

# SPECIAL SERVICES MONTHLY

908.436.5200



DIVISION OF SPECIAL SERVICES



EPSNJ.ORG

## OCTOBER IS AAC AWARENESS MONTH!



October is AAC Awareness Month! Augmentative-alternative communication (AAC) is a broad term used for different communication methods. AAC is often used by children with complex communication needs who are not able to communicate most effectively through speaking. There are many different types of AAC including aided, unaided, no tech, light tech, mid tech, and high tech. All forms of AAC are highly customizable and can be modified to support needs and preferences. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about AAC, you can reach out to your school's speech-language specialist.

**LOOKING AHEAD**

Professional Spotlight:  
Mr. Dec

Home tips to improve communication

Learning to use an AAC system



# SPECIAL SERVICES MONTHLY

## A MESSAGE FROM YOUR DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL SERVICES

Stakeholders of Students with Special Needs,

We hope all have settled in well for the 2025-2026 school year. October's newsletter focuses on "Communication" to mark AAC Awareness Month. Please take some time to look over the helpful tips and information in our newsletter. The information aims to support students' growth and learning.

Also, this month, members of ESEPAC have chosen their cabinet members, and their details are included in the newsletter. Our goal is to continue providing you with relevant resources and information on a variety of topics. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

*N. Morales-Frigoletto*



**Nancy Morales-Frigoletto**  
Director

**Thelusma Cadet, Scott Cohen,  
Myranda Conceicao, Cheryl Ferry,  
Maria Dolores Garcia, Julia Lehman,  
Ali Abdul Malik**  
Supervisors

### Featured Community Resource

## UNION COUNTY OFFICE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS (OPDSN) -

Want to check out an AAC board within our community? Two Elizabeth parks, Mattano Park and Warinanco Park installed bilingual English-Spanish communication boards in 2023 that children and adults can use to communicate when verbal communication is difficult. Visit a local park to check them out! OPDSN also coordinates inclusive and adaptive social and recreational activities for children and adults with in the Elizabethport Community Center; visit OPDSN's website: <https://ucnj.org/dhs/opdsn> or call (908) 527-4807 for more information on local events and to be added to their distribution list.

## ABOUT ESEPAC

### ESEPAC Executive Officers

President: Emily Gonzalez  
Vice President: Gilda Rodriguez  
Secretary: Denise Olivera



**Contact Information:** [ESEPAC@epsnj.org](mailto:ESEPAC@epsnj.org)

ESEPAC is organizing a series of informational sessions tailored for parents and guardians of students receiving special education services. Your feedback will assist us in determining the most relevant topics and preferred formats for these sessions. **Please note that all questions are mandatory; if a question does not apply to you, kindly select or write N/A.** Your responses will remain anonymous and will be used solely for planning purposes. The survey findings will be shared with you in the November newsletter. Please scan the QR code to complete the survey.



**Scan me!**



## KNOW YOUR IEP

**Speech-language services** – a related service in the IEP that supports students’ communication needs.

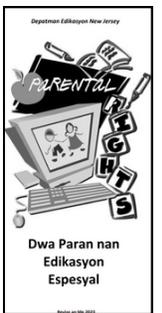
**Receptive language** – students’ ability to understand spoken language (Ex. vocabulary, answer questions, follow directions.)

**Expressive language** – students’ ability to express themselves (Ex. communicate wants and needs, use words/phrases/sentences to respond to a question or provide an opinion)

**Articulation** – students’ speech sound production (Ex. forming clear and distinct sounds in words, phrases, and conversation)

**Fluency / Stuttering** – Fluency refers to speech smoothness while stuttering involves interrupted flow due to repetitions of sounds, syllables or words, holding out sounds or blocking speech sounds

## PARENTAL RIGHTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

 <p>Parental Rights in Special Education</p>	 <p>Derechos parentales en educación especial</p>	 <p>Direitos parentais na educação especial</p>	 <p>Dwa Paran nan Edikasyon Espesyal</p>	 <p>حقوق أولياء الأمور في التعليم الخاص</p>
<p>English</p>	<p>Espanol</p>	<p>Português</p>	<p>Kreyòl Ayisyen</p>	<p>عربي</p>



Professional Spotlight

### MEET MR. DEC, TEACHER OF AUTISM, SCHOOL NO. 22

My name is Michael Dec, and I am one of the first-grade autism teachers at William F. Halloran, School #22. I have been a proud Husky since January 2024 and have now been teaching for two and a half years, though at times it feels like I have been teaching a lot longer. This was not my first career, nor was it my second, or even third; this is my fourth career, and I am more than happy to say I have found where I belong. I have found something that brings me joy even on some of the toughest days. I knew this path was not going to be easy. It is my compassion for helping others and my need to be of service to others that led me to teaching. In my time within the classroom, I have enjoyed watching my students make gains and come out of their shells. The giggles and smiles that come from their excitement when they master or learn something new adds to my joy. In conclusion, I leave you with this quote, "Challenges are what make life interesting and overcoming them is what makes life meaningful."

Mr. Dec



# SPECIAL SERVICES MONTHLY

## SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNICATION

Speech-language services include overall communication skills such as receptive language, expressive language, articulation, fluency/stuttering, and feeding/swallowing. Speech-language specialists are school-based speech-language pathologists who diagnose and provide treatment to children with communication difficulties. Frequency and duration of services vary based on specific student needs as outlined in their individualized education program (IEP). Services are proposed based on the least restrictive environment; considerations are made for least removal from the classroom and working with same-age peers to achieve communication confidence and independence.

## HOME TIPS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

Your child's communication skills are something that can be easily supported in the home environment. Incorporate the following strategies into your daily routine to support your children at home:

### Active Listening

Ask your child to share information about their day. Avoid using yes/no questions. For example, instead of asking "Did you have fun today?", ask instead "Tell me about something fun you did today." Be patient while your child shares, try not to rush them and give them time to think about their response. Give your child the option to draw their answer if they cannot verbalize it.

### Modeling

When your child mispronounces a word, give them an example of you using it correctly. You can also use a slower rate of speech so they can hear the target sound, word or sentence. For example, if your child says, "I want nana.", you can respond with "Oh you want a banana?" emphasizing the beginning sound and syllable.

### Reduce Screen time

Using a tablet, cell phone, computer or video game system, oftentimes does not allow for children to learn appropriate interaction of communication skills including social skills. Too much screen time has been shown to have a negative effect on educational skills such as attention, social interaction, vocabulary skills, and reading ability.

Fluency/Stuttering-Related Parent Tips for Talking with your Child  
Website: [7Tips-NEW.indd](#)

## IMPORTANT DATES

OCT  
22

UCNJ Webinar:  
Navigating  
Guardianship

OCT  
23

EBOE Meeting

OCT  
24

Early Dismissal

OCT  
25

Spooktacular  
Family Afear

NOV  
13

E-SEPAC  
Introductory  
Meeting

# AAC AWARENESS MONTH

## FALL IN LOVE WITH SCHOOL 51'S ACC BOARDS!



Ms. Louro uses playground board during speech therapy session

Have you seen any of our district's bilingual core boards pop up at your child's school playground? AAC playground boards have been implemented at several district schools to ensure students have access to varied forms of communication as needed, and to support the school community with different tools.

Donald Stewart ECC School No. 51 classes and speech-language therapy groups, led by district speech-language specialist (SLS) Ms. Ines Louro, are loving the boards and AAC apps via an iPad as tools to better express themselves. SLSs provide consultations and education for teachers, paraprofessionals, and families to support student's communication skills across daily activities.



Share ideas for future issues to: [frigolettona@epsnj.org](mailto:frigolettona@epsnj.org)

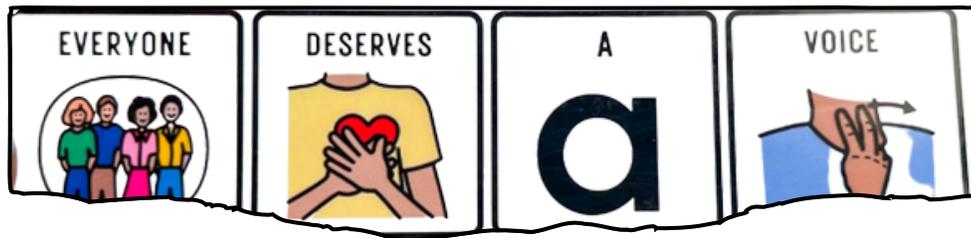
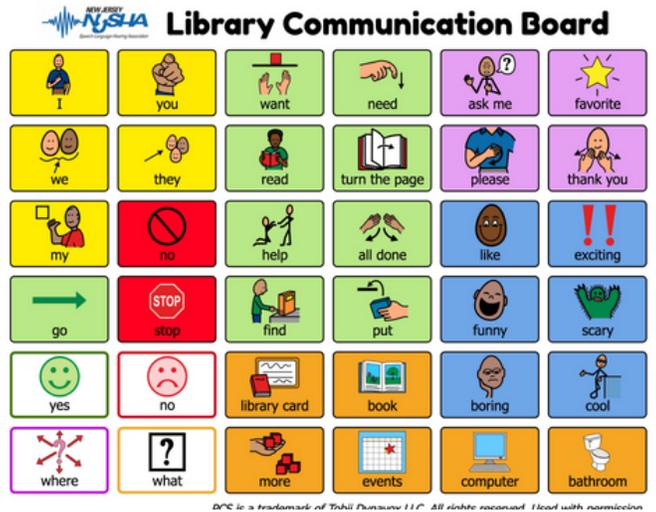
# AAC AWARENESS MONTH

Parent Tips

## LEARNING TO USE AN AAC SYSTEM

Learning to use an AAC system can be challenging for your child. You can help at home by making sure the AAC system is always available to your child. Take time to learn your child’s AAC system including vocabulary, operational functions, and its layout. Use the AAC system during daily activities and routines. For example, before a meal, point to the symbol eat and say “eat.” Most importantly, the best thing you can do is offer encouragement and celebrate small successes to motivate your child to use the AAC system!

NJSHA has created community AAC boards and resources that can be found [here](#). These boards are free to print and use as needed. NJSHA also has additional information on communication disorders and treatment for parents and community stakeholders.



Know your AAC Terms

### BUZZ WORDS

**Total Communication** is an approach which emphasizes the importance and honors all means of communication which includes facial expressions, gestures, body language, signs, sounds, symbols and pictures.

**No tech AAC** is a form of unaided communication using no materials other than the child’s body. Examples include nodding head, shaking head, thumbs up, thumbs down and pointing.

**Light tech AAC** is a form of aided communication using an item outside of one’s body that is not electronic. Examples can be a piece of paper and pencil or a communication book made up of many pages and symbols.

**High tech AAC** is a form of aided communication that uses electronic devices with advanced processors. Examples include a tablet or computer with a software program for communication.

**Unaided AAC** refers to any communication method that requires only the child’s body. No additional tools or technology are needed.

We value the thoughts of our community members.

Have a great idea for an upcoming issue or information that you think would be beneficial to others in our community?

Send to: [frigolettona@epsnj.org](mailto:frigolettona@epsnj.org)