

The All Means ALL Podcast Season 3, Episode 60

Audio Transcript

[opening]

Carolyn: Welcome to All Means ALL. I'm Carolyn O'Hearn.

Sara: And I'm Sara Pericolosi. We are two inclusive education enthusiasts striving to shift mindsets

C: Challenge the status quo

S: And open more doors for all students

C: In all settings

S: All of the time.

C: Greetings from Orlando, Florida. It is much warmer here than it is in Michigan. And so to all of our Michigan listeners. Sorry, but we are not, sad to be here. Sorry, but we're not sorry. No, we are not. We are at the Assistive Technology Industry Association's conference, ATIA, and it's been a good first day. There were pre conferences yesterday and a half day pre con this morning. You and I didn't go to a pre con, but I heard some really great things we've been connecting to, connecting with a lot of people from Michigan, and then just people that we've met at these conferences before. Again, this is our little plug for the power of community. Go out, meet people, talk to people, find people over on Blue Sky or Instagram, and then if you see them in real life, tell them, hey, I follow you on Blue Sky or Instagram. Same thing with us. If you see us in real life, Hey, we'll listen to the podcast. Hey, you guys saw you on this. That, that's how you build the community. That's how you build your interests and your knowledge and expertise and you just gain new insights and new ideas. Sara, we had our session today. And this was fun for a number of reasons. One, we were the first session of the actual conference. So the pre conference ended at noon. Then there was an hour lunch break. We were the first conference at one, which there were a ton of sessions at one o'clock. But because of, purely accidentally, the fact that we put our title as "A" first, like the word "a" we were listed first in the conference handout, in the session card. We had a great turnout. We spoke about all of the work that the school that I work for now and the organization that Sara works for during her daytime, how we've made some really great gains in literacy instruction for our learners, but also with our staff and how we're bringing families and caregivers along for the ride now, which has been super fun.

So that was the second part, the one we were the first. session. Two, it was a topic that we, you and I are super passionate about. Three, we finally realized we haven't presented together in person in a year. Like the last time we did this was at ATIA. Last year when we had our kids with us and we are also happy to say that our families are at home We love you families We will see you when we get back As I was scrolling after one of my sessions ended I got an email from James clear and He said A quote that I that actually super resonated with how I was feeling about our session this morning. And it says, "Your best performances will come when you are working in a way that is full expression of you. The work becomes a natural display of your personality. This is when you not only get better results, but you also love the activity, because

in doing the craft you feel alive.” And I was just like this sums up how this morning went. We started on time even with some weird technical glitches of closed captioning not working and then the internet was spotty because we were on like the far end of the conference hall. Started on time, ended just like a minute late so it was perfectly fine due to all the chaos. But we had what, over, probably over a hundred people in our little room. People sitting on the floor up front with us, standing out. At the back and then also we heard that people were standing in the hallway too. So if you came to our session today, thank you so much. It was a great crowd. What did you think?

S: Yeah, I think it's a great crowd. We mentioned in our session, and I felt this all day, but sometimes this work can feel lonely, especially if you're the lone nut that's saying literacy matters for all students and you're recognizing the potential and sometimes it feels like you're swimming against the current. And when you come to places like this and you're amongst the community that you just talked about, and you're with people who get it and they continue that path, even when the work is hard, for one, it energizes you again. Like you and I were bebopping around the room and we're just our true authentic selves. And I think for me, this has been the longest I've ever gone since I've met you without getting a chance to get up in front of a room and present with you. And I think. For us, part of what we talked about this morning before our session is it's not just about you and I, and the information and the background and the learning that we've had, but it's about one, establishing that sense of community in the room. It's helping the listeners, our participants, you if you're at home, recognize that you're not alone. The first question we asked them is, what barriers are preventing you from implementing literacy with your staff, with your students, with families? And the room was abuzz and when you turn and people's faces, it's you know what? You're not alone. We don't have this magic wand. We're in the next, 58 minutes. We're gonna tell you here's how you can fix this. But it's that idea of that. We're here together and we're pushing through and we're finding energy with and from each other. And we just had a really great group of people.

C: Yes. Good laughter and good questions too. There was a level of vulnerability in that room that People didn't feel afraid to ask the questions. We've never heard of this assessment when probably, 85 percent of the room had. But someone spoke up saying, Can you just talk to us about what you're even mentioning? What does this even look like? And then asking, How are we utilizing this assessment and utilizing these guidelines and progress monitoring on our learners who don't fit the typical graphic depiction of a student, right? It's those who have complex bodies, those who have complex communication needs. How are you applying this assessment that's about this one particular student, this one particular learner to these other students as well? So it was just, it was great conversation, great people. Again, if you were there, thanks, because that, we felt good after we left. So if you didn't like it, please don't tell us.

S: No, do, so we can do it better next time.

C: Tell Sara.

S: You can come find me. I think the other thing that we talked about though, and the reason that we started with barriers this morning. It's because so often it's really challenging to find a solution if you don't have a clear understanding of what that barrier is, of why you keep running into that wall. And what I loved is we started our morning talking about that. And then this last session that I just came to, which was about building, assistive technology capacity from the top admin down and from the bottom implementer up. And she started there too with we really need to have a clear understanding. And one of the things she said is if we as educational leaders don't understand the barriers that people feel, even if they may be our false barriers, if we don't address those in our work, then we are going to struggle even harder to get this initiative to get the shifted mindset off the ground. And I was like, yeah, that makes perfect sense.

C: I love it. I'm just excited because I think that so often people come to these conferences and think that you're on your own, you're doing it by yourself, and we're starting to see more and more sessions that are like, you can't do it alone. You need to develop that goal. You need to have the team. You need to have these resources and in that community to help you along the way. Amazing. We also went to a couple sessions. I went to a different session actually from Amazon, and that was off the mark for me, but, thinking about all the different learners that I have in my, during my day job at school we need access, they need access to entertainment at home too. So I was like, I have, I typically don't go to big vendor sessions and this one just piqued my interest as far as how are they listening to the feedback from those who are subscribers of Prime Video and those who have Kindles. And Amazon's working on something called scene based mixing. And they gave us three different examples of how, initially, if you have to have audio description, for example. So if you have a visual impairment, audio description is where it will describe the scene in the video. And typically what they would do is they would blend out the background music and all the extra noise to have this Alexa sounding voice come in and describe the scene then you'd hear the Quote in the dialogue that's happening in the movie and then you'd go back to that Alexa thing so you're missing a lot with the score and the background noises and all of that and so that was jarring to recognize that with what they're doing Now the scene based mixing is you have the background noise, but you also have a more human sounding, the way with the prosody is not as robotic. Even though it was the same script that the Alexa voice and then the more human person sounded it was just, it was cool to hear that now those who do have visual impairments can enjoy what they're engaged in for entertainment versus being just stuck with whatever Hollywood's putting out at that time.

And then they also have dialogue boost and I was telling Sara, I'm going to use this. I'm excited to turn this on and find this feature. So this is an Amazon prime video and it's unique to Amazon prime video. So no one else, no other streaming services are doing this yet. And they launched this in September of 2023, but it boosts the volume of speech and dialogue that's happening. In the scene relative to the music and the effects. So think about all of the war movies you might watch or if there's a helicopter coming in or just there's a lot of things going on in the background it's hard and it gets jumbled sometimes to hear What people are saying, in addition to also recognizing all the sounds that are going on. Also why I put closed captions on when I'm watching movies. So if you come to my house, sorry, but the captions will be on. Because I don't

want to miss what they're saying, but sometimes the noises get jumbled to me. And it makes a huge difference. So now you can still hear what's going on, but you're going to hear what the actors and the characters are saying without having to lose that in the, all the background chaos. And it's, they told us that in September of 2024, they've launched this in other languages and they only listed a couple, but they said it's other languages like French, Italian, German, Spanish, and Hindi. And someone in our question and answer session after that. asked like, why is it only those five other languages? Are those just the easiest ones to do? And the Amazon rep said, oh, actually, it's in several other languages. This is just a sample set that we decided to share with you. So I don't know exactly what languages those are. But how fun is that? Especially if you have family or friends who speak other languages that now you can share with them the Dialogue Boost.

And with Kindle, there's obviously, if you have a Kindle, if you have a Kindle app, there's a ton of things that you can manipulate already reading customization of those books. So you can change the font, you can change the size, you can make it bold. What was fun is that they talked about the open dyslexic font, which you and I have been familiar with for several years, thanks to the organization that we both used to work with. But a lot of the people in that room hadn't heard of it. And so it was really cool to sit okay, good. They are hearing this. So more people are going to have access to it. But you can change the line spacing and the margins and the alignment in the books that you're reading over on Kindle. And your screen brightness. And there's one in the screen brightness piece that I thought was fun. It's in the Kindle app. So you don't have to leave the app, go to your phone, change the brightness, go back to the app. There's its own. So when you leave the Kindle app, the brightness settings for the rest of your phone are still what you set for the phone. Not just for the app. So I thought that was fun. And then another one is paginated versus continuous scroll. So the way I have my books is I go page by page and I swipe and I swipe, but they also make it where it's continuous scroll so you can just scroll slowly down one continuous long page essentially, which I was like, Oh, that would be interesting to read books that way. I still get fulfillment from turning the page every time I finish one, there's that. So just fun things that they're making. These apps and these ways to enjoy life just more accessible to the people around us. And something that I'm going to pop it back over to you to talk about the other session that we went to earlier, but something that Cassie Frost said, who was the session we went to is remember that the tools that we have around our house that are just used by everyone. So think about Kindle, think about Prime Video, think about pens, think about whatever. Those could be things that people specifically need in order to be successful, which then makes them assistive technology. It might be fun for me. I like to change my font size. I'm going to change the fonts on all my books now. But it could be the determining factor of whether or not a person is going to use that app to read and engage in reading. So it's assistive technology for them. I thought that was fun.

S: We went to a session on writing and technology and just understanding that we all write for different purposes across the day and just recognizing that sometimes we have learners who may use a traditional pencil in the morning and when they're making a list, but then when we want them to be really creative and use their imagination. That they may decide to turn to a keyboard and type that out. And we, she did a fun little question and answer to people about

how many people use speech to text and how many people despise it and really struggle to use it. And I think that's one of those things, regardless of if we're talking about writing, if we're talking about communication, it's that what works for one individual may not work for all of our students.

And that we really need to put on a problem solving hat of what is really the challenge for my student in terms of access or in writing or communication, and then being willing to go out and be curious. A lot of her session was about her own self discovery on how she found these tools, how she trialed these tools pulling in AI has been a huge thing at this conference. So pulling in that instead of, being fearful and pushing away is really to step into and embrace and be curious and explore. And so we are ending the first day here at ATIA 2025. And it's been a great day of learning. I think we've both said a million times today how exhausted we are, but it's really, it's a good exhausted. It's always great to be back in this community, and I can't wait to see what tomorrow brings.

C: Stay tuned for our recap for day two.