

Lesson 1: Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Discussion and Discovery

Corner Concepts Educational Resources
Created by Cordell Ware

Core Competency Connection:

Communicating encompasses the set of abilities that people use to impart and exchange information, experiences, and ideas; to explore the world around them; and to **understand** and effectively use **communication forms**, strategies, and **technologies**. Communicating provides a bridge between peoples' learning, their personal and social identity, and the world in which they interact. ([BC Curriculum Website](#))

Rational:

We are all equal partners in ensuring all learners can communicate, share their voices, and express themselves. As a community of learners, we focus on communication equity and are committed to being an AAC ally.

Lesson Preparation:

Print these AAC symbol sheets for each learner: [AAC Board 1](#) and [AAC Board 2](#)

Lesson Sequence:

- Open by showing learners an example of an AAC board or button set (Use a digital display system)
- Ask: What do you think this is? What do you think it is used for?
- Consider using a pair share strategy to allow learners to extend their thinking and answers among fellow learners. Rotate or shift pairings two or three times to layer the dialogue for all learners. This allows everyone to hear multiple answers to the questions before having a class-wide discussion which fosters discussion equity.
- Facilitate a class-wide discussion around their answers. Learner answers may not completely identify the AAC board's function, which is okay. After hearing their thoughts, show and demo an AAC device (i.e. iPad with touchchat) to support their understanding. Share how learners in the class or school use these tools to communicate. Now is also the time to introduce the term augmentative and alternative communication or AAC.

Check for understanding before moving forward. Learners need to understand what AAC is and its purpose. Consider organizing groups of three or four learners to summarize what they have learned about AAC. Consider having one of the small groups share. This builds collective understanding before moving to the independent activity.

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- Explain: We all have a voice. Sometimes that voice is loud, sometimes quiet, sometimes written, sometimes silent hand signs, and sometimes that voice is heard through technology. Everyone's voice is important, so we must become good listeners and speakers of all types of communication.
- Distribute AAC Boards 1 and 2 to each learner.
- Ask: What difference do you see between these two boards? If you could only communicate on one of these boards, which would you choose and why?
- Key differences: Only one board has the word love. Only one board has the word angry. Only one board has words for family.
- Have learners share with the class what board they would choose to use and why.
- Ask: How would it feel if you couldn't communicate with your family, friends, or teacher? What would it feel like to have no voice? What would it feel like if you couldn't ask to or to the bathroom or tell someone you were hungry?
- Have a couple of students share.
- Explain: If AAC didn't exist, many people in our world would struggle to communicate. We have a learner _____ who wouldn't be able to tell us what they need or want. As a class community, it is our shared responsibility to help _____ communicate. Over the next few days, we will learn more and become AAC experts. The more we learn about AAC the 'louder' _____'s voice will be.

Check for understanding as the lesson ends. Consider using a ticket-out-the-door strategy. Ask students to write (or communicate in another form) why AAC exists. Whom does it help?

Lesson Notes: