PrAACtical AAC

AAC 101 Handout

WELCOME
to Kindergarten!
Mrs. Gavin

CALENDAR
SCHEDULES
CLASS RULES
BIRTHDAYS
READING
DRESS CODE
HOMEWORK

EVERYONE DESERVES A VOICE
AAC STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS
www.PrAACticalAAC.org

AAC NEAR ME
SPEAK AAC
SPEAKING STYLE
EXPECTATION
SUPPORT
FAQS
TOP 10 TIPS

Adapted using
Maria Gavin's Back-
To-School template
at KinderCraze:
http://bit.ly/2spCf81

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NOTE TO THE TEACHER:
This sheet yields enough copies to create the cover page of 4 books. Copy and cut along printed guidelines. I used Lift Off Lemon from Astrobrights for this page of my flip book.

Students who use AAC need their communication systems within arm's reach at all times.

If you can see the student, you should also be able to see their AAC.

It's never okay to turn it off or take it away.

AAC NEAR ME

NOTE TO THE TEACHER:
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For students to learn to use AAC, they need to see adults & peers using it, too.
Immerse them in an environment that is rich in AAC use throughout the day.

Point to the AAC symbols as you speak. Use the AAC device or app OR make a non-electronic mock-up.
- This is the foundation for future AAC learning. Don't worry if you aren't perfect – just keep at it!
- Speaking AAC normalizes this way of communicating & it teaches them 'how it's done."
- Using AAC shows kids that their way of communicating is valid.

SPEAK AAC

NOTE TO THE TEACHER:
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How we talk to AAC learners makes a big difference! They learn best when we use AAC &:

1. Narrate what we are doing & thinking
2. Avoid asking lots of questions
3. Describe what they are doing
4. Refrain from putting them on the spot or quizzing them
5. Use a natural conversational tone
6. Inject humor
7. Talk to them just like we do with our students who speak

SPEAKING STYLE

NOTE TO THE TEACHER:
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AAC learners are usually underestimated. This can lead to frustration & it puts limits on their motivation. Here are some ways that we can facilitate learning & achievement:

Set the Bar High

Provide Support

Engage Them in High Quality Instruction

Focus on Progress, Not Perfection

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Perception drives expectation. Expectation drives opportunity. Opportunity drives achievement. Achievement drives perception

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EXPECTATION

NOTE TO THE TEACHER:
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Communicating with AAC is hard, especially in the beginning stages.

We can support their growth by:
- Waiting patiently for at least 5-10 seconds if they need extra time to process what we've said & respond. Resist the urge to repeat, rephrase, or prompt.
- Responding to the intent of their message, not the form.
- Expanding on what they say by adding a word or two
- Tempting communication but not forcing it
- Using AAC whenever you talk to the student

"What if they use their AAC to say something & it is incomplete or has an error?"
- Don't stress about it. That's part of the learning process. It's all good.
- Acknowledge the intent. Respond to what the message they were trying to convey.
- Say it back, but without the error.
- Model the new skill or word often throughout the day.

SUPPORT

NOTE TO THE TEACHER:
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AAC: Always Available for Communication

"She just plays around or stims on it & says random words! Can't I take it away when it distracts other kids?"
Nope. Instead, provide opportunities just for play & experimentation. All kids are annoying sometimes, but we don't tape their mouths shut. We give consequences appropriate to the situation. This works for AAC, too.

"But he's even not paying attention when I model AAC! Why bother?"
Don't be so sure! Attending looks different in different kids, & some use their peripheral vision. Besides, no child pays attention all the time. If we use the AAC strategies frequently throughout the day, they'll get plenty of other chances to learn.

"The AAC device/app is too overwhelming. Wouldn't it be better to use something simpler?"
Probably not. Every situation is different, but limiting access to a small set of words makes it difficult to say what you want to say & creates more issues than it solves. Students will learn what we model & teach.

FAQS

NOTE TO THE TEACHER:
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Copy and cut along printed guidelines. I used Vulcan Green from Astrobrights for this page of my flip book and I used Solar Yellow on page 8.

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Top 10 Tips for Successful AAC

1. **Speak AAC whenever you can.** Challenge yourself to do more this week than what you did last week. The more you do, the better you'll be!
2. **Measure it!** Track what you are doing to support AAC use & review it periodically. Set goals for your own use of AAC support strategies.
3. **Build engagement.** Students will become better communicators if they WANT to engage & interact. As yourself, "What can I do to make this student WANT to interact with me?" Once we figure that out, everything else becomes easier.
4. **Use gentle accountability.** Hold yourself & others accountable for their AAC use, but in a kind & supportive way.
5. **Make it easy & acceptable for others to use AAC, too**. Display large AAC boards & have small ones strategically located around the room so that there is always a convenient AAC option.
6. **Make it fun!** Set up a challenge, post pictures, leave notes for each other, play games! Brag about a colleague to the boss. Praise a parent to his/her child.
7. **Stick with it**. Some students don't hit their stride until adults have been consistently modeling AAC for a few months. Hang in there. Starting over is 1000% better than giving up.
8. **Create opportunities for AAC use across the day**. AAC learners need frequent opportunities for learning & practice.
9. **Find or create a supportive tribe**. Building new communication habits is **hard**! Hard things require support. Reach out for encouragement when you need it.
10. **Celebrate the little victories** along the way. Communication is a journey, not a destination.

TOP 10 TIPS