**ECPC Sample Syllabus**

**Supporting Young Children with Augmentative and Alternative**

**Communication Needs**

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Description automatically generated](https://ecpcta.org/)*

This **sample** syllabus provides ideas for resources, activities, readings, and assignments, aligned with the topic. For some topics, the content may be a separate or stand-alone course. However, for other topics, the content may only be part of a course or courses. ***This is a sample only, and is not a complete syllabus, and can be modified.***

**ECPC Sample Syllabus Content:**

**Supporting Young Children with Augmentative and Alternative Communication Needs**

**Course Description**

This course is designed to help learners gain understanding about strategies and techniques used to support young children who have complex communication needs and their families. Learners will gain a better understanding of the role of families when assessing young children to use augmentative and alternative communication. Learners will engage in understanding of effective interventions for young children with complex communication needs. Topics include collaborating with professionals and families, working effectively with families from diverse cultural backgrounds, how to support beginning communicators, and evidence-based interventions and instructional strategies for working with young children with complex communication needs and their families.

**Recommended Texts**

Beukelman, D., & Light, J. (2020). *Augmentative and alternative communication: Supporting children and adults with complex communication needs, Fifth Edition.* Brookes.

**Standard Components - Student Learning Outcomes**

IHE faculty may develop additional student learning objectives that align with the Standards and components addressed by this course/course content by describing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions students are expected to learn upon successful completion of learning objectives.

As a result of active participation and successful completion of course requirements, learners will be able to:

Standard 3

Component 3.1: Apply teaming models, skills, and processes, including appropriate uses of technology, when collaborating and communicating with families; professionals representing multiple disciplines, skills, expertise, and roles; and community partners and agencies.

* Demonstrate understanding of the factors impacting AAC access including parental perspective and communication, interdisciplinary collaboration, public policy and use of evidence-based practices
* Describe a continuum of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools, strategies, and techniques

Standard 4

Component 4.2: Develop and administer informal assessments and/or select and use valid,

reliable formal assessments using evidence-based practices, including technology, in partnership with families, and other professionals.

* Define augmentative and alternative communication
* Describe the criteria used to identify children who can benefit from AAC tools and strategies
* Identify myths and misconceptions about AAC

Standard 6

Component 6.7: Plan for, adapt, and improve approaches to interaction, intervention, and

instruction based on multiple sources of data across a range of natural environments and inclusive settings.

* Plan for supporting AAC in home, educational, and recreational environments
* Describe the benefits of AAC for children with diverse communication skills

**Topical Course Outline**

Include a topical courseoutline. Align course topics with EI/ECSE Standards and components.

| **Week** | **Standards/ Components** | **Topic and Readings** | **Activity Bank** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Standard 4 Component 4.2 | Definition of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)  An introduction to AAC   * What is AAC? * AAC Myths & Realities * AAC Goals   Beukelman & Light, 2020  Ch. 1  Schlosser & Wendt, 2008 | Begin a relationship/ partnership with a family. This will extend beyond the semester.  Watch this [introduction video](https://youtu.be/lJ1-KjHDikI) about AAC. Share two things you learned about AAC with your discussion group.  Complete the [*Explore AAC*](https://exploreaac.com/modules/what-is-aac/index.html?endpoint=https%3A%2F%2Flrs.saltillo.com%2Fdata%2FxAPI%2F&auth=Basic%20NzQ2OGNmYmFhZjY3YWRhMmQwYjU1MjI5ZjJjNjQyODUxZDEzMTE1ODowMTA3ZDA5ZDNlYWI1YWQ4YzdmOGRkM2Y4NTQ3MjNmZDczNDYwMTI1&activity_id=https%3A%2F%2Fwhat_is_aac_XMLm5emYsWJMCDjwCxCAqx-vRKebBXmU_rise&actor=%7B%22mbox%22%3A%22mailto%3Af590ec2d-f26d-41a8-a8d0-1697d06f3815%40example.com%22%2C%20%22name%22%3A%22ExploreAAC%20f590ec2d-f26d-41a8-a8d0-1697d06f3815%22%7D&registration=f590ec2d-f26d-41a8-a8d0-1697d06f3815#/?_k=3xhh1d)module for a brief introduction to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). |
| 2 | Standard 4 Component 4.2 | Why implement AAC?  Stages of language development  Paul, R., Norbury, C., & Gosse, C., 2018  Waddington, 2018  Schlosser & Wendt, 2008 | Register for free access and explore the [Communication Matrix](https://communicationmatrix.org/).  Explore the [CDC’s milestones charts](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html). Make a list of language and communication milestones for the age range of your family partner’s child. |
| 3 | Standard 4 Component 4.2 | AAC and stages of language development   * Using AAC to support Prelinguistic Skills * Supporting Emergent Skills   Erickson, 2003  Cress & Marvin, 2003  Beukelman & Light, 2020  Ch 2 | Summarize your understanding of language development in two paragraphs. |
| 4 | Standard 4 Component 4.2 | Where to start with AAC   * Overview of AAC intervention * Multimodal communication * Person-centered   Beukelman & Light, 2020,  Ch. 3  Light & McNaughton, 2013  Davidoff, 2017 | Register for a free account with the [AAC Learning Center](https://aac-learning-center.psu.edu/moodle/aac-for-children-an-introduction/), a resource from Pennsylvania State University. Then complete the AAC for Children module. This module explores a family-centered approach to AAC assessment and intervention. |
| 5 | Standard 4 Component 4.2 | An AAC evaluation   * Collaboration with a speech language pathologist * Collaboration with families | Identify three family-centered practices used when collaborating with families about AAC evaluation information. |
| 6 | Standard 4 Component 4.2 | Evaluating options  Feature matching  Beukelman & Light, 2020,  Ch. 8  Ch. 9 | With your family partner, identify the child’s strengths. Based on the child’s strengths, use feature matching to identify two possible tools or strategies that the family can use to support communication in everyday activities. |
| 7 | Standard 6  Component 6.7 | How and when to implement AAC   * Aided language modeling * Core and fringe vocabulary   Soto, et al., 2009 | Using one of the provided case studies, develop a communication system for the child. |
| 8 | Standard 3  Component 3.1 | Communication and collaboration with families  Beukelman & Light, 2020  Ch. 4 | Ask your family partner about their best experience and worst experience in receiving information about their child. |
| 9 | Standard 3  Component 3.1 | Helping families make informed decisions | Research an AAC-related topic and develop a conversation guide for parents with information about choices. Practice the conversation guide with your family partner. |
| 10 | Standard 6 Component 6.7 | Supportive environments for young children with complex communication needs | Develop a list of strategies used to create a supportive environment, including transitions. |
| 11 | Standard 6 Component 6.7 | Everyday activities for young children with complex communication needs | With your family partner, create a list of activities that they can do with their child in the following areas:  Meals and snacks  Play with people  Play with props  Caregiving activities (e.g., diapering, dressing)  Play with toys  Family chores  Books  Transitions |
| 12 | Standard 6 Component 6.7 | Evidence-based practices used with very young children who have complex communication needs | Explore the [Evidence Map created by ASHA](https://www2.asha.org/EvidenceMapLanding.aspx?id=8589942945&recentarticles=false&year=undefined&tab=all). |
| 13 | Standard 6 Component 6.7 | Evidence-based practices used with very young children who have complex communication needs (continued) | Find two articles that include young children with complex communication needs and AAC. Read the articles and summarize your understanding. |
| 14 | Standard 6 Component 6.7 | Evidence-based practices used with very young children who have complex communication needs | Explore the [ISAAC website](https://isaac-online.org/english/home/) and identify two resources that would be helpful to families in their AAC journey. Share the resources with your family partner. |
| 15 | Standard 6 Component 6.7 | Evidence-based practices used with very young children who have complex communication needs | For each resource category, select and annotate three resources. Share the list with your family partner. |

**Resources**

Resources to supplement the ECPC Sample Syllabus Supporting Young Children with Augmentative and Alternative Communication Needs.

* [*Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)*](https://ebip.vkcsites.org/augmentative-and-alternative-communication/)
  + This website describes AAC and includes video examples.
* [*Autism Internet Modules*](https://autisminternetmodules.org/)
  + Modules to support learner understanding about evidence-based practices used for intervention and instruction with young children with autism and their families. Topic modules specific to AAC include Language and Communication, Speech Generating Devices and Assistive Technology.
* [*CDC’s Milestones Charts*](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html)
* [*Evidence Maps*](https://www2.asha.org/EvidenceMapLanding.aspx?id=8589942945&recentarticles=false&year=undefined&tab=all)
  + Created by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA), the evidence maps provide the latest evidence about specific topics.
* [*Explore AAC*](https://exploreaac.com/modules/what-is-aac/index.html?endpoint=https%3A%2F%2Flrs.saltillo.com%2Fdata%2FxAPI%2F&auth=Basic%20NzQ2OGNmYmFhZjY3YWRhMmQwYjU1MjI5ZjJjNjQyODUxZDEzMTE1ODowMTA3ZDA5ZDNlYWI1YWQ4YzdmOGRkM2Y4NTQ3MjNmZDczNDYwMTI1&activity_id=https%3A%2F%2Fwhat_is_aac_XMLm5emYsWJMCDjwCxCAqx-vRKebBXmU_rise&actor=%7B%22mbox%22%3A%22mailto%3Af590ec2d-f26d-41a8-a8d0-1697d06f3815%40example.com%22%2C%20%22name%22%3A%22ExploreAAC%20f590ec2d-f26d-41a8-a8d0-1697d06f3815%22%7D&registration=f590ec2d-f26d-41a8-a8d0-1697d06f3815#/?_k=3xhh1d)
  + This module is a brief introduction to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). The module will define AAC, talk about who uses AAC, describe AAC systems and address the question of when to begin AAC.
* [*The Communication Matrix*](https://communicationmatrix.org/)
  + This nonprofit project is devoted to improving outcomes for individuals with complex communication needs around the world. It offers a free assessment tool to help families and professionals easily understand the communication status, progress, and unique needs of anyone functioning at the early stages of communication or using forms of communication other than speaking or writing.
* *Initial* [*Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for EI/ECSE (2020)*](https://exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-practice-based-standards-early-interventionists-early-childhood-special-educators)
* [*The International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication*](https://isaac-online.org/english/home/)
* [*Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/professional_standards_and_competencies_for_early_childhood_educators.pdf)
* [*ECPC Cross-Disciplinary Competencies*](https://ecpcta.org/cross-disciplinary-competencies/)

**Journals in EI/ECSE**

Below are examples of journals that publish topics about EI/ECSE. Faculty may want to explain how to use articles to support practice and to examine current research. Clarify the difference between practitioner-based journals and research-based journals.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * *Infants and Young Children* * *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* * *Journal of Early Intervention* * *Journal of Special Education Technology* * *Young Exceptional Children* * *Teaching Exceptional Children* | * *Intervention in School and Clinic* * *Journal of Early Hearing Detection and Intervention* * *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education* * *Young Children* * *Exceptional Parent Magazine* * *Rural Special Education Quarterly* |

**Activities and Assignments**

1. **Needs assessment** (Standard 3, Component 3.1; Standard 4, Component 4.2)

Consider a child on your caseload, or someone you’ve met who does not use speech as a primary means of communication. Describe their present needs (list communication functions, environments, partners, types of messages, and AAC options available / needed). Estimate future needs in six months and in one year. Given the needs you’ve identified and the skills you know them to have, what stage of language development do you suspect the individual is at? How would you introduce alternative language symbols to help them move to the next stage (or closer to) of language development? Describe behaviors (typically from observational assessment) that influenced your decision.

1. **System design activity** (Standard 3, Component 3.1; Standard 6, Component 6.7)

One of the biggest differences in working with children who have complex communication needs versus other children is that you must think about symbols to communicate information. Children need a variety of modes for communicating information to allow them to be independent across a wide variety of environments and times of day. You are tasked with developing two different systems for a child (see case studies provided below, or you may use your own). Include body-based communication and lite technology options. As you are planning consider the child’s needs and the communication situations and partners that may impact your decision making. Make sure your AAC options provide as much communication coverage as possible (e.g., be thoughtful about core and fringe vocabulary.

Case Studies

Sheila is a 4-year-old girl who has autism. Her expressive vocabulary is around 50 words with few two-word combinations in highly structured interactions (e.g., lunch request; arts /craft activity). She has some vocalizations and close approximation of speech sounds, but primarily uses her communication notebook to generate basic 1–2-word utterances. She appears to understand more than she can express and benefits from having directions given in one or two steps. She appears to have interest in interacting with some of her peers but has trouble engaging with them. How might you help Sheila have more interactions with her peers? Are there scriptable routines you might introduce for her and her peers to engage in?

Jim is a 5-year-old boy who has cerebral palsy. He attends regular education preschool classroom with a 1:1 aid who assists by dictating for Jim. He is an adept user of his AAC system and language software. He is highly social and often organizes group activities (e.g., games) with his peers. Jim has expressed a desire to learn to read and write. How might you help Jim develop literacy skills using his language system and peer engagement? How might you utilize his 1:1 support for his literacy goals?

1. **Which App for that? activity** (Standard 3, Component 3.1; Standard 4, Component 4.2)

The purpose of this activity is to give you exposure to, and experience with, searching for, critiquing, and selecting appropriate technology resources (i.e., applications for mobile devices) that have become ubiquitous. Many applications are marketed as targeting specific populations and skills. For this activity, it is okay to presume competence in linguistic skills (i.e., symbolic considerations are not required) when selecting application / assistive technology to review for this assignment. Select two applications based AT programs to review and compare. You are welcome to use these examples but are not required to do so. In fact, encouraged to explore other options available (they change regularly). For both apps: Your group will generate a “fact sheet” that offers a description of the program itself, population(s) targeted, skills required to be able to use program, skills program intends to build/support, cost, and limitations. Compare features/aspects/capabilities of both applications and determine interest which app you would purchase for your clinical practice and why. Be prepared to offer a 5-minute, description/demonstration of application software.

1. **Intervention planning activity** (Standard 6, Component 6.7)

Using the same child as you selected for the system design activity (or another just be clear about indicating this) consider the following:

* What is the child’s potential?
* What barriers do you anticipate to more independent communication?
* Will your intervention focus on language learning, literacy, social communication, etc.?
* Generate a script for an activity that you could use to address the focus you select.

1. **Scripting activity** (Standard 6, Component 6.7)

Select an activity that is routine for young children you work with. Identify core vocabulary that is used in that activity and identify key/motivating fringe vocabulary that also corresponds to that activity. Think about how to incorporate core words throughout the activity. For example, if making cookies think about how you can incorporate the use of “more” “less” or “soft” and “dry” as well as motivating fringe vocabulary like “chocolate chips” and “cookies”. Once you have identified the vocabulary you want to focus on for your activity decide what you can do and say to create opportunities for the child to practice using those words as well as for the child to see you modeling those words. How will you scaffold success?

1. **Considering access activity** (Standard 3, Component 3.1)

Watch this half hour video to help you think about access beyond the physical components of switches and direct selection. \*\*Also, wait for it…, a shameless plug from you’re truly so I’m present even in your self-studies –and you’ll see the proverbial nut doesn’t fall far from a metaphorical familial tree when it comes to talking too long.\*\*

<https://aac-learning-center.psu.edu/2012/11/07/adaptive-access-key-design-considerations/>

Select one of the following. After you have watched both, identify 3 unique access considerations that are not physical that come to mind, and provide me at least one question you still want answered after watching them.

* [An Introduction to Non-Invasive Brain-Computer Interface Techniques for AAC – March 27, 2019](https://www.isaac-online.org/english/webinars/archived-webinars/introduction-to-non-invasive-brain-computer-interface-techniques-for-aac/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)
* [Social Justice: Accessibility Includes Communication – November 17, 2015](https://www.isaac-online.org/english/webinars/archived-webinars/social-justice/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)
* [Augmentative Communication Apps: Making the Best Choice for the Best AAC Voice](https://www.isaac-online.org/english/webinars/archived-webinars/aac-apps-isaac-aaidd/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

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