

This letter is from your child.

Dear Parents,

This letter is from your child. This is what I wanted to say to my family and what I always say to parents when I talk to them. “Hey family, I’m alive. My mind has some cool thoughts and ideas, and I cannot wait to share them with you. I have loved you since I was born but had no way to tell you. Today I received my first communication device and am so excited but scared. My communication device is my voice. I am so excited about having a voice so I can talk to you for the first time. I might tell you my favorite place to go to or a joke. I may be scared because I do not know where to start. I will not start by using sentences. It might look to you that I am just playing around on my device but please know that I am looking at my screens to know where everything is. Please take my device with us all the time. I want you to use my device so I can watch you and learn. I am so excited to tell you that I love you. We are starting a new chapter in our life. Please take some time to show me some videos of children and adults using their device, so I can see how to use this cool thing. Let’s start our communication journey.

Love you,

Your Child

I want to welcome your family into the Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) community. This community is welcoming and understanding. Other parents and advanced AAC communicators are a source of information and support. It can be difficult for you and your child learning how to use the device but it will come with time and practice. I cannot wait to see where your child will be and what your child will be doing in the future! I am sure it will be great things. Learning the device is like learning a foreign language so give your child time and remember they are trying their best. The communication device will breakdown sometimes. It is a computer; computers can have a mind of their own. The most important thing is to make using their device fun. They will use their “voice “if they are having fun. I have been on my AAC journey for eighteen years, so if you have any questions or want to share an idea email me.

Mike Hipple

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AAC nuggets of wisdom from some of our best AAC friends...

Take your time researching devices, get good evaluations but go with what you know is best for your child

Have all family members take turns using the device to increase understanding and knowledge of device.

Take the device everywhere to provide lots of opportunity to use it.

Do not expect to figure it out overnight. It is like learning a new language. Same goes for your child.

Do not beat yourself up for not using your device yesterday. Today is a new day and a fresh start.

Look on line, You Tube, Pinterest, there are all kinds of new ideas and examples to use.

Be patient. Learn the software and parents should play around with the device themselves.

Have patience.

Make it fun for your child to use.

Provide opportunities for your child to make friends with other AAC users.

Put yourself out there and meet people. Do not wait for them to come to you.

It is not how you communicate but what you communicate.

Ask about the other person. Show interest in those around you.

Think up and program in some conversation starters so you have something to say quickly.

Talk. It does not have to be perfect.

Have a good sense of humor, laugh. People like to have fun.

You are as important as everyone else. Everyone else is as important as you are. No one wants to be left out. Include them.

Be ready to communicate.

Ways to make using the AAC device fun

Have your child get to know their device by putting together a “crazy” sentence.

Play “the device says” by having your child pick a verb and another family member acting it out.

Include your child when you read to them by picking a word or two and each time you see it have them say it with their device.

Include your child in storytelling by sharing their ideas to add to the story with their device.

Use familiar children’s books like Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See or Cat in the Hat to answer the book’s questions with their devices.

Take a car ride or walk to the park and ask them to tell you what they see.

Shoot a short video with them using their device and zoom in on the screen so they can watch themselves accessing the device.

During holidays, keep your child involved in family traditions by using their devices to make choices about decorating the tree, trick or treating, choosing words to write on the Valentines are some ideas or record a line to “Happy Birthday” and have them play it.

Use their devices to greet friends and family who come to your house.

Adapt games like “Guess Who” or “Candy land” so they can use their device.

Call or Skype with grandparents about their day.

Enlist friends to be communication buddies. Your child can use their device to ask their buddy a question or play a game with them. Have you buddy access the device to tell your child something.

Use your imagination and just have fun!

Using your AAC device at school

It is important for your child's IEP team to know their device. Consider including the following two goals in related services:

If the teacher, para pro, or speech therapist is unfamiliar with their device, attend one on line training.

AAC specialist or speech therapist who is knowledgeable about the device to consult with classroom teachers and be available to program the device.

Some ideas to get your AAC user involved in the classroom are:

Use programmed messages to share with their class news from home or something special your child did.

Do not forget art, gym or music-have programmed messages so they can be an active part in these classes too.

Plays are a great way to include an ACC user-program their lines in the device.

Talk to the teacher about clubs. Maybe your child could write an article for the school newspaper, participate in a Battle of the Books team or a forensics team. Remember to ask about after school groups like boy or girl scouts or Kiwanis.

Make a programmed page for recess activities so they can chose what they want to do.

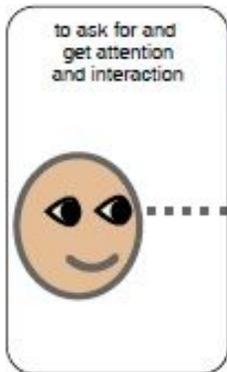
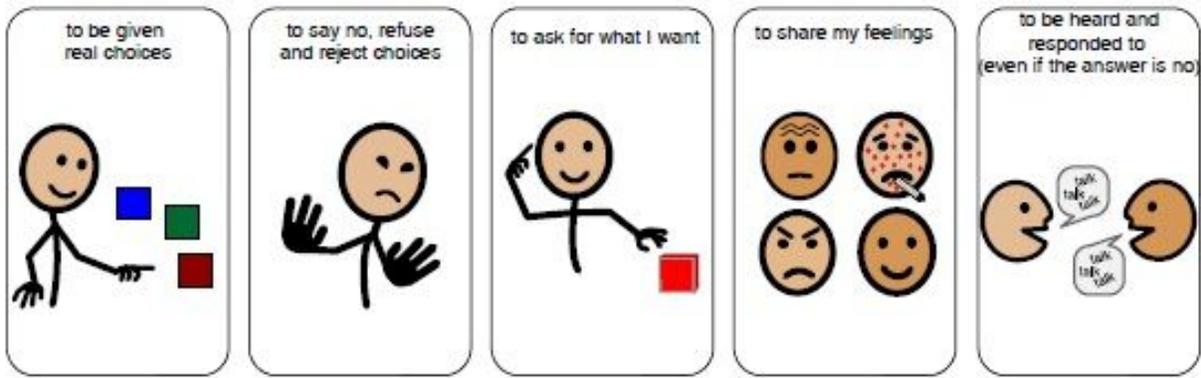
Talk to their friends to find out their language for example what is cool for their age group. Teach them these phrases or program them for quick use.

Ask their teacher to give them a question or two that they can answer ahead of time and play it for the class when their teacher asks it.

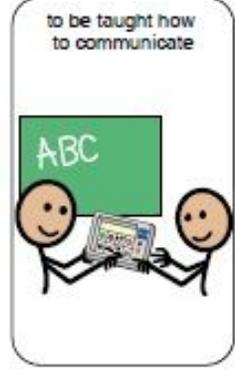
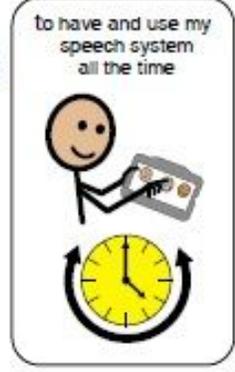
Another opportunity to include your child is to have them start each day with something the class learned the day before.

Remember the AAC device can be used at resource time, too. If other students are reading a book have someone read to them and then keep them involved by asking questions about the book.

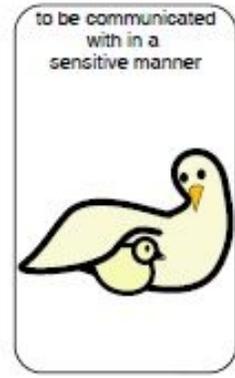
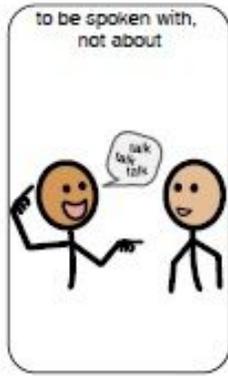
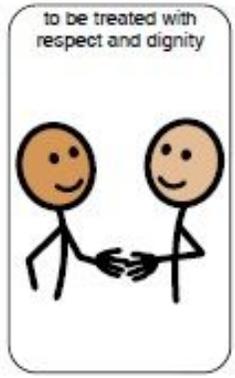
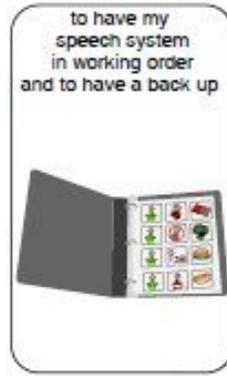
Educate the school about AAC by sharing and posting the Communication Bill of Rights in the classroom.



Communication Bill of Rights



I have the right:



From the National Joint Committee for the Communicative Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities. (1992). for meeting the communication needs of persons with severe disabilities. *Asha*, 34(Suppl. 7), 2-3. adapted by K. Al