurable outcomes for individuals with and without exceptionalities and their families.

# Contact Info

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*Presented by Hali Strickler, M.A., CCC-SLP*
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