General synopsis
In this short video clip, Dr. Caroline Musselwhite talks about how symbols can affect the reading process.

Key understandings
• Symbol sets have made a real difference in the lives of many individuals with disabilities.
• To be effective supports in learning to read, symbols must be used thoughtfully.
• The overuse of symbols can interfere with the reading of text.
• Generally, high frequency words (e.g., the, to, I) are best learned in visual chunks versus as symbols.
• Symbols for low frequency words that are difficult to decode can be helpful.

Questions for discussion
• Was there anything in Dr. Musselwhite’s summary of the early research on the use of symbols that surprised you?
• Thinking about your own experiences, can you recall a time when the use of symbols created inadvertent barriers for a student learning to read?
• Considering Dr. Musselwhite’s remarks, plus your own experience, where and when would it be effective to use symbols with a student with significant disabilities?

For more information