
**Title: BUILDING BALANCED LITERACY CLASSROOMS:
SUPPORTING LITERACY FOR STUDENTS WITH SIGNIFICANT
DISABILITIES**

Speaker 1:

Dr. Caroline Ramsey Musselwhite (Lead Presenter, Assistive Technology Consultant)

Education: doctorate in speech-language pathology / minor in special education

Professional experience: 25+ years as speech-language pathologist, consultant, author, software developer in the area of assistive technology

Position/ Title: Assistive Technology Consultant / Author

Company: AAC Intervention

Biography:

Dr. Caroline Musselwhite is an assistive technology specialist with more than 30 years of experience working with individuals with severe disabilities in a variety of settings, including Head Start, developmental day programs, and the public schools. Dr. Musselwhite has written a number of textbooks and "how-to" books, and has authored a software programs for youth with disabilities. She has presented thousands of workshops throughout North and South America, Australia, and Europe, and is a founding member of the ISAAC Board of Directors.

Speaker 2:

Dr. Gretchen Hanser

Education: doctorate in education / masters in occupational therapy

Professional experience: 15+ years as an occupational therapist, AT/AAC consultant, author, teacher trainer

Position/ Title: Associate Director of School Aged Services

Company: The Center for Literacy & Disability Studies

Biography:

Dr. Gretchen Hanser is the associate director of school-aged services at the Center for Literacy & Disability Studies at the University of North Carolina. She works in classrooms and homes to support literacy and communication for students with significant disabilities, including deaf-

blindness. Gretchen has a masters' in occupational therapy. She recently received her doctorate in education from the University of New Hampshire; her doctoral research was on an integrated literacy and communication intervention with students with significant disabilities.

Abstract

The prospect of teaching students with significant disabilities to read and write may seem daunting. We have facilitated the development of classrooms that are based on a balanced literacy approach, working as a team to support all teachers, therapists, teaching assistants and parents. The development of the classrooms included full-day presentations, short monthly presentations, make-it/take it projects, in-class modeling and coaching, and team celebration of successes. To date, the balanced literacy classrooms have spanned twelve school districts and over 60 classrooms, and include a range of students (with cognitive impairments, autism spectrum disorders, physical impairments, many of whom use augmentative and alternative communication). We will share classroom results including: assessment, intervention, data, videos and light and high tech tools. The following instructional areas will be covered: phonemic awareness, phonics, shared reading, guided reading, writing, and self-selected reading. The session will include opportunities for small group discussion and hands-on activities. We will share tips for getting EVERYONE onboard and excited about pushing for quality, research-based balanced literacy instruction. Presenters will also focus on ideas for replicating this project. Participants will receive a CD with multiple forms for setting up balanced literacy classrooms and sample intervention templates.