

The Future is Vocal: Publication Outline

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The Future is Vocal: Integrating AAC Devices into Classrooms

I've always believed every child deserves a voice. As both a compliance specialist and speech-language pathologist, I've seen too many students with severe communication needs remain silent in general education classrooms. They were physically present, but their voices went unheard, even ignored. Some had AAC devices, yet without intentional training or teacher buy-in, those devices sat unused. That silence weighed heavily on me.

I realized my innovation plan on integrating Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices could not remain limited to my school or district. Publishing became the way to share strategies, lessons, and lived experiences with others who face similar challenges. As (Crowe et al., 2022, p. 3) explained, "AAC provides children with the tools to express thoughts, needs, and ideas, but without systematic implementation, the potential remains unrealized". Sharing this message matters because communication is more than an academic skill. It's right owed to all.

Finding the right profile

When I first thought about publishing, I found myself asking the same questions teachers ask when choosing a digital tool: Where do I start? Who am I speaking to? Where will my story resonate best?

I quickly realized I had different audiences to reach. The ASHA Leader offers a space where speech-language pathologists and educators already invested in communication issues gather. The Journal of Special Education Technology (JSET) offers a peer-reviewed, research-based audience where practitioners and researchers look for tested innovation. Edutopia provides a practical, teacher-centered space where classroom strategies can inspire immediate

action.

Each platform offers unique benefits. Together, they can carry one message: AAC integration is not just about devices. It's about equity, intentionality, and building classrooms where students with complex communication needs can thrive. (Taylor et al., 2020, p. 109) remind us, "Inclusion is an ethical responsibility, not an optional extra". Overall, the best place I chose to publish was Edutopia.

Building on Innovation

This publication is rooted in my ongoing innovation plan and action research. In my professional practice, I have repeatedly seen that successful AAC integration doesn't happen by accident. Buying devices is the easy part; sustaining meaningful use is the real challenge. Teachers must be equipped with training, families must feel connected to the process, and administrators must understand the cost-benefit realities of AAC investment. In my district, I've seen that when even one of those elements is missing, students are left unable to show what they know. (Lohmann et al., 2019, p. 6) highlight this same concern, noting that "assistive technology tools are only effective when paired with intentional planning and teacher support".

My article builds on this reality: technology is necessary, but it must be paired with leadership, professional learning, and a culture of equity. Without this, AAC risks being another unused tool collecting dust in a classroom corner.

Lessons on Lessons Learned

The lessons I've learned so far are both humbling and inspiring.

- Implementation gaps matter. Many students had devices, but no consistent routines to use them.

The result was exclusion from peer conversations, reduced participation, and ultimately isolation.

- Teacher intentionality changes everything. With proper training, educators learn to pause, prompt, and include AAC responses in instruction. Suddenly, students who were previously silent find space to contribute.
- Peers are powerful allies. When general education classmates learn to wait, model, and interact with AAC users, stigma fades. A sense of belonging and community grows.

Yet, there is still much to learn. I hope to gather more evidence about the long-term academic and social outcomes for students who consistently use AAC not only in classrooms, but also at home and in unstructured environments. Will these students experience stronger literacy growth? Will peer relationships deepen? These are questions that demand continued exploration.

Digital Resources

Just as digital portfolios use blogs and websites to showcase student learning, my article will include digital resources that demonstrate AAC in action. Words alone cannot fully capture the power of seeing a child communicate for the first time using their device.

- Example Video. A short classroom clip where a student uses their AAC device to participate in a group discussion. This resource doesn't just describe inclusion; it shows it.
- Infographic Guide. A step-by-step visual roadmap for teachers to integrate AAC into daily instruction. Designed to be printable, shareable, and easy to reference, this tool will help teachers move from theory to practice.

These digital resources make the article interactive and practical. They give educators tangible strategies rather than abstract concepts.

The Message

The audience for this work is broad. It includes teachers, parents, speech-language pathologists, administrators, and even siblings and clergy who support students using AAC devices. Every one of these people has the power to influence a child's communication opportunities. The message is simple but urgent: when classrooms intentionally integrate AAC, communication gaps close, disparities decrease, and authentic inclusion becomes possible. As (McCarty, 2022, p. 4) emphasized, "Peer interaction is not an afterthought—it is a central pathway to learning and identity for students with complex communication needs".

I want my publication to serve as a guide for anyone supporting AAC users. My hope is that it not only shares research but also inspires empathy, intentionality, and action. Because in the end, the future isn't just digital. It's vocal- however that for that individual.

References

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