

**NOTE: Handout Edited/Redacted for Privacy of a Minor. Please feel free to Contact Cass Griffin Bennett at [cassia.griffin@gmail.com](mailto:cassia.griffin@gmail.com).**

**STATE INTERAGENCY  
COORDINATING COUNCIL  
APRIL 17, 2024**

# Toddler AAC

What I Wish Our Early Supports Team  
Had Known About How 'Early' AAC Can  
Help Families Thrive

**CASS GRIFFIN BENNETT**

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# Today's Presentation

**About Us & Our AAC Experience via Videos & Facebook Posts**

INCLUDING

**Biggest Effects**

**Why? My Felt Safety Premise**

**What? When? How? Strategies & Parent Pro-tips**

**Why 2 May Actually Be *Easier***

**Biggest Takeaways**

**NWACS Resources**

**What I've Been Up To & My Ask**

**Questions & Discussion**



# What is AAC?

AAC stands for augmentative and alternative communication. It refers to tools and strategies that can enhance speech or provide a completely different means of communication.

AAC can be aided (i.e., using a tool) or unaided (i.e., no tool needed), such as sign language or gestures. The truth is we all use some AAC. We text, type, write and use gestures. Additional tools, such as communication devices, books or apps, can provide a means of communication for individuals who are unable to speak or for whom speech is not always their primary mode.



@the.aac.coach

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# My Why

## THIS IS NOT ABOUT ME

DOCUMENTARY FEATURING JORDYN ZIMMERMAN



CAME OUT IN LATE 2021

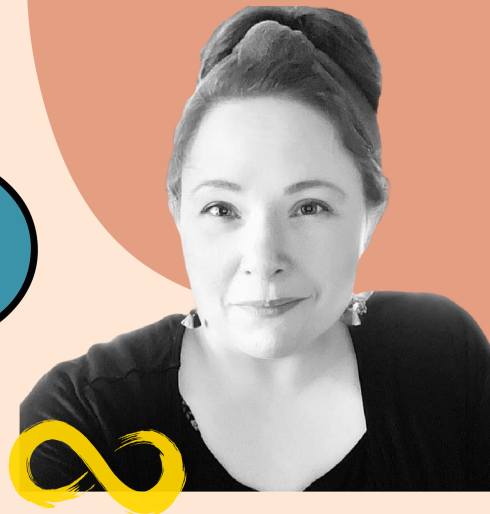
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# CASS GRIFFIN BENNETT

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## MY GUIDING PARENTING GOAL

To raise my daughters to be their own best self-advocates



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## “JUST A MOM” DISCLAIMER

BA from Smith College  
NWACS Board Member  
AASR Volunteer



1

KIDS ARE INTRINSICALLY MOTIVATED TO CONNECT

2



## Why? My Felt Safety Premise

MORE RELIABLE ROBUST COMMUNICATION

leads to

INCREASED FELT SAFETY

leads to

MORE STABLE REGULATION FOUNDATION

leads to

MORE FREQUENT ABILITY TO ENGAGE, PARTICIPATE, STRETCH & DEVELOP & LEARN

# My Own Evolution:

Two is not too early to start  
**TO**  
Two is a great age to start

## Why?

- Brain development in early childhood
- Less communication trauma
- Developmentally-appropriate topics are easiest for adults to learn modeling on too!

## & Remember These Effects?

PREPARATION & TRANSITIONS & NEW EXPERIENCES & PREDICTABILITY & SELF-ADVOCACY

### COMMUNICATION

SHARED MEANING  
MAKING

BONDING

SENSORY VALIDATION

### CONNECTION

REPAIR FOR  
MISCOMMUNICATIONS

FAMILY LIFE

FUN & JOY

### REGULATION

BUILDING PROBLEM  
SOLVING SKILLS

LESS FRUSTRATION

## Why Wait?

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# NWACS

NorthWest  
Augmentative  
Communication  
Society

## Community, Education & Support



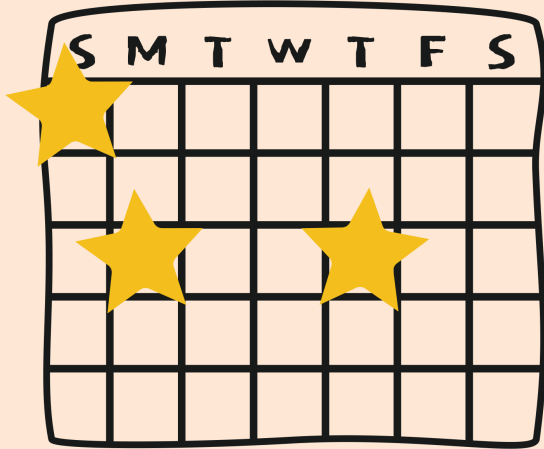
“FAMILY AAC (HOSTED BY NWACS)”

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# NWACS

NorthWest  
Augmentative  
Communication  
Society

## Community, Education & Support



Annual Conference

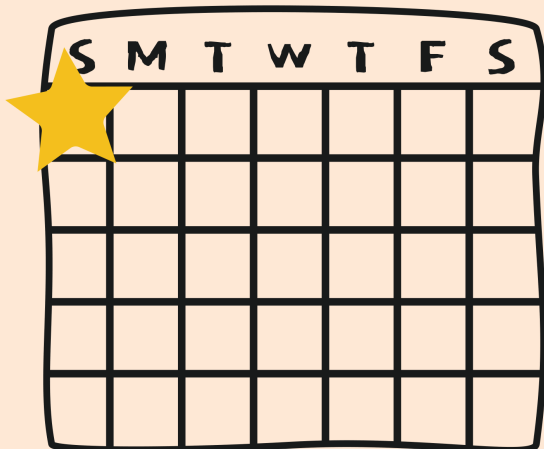
Monthly Events

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# NWACS

NorthWest  
Augmentative  
Communication  
Society

## Community, Education & Support




**NWACS CAREGIVER MEETUP**

*Zoom Meeting*

**Target audience:** Parents/guardians of AAC users who are gestalt language processors

**Sunday, March 3, 2024**  
**3:00pm - 4:30pm Pacific**

 [nwacs.info/outreach-committee](http://nwacs.info/outreach-committee)

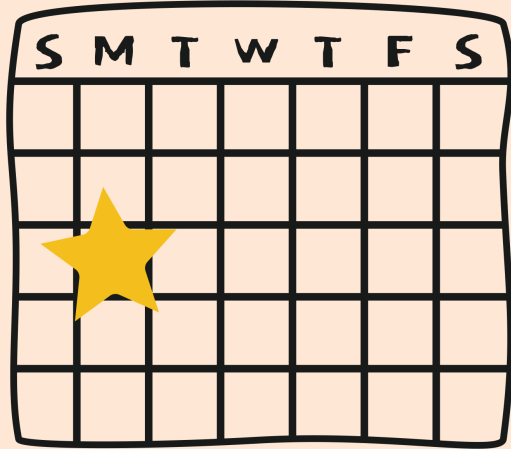
1ST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

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# NWACS

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Augmentative  
Communication  
Society

## Community, Education & Support



**NWACS Study Buddies**

An AAC-related virtual "book club" type meeting. Anyone interested in deepening their knowledge of AAC is welcome to attend! Discussion will be on self-selected materials from the NWACS Website.

**Monday, March 18th, 2024**  
6pm Pacific / 9pm Eastern  
Zoom Meeting

NWACS [www.nwacs.org](http://www.nwacs.org) [nwacs.info/outreach/committee](http://nwacs.info/outreach/committee)

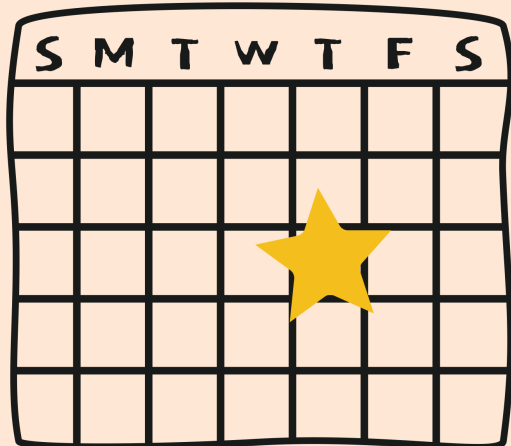
**3RD MONDAY OF THE MONTH**

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# NWACS

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## Community, Education & Support



**NWACS AAC LEARNING NETWORK**

*What is Comprehensive Literacy and Ideas  
for Literacy at Home*  
with Marci Revelli

**Thursday, February 22, 2024 at 7pm Pacific**  
(Zoom meeting)

NWACS [www.nwacs.org](http://www.nwacs.org) <https://nwacs.info/overing/learnnet>

**3RD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH  
RECORDED**

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# NWACS

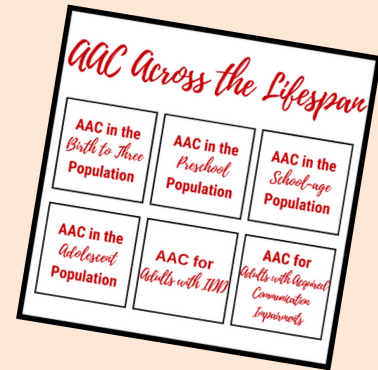
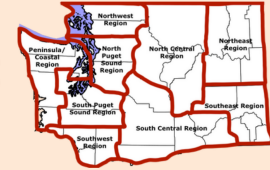
NorthWest  
Augmentative  
Communication  
Society

# Community, Education & Support

<https://nwacs.info/for-parents>

<https://nwacs.info/for-providers>

<https://nwacs.info/for-educators>



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# Community, Education & Support

**You got an AAC device!**  
WHAT DO YOU DO AT HOME?

**WHAT TO EXPECT**  
Your child may...  
- Play with the device.  
- Explore the words in the device.  
- Experiment with the device.  
- Repeat on the device.

**Getting Started with AAC? Family Handouts**  
Four of our new handouts are for families with a new AAC device. Find more info on:  
• What to do at home  
• Teaching Requesting  
• Teaching Refusing  
• Teaching Commenting

**AAC Tip of the Week: Model Without Expectation**  
Model language for a variety of communication functions...  
Was this post helpful?

**NWACS**  
NorthWest Augmentative Communication Society  
[www.nwacs.info](https://nwacs.info)

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# Toddler AAC

What I Wish Our Early Intervention Team  
Had Known About How 'Early' AAC Can  
Help Families Thrive

Presenting to Early  
Support Teams!

Deeper Dive on  
Hows

Early Supports Staff  
Drop-in with Cass &  
NWACS

Many one-on-ones,  
small groups, large  
teams

Deeper Dive on Supporting  
Gestalt Language  
Processors

Family Presentations

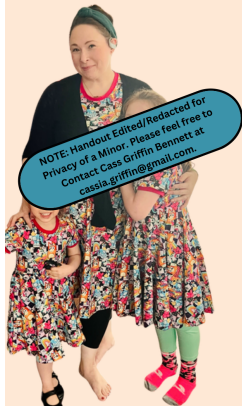
Agency Board of Directors  
Presentation

AAC Resource Fair

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## Thank You My Asks

Tell your families and teams about NWACS!  
Would you like me to present to your teams or families? How can I help?  
Consider how SICC may help increase access more broadly.



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## Contact

Email: [cassia.griffin@gmail.com](mailto:cassia.griffin@gmail.com)

FB: "Cass Griffin Bennett" in Mukilteo (send message for context)

## Questions & Discussion

- Presenting two sessions at the IECC Conference Monday, May 6
- May 18 Snohomish County FICC Toddler AAC program (flyer, next)



FAMILY AND INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL (FAMILY ICC)

# SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S COMMUNICATION WITH AAC

Join us to learn and ask questions about Augmentative and Alternative Communication

CASS GRIFFIN BENNETT WILL SPEAK ON HER AND HER FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE WITH AAC, DISCUSS THE BENEFITS, AND PROVIDE AAC RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES FOR FAMILIES TO TRY AT HOME!



**Saturday: May 18th, 2024**

**Cass Griffin Bennett**



**11:00AM - 1:00PM**

For language interpretation, please RSVP by Friday, May 10th

**REGISTER FOR ZOOM LINK**



Is a parent of multiple autistic kids, including a 4-year old who started robust high-tech AAC at age 2. She is passionate about empowering parents around AAC and educating providers and educators about the benefits of starting AAC early. Cass also serves on the board of the Northwest Augmentative Communication Society (NWACS).

**NWACS info and resources:**  
[NWACS Family Facebook Page](#)  
[NWACS Info for Parents](#)

For Snohomish County families participating in this event, we are offering gift certificates to Sensory Tool House.

This event is coordinated by the Snohomish County Family and Interagency Coordinating Council  
[Click this link to learn more about FICC](#)