AAC Student Presentation Lesson Plan - Beginner Level

Topic: AAC Communication At School

Audience: 3rd grade students

Length: 20–30 minutes

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the presentation, students will be able to:

1. Understand that communication is more than talking.
2. Explain what Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) is in a simple way.
3. Practice being patient and kind communicators.

Opening Activity (2-3 minutes)

Turn to the person next to you and greet them without using your voice.

Communication is more than talking. Many students communicate using a variety of methods.

What is AAC? (5 minutes)

AAC = Augmentative and Alternative Communication

AAC includes tools that help people communicate when talking is hard.

AAC can be:

No-tech:

- gestures
- sign language
- facial expressions/body language

Low-tech:

- picture boards
- communication books
- printed choice cards

High-tech:

- speech-generating devices (talking devices)
- tablet-based communication apps (tablet devices)

AAC does not replace speech, it helps communication.

Common Myth About AAC (2 minutes)

Myth: AAC means someone can't talk.

Reality: AAC helps people communicate and sometimes even helps them learn to talk.

Why AAC Matters in the Classroom (4 minutes)

Without communication, people often:

- feel frustrated
- feel left out

AAC helps these people:

- share ideas
- ask for help
- talk with friends

Skit: How to talk with AAC Users (4-5 minutes)

Part 1: what NOT to do

- Teachers act out:
  - One student uses a device

- The other student interrupts
- Doesn't wait
- Talks for them
- Walks away

- Ask students, "Was that kind or helpful?" (thumbs up/down).

Part 2: what TO do

- Teachers act out:
  - Looking at the student
  - Waiting patiently
  - Listening
  - Responding kindly
- Ask students, "What did they do better this time?"

Simple Strategies Students Can Use To Communicate With Others (5-6 minutes)

1. Look and Listen
   - Pay attention when someone is communicating.
2. Be Patient
   - Give them time to finish.
   - Many students who use AAC are still learning to talk with their device, like learning a new language.
     i. You can ask simple yes or no questions to help them.
3. Be Kind
   - Everyone communicates differently.
4. Include Everyone

        - Talk and play with everyone.

Closing (2 minutes)

AAC helps give everyone a voice.

Three things students can start today:

- Be patient
- Listen
- Include Everyone

AAC Student Presentation Lesson Plan - Intermediate Level

Topic: AAC Communication At School

Audience: 4th grade students

Length: 20–30 minutes

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the presentation, students will be able to:

1. Understand that communication includes many forms
2. Explain Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) and why people use it
3. Practice respectful and inclusive communication

Opening Activity (2-3 minutes)

Turn to the person next to you and greet them without using your voice.

"What strategies did you use?"

People communicate in many ways, not just talking.

What is AAC? (5 minutes)

AAC = Augmentative and Alternative Communication

AAC includes anything that supports or replaces speech when needed. People may use AAC all the time or just in certain situations.

AAC can be:

No-tech:

- gestures
- sign language
- facial expressions/body language

Low-tech:

- picture boards
- communication books
- printed choice cards

High-tech:

- speech-generating devices (talking devices)
- tablet-based communication apps (tablet devices)

Different people use different types of AAC depending on their needs. Some people even use more than one kind.

Common Myth About AAC (2 minutes)

Myth: AAC means someone can't talk.

Reality: People who use AAC can talk a little, a lot, or not at all. AAC gives them a reliable way to communicate so others can understand them.

In fact, using AAC can sometimes help people build language skills and become more confident communicators.

Why AAC Matters in the Classroom (4 minutes)

Without communication, people often:

- feel frustrated
- feel left out
- have trouble learning

AAC helps these people:

- share their thoughts
- ask and answer questions
- participate in learning

- build friendships

Skit: How to talk with AAC Users (4-5 minutes)

Part 1: what NOT to do

- Teachers act out:
    - One student uses a device
    - The other student interrupts
    - Doesn't wait
    - Talks for them
    - Walks away
- Ask students, "Was that kind or helpful?" (thumbs up/down).

Part 2: what TO do

- Teachers act out:
    - Looking at the student
    - Waiting patiently
    - Listening
    - Responding kindly
- Ask students, "What did they do better this time?"
    - "How did that change their interaction?"

Simple Strategies Students Can Use To Communicate With Others (5-6 minutes)

1. Look and Listen
    - Pay attention, even if it looks different
2. Be Patient
    - AAC can take time, waiting shows respect

3. Be Kind
    - Do not interrupt or speak for someone.
4. Include Everyone
    - Invite everyone to join conversations and games
5. Helpful Tip: You can ask yes/no questions to help start a conversation with an AAC user

Closing (2 minutes)

AAC helps make sure everyone has a way to express themselves and be understood.

Three things students can start today:

- Be patient
- Listen
- Include Everyone

AAC Student Presentation Lesson Plan - Advanced Level

Topic: AAC Communication At School

Audience: 5th grade students

Length: 20–30 minutes

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the presentation, students will be able to:

1. Understand that communication is a complex process that includes expressing, receiving, and understanding messages in multiple ways.
2. Explain what Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is and why it is an important tool for accessibility.
3. Demonstrate respectful, patient, and inclusive communication behaviors with peers who use different communication methods.

Opening Activity (2-3 minutes)

Turn to the person next to you and greet them without using your voice.

Ask a few students: “What strategies did you use? What challenges did you notice?”

Communication is not just about speaking; it involves sending and receiving messages in ways others can understand. When one method is not available, people naturally use other strategies.

What is AAC? (5 minutes)

AAC = Augmentative and Alternative Communication

AAC refers to tools and strategies that support or replace speech for individuals who have difficulty communicating verbally. It helps ensure access to communication for everyone.

AAC can be:

No-tech:

- gestures
- sign language
- facial expressions/body language

Low-tech:

- picture boards
- communication books
- printed choice cards

High-tech:

- speech-generating devices (talking devices)
- tablet-based communication apps (tablet devices)

People may use AAC for different reasons, and their needs can change over time. Some people combine multiple types of AAC depending on the situation.

Example: a student might use a device in the classroom, but gestures on the playground.

Common Myth About AAC (2 minutes)

Myth: AAC means someone can't talk.

Reality: AAC users have a wide range of communication abilities.

Research shows that AAC can support language development and may even encourage speech in some individuals.

Why AAC Matters in the Classroom (4 minutes)

Without communication, people often:

- experience frustration when they cannot express themselves
- get excluded from discussions or group work
- have difficulty demonstrating their knowledge

AAC helps these people:

- participate actively in classroom learning
- express complex ideas and opinions
- build relationships and collaborate with peers'

Communication is a basic human need, and access to it allows students to fully participate in school and social environments.

Skit: How to talk with AAC Users (4-5 minutes)

Part 1: what NOT to do

- Teachers act out:
    - One student uses a device
    - The other student interrupts
    - Doesn't wait
    - Talks for them
    - Walks away
- Ask students, "What went wrong in this interaction?"
- Then, "What should they do differently?"

Part 2: what TO do

- Teachers act out:
    - Looking at the student
    - Waiting patiently

- Listening
- Responding kindly

- Ask students, “What improved in this interaction?”
  - “Why do these actions matter?”

Simple Strategies Students Can Use To Communicate With Others (5-6 minutes)

1. Look and Listen
   - Focus on the person and their communication method. Understanding may take attention and effort.
2. Be Patient
   - Communication using AAC can take longer, but waiting shows respect and allows for full participation.
   - Support communication
     i. Ask yes/no questions
     ii. Gently point to options if appropriate
     iii. Do NOT take over
3. Be Kind
   - Avoid interrupting or speaking for someone.
4. Include Everyone
   - Actively include all classmates in conversations, group work, and activities. Inclusion helps build a stronger community.

Closing (2 minutes)

AAC helps ensure that everyone has access to communication, which is essential for learning, relationships, and self-expression.

An inclusive classroom is one where every voice is heard, no matter how it is expressed.

Three things students can start today:

- Be patient
- Listen
- Include Everyone

Works Cited

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/professional-issues/augmentative-and-alternative-communication/.

David R. Beukelman, and Patricia Mirenda. Augmentative and Alternative Communication: Supporting Children and Adults with Complex Communication Needs. 4th ed., Paul H. Brookes Publishing, 2013.

International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. What Is AAC? ISAAC, https://isaac-online.org/english/what-is-aac/.

Janice Light. "Toward a Definition of Communicative Competence for Individuals Using Augmentative and Alternative Communication Systems." Augmentative and Alternative Communication, vol. 5, no. 2, 1989, pp. 137–144.

Janice Light, and David McNaughton. "Supporting the Communication, Language, and Literacy Development of Children with Complex Communication Needs: State of the Science and Future Research Priorities." Assistive Technology, vol. 24, no. 1, 2012, pp. 34–44.

National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities. Communication Bill of Rights. NJC, https://www.asha.org/njc/communication-bill-of-rights/.