Collaboration is Key: Supporting Families using AAC in Homes from Birth to Three

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North Carolina Department of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Office of Exceptional Children

Learner Objectives

- The learner will describe the benefits of AAC for young children with hearing loss, including those who are DeafBlind and/or Deaf with Disabilities.

- The learner will be able to discuss the role of the TOD/HH in supporting families using AAC devices and the importance of collaborative team approaches

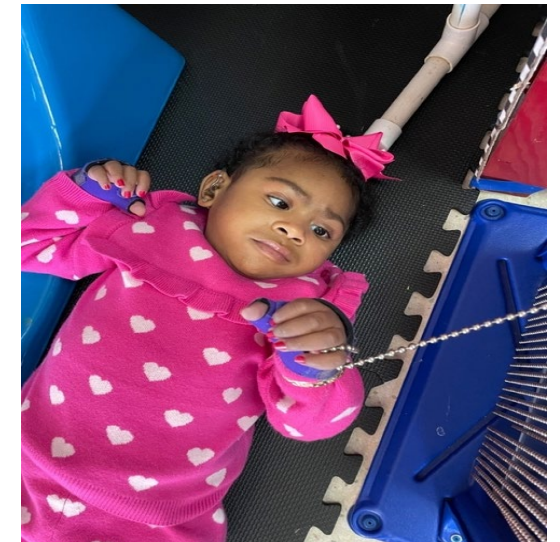- The learner will identify three resources for supporting families using AAC.
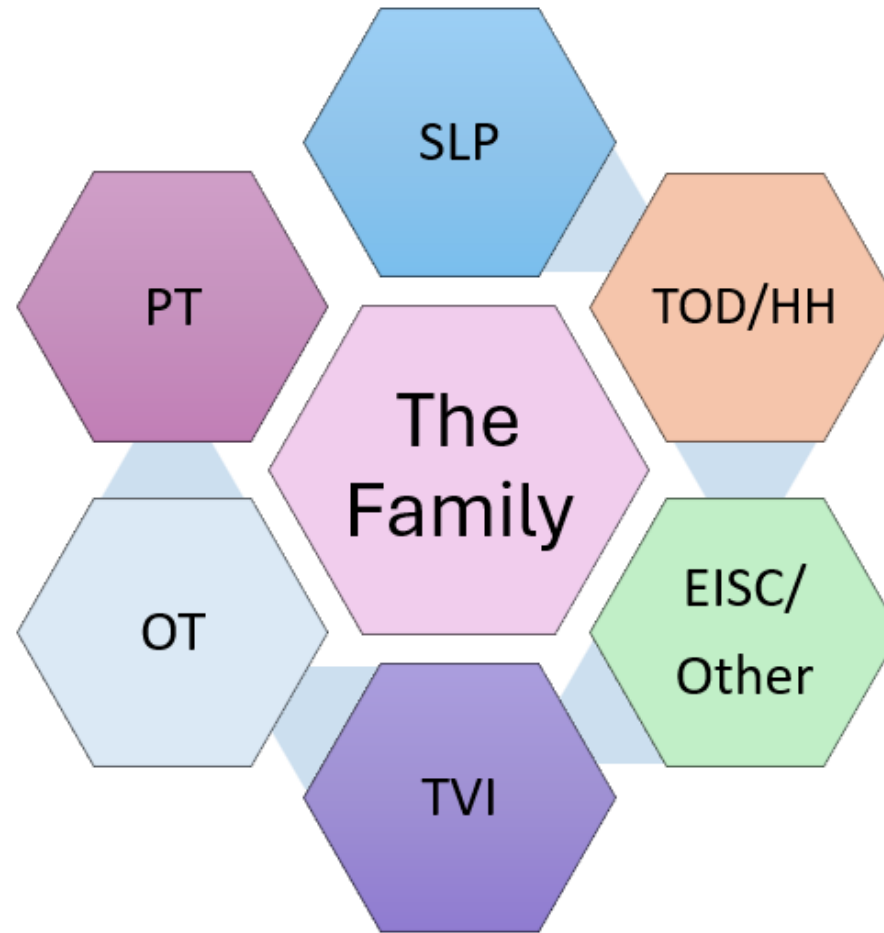
Of all the life skills available to us, communication is perhaps the most empowering.

Bret Morrison

quotefancy

Collaboration is Key!

The hexagon diagram shows "The Family" in the center surrounded by: SLP, TOD/HH, EISC/Other, TVI, OT, PT

Communication is Power!

Communication Functions!
The Many Reasons We Communicate!
Instruct Disagree Describe Greet
Pretend Comment Tell a story Protest
Remind Gossip Agree Request
Compliment Negotiate
Tell on someone Express opinions
Share information Answer questions
Get attention Express a feeling
Share an idea Argue Direct Tell secrets
Discuss an interest Share physical needs
Get help Whine Joke Make choices
Ask questions Clarify Flirt Complain Etc!
Each helps us build relationship and share ourselves with the world.
@the.aac.coach

Each helps us build relationship and share ourselves with the world.

-The AAC Coach

Amanda Hartman

Speech Language Pathologist
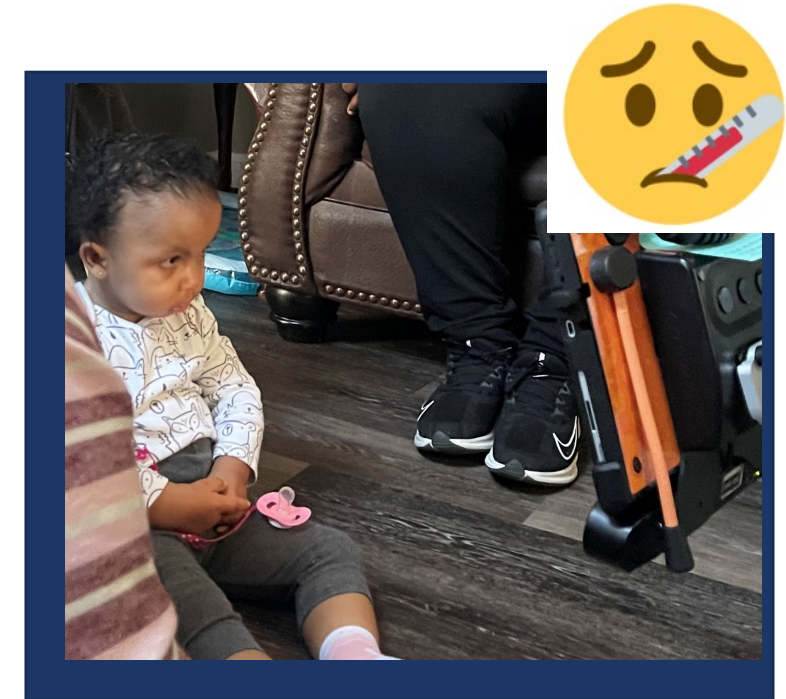
The Power of Communication

The power of communication is being able to be understood. It's not just about getting our wants and needs met but being able to fully express ourselves and build connections.-Dale Porter

Eva – 18 months
Tactile Communication System
Voice Output

Anna - 2 years 4 months
IPad Mini with LAMP Voice Output

Issa-2 years old
Zuvo 12-D speech generating device with Eyespeak Eye Gaze Camera

What is Augmentative Communication?

Any device, system or method that improves the ability of a child with communication impairment to communicate effectively. The inclusion of a variety of different augmentative communication strategies is particularly important for young children and may include a program that uses devices, signing, gestures and pictures.
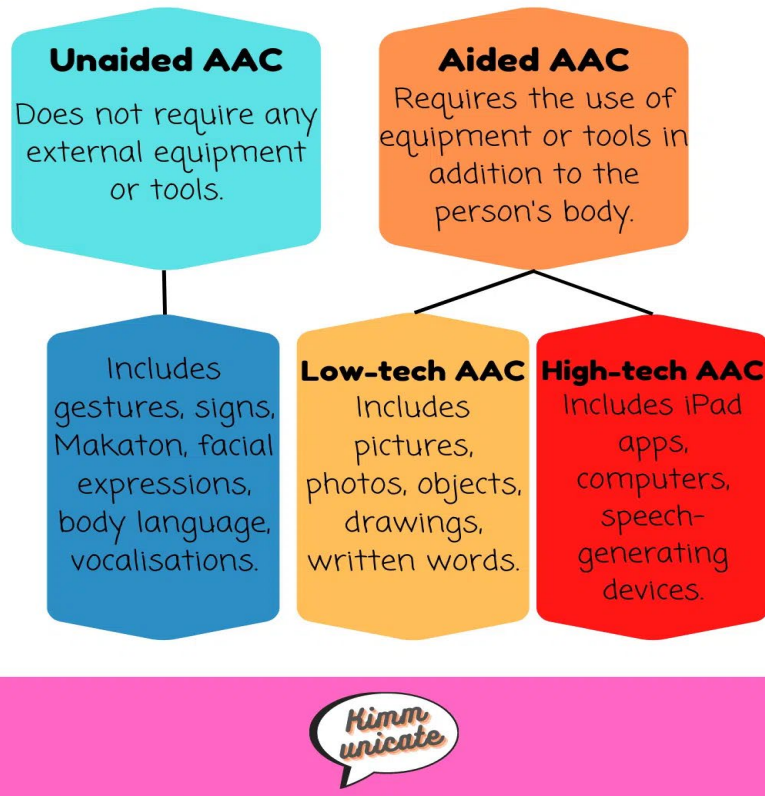
Items may include but are not limited to:
* picture or object communication boards
* symbol systems
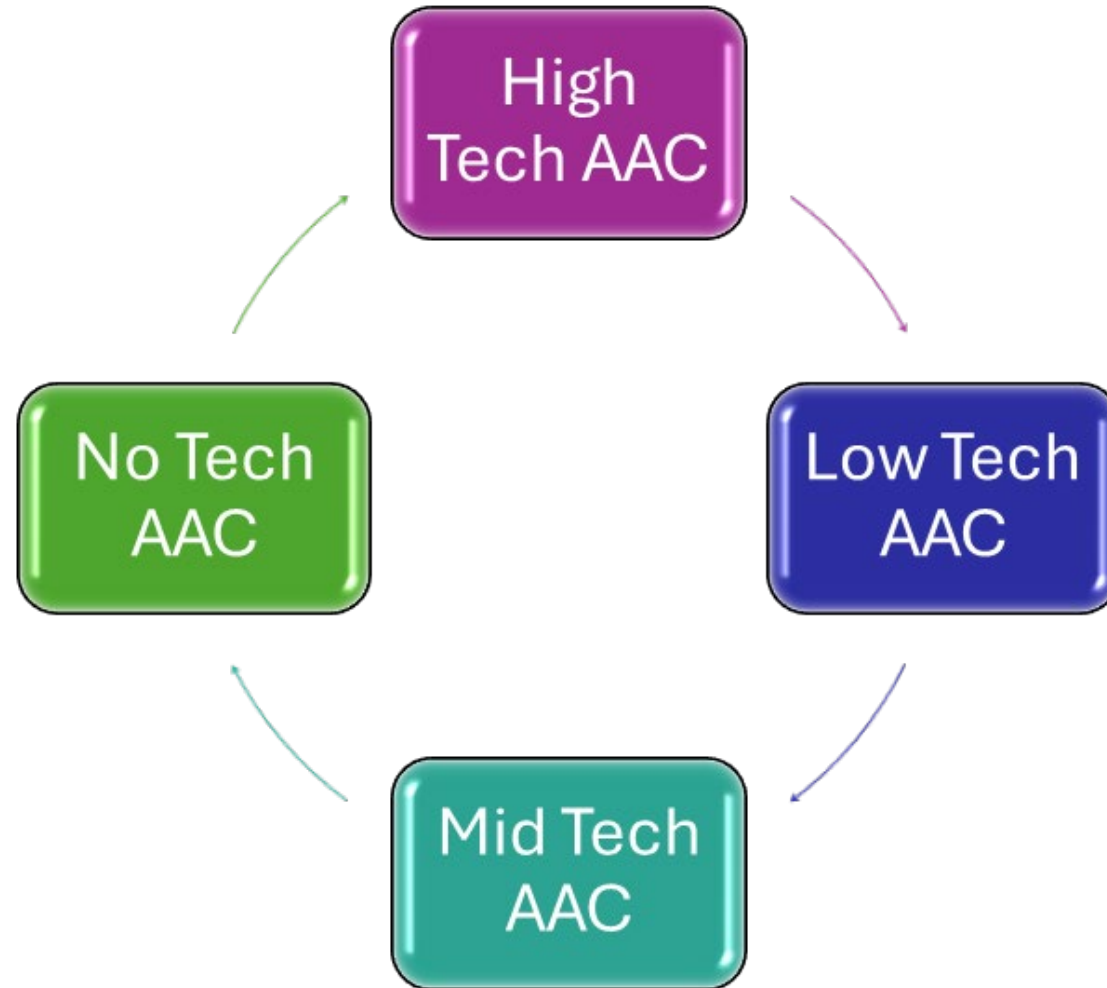* voice output devices

Types of AAC

Types of AAC

- Unaided
- Aided
- No Tech
- Low Tech
- Mid Tech
- High Tech

The AAC Continuum

AAC Myth Busters

OSEP Myths and Facts

AAC Myth #1

Using AAC will hinder spoken language development.

FACT: Research shows that AAC interventions and systems help children to develop language skills across a variety of domains.

(Jensen, Douglas, and Gerde, 2023)

FACT: AAC has been found to increase natural speech when therapy utilizes a multimodal approach of simultaneously targeting AAC and spoken communication. (Millar, Light, and Schlosser, 2006)
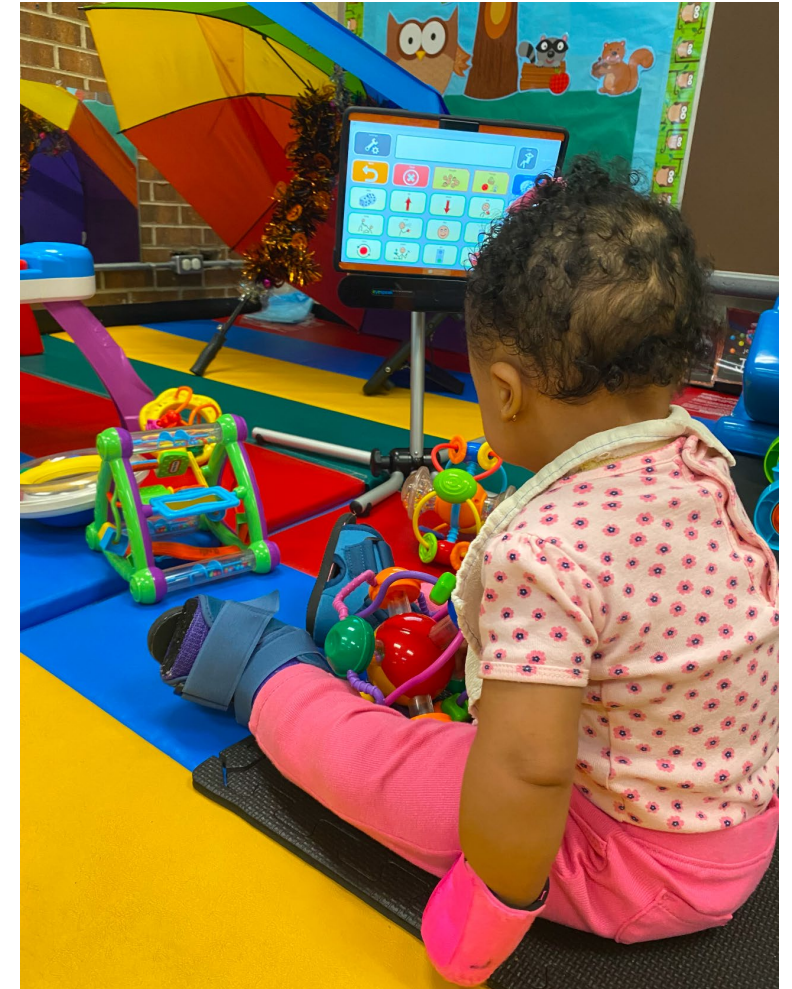
AAC Myth #2

Young children are not able to use and understand AAC.

FACT: Early introduction of AAC can aid in the development of natural speech and language (Lüke, 2014; Romski et al., 2010; Wright, Kaiser, Reikowsky, & Roberts, 2013) and can increase expressive and receptive vocabulary for children younger than 3. (Romski, Sevcik, Barton-Hulsey, & Whitmore, 2015; Brady, 2000; Drager et al., 2006).

FACT: The evidence strongly indicates that [augmentative and alternative communication] AAC does not hinder the development of speech at the very beginning stages of language acquisition." (Romski et al., 2015)

AAC Myth #3

A child should demonstrate prerequisite skills before AAC is introduced.

FACT: Research shows that children can be successful using AAC without demonstrating prerequisite skills (Beukelman & Light, 2020; Romski et al., 2015). Using the AAC system is educational. Studies related to AAC note that even young children develop visual motor, cause and effect, language processing, and language skills as they use AAC systems (Maue, 2022). (Jensen et al., 2023)

Communication Access for All

 "There are no prerequisite skills for AAC. You do not have to be a particular age to be eligible for AAC. There are no behavioral or cognitive prerequisite skills that need to be demonstrated before AAC can be introduced. Any person with communication difficulties, regardless of age or diagnosis, should be given the chance to learn to communicate using AAC."-Amanda C. Hartmann

Case Study - Aubrey
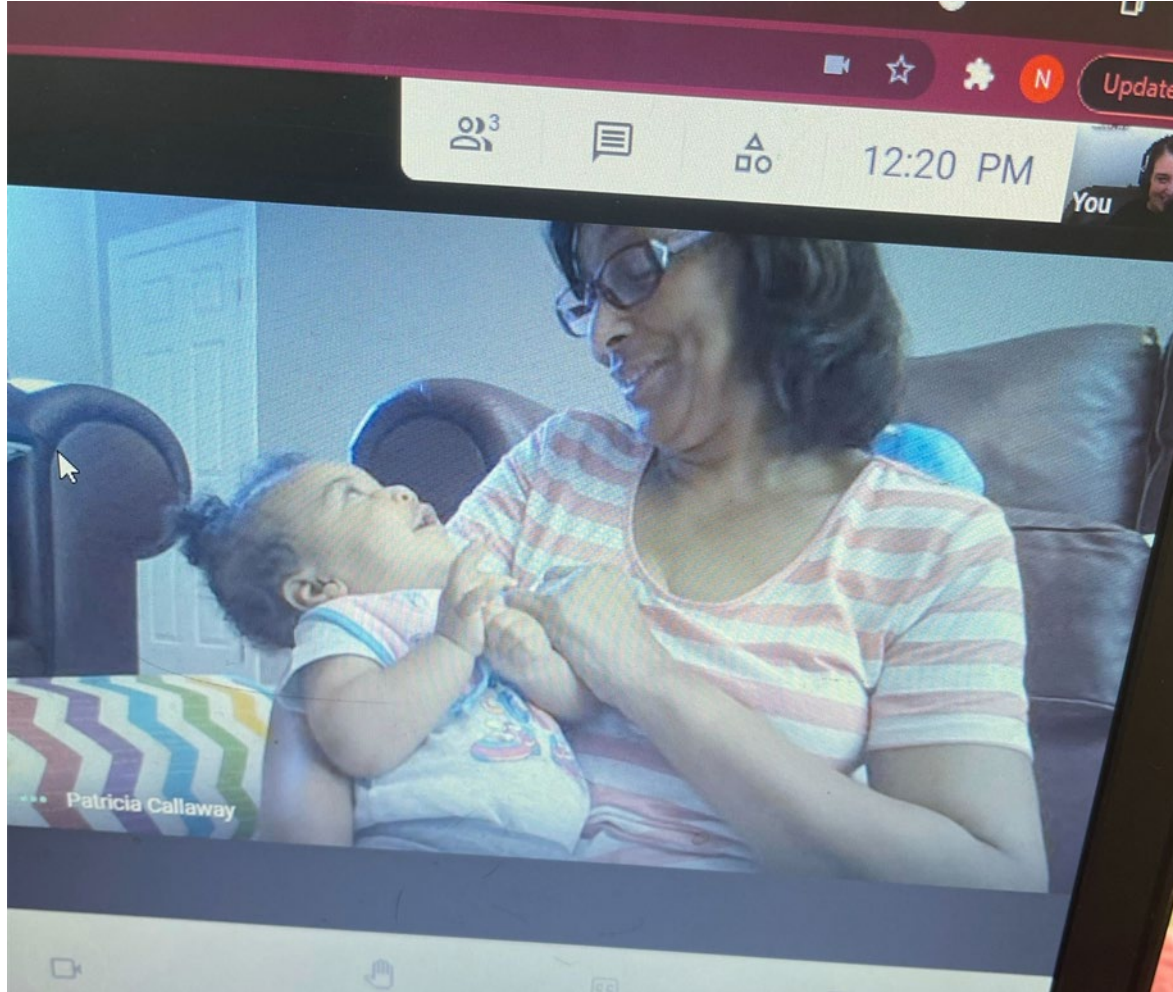
Case Study- Aubrey

18 Months
21 Months
22 Months

Case Study-Aubrey

Case Study-Aubrey

Each day, Aubrey learns more ways to use assistive technology to communicate whatever she wants to.

Aubrey can:

- ✓ communicate her likes and dislikes.
- ✓ request, protest, comment
- ✓ communicate with her friends
- ✓ answer a variety of questions
- ✓ "retell" familiar songs and stories
- ✓ talk about what she did at school
- ✓ tell mom what she would like for dinner
- ✓ And more…

AAC in Birth to 3 is…

- ✓ Family Centered
- ✓ Flexible
- ✓ Collaborative
  - ✓ Supports the child and family to reach IFSP outcomes
  - ✓ Coaching families to use AAC through daily routines
  - ✓ Collaborating with families and providers to find ways for AAC to be available throughout the home and community environment
  - ✓ Coaching families on how to facilitate language development through modeling and highlighting the words already arising in their daily routines

Team Member Expertise

Family

- The MOST important part of the collaborative team
- Experts on their child
- Knows family routines and preferences
- Integral part of successful AAC collaboration

Team Member Expertise

Speech Language Pathologist

- Assess communication abilities to determine suitable AAC tools.

- Select appropriate AAC options like speech-generating devices or picture boards.

- Train caregivers to integrate AAC into daily routines.

- Support communication through modeling and aided language stimulation.

- Collaborate with professionals to adapt strategies as needs evolve

Team Member Expertise

Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- Address hearing and amplification needs to ensure AAC aligns with hearing aids, cochlear implants and/or FM systems

- Collaborate with team members to explain the child's hearing loss and impact on communication.

- Provide input on AAC speech-generated features such as voice type, speed and volume.

- Provide expertise about listening environment and noise sources across to increase AAC device use across settings.

Team Member Expertise

Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- Coach families and teams to use the families chosen communication mode such as spoken language or ASL.

- Coach families to integrate AAC into daily routines and in family conversations.

- Use knowledge of hearing loss , listening and language development, help guide families on how to model language on the child's AAC device to support continued growth across language and listening milestones."

Team Member Expertise

Physical Therapist-

- Ensure proper positioning in wheelchairs, gait trainers, or adaptive equipment for effective AAC use.

- Support motor-linguistic connections by integrating AAC use during motor skill development.

Occupational Therapist-

- Assess motor, visual, cognitive skills, and positioning for optimal AAC access.

- Implement adaptations and coach families on motor, perceptual skills and sensory regulation for efficient AAC use

Team Member Expertise

Teacher of the Visually Impaired

- Determine visual access needs and recommend AAC adjustments (picture size, background color, image types, set size).

- Assess tracking ability, dwell time, and device placement for optimal use.

- Provide ongoing support, troubleshooting, and adjustments based on vision needs.

The goal of communication-

"Being able to say what I want to say,
to whoever I want to say it,
whenever I want to say it,
however I want to say it"
- Gayle Porter

Resources

Questions to consider

- Is the family concerned about the child's current progress in language/speech development?

- Is the child having difficulty expressing themselves and/or being understood?

- Does the child have additional support needs/diagnosis?

- Is the child demonstrating communication frustration?

- Is the family interested in learning additional ways to support their child's communication development?

Using What We Know

- Family Observations
- Input from other providers
- Expected Outcomes vs Current Outcomes
- Diagnostic Assessments
  - CASLLS
  - Communication Matrix
  - MacArthur Bates
  - Auditory Learning Guide
  - And many more

Communication Boards

Printable CORE Boards

36 Bilingual Spanish/English Core Board
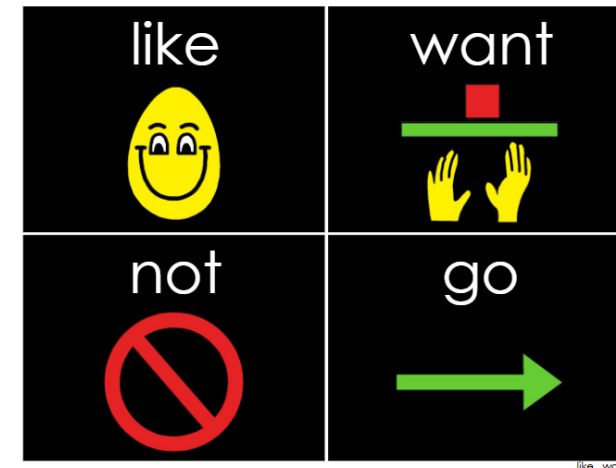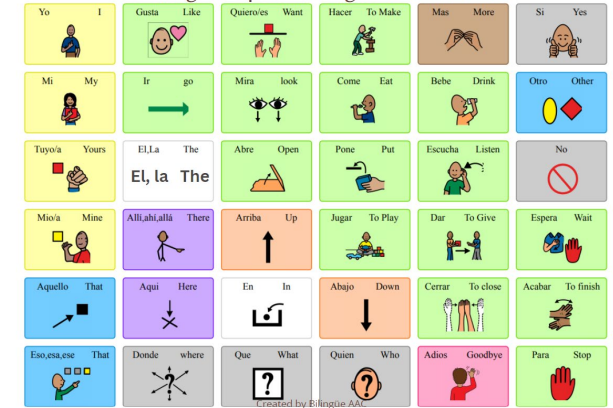
CORE Resources

- -Build your own CORE Board [Project CORE Communication Board Builder](#)

- -Printable Universal CORE Boards [Project CORE Printable CORE Boards](#)

- -Printable AAC Resources, Handouts and Webinars [Aaccessible Website](#)

- -Several Variety of CORE Boards including Bilingual ones [My Beautiful Speech Life CORE Boards](#)

Communication Apps

Pic Collage Website/App [iOS App](#) [Android App](#)

- Free picture board app
- Upload all your own pictures
- Printable
- Add your own captions in any language

Card Talk [Android/Google App](#) [iOS App](#)

- Free, speech-generating app
- 200 pre-loaded pictures/symbols
- Add your own pictures and voice

Communication Apps

Weave Chat AAC [(iOS) (Android) (Amazon) Apps on Website](#)

(Spanish Available 2025)

- Free, Robust, speech-generating app
- Fully customizable
- Add your own pictures and voice recording

Visual Choices [iOS App](#) (No Spanish options)
- Free, simple speech-generating app
- Some loaded pictures
- Add your own pictures
- Printable

Other Free AAC Apps to Explore

- [GoTalk Now Lite](#)

- [Visuals2Go](#)

- [Choice Boards](#)

- [SoundingBoard](#)

- [Avaz](#)

- [WeaveChat AAC](#)

- [TD Talk](#)

Find Local Resources

- https://at3center.net/
- https://at3center.net/state-at-programs/

North Carolina Assistive Technology Program (NCATP)

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

- What is the NCATP Lending Library?

- How do I find one near my families?
  [NCATP Lending Library Directory](#)

- How can I access videos with Assistive Technology and AAC?
  [NCATP Assistive Technology YouTube Channel](#)

Raleigh (2) – Charlotte – Greensboro – Greenville – Morganton – Sanford – Sylvia – Wilmington – Winston-Salem

Wrapping it up

Collaboration is Key!

"Being able to say what I want to say, to whoever I want to say it, whenever I want to say it, however I want to say it"
- Gayle Porter

Remember the Goal!

Thank you!

Contact Info

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Question Time

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