



**WACO ISD EDUCATION FOUNDATION
COVER SHEET – PART II
Application for Grant:
2026-2027 Funding Cycle**

Assigned Grant Proposal #: _____

Project Title: _____

Grade Level(s): _____ # of Students DIRECTLY involved: _____

Subject Area(s): _____

Amount Requested: \$ _____

Grant Focus Area(s): In order to be considered, Waco Education Foundation Innovation Grant proposals must fall under one or more of the E4 focus areas: early childhood development, enhanced programming for advanced students, extended education for staff, and emphasis on student performance. NOTE: In addition to meeting one of the E4 focus areas above, grant readers are especially interested in creative and innovative grant requests that target fine arts, STEM, literacy, or enrichment.

(check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Early Childhood Development | Extended Education for Staff |
| Enhanced Programming for Advanced Students | Emphasis on Student Performance |
| Fine Arts | STEM |
| Literacy | Enrichment |

Special Education Education Foundation Grant Proposal

Project Title:

Empowering Student Communication Through Portable AAC Communication Boards

Needs Statement:

Students in Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade receiving special education services often experience significant challenges with expressive and receptive communication. Many students in our program have diagnoses including Autism, Intellectual Disabilities, Developmental Delays, Speech and Language Impairments, ADHD, and Specific Learning Disabilities affecting reading, writing, and listening comprehension. These disabilities frequently limit students' ability to express their needs, participate in classroom instruction, and interact socially with peers and adults.

When students cannot effectively communicate, they often experience frustration that can lead to behavioral challenges, decreased participation, and missed learning opportunities. For students who are nonverbal or minimally verbal, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) supports are essential tools that allow them to communicate using visual symbols, words, or pictures.

Currently, many of our students rely heavily on adult prompting or limited communication systems that cannot travel with them throughout the school day. Without consistent access to communication supports across environments such as classrooms, therapy sessions, recess, and the cafeteria, students struggle to generalize communication skills and develop independence.

Portable AAC communication boards will provide students with a reliable and accessible way to communicate their wants, needs, feelings, and academic responses. These tools support expressive language development, increase student independence, reduce behavior challenges, and promote meaningful participation in both academic and social environments.

Providing portable communication boards will ensure students have consistent access to communication supports throughout the school day, allowing them to actively engage in learning and develop essential life skills.

Project Description:

This project will provide **10 portable AAC communication devices** to support students receiving special education services in Pre-K through 5th grade. The selected device, TalkingTiles AAC, is an assistive technology communication system designed specifically for individuals who are nonverbal or have limited verbal communication.

These devices allow students to communicate by selecting visual symbols that produce recorded speech output. Teachers and therapists can customize vocabulary and communication options to meet individual student needs.

The portability of the TalkingTiles system allows students to use their communication device across multiple environments including:

- Classroom instruction
- Speech therapy
- Small group intervention
- Transitions between activities
- Recess and playground
- Cafeteria
- Special area classes

The devices will support communication development, reduce communication barriers, and allow students to actively participate in their educational environment.

Goals and Outcomes:

Goal 1: Increase Student Communication Skills

Students will increase their ability to communicate needs, wants, and responses using AAC communication devices.

Outcome:

Students using AAC communication devices will demonstrate increased expressive communication during instructional and social activities as documented through teacher observations and communication data collection.

Goal 2: Increase Classroom Participation

Students will actively participate in classroom discussions, instructional activities, and social interactions using AAC supports.

Outcome:

Teachers will observe an increase in student engagement during lessons and structured activities.

Goal 3: Reduce Communication-Related Behavior Challenges

Providing accessible communication supports will reduce frustration caused by the inability to communicate effectively.

Outcome:

Teachers will track a reduction in communication-related behavioral incidents.

Goal 4: Promote Student Independence

Students will independently use their communication devices across multiple school environments.

Outcome:

Students will demonstrate increased independent communication during daily routines and instructional activities.

Implementation Plan:

Upon receiving the grant, the TalkingTiles AAC devices will be distributed to students who demonstrate significant communication needs. Special education teachers and speech-language pathologists will collaborate to program the devices with individualized vocabulary and communication options.

Teachers will incorporate the devices into daily instruction, small group learning, therapy sessions, and social interactions. Staff will model communication use and provide guided opportunities for students to practice using the devices throughout the school day.

Data will be collected through teacher observations, speech therapy documentation, and progress monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of the devices in supporting student communication.

Budget Justification:

The requested funding will be used to purchase **10 TalkingTiles AAC Communication Devices** designed for individuals who are nonverbal or have limited verbal communication.

Each device provides customizable visual symbols with voice output capabilities, allowing students to communicate effectively using assistive technology. The portability of the devices allows students to access communication support across multiple learning environments throughout the school day.

By providing these AAC devices, students will have consistent access to communication tools that support language development, academic engagement, and social interaction.

Budget Breakdown:

Item	Quantity	Cost	Total
TalkingTiles AAC Communication Device	10	\$300	\$3,000

Total Funding Requested: \$3,000

Product Description:

The TalkingTiles AAC Communication Device is an assistive technology communication system designed to support individuals who are nonverbal or have limited verbal communication. The device allows users to communicate by selecting visual symbols that produce recorded speech output, helping students express needs, participate in learning activities, and interact socially.

TalkingTiles devices are commonly used in educational settings, speech therapy, and special education programs to support communication development for individuals with Autism, developmental delays, speech and language impairments, and other disabilities affecting communication.

The device features customizable communication tiles, durable construction suitable for classroom environments, and portability that allows students to carry the device with them throughout the school day. This portability ensures communication support is available in multiple environments including classrooms, therapy sessions, playgrounds, and cafeterias.

These AAC devices promote independence, reduce frustration related to communication barriers, and allow students to actively engage in academic and social experiences.

Vendor/Product: TalkingTiles – AAC Device for Autism & Speech Therapy

Estimated Cost: \$300 per device

