



SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY PARENT HANDOUT

Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC)

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What is AAC?

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to all forms of communication other than speech that individuals use to express themselves. AAC is designed to support individuals who have difficulty using spoken language due to conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, apraxia of speech, and other developmental or acquired communication challenges (Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013).

AAC can be used as a lifelong communication tool or as a temporary support to facilitate language development and communication.

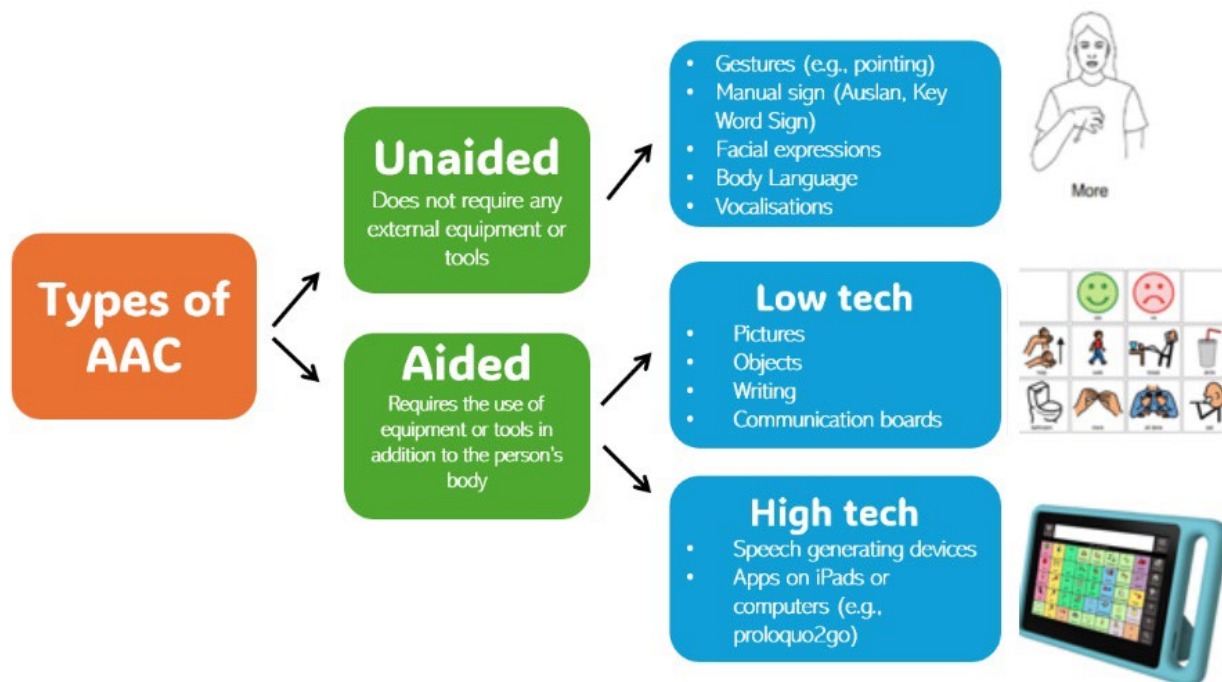
AAC is not limited to individuals who are entirely nonspeaking- many people use AAC alongside spoken language to enhance their ability to communicate effectively in different contexts.

AAC can be broadly categorized into two types:

- Unaided AAC, which includes gestures, facial expressions, body language, and sign language. These methods do not require external tools and rely on the individual's ability to use their body to communicate.
- Aided AAC, systems that use external tools, which can be further classified into paper-based/static (communication books, visual schedules, topic boards), and powered/digital (AAC apps, dedicated AAC devices, speech generating devices).



 Types of AAC 	
unaided	aided
★ no tools needed ★ no physical aids -sign language -gestures/movements -facial expressions 	★ tools needed -pictures/photos -technology (low/high tech) -communication boards -object symbols -written words/letters 





AAC can:

- Provide a reliable means of communication.
- Reduce frustration and challenging behaviours associated with communication difficulties.
- Support social interactions and enhance participation in daily activities.
- Facilitate the development of spoken language (Kasari et al., 2014).
- Improve literacy skills through increased exposure to symbols and written words (Light & McNaughton, 2012).
- Early introduction of AAC has been shown to improve long-term communication outcomes (Drager et al., 2010).

The research shows that children who are exposed to a minimum **of three modes of communication being used simultaneously**, learn new vocabulary and concepts **much faster** than one mode of communication.

Bottom line: Every child needs all adults to be using at least 3 modes of communication when engaging and communicating with them.

AAC should not be considered a last resort but rather an integral part of language development and communication access.



At home, how many forms of communication are being used?



You may need to implement:

- Now/Next board with places (photos or symbols) that your family visits regularly to support with transitions
- Daily routine schedule with activities of daily living (bathing, mealtimes) that your family does everyday to encourage language development.
- Makaton signs for: more; finished; help.
- Communication boards to have alongside play-based activities your child enjoys regularly (e.g. bubbles; slime; blocks) to encourage language development.
- Use a whiteboard and a marker to create an informal Now/Next board on the move!
- Print photos of food items and toys your child enjoys to encourage them to make choices.

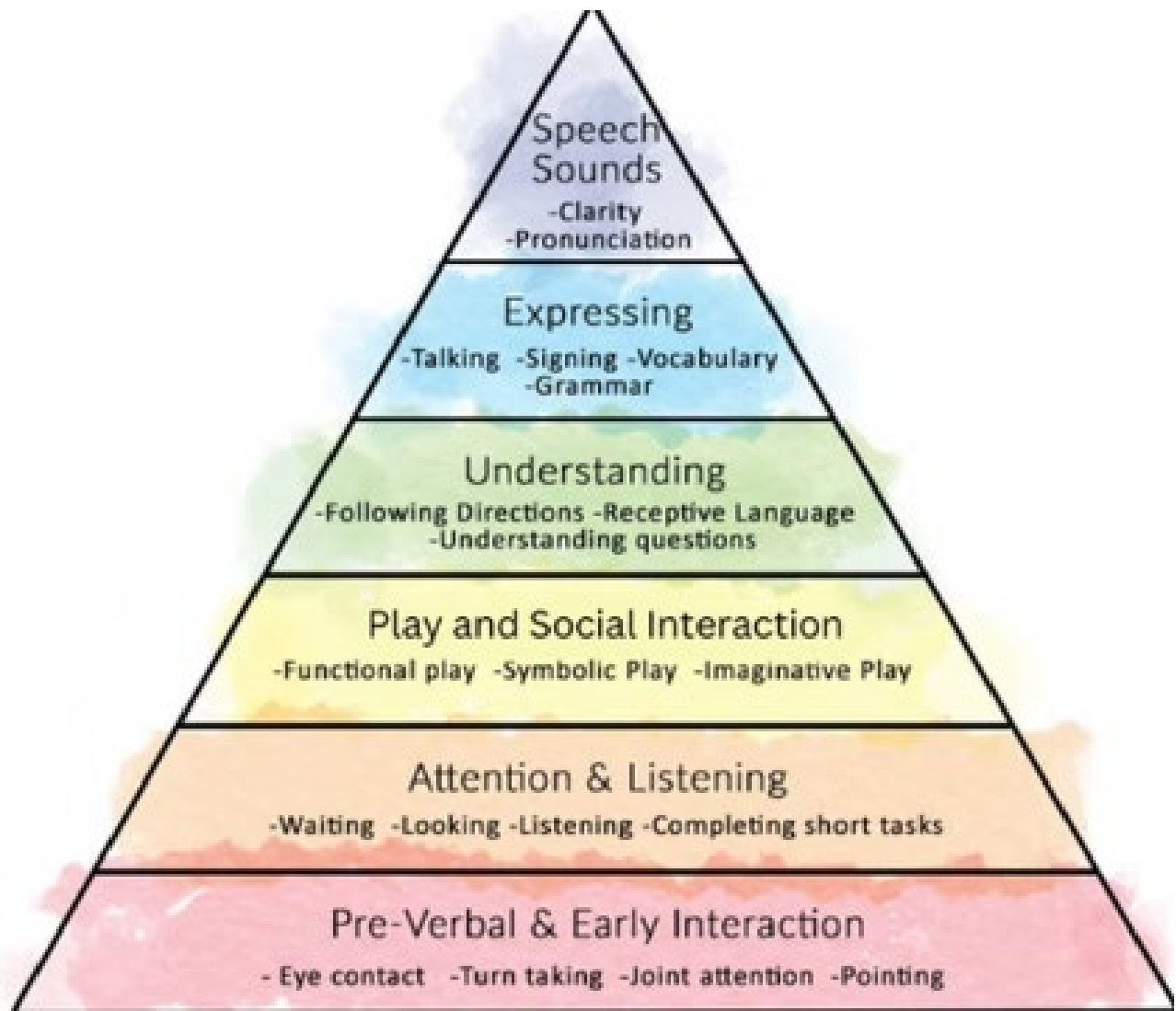
Do you need any of the above resources?

*Email the office at: office@lindonbennett.hounslow.sch.uk To request an **AAC home request questionnaire** and the Speech Therapy Team will email you digital resources to print and use at home.*

Please note: when you receive a visual schedule/now/next board template, you may need to print photos of places/activities to use with it. Not all children respond to the generic symbols.



Communication Pyramid:



AAC consistently targets:

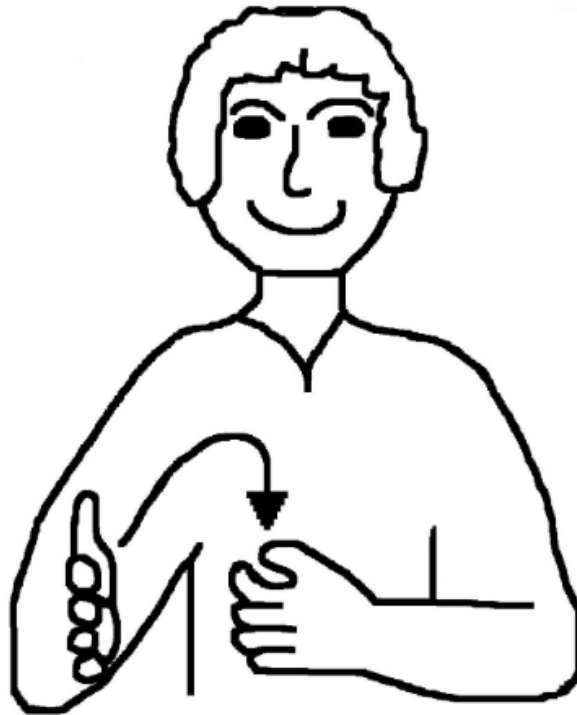
- Pre-Verbal & Early Interaction
- Understanding & Expressing across all environments; play-based; daily routines; learning; transitions etc.



Appendices:

Appendix A – *Makaton sign* for “more”. [Makaton Key Word Sign #5 - More](#)

More



Move flat hand, palm in
pointing forward on top of
“Full O” support hand

Tutorial Videos: https://youtu.be/bit_rwlhvWA?si=itkSS-hHcYBP_wsu

Fun videos: [SingingHandsUK - YouTube](#)

What is Makaton: https://youtu.be/rm8fGFaT_gg?si=yBu5Kw1mVI3TfcAf

What is Makaton: [Makaton Training](#)



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Appendix B: Visual Schedules

Example of daily living schedule for an individual child:



Visual Schedule including Objects of reference (two modes together).





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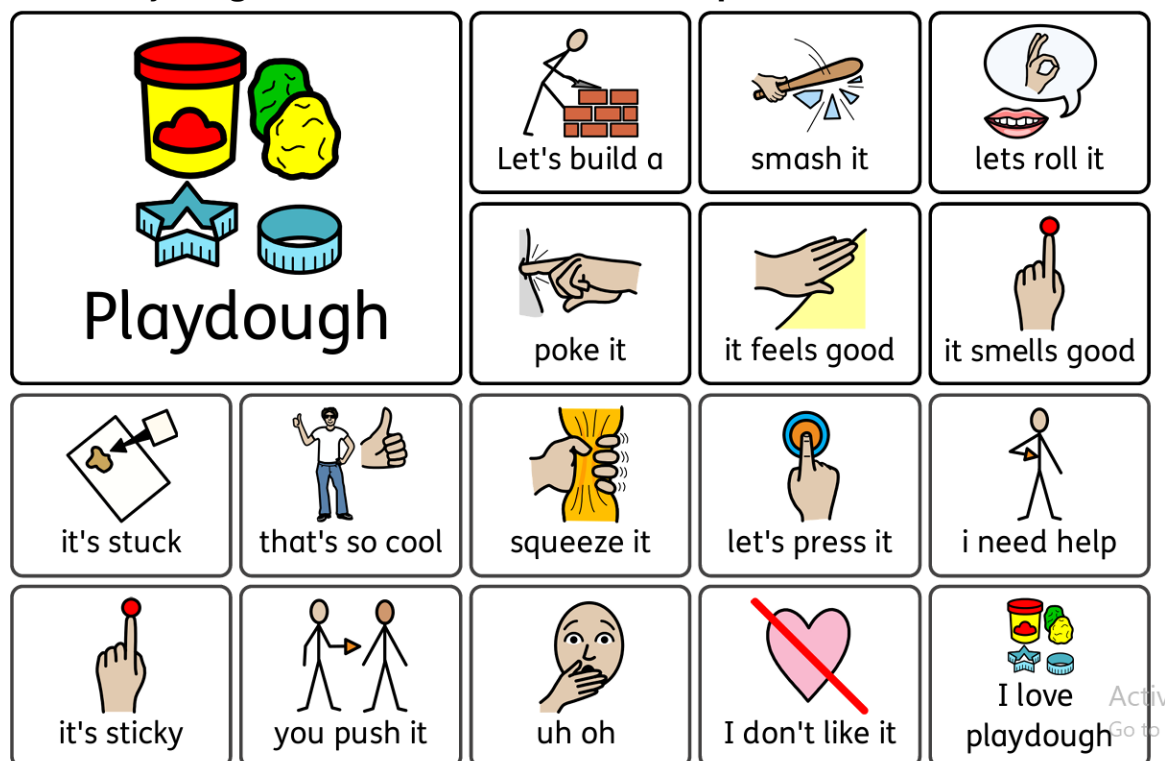
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Visual Schedule for Whole Class:



Appendix C: Communication boards

Generic Playdough communication board with **phrases**





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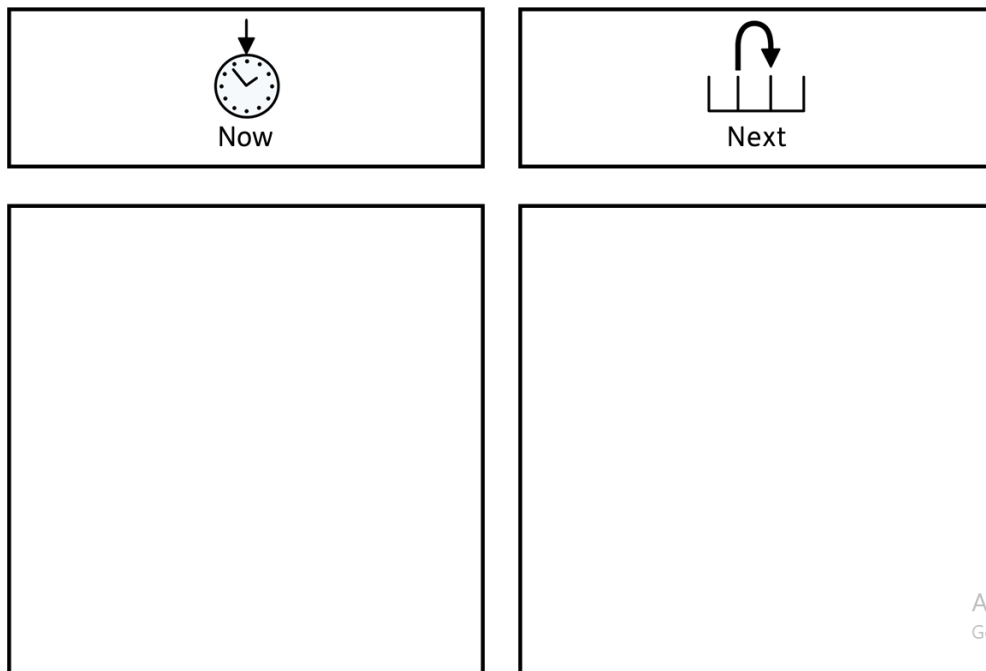
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Appendix D: Core boards examples – vocabulary, size, complexity will vary depending on the student’s needs and current level.



Appendix E: Now/Next board





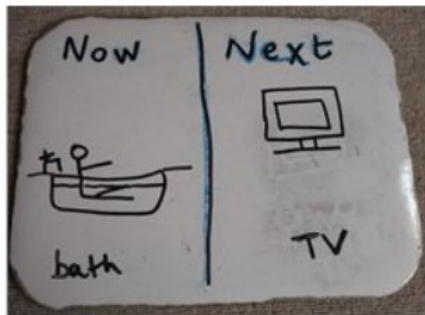
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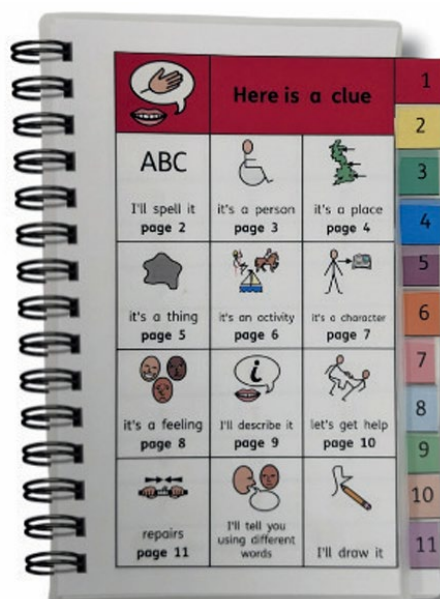


Now/Next: whiteboard



Now/Next: using template

Appendix F: Communication books





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