What is AAC?

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)** is an area of clinical practice that addresses the needs of individuals with significant and complex communication disorders characterized by impairments in speech-language production and/or comprehension, including spoken and written modes of communication.

AAC uses a variety of techniques and tools, including picture communication boards, line drawings, speech-generating devices (SGDs), tangible objects, manual signs, gestures, and finger spelling, to help the individual express thoughts, wants and needs, feelings, and ideas.

[https://www.asha.org/](https://www.asha.org/)

AAC is **augmentative** when used to supplement existing speech, and **alternative** when used in place of speech that is absent or not functional.

**Guiding Principles**

- Communication has no prerequisites.
- AAC is best incorporated into an individual’s already existing multimodal communication system.
- Students need opportunities to communicate for more than just requesting their wants and needs.
- Teaming is essential. The success of any communication system is highly dependent upon the skills of communication partners.
- Technology decisions are guided by *needs* and not *candidacy*.

**Core Vocabulary**

**Core vocabulary** refers to the small number of words that make up > 70-90% of what we say on a daily basis. These words are relevant across contexts and can have many meanings. Core vocabulary allows communicators to express a wide variety of concepts with a very small number of words.

**Aided Language**

**Aided language** input is a research-based strategy in which communication partners highlight symbols on the AAC system as they interact verbally with the person using AAC.
BUILDING TIERED AAC SUPPORTS

**Tier 1 - Year 1**

*Foundations*
Designed to build the knowledge and skill that EVERY person who supports a student with complex communication needs should demonstrate in order to foster the student's skill development with augmentative & alternative forms of communication (AAC).

**Outcomes**
- Knowledgeable of the universal supports for developing communication competence
- Actively participate in the Communication Access Planning process for communication tools & strategies
- Effectively support a student collaborative plan for developing communication participation & skill development

**Intended Participants**
Special Education Teachers, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Behaviorists, School Psychologists, Paraeducators, Speech & Language Pathologists, Speech & Language Pathologist Assistants

**Tier 2 - Year 2**

*Implementation*
Designed to build the knowledge and skill of speech-language specialists who can guide individual student teams in selecting appropriate tools and strategies and developing effective Communication Access Plans for students with complex communication needs.

**Outcomes**
- Knowledgeable of the tools to support students across the range of AAC user profiles
- Guide a Communication Access Planning process for universal communication tools & strategies
- Complete an AAC Need Assessment for students requiring more individualized AAC tools
Effectively coach a student's team in identifying and selecting appropriate implementation strategies

**Intended Participants**
SLPs and SLPAs who have...
- Successfully completed AAC Foundations
- Access to three caseload students with varying AAC user profiles

**Tier 3 - Year 3 Specialization**
Designed to build the knowledge and skill of AAC Specialists who can provide support and expertise for a full range of AAC needs (e.g. complex access solutions, sensory & motor disabilities) and navigate external sources of funding for speech-generating devices.

**Coming Soon!**

**Outcomes**
- Knowledgeable of tools and **access methodologies** to support complex seating, positioning and alternative access problems.
- Knowledgeable of custom vocabulary design to match **complex symbolic and linguistic needs**.
- Knowledgeable of the range of **funding** avenues and can successfully complete outside funding requests.
- Can effectively train and support other SLPs in an **expert consultant role** for more complex cases

**Intended Participants**
Licensed SLPs
- has successfully completed AAC Implementation
- nominated by their district
- completion of a district capacity assessment
- have access to a range of students including complex cognitive, linguistic & motor profiles