

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, **The Art of Attributing Meaning to Student Attempts**.



General synopsis

In this short video clip, Dr. Caroline Musselwhite discusses why it is important to attribute meaning (or give intention) to students' attempts at writing and communicating.

Key understandings

- Attributing meaning to random attempts is a natural way parents respond to typically developing young children learning to communicate (e.g., responding to a baby's smile or first attempts at babbling).
- Attributing meaning to attempts (even those attempts that may appear random) by students with significant disabilities has the potential to turn gestures and vocalizations into meaningful, comprehensible communication.

Questions for discussion

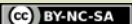
- What statements in this video caught your attention?
- From your own experience, can you recall a time when you attributed meaning to an apparently random act of a student? Why did you do this—what did you hope would happen? What was the actual result of giving intention to this particular attempt?
- How do we balance our interactions with students with significant disabilities with giving intention to attempts (by attributing meaning) but not speaking or over-interpreting their communication?

- How does this video clip challenge or affirm what you know about behaviour of students with significant disabilities and what you see practised in different situations?
- How could this information be helpful to your work in the future?

For more information

- Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium. *Literacy for All*. Retrieved from <http://abliteracyforall.wikispaces.com/>
- Musselwhite, C. *AAC intervention*. Retrieved from <http://aacintervention.com/>
- Siegel-Causey, Ellin and Guess, Doug. (1989). *Enhancing Nonsymbolic Communication Interactions among Learners with Severe Disabilities*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Acknowledgement:

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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/>.