

This learning guide is designed for use by Professional Learning Communities, learning coaches and teacher leaders, or as a self-paced study to enhance and support teacher practice in the area of literacy for students with significant disabilities.

## Literacy for All:

*In Conversation with  
Dr. Caroline Musselwhite*



This conversation guide is intended to be used after viewing the video clip, **Creating Opportunities for Students to Explore and Understand Text**.



## General synopsis

In this short video clip, Dr. Caroline Musselwhite discusses the importance of having a high level of cognitive engagement for students to explore and understand text.

### Key understandings

- Students with significant disabilities, like all students, need learning opportunities that have a high level of cognitive engagement.
- The instructional emphasis needs to be on comprehension of the whole text.
- Too often teachers ask simple questions (e.g., “What colour is Johnny’s shirt?”) that are more about short-term memory than whole text comprehension (e.g., “What was Johnny doing in the story?” )

### Questions for discussion

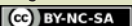
- What was your reaction to Dr. Musselwhite’s assertion that too often students with significant disabilities experience a “perpetual preschool?” Have you seen examples of this type of instructional practice?
- Thinking about your own experience, what are some ways you have made learning activities more cognitively engaging for students?
- What does Dr. Musselwhite mean by short-term memory questions? Are these types of questions ever useful in instruction?

- What are some ways to move to more authentic comprehension questions at the whole text level?
- What experience do you have with students using switches or personal devices for communicating? How do you ensure students are not in “coast mode” and use the devices to communicate meaningfully?
- How will this information impact your work in the future? What is an example of one thing that you might do differently in your classroom?

### For more information

- Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium. *Literacy for All*. Retrieved from <http://abliteracyforall.wikispaces.com/>
- Erickson, K., and Koppenhaver, D. (2007). *Children with Disabilities: Reading and Writing the Four Blocks® Way* (pp. 42–43). Greensboro, NC: Carson-Dellosa. 75–77.
- Musselwhite, C. *AAC intervention*. Retrieved from <http://aacintervention.com/>

### Acknowledgement:

This guide was developed through a collaboration between Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium and Alberta Education. It is freely provided in support of improved teaching and learning under the following Creative Commons licence. 

Link to the Inclusive Education: Support for Implementation website at <http://inclusiveeducationpdresources.ca/> for Professional Development Resources.

For further information on learning opportunities to support inclusion, visit <http://www.arpdc.ab.ca/>.