Supporting Augmentative and Alternative Communication at Home

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Alt+Shift

Michigan Alliance for Families
information, support, and education

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Supporting Augmentative and Alternative Communication at Home

Alt + Shift
Rethink the possible. Realize potential.

Michigan Alliance for Families
information, support, and education

December 2025

Alt+Shift is an *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) Grant Funded Initiative through the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education

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Please Note

In this webinar, Alt+Shift will provide information and resources regarding assistive technology best practices.

Student specific solutions, including the use of specific tools, are determined by your learner's IEP team. For assistance navigating IEP meetings, contact Michigan Alliance for Families. For assistance with disagreement resolution or complex meetings, contact Special Education Mediation Services (https://www.mikids1st.org/).

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Accessibility Commitments

We have taken steps to ensure this deck is accessible.

- We used a tool(s) to perform an an automated check (Grackle Slides and/or Microsoft Office accessibility checker).
- We also checked manually to ensure a clear reading order for screen reader users.
- We provided access to the deck for you. This means you can personalize your experience as we speak.
- We welcome any feedback for improving the experience.

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Nice to Meet You!

Kelsey Brewer

- Assistive Technology and Augmentative and Alternative Communication Specialist with Alt+Shift
- Early Childhood Special Education Teacher 9 years
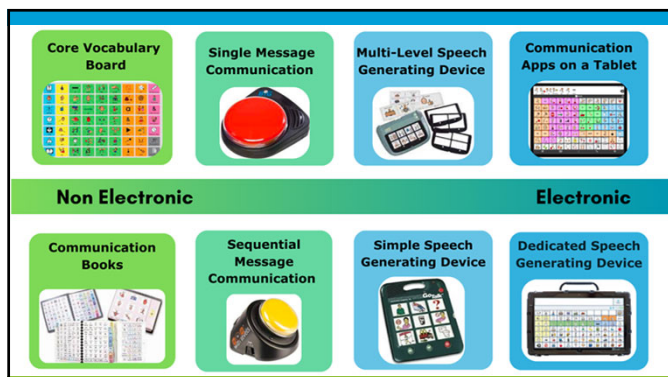- Adjunct Professor in Special Education at a Michigan University

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What is AAC?

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

- Augmentative - I need another mode of communication to **support** my verbal speech.

- Alternative - I need another mode of communication as an **alternative** to verbal speech.

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Core Vocabulary Board	Single Message Communication	Multi-Level Speech Generating Device	Communication Apps on a Tablet
Non Electronic			Electronic
Communication Books	Sequential Message Communication	Simple Speech Generating Device	Dedicated Speech Generating Device

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Five Tips for AAC at Home

Find your team	Get Comfortable	Customize

| Accept all forms of communication	Model

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Find Your Team

- AAC is a big learning curve, don't take it on alone!
- It's okay to ask professionals about their experience with AAC
  - If they don't have experience, ask if they would be willing to attend a training on AAC
- Encourage family members, friends, or other significant people in your child's life to learn along with you
- "To my fellow AAC parents" blog post (https://www.assistiveware.com/blog/parents-collaborate-aac-team)

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Share Photos/Videos

Sharing photos and videos is a powerful way to stay connected, problem solve, and hold people accountable (if you need to!)
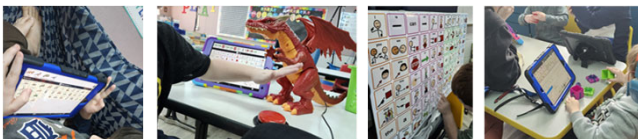
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Connecting via Social Media

Facebook
- AAC Family Fun
- Communication FIRST

Instagram
@fightingformyvoice
@holdmywords
@tmorenoSLP
@mateomorenoaac

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Advice From a Parent #1

"I wish I could have gone back & taught my husband & any family/siblings around my child how to use the device. In the beginning I put so much pressure on myself to learn everything about this device and it would have been helpful to have more help & support with my daughter & her device."

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Get Comfortable

No matter what tool your child uses - make sure that you take time to use it to get comfortable.

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What is helpful to know?

- Turning the device on/off
- Volume control
- Batteries/charging
- How to record or program new vocabulary
- Where to find your child's preferred items/activities

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How do I learn?

- Take time with the tool
- Find preferred vocabulary first
- Use your child's favorite song lyrics/movie quotes to learn new words
- Ask for videos of staff using AAC at school

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Something to consider…

If your student uses a paper-based communication tool, ask for extra copies.

If your student uses an electronic tool, ask if the company offers a free version of the software.

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Advice From a Parent #2

"I wish I could have gone back & taught my husband & any family/siblings around my child how to use the device. In the beginning I put so much pressure on myself to learn everything about this device and it would have been helpful to have more help & support with my daughter & her device."

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Customization

- This device is your child's voice, they should be able to talk about the things that matter to them in a way that represents them.
  - Skin tone
  - Voice
  - Favorite activities, places, toys, foods
  - People
  - Button Icons

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How to customize?

- Talk with the team about what is important to your family
- Request a professional from your child's team meet with you and show you
- Request pictures be added
- Request low tech pictures or boards be printed
- How to tutorials on company websites

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Advice from a parent #3

"We found that customizing the device for him made it easier to use and more motivating for both of us. We made him a page with his favorite shows. Whenever he navigates to one of his favorite shows, we honor that and reinforce that. Getting the things he liked when he asked made him so happy! Seeing his joy made it much easier for me to reach for the device and want to use it."

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Advice from a parent #4

"The original speech therapist wanted us to work on CORE words, but we found that it was much more difficult to motivate him with core words than with things that he liked and wanted."
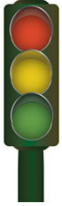
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Accept All Forms of Communication

Everyone is a multimodal communicator! All communication attempts should be honored, including:

- vocalizations/words
- gestures/manual signs
- facial expressions
- AAC use

Avoid using phrases like 'now use your words' or 'say it on your device.'

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Red-Yellow-Green Framework

- Green - Low demand
- Yellow - Moderate demand
- Red - High demand
- Limit to one high demand (red) per domain
- Includes skills, AT tools/devices, academic tasks, sensory, etc.

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Red-Yellow-Green Framework

Communication:	Positions:	Activity:
Using voice or eye gaze	Wheelchair	Laying on the floor playing
Pointing to printed pictures adult is presenting	Bolster seat	Eating in a supportive chair with help
Using a high tech device	Stander	Independent writing

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What does this look like?

Example: You are asking your child what they would like to eat for dinner.

You: (Find food page on device). Do you want pizza (model on device) or macaroni and cheese (model on device)?

Child: Points to pizza

You: You want pizza! Cheese or pepperoni (point to both options)?

Child: vocalizes 'pah'

You: I heard you say 'pah', I wonder if that means you want pepperoni.

(look to child to confirm/deny)

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Advice From a Parent #5

"I wish I would have created less pressure of forcing communication & let her take the lead a little more instead of trying to overwhelm her with words. She does best with a supportive environment that encourages and reinforces AAC use without pressuring or forcing communication."

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Advice From a Parent #6

"Sometimes it can be frustrating teaching your child where/how to access new words. Be patient. Don't be upset if they don't follow along or choose to tell you something else instead. Communication at home may still need to be a combination of AAC use, facial expressions, gestures, etc. AAC definitely opens up a whole new window of opportunity, however."

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Why Model AAC

- Children learn to communicate by hearing and seeing language used for real reasons, often and across a variety of situations.

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Things to Remember

- Motherease
- What's important?
  1. Model complete messages
  2. Let the device speak first
  3. Model for connection, not correction

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Model Language
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqeAipcciVQ&t=6s

AssistiveWare

Modeling:
Use AAC to teach AAC

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Model for Understanding

- Goal of modeling is to create understanding

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Model Through Mistakes

Letting your student see you make mistakes while modeling is *powerful.*

You: I'm wondering what you might want for your birthday this year. I'm looking for the word 'Birthday' - I think it's in the Days/Times folder. Let's look - wait, it's not in here. I need to go back, and now I'm going to search for it. Oh, it's in the 'Holidays' folder!

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Steps for Modeling AAC

Steps for AAC Modeling

1. Join in or invite attention
2. Model a complete message using AAC
3. Wait
4. Recognize any response as their turn
5. Model again if there's no response
6. End when the child ends it

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What does it look like?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cysXi0fgusI&t=1s

Sister: COLOUR PENCIL

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Advice From a Parent #7

"My daughter was most motivated in having the device around when we were coloring (so we would point to colors we were using on her device), or playing with farm animals (again tapping each farm animal we were playing with). We started slowly from there and it got easier!"

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Parent Resource #1

Stepping into AAC

(https://www.angelman.org/stepping-into-aac/)

- online course for parents/caregivers
- 20 self-paced modules
- includes activities, resources, and videos
- FREE!

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Parent Resource #2

Building Blocks to Autonomous Communication

(https://www.altshift.education/professional-learning/online-modules/building-blocks-autonomous-communication-bbtac)

- online modules for educators and parents/family members
- 7 'blocks'/modules that are self-paced
- includes activities, resources, and videos
- FREE!

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Parent Resource #3

Michigan Disability Rights Coalition
(https://mymdrc.org/assistive-tech-program/)

- assistive technology lending library
- device loans
- at-home device demonstrations
- assistance with funding
- online webinars

Michigan Disability Rights Coalition
With liberty and access for all.

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Review

| Find your team | Get Comfortable | Customize |

| Accept all forms of communication | Model |

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Finally…

If you could go back to when your child first was introduced to AAC, what is something you would tell yourself, or something you wished you would have known?

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If I Could Go Back #1

"It won't stop her from gaining words. Our daughter can vocalize a few things like"more" "no" "hi" "bye" ect. and I never thought she would. She now sings with us as well and will try any word we ask her to - I was worried that by using the AAC she would never 'try' to talk."

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If I Could Go Back #2

"I wish I would have understood it didn't need to be used a certain way. Communication can happen without full sentences. The device does not need to look like the default setup, you can truly customize it whichever way works best for your child."

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If I Could Go Back #3

"I would have given myself & my daughter some grace."

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Thank you!

What questions or comments do you have?

Please reach out!
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Questions

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We are here to support you!

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For more information visit
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