Erin Sheldon



Erin Sheldon earned her graduate degree studying school inclusion for students with significant support needs. Erin consults for the AAC vendor, AssistiveWare, as a language and literacy specialist. She has been an invited speaker at conferences across North America and Europe. Erin has authored articles, book chapters, and manuals for parents and educators. Erin lives with her family in Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

Session Descriptions

Thursday, April 18, 2024

10:00am-11:30am

Support Inclusion with Whole-class AAC

2024 is a whole new era in AAC! AAC solutions are now so affordable and accessible that schools across North America are introducing them as Tier 1 supports across a range of classrooms. AAC graphic symbols can be a rich source of visual supports to students with a broad range of barriers to communication and learning, such as English Language Learners or students with attention or executive functioning challenges. This session will present case studies of how teachers in the Pacific Northwest are leveraging the power of AAC in whole-class general education instruction. Come see how AAC can help with classroom

management, literacy and vocabulary instruction, and teaching content areas of the curriculum. Clinicians will come away from this session with new ideas of how they can improve push-in services and support educators with language instruction. Educators will leave with exciting new strategies to use AAC to level the playing field and enhance participation for a broad range of students.

1:45pm-3:15pm

Proloquo: AssistiveWare's Powerful Next-generation AAC Solution

You're already familiar with Proloquo2Go, but have you explored Proloquo? Proloquo is a deceptively simple AAC solution that provides efficient access to the largest and most robust symbol-based AAC vocabulary ever developed. Proloquo was designed to support communication growth from the most emergent young user to a literate adult. Come explore the app and learn about its foundational principles and features. Word nerds will delight in how Proloquo scaffolds access to a rich and sparkly vocabulary! Educators will find the robust curriculum support particularly helpful, while families will appreciate the free companion app, Proloquo Coach, which walks families through their communication journey. You will leave the session with your own free professional license and all the knowledge you need to effectively feature-match Proloquo to student needs.

3:30-m-5:00pm

Emergent Literacy and AAC: Bringing It All Together

Our most emergent students often pose the biggest challenge to classroom teams. These students are often learning language through AAC. They need support to comprehend spoken language, develop expressive language, and make progress in the

earliest aspects of literacy. They often make progress in small increments, so we need tools that capture those smallest gains. This session is for anyone who is looking for a practical starting place to develop meaningful IEP goals and to track progress. We will explore simple classroom-based tools to help you: chart where your student is on their language and literacy journey; document observable progress; and plan instruction to move them forward. Participants will leave with practical strategies and teacher-friendly tools to help get the whole IEP team on board and support your student's success.

Friday, April 19, 2024

8:00am-9:30am

An Introduction to Talking Mats

Talking Mats is a simply brilliant approach to how we learn what is most important to a person and how we can better support them. Talking Mats originates from the UK, where it has helped people of all ages and with a wide range of disabilities communicate what matters most. Better yet, Talking Mats helps families, educators, and clinicians to be better communication partners. It is a predictable, structured routine that combines visual supports, wait time, and open-ended questions and statements. The routine of a Talking Mats conversation is proven to elicit more detail and information, by putting the person with the communication disability in the driver's seat of the conversation. Talking Mats is particularly useful for anyone supporting transition-age students, but we will explore how the broad framework can be easily applied to our youngest students as well as we teach them the skills to share their perspective and participate in decisions. Come experience this hands-on introduction to the power of Talking Mats! Special educators and clinicians will find it highly relevant to students with a broad range of communication, cognitive, and executive functioning challenges.

9:45am-11:15am

When Modeling is Not Enough: Explicit Vocabulary Instruction with AAC

AAC modeling is an important naturalistic strategy to develop students' symbol knowledge and expressive and receptive vocabulary. Many of our classrooms rely heavily on AAC modeling or isolated drills to teach words such as AAC core vocabulary. But many students need intensive, explicit instruction in word meanings and uses, and their teachers need practical routines that can be administered by a range of classroom staff. This session will demonstrate a simple daily vocabulary instructional routine (borrowed from research on explicit alphabet instruction) that can be embedded in common routines such as morning meeting or shared writing. This instruction leverages the unique attributes of a robust AAC system to maximize instructional impact. Come explore how common AAC features - such as graphic symbols and fringe categories - are powerful vocabulary instruction tools for any student. Participants will leave with a practical, predictable daily routine that supports students to learn and use a range of new words.

12:30pm-2:00pm

Supported Decision-making for Students with CCN

When students are still learning to use language to communicate, it is easy for families and school teams to make decisions *for* them instead of *with* them. These students may leave school without meaningful experience participating in the most important decisions about their lives, such as where they will live, who they will live with, and how they will spend their days. The more emergent a student's skills, the more explicit support and planning they need to participate in decisions. Teaching students to participate in decisions is an essential life skill to ensure they can evaluate their adult services and advocate for what they need

to live their best life. This session will explore simple tools and strategies that can be used across the lifespan, with even the youngest and most emergent students. These resources will help you elicit and gather information about what is most important to your students, what is working and not working for them, and what changes they may like to see. Even better, these tools help us document this information so that everyone supporting the student can be on the same page and respond consistently and respectfully to how the student participates in decisions. These tools will be particularly helpful to anyone with transition-age students, but no student is too young or too emergent to increase their involvement in decisions!