AAC Teacher Presentation Lesson Plan

Topic: AAC Communication in the Classroom

Audience: All Elementary Classroom Teachers

Length: 20–30 minutes

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the training, teachers will be able to:

1. Define Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).
2. Recognize different types of AAC students may use.
3. Identify simple strategies to support AAC users in any classroom.
4. Understand how teacher behavior impacts AAC communication.

Opening Activity (2-3 minutes)

Ask: “How do students communicate in your classroom besides talking?”

Have teachers shout out answers, specifically look for answers like:

- gestures
- pointing
- writing
- pictures
- technology
- facial expressions

Communication is more than speech. Many students communicate using a variety of methods. Some students rely on AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) to express themselves.

What is AAC? (5 minutes)

AAC = Augmentative and Alternative Communication

AAC includes tools and strategies that help people communicate if speech is difficult.

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
- tablet-based communication apps

AAC does not replace speech, it aids in communication.

Common Myths About AAC (3 minutes)

Myth: AAC prevents speech development.

Reality: Research consistently shows AAC does not prevent speech and often supports speech development.

Myth: AAC is only for students with severe disabilities.

Reality: AAC is used by individuals with many communication needs, including:

- autism
- developmental delays

- temporary speech loss

Why AAC Matters in the Classroom (4 minutes)

Students who cannot effectively communicate may experience:

- frustration
- challenging behaviors
- reduced academic participation
- social isolation

AAC helps students:

- participate in lessons
- answer questions
- interact with peers
- express needs and ideas

Communication access is linked to improved academic engagement and behavior.

Simple Strategies Teachers Can Use To Aid Communication (8–10 minutes)

Disclaimer: Teachers <u>do not</u> have to be AAC experts to support communication

1. Model, Model, Model

   Use the student's AAC system while you speak.

   You don't need full sentences—just model key words.

   Example: Say "more?" and press MORE on the device.

   Modeling helps students learn how AAC works and how to use it to communicate

2. Keep AAC Available

   AAC should always be visible and within reach

   - keep the device nearby

- create a charging station in the classroom (home base)
- hang visual reminders or communication boards around the room

Students cannot communicate if the AAC system is not accessible

3. Build Communication Into Daily Routines

   Integrate AAC into everyday activities such as:

   - arrival
   - transitions
   - return from specials
   - any predictable opportunities where AAC can be used meaningfully

   The more predictable and repetitive, the more language students absorb.

4. Add AAC to Classroom Activities

   Include AAC in lessons you already teach

   - modeling words during read-alouds
   - “question of the day”
   - teaching core words across subjects

   This helps AAC become a normal part of classroom learning.

5. Respond to All Communication

   Treat AAC Communication the same as spoken words

   - seek to understand the message
   - respond to attempts
   - validate attempts

   Communication is communication

6. Slow Down and Wait

AAC users often need extra time to process and respond

Give wait time after asking questions and allow the student time to find words on the device.

7. Learn the Device

   Teachers should spend time exploring the device.

   Helpful tips:

   - learn the homepage vocabulary
   - utilize “word finder” features that are available on some devices
   - preview words before lessons

   This makes modeling easier during instruction

8. Work With the Team

   Collaborate with:

   - speech-language pathologists
   - occupational therapists
   - paraprofessionals
   - special education teachers

   Communication across adults improves AAC success

9. Encourage Peer Interaction

   Create opportunities for AAC users to communicate with classmates

   Peers will learn to:

   - wait for responses
   - take turns
   - respond to AAC messages

This helps students understand that everyone has something to say and all voices deserve to be heard

10. Celebrate All Communication

Closing (2 minutes)

AAC gives all students a voice

Even small changes in teacher behavior can make a huge difference

Three things teachers can start tomorrow:

- Model words on AAC system
- Pause and wait for responses
- Include AAC users in classroom conversations

Works Cited

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