

[Home](#)

[What's New at SOS.com](#)

[SpeakingOfSpeech CD](#)

[CD Printable Order Form](#)

[CD Online Order Form](#)

[This Works For Me!](#)

[Highly Recommended](#)

[Help Line](#)

[Materials Exchange](#)

[Lesson Plans/Data Forms](#)

[IEP Goal Bank](#)

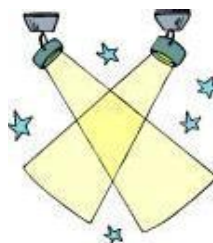
[Tech Tips](#)

[Share a Smile!](#)

[Links & Resources](#)

[In the Spotlight](#)

In the Spotlight



Each month we will spotlight a book, material, software, or test that has been **Highly Recommended** by contributing SLPs and teachers.

In this month's spotlight:

Product: BoardSpeaker AAC Device with DECTalk

Source: [AffordaSpeech](#)

Price: \$995

Description: BoardSpeaker is a versatile, portable voice output communication aid for non-speaking children and adults for whom all the bells and whistles of high-end dynamic display devices are not needed but who require more in terms of vocabulary selections, layout options, and independent access to overlays that are absent in low-end devices. I have used the BoardSpeaker during the past school year with several elementary students who are non-speaking and who function in the Life Skills range, and all have been successful in using this AAC device in multiple communication settings. Like the experience that Goldilocks had with the three bears, whereas some AAC devices were too complex and others were too limited for my students, the BoardSpeaker is just right!

The BoardSpeaker is unique in several important ways.

1. Rather than traditional slide-into-the-slot overlays that often hamper independence, the BoardSpeaker uses heavy stock cards that fit into a tray, up to 40 at a time, that are accessed through the device's unique shuffling mechanism. To change overlays, the user simply pulls out and pushes in the tray; the next card rises to the top automatically so that the user never has to physically handle the cards. Since 40 cards would mean a lot of shuffling to get to the desired card, I created smaller decks of cards that were changed throughout the day -- a deck for morning arrival, Circle, Show 'n Tell, and AM academics, a deck for lunch, recess, and specials, a deck for afternoon activities, each containing cards that could be used at any time, such as sharing personal feelings, requests, questions, etc. This strategy made the device very

Spotlight Archives

Tip of the Month
Winner

Freebies!!

Guest Book

Meet the Staff

Contact Me

user-friendly for my students by providing quick, independent access to the vocabulary they needed throughout the day. Students activate the device by using the built-in touch screen with their finger, stylus (not included), or custom-made pointing device.

2. The programming for BoardSpeaker is done on any computer, not on the device itself, so the user does not experience any "down time" while new overlays are being prepared. A set of BOARDMAKER templates specially designed for the device can be downloaded from www.boardspeaker.com. The programmer selects the desired template configuration and orientation, then adds the messages (text and/or symbols, single words to full paragraphs) using BOARDMAKER. The finished card is then printed on an EPSON PictureMate photo printer (don't miss the SPECIAL OFFER at the end of this review). The programmer then goes online to www.boardspeaker.com, enters a password, and then proceeds to type in the desired messages to be spoken when each cell is touched. When satisfied with the pronunciation of each message, the programmer saves the messages which generates a bar code containing the information. The programmer reinserts the overlay card, upside down, into the PictureMate to print the bar code on the back. When the card is inserted into the BoardSpeaker and is shuffled to the top, its messages are immediately accessible to the user.

3. There are many overlay templates to choose from, from a single full-window cell (appropriate for very low functioning students or for making talking books with each card containing the illustrations and spoken text of a page of a story) all the way up to 54 small cells per card. Each template is available in portrait and landscape mode. Templates can also be customized to contain a combination of large and small cells or a different number or arrangement of cells.

4. For students who require actual objects or tactile cues for AAC use, bar codes can be generated as described in #2, then affixed to the bottom of 3-D objects, containers, and texture strips which would be placed on top of the touch screen, rather than in the card tray. This is a very unique "external mode" feature that opens up access to voice output to AAC users for whom symbol/text overlays are not appropriate due to cognitive or visual limitations.

5. While the device seems very simple on the face of it, it contains DECTalk which provides the user with a range of male and female voices to choose from, a feature not available on most low-end devices. Voice selections, speaking rate, and speaking volume are all easily controlled by anyone who knows the little trick into activating these hidden options, but they are not visible or available to users for whom those controls could be a distraction. The only button the user can activate, other than the cells on the touch screen, is the on-off switch located on the bottom of the case.

6. The BoardSpeaker is very lightweight and sturdy. Its built-in handle makes it very portable. To change the angle of presentation for my students who needed

this due to physical access and/or vision concerns, I placed the device on a slant board covered with a nonskid fabric from the dollar store. I also place the device upright in a decorative but sturdy metal plate stand found in a gift shop and found this to be very effective.

7. The BoardSpeaker uses rechargeable batteries which can be charged while in the device.

8. The message cards for the BoardSpeaker also fit into the Showbox Magic Frame, available from www.ActForth.com. These very inexpensive frames operate with the same type of shuffling mechanism; the only difference is that there is no voice output with the Magic Frame. I typically print two sets of the message cards for my students; one set is kept at school with the BoardSpeaker, the other is sent home for parents to use in the Magic Frame when going places where voice output is not needed or where the BoardSpeaker may get lost, stolen, or damaged (ie the pool, bowling alley, playground, etc.). In this way, the students have a simple backup device that is nearly identical to the BoardSpeaker, so they have no difficulty switching back and forth from one device to another.

I have been very pleased with the features and functionality of the BoardSpeaker AAC device and would definitely recommend it for users in that middle range of AAC needs. For them, it may be just right.



A decorative book or plate stand (about \$6 in houseware stores) makes a great vertical stand for BoardSpeaker. Easels, slantboards, and foam wedges can be used for using the device on an angle for those who can't access it when flat on a table or tray.

Guess what? 	Last night, I 	What about you?
ate dinner 	did chores 	played video game
went somewhere 	watched TV 	played outside
did homework 	read a story 	played sports
got hurt 	was sick 	rode my bike

This message card for a simple social conversation was created on a pre-made template.

lunch count time 		sit down 		stop it 	
listen 		help 			
R	C	T	N	H	not here
K	H	M	B	S	J
Are you 	didn't hear 	thank you 	write it 	cafeteria 	finished
packing 			buying 		
0	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11

This message card for taking lunch count illustrates the use of color, initials for student names, and customized cell arrangement.