

Tips for Encouraging Children to Use their AAC Systems At Home and in the Classroom

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1. Get Familiar with The Child's Communication Method

Have the child's speech therapist show you how to use the communication method that has been chosen for this child. You should be familiar enough with it that you can teach it to the child.

2. Use the AAC When Communicating Around the Child

When you're talking to the child, you should be using the child's AAC system, too. You can also use it when you're talking to other people. Just make sure the child sees you using the AAC system a lot. The child needs a lot of great models to know what to do.

3. Encourage the Child to Play with and Explore the AAC System

At first, the child will probably use the AAC system without much intent. He may push buttons randomly or play with the pictures instead of using them to communicate. Respond to these actions just as though he was doing it intentionally. If he pushes a button, talk about the button he pushed. If he picks up a picture, talk about the picture he chose. This will help him learn that the words from the AAC system have meaning.

4. Keep the AAC Device/System With the Child and Working at All Times

You can't take away a child's voice and you shouldn't take away his communication device either. If a child is pushing buttons or playing with the pictures when he should be listening or paying attention, you need to teach him not to instead of taking it away.

5. Set Up Opportunities for the Child to Use the AAC

Ask the child questions that you know he can use the AAC to answer. Provide choices of items that you know he can use his AAC to ask for. Set up situations where the child will be successful with the AAC and help him if he's having trouble.

6. Stay Positive and Praise Often

Using AAC can be an amazing experience for a child who doesn't have the means to talk. If you stay positive and praise him for his attempts, you will both have a better time using it.