

Addressing Complex Communication Needs & Support for AAC Users

Sponsored by the

SD Department of Education and the SD Speech-Language-Hearing Association

January 23, 2026

Zoom Presentation: 9-12, 1-4 Central 8-11, 12-3 Mountain



In order to receive continuing education credit for this course, participants will be required to complete a self-assessment which will include stating three things learned related to learner outcomes and how this information will be applied in the workplace.

Course Description: This 6 hour course will be in two parts discussing **Augmentative and Alternative Communication for Gestalt Language Processors (AM session)** and **Managing AAC in the Classroom (PM session)**

Morning session: Introduction to AAC for Gestalt Language Processors

Course Description: This practical workshop introduces speech-language pathologists and related professionals to the essentials of supporting gestalt language processors (GLPs) with augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Participants learn how AAC can empower communication, support language development, and align with a neurodiversity-affirming framework. Key Topics Covered: - Common myths and mindset shifts around AAC use for GLPs - Clues and characteristics of gestalt language processing - Developmental stages of gestalt language acquisition - Why AAC is critical for communication success in this population - Practical strategies for introducing and supporting AAC use

Learner outcomes:

After completing this activity, participants will be able to explain the stages of Natural Language Acquisition and apply that knowledge to assessment and therapy for gestalt language processors.

After completing this activity, participants will be able to describe neuro-diversity affirming and child-led therapy approaches and their importance

After completing this activity, participants will be able to program a variety of AAC applications/software to support gestalt language processors

Afternoon session: Managing AAC in the Classroom: Buy-In Tips & Tricks for Success

Course Description: Communication doesn't just happen during speech therapy! This part of our day will help you consider how to train & support classroom professionals so they feel confident in following through with implementing AAC even when you're not there. We have rounded up the best tips & tricks for buy-in and evidence-based practices for AAC coaching and implementation for improving AAC outcomes in the classroom.

Learner Outcomes:

After completing this activity, participants will be able to implement new ideas and activities in the classroom that support complex communication needs

After completing this activity, participants will be able to coach classroom staff using a variety of habit-based strategies

After completing this activity, participants will be able to push-in to the classroom setting to provide therapy services in the natural environment

Presenter: Emily Diaz, M.S. CCC-SLP is a certified speech-language pathologist with a passion for empowering individuals to find their voice. With a focus on neurodiversity affirming care and augmentative & alternative communication (AAC), Emily offers valuable insight and support to clinicians, parents, and school districts. Emily's expertise extends to topics like managing AAC in the classroom, the importance of staff-buy in and dynamic coaching methods, and the nuances of gestalt language processing and AAC implementation strategies. Having shared her knowledge at conferences and platforms, including Meaningful Speech, Bright Ideas Media, and SpeechPathologyPD.com, Emily stands as a beacon of expertise and innovation in the field of speech-language pathology.

Disclosures:

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Non-Financial: No relevant non-financial disclosures