

## What are 3 things I can do to help?

- 1) If you see an AAC user without their communication system, provide a friendly reminder that the AAC system or low tech back up should be available at all times.
- 2) Make an effort to model communication by speaking and using the AAC system. We call this providing "aided language modelling" and it is the BEST way to help an AAC user learn to use their system.
- 3) Encourage teams to focus on 'core vocabulary' - words that make up 80% of what we say and are useful across contexts (e.g. go, help, look).

### You might be surprised to know:

- 97% of communication is non-verbal. We all use non-verbal means of communication to augment speech (e.g. gestures, writing, text, emoji's, photos, etc.).
- A lot of what you already know about working with verbal students can be applied to working with non-verbal students to build communication and literacy skills.
- No one is 'too old' or 'too low' for AAC or literacy instruction that is accessible to them.
- Behavior can be communicative. You may see students displaying 'negative behavior' when they do not have their AAC system available or have not yet been taught to appropriately communicate words such as, 'look', 'finished', 'help', or to request other needs be met (e.g. sensory needs).

"Everyone has an inner voice and I found a way to get mine out."

- Carly Fleischmann  
AAC User  
\*Check out Carly's YouTube Channel

## Happy Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Awareness Month!

October is AAC Awareness Month so the VSB SLPs would like to take this opportunity to share a little information about AAC, our students, what we do, what you can do, and how to refer to us.





### What is AAC?

AAC stands for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. AAC systems can include things like communication books, speech generating devices, and sign language. AAC provides a way for student's to express themselves.

### Who is on the AAC Speech-Language Pathologist's (SLP) caseload?

Approximately 200 students in our district who need a system to either augment their speech or as an alternative to speech. Students may:

- Have speech difficulties that make it difficult to understand them or have extremely limited verbal output.
- Be non-speaking.

“Communication is a basic human right”

### What does an AAC SLP do?

The primary role of the AAC SLP is to support school teams working with students who are functionally non-speaking.

### The AAC SLP provides primarily consultative services which may include:

- Observation and Assessment
- Consultation with the student's team (e.g. school team, caregivers, other professionals)
- Support with the development of communication related goals
- Education relating to strategies and implementation of AAC systems
- Support AAC Implementation
- Liaising and/or collaborating with outside agencies and service providers (e.g. CFA, SET-BC, CAYA, private SLPs, etc.).
- Student specific, classroom based, and district professional development and training.

### What do I do if I think a student may need AAC?

**Elementary:** Bring the child to school based team with your school SLP present. Your school SLP can help you determine if AAC SLP support is needed and if it is, help you through the referral process.

**Secondary:** Contact District Learning Services or one of the AAC SLPs listed below and we can direct you to your AAC SLP who can connect with you to help you determine if AAC may be appropriate, provide a referral form, and help you to complete the form if needed.

### Contact Us

**VSBC AAC SLPs:** Kristy Stefanucci, Sarah Nowland, Chichi Mgbemena, Megan Bamburak, Rhiann Grills, Dora Malone

District Learning Services

Garibaldi Annex

1025 Slocan Street

V5K 3Y2

Vancouver, B.C.