

Support augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) users

A suggestion for implementing the strategy

'Key areas to support' from the Guide: [Speech, Language and Communication](#)

Includes:

- Get specialist support
- Integrate AAC across the school
- Understand the role of AAC systems
- Model communication
- Support successful use of AAC
- Honour student contributions
- Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Speech, Language and Communication](#)

Strategy: [Key areas to support](#)

Suggestion: [Support augmentative and alternative communication \(AAC\) users](#)

Date

25 June 2026

Link

inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/speech-language-and-communication/support-augmentative-and-alternative-communication-aac-users

Get specialist support



Source:

[Altogether Autism Takiwātanga – Spotlight on Core Boards](#)

<https://www.altogetherautism.org.nz/spotlight-on-core-boards/>

[View full image \(81 KB\)](#)

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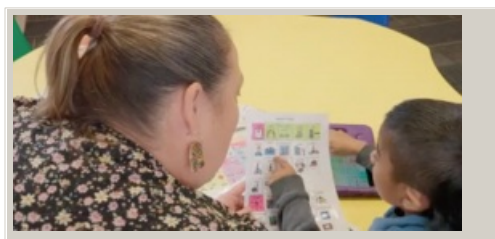
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Integrate AAC across the school

Papatoetoe South School staff talk about how they support AAC users. Their inclusive approach includes modelling, working with peers and using core boards in the playground.



Video hosted on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/945992184>

Closed Captions

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Understand the role of AAC systems

AAC supports communication and language development for students who do not rely on speech alone to be heard and understood.

- ✓ Students may communicate non-verbally using an AAC system.
- ✓ Non-verbal communication systems use a variety of techniques including sign language, gestures, visuals, written communication, or specialised communication boards and communication technologies.
- ✓ Students who use specialised communication boards and technologies communicate by selecting from an increasingly complex range of communication symbols or choices.
- ✓ Some digital systems speak words aloud for the student.

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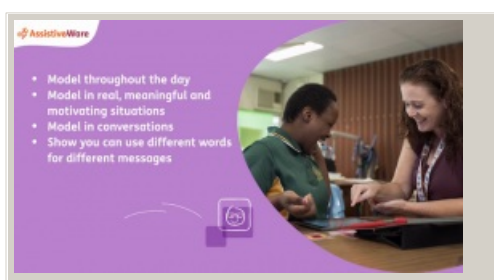
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Model communication

“Typically developing children learn language by hearing it spoken around them all day... But often we hand a non-speaking child a communication device and expect them to use it after a short demonstration.”

Source: [AssistiveWare](#)



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/LqeAipcciVQ>

Closed Captions

Source:

[AssistiveWare](#)

<https://www.assistiveware.com/learn-aac/start-modeling>

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Support successful use of AAC

Support students who use AAC systems with guidance from the student's speech-language therapist.

- ✓ Make sure the AAC system is consistently available, in and across settings.
- ✓ Model communication using their system.
- ✓ Respond to AAC communication promptly, appropriately, and consistently.
- ✓ Prompt ākonga to use their AAC system when making requests and expressing themselves.
- ✓ Help them to give language to what they are feeling, especially after experiencing challenges.
- ✓ Set up opportunities to teach use of the AAC system. Schedule daily practice sessions and embed opportunities throughout the day.
- ✓ Teach peers how to use the AAC system. If possible, give peers their own system.

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Honour student contributions

Listen to ākongā and honour their contributions.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/H7dca7U7GI8>

Closed Captions

Source:

[Communication First](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7dca7U7GI8>

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Useful resources



Atanz links and resources

Links to assistive technology products and information.

Publisher: Assistive Technology Alliance New Zealand Trust

[Visit website](#)



Students with limited verbal capabilities can thrive in inclusive classrooms

Teacher's story about supporting students using AAC. Links to video examples.

[Visit website](#)



Aided language stimulation explained

Video showing the importance of modelling language using modes the student uses, including using communication devices to model communication.

Publisher: Loudoun County Public Schools Assistive Technology

[Visit website](#)

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