



Charting the Cs  
Conference 2025:  
*To Literacy and  
Beyond*

Cooperation  
Communication  
Collaboration

# Unlocking Potential

The Life-Changing Impact of Comprehensive Literacy  
Instruction for Students with Significant Disabilities

April 28, 2025

Mateo Moreno & Tina Moreno,  
M.A. CCC-SLP, ATP

# Mom & Speech-Language Pathologist

Tina Moreno, M.A. CCC-SLP, ATP

- Serves UCP Cleveland Leaf Bridge Education Program
- Co-founder of Camp ALEC
- Assistive Technology Professional through RESNA
- VP, People Who Use AAC and Their Families, USSAAC
- Member of ASHA and SIG 12
- Mom to Mateo



# The Expert

- Mateo Moreno, Presenter & AAC User
- AAC user since the age of 4
- Dietary aide at nursing home
- National presenter on AAC, disability & inclusion
- Visits school classrooms to teach children about AAC
- Mentor, AAC camps
- Ambassador, PRC-Salttillo
- Loves Disney, MLB baseball, trains and Don Bluth movies



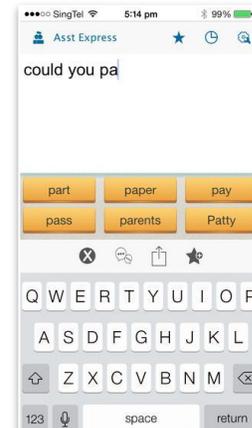
# Why I use AAC

- Born with childhood apraxia of speech and dysarthria
- Speech is hard for others to understand
- Have a lot to say
- First device at 4 years old



# My communication system now

- Saltillo Novachat 8 with Wordpower 108
- Mostly use spelling and word prediction
- iPhone with Assistive Express app
- Multimodal communicator



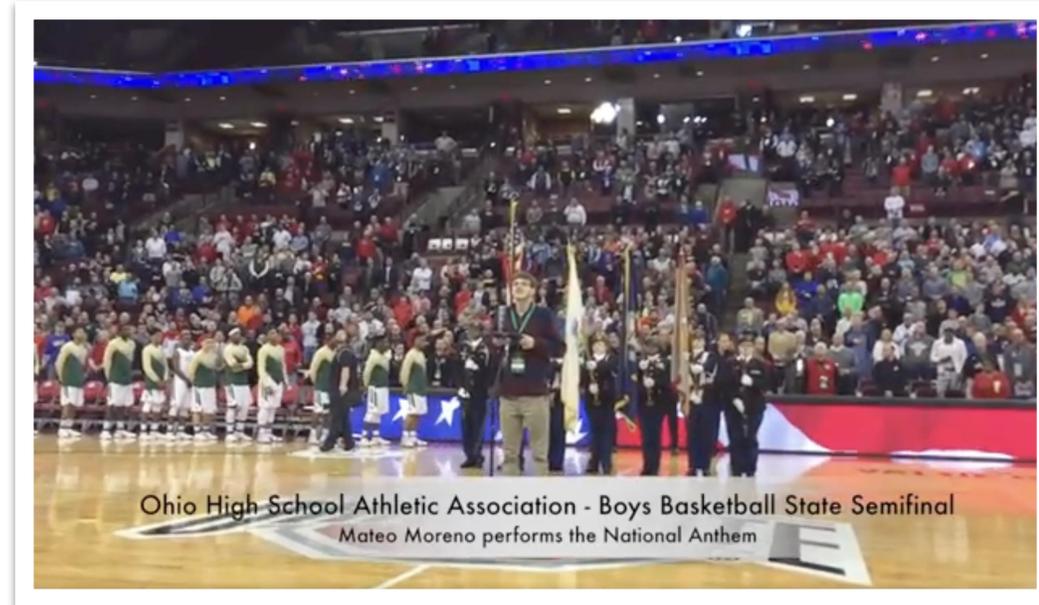
# My work experience

- Current: work at nursing home
- Presenter
- Camp mentor, Talking with Technology Camp and Camp ALEC
- AAC family night
- AAC learning modules
- Visit School classrooms
- PRC-Salttillo Ambassador



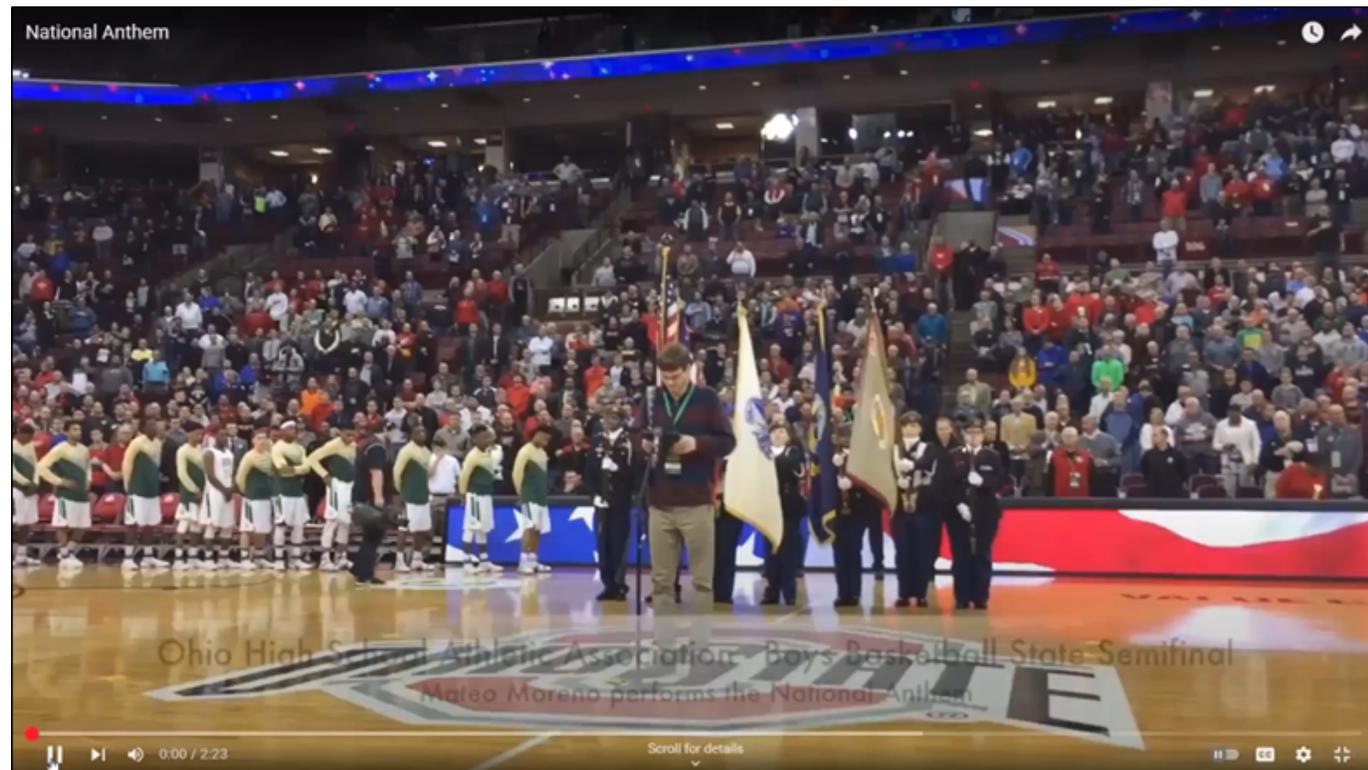
# Getting a little more personal

- Hobbies and interests
- Likes and dislikes
- Dreams and future goals
- A born extrovert



Mateo sings the National Anthem  
at Ohio State

# Mateo sings the National Anthem at Ohio State - video



# What about you?

- Answer anyway you like
  - Nod yes / no
  - Sign yes / no
  - Thumbs up / down

# What about you? Cont.

- Do you like rides at theme parks?

# What about you? Cont. 2

- Do you like brussels sprouts?

# What about you? Cont. 3

- Do you like baseball?

# What about you? Cont. 4

- Do you have hopes and dreams for your future?

# What is communication?

- Everyone is a multimodal communicator
- All communication is valuable
- Individuals get to be in charge of what they say and how they say it
- AAC does not come naturally
- Reading and writing are essential forms of communication!



# Why is literacy so critical for me?



## Practical

Like writing checks, checking ingredients, reading recipes



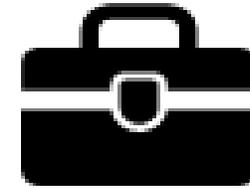
## Leisure

Reading about my favorite topics, playing video games



## Connections

Writing allows me to stay connected with my family and friends



## Employment

Writing allows me to stay connected with my family and friends



## Communication

Spelling lets me say anything, including words not on my AAC

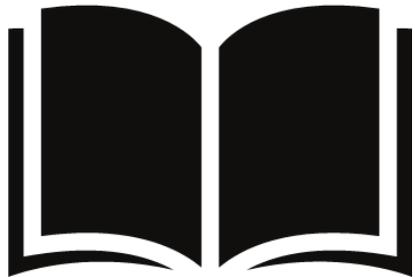
# Literacy & the practical stuff



Writing checks, checking ingredients in food items to make sure they won't make me sick, and following recipes.



# Literacy & leisure



Searching for and learning more about my favorite topics (like Disney, trains, animators and baseball), reading books and playing video games. Looking for a restaurant to stop at on a road trip and searching for cool places to visit while on vacation.



# Literacy & connections



Reading and writing allows me to stay connected with my friends and family through texts and social media. It's how I keep up with people I care about and how I reach out when I need support.



# Literacy & employment



Searching for, applying to and preparing for jobs.  
Keeping up with required trainings and quizzes.  
In the nursing home, taking meal orders.  
Responding to emails about possible speaking engagements and working on slide decks.



# Literacy & communication

abc

Spelling lets me say anything I want to say, including words that are not on my AAC device. Adults will never know what a child might want to say, or when they might meet a new friend whose name is not programmed on their device. No one can predict the future and no one is a mind reader.



# Life without literacy is unimaginable



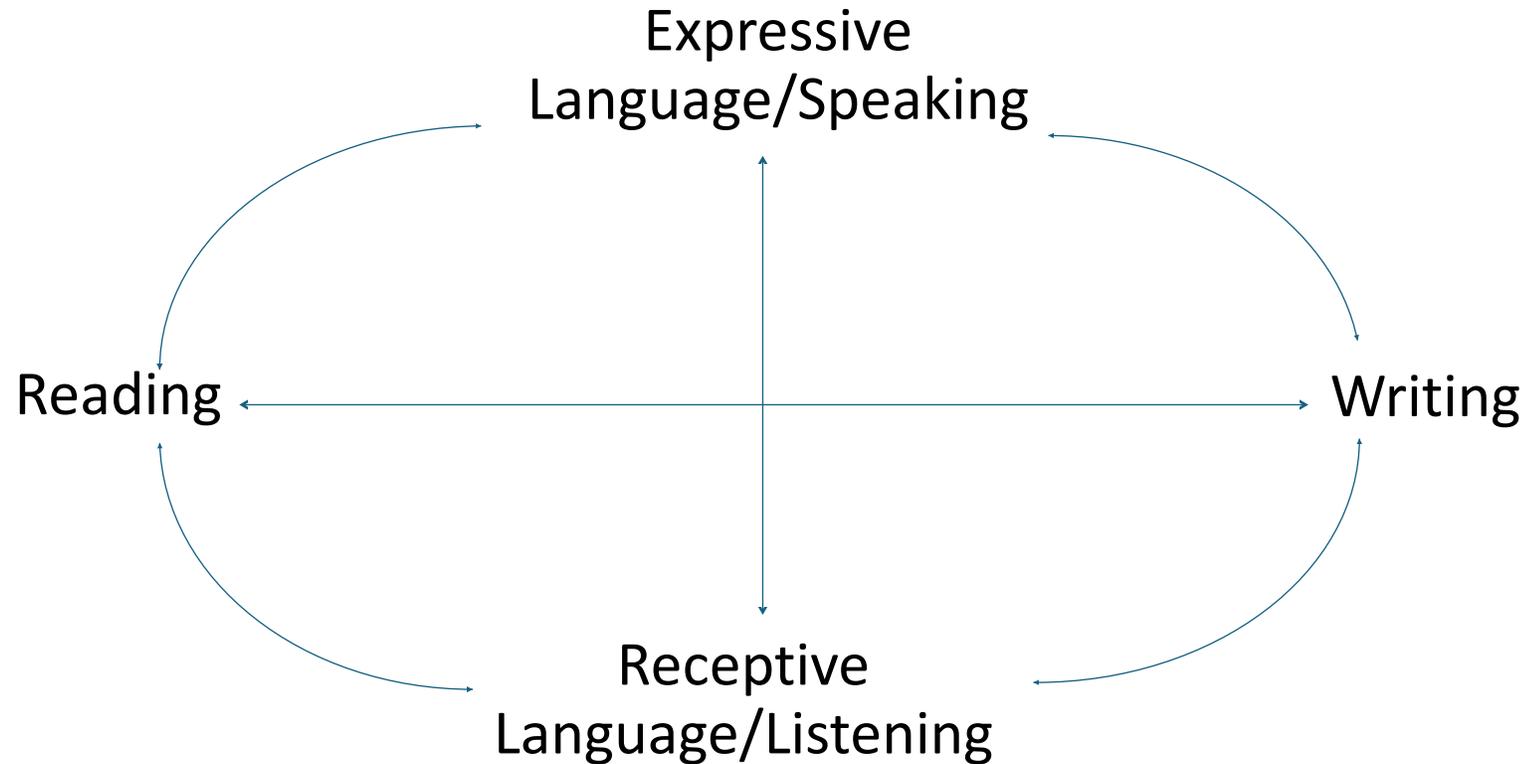
# Finally, why NOT literacy?

Why would some students be entitled to learn to read and write and not others?  
Why don't we presume everyone should and can learn to read and write? Why are we still talking about the why?

# Enough about why!

How do we teach literacy to learners with significant disabilities?

# Oral & written language development



(Koppenhaver, Coleman, Kalman & Yoder, 1991 adapted from Teale & Sulzby, 1989)

# Providing the *right* instruction for learners is critical

Providing instruction that is too hard, or too easy, is not effective. It may cause learners to become bored or discouraged, prompting them to believe they're not capable or dampening their love of learning.

First, decide if the learner is emergent or conventional in their understandings of literacy.

# Where is the learner on the literacy continuum?

## Emergent

- Describe the reading and writing experiences of young children before they learn to write and read conventionally
- Begins at birth, regardless of whether or not a child has a disability
- Working to understand the functions of print and print conventions
- Examples: interpreting a story through pictures rather than through text, manipulating books in nonconventional ways, scribbling

# Where is the learner on the literacy continuum? Cont.

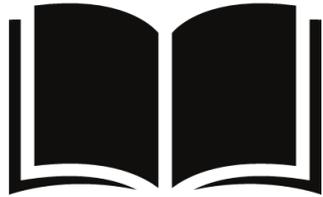
## Conventional

- Reading and writing that follow the form, content, and use of standard conventions
- Built on discoveries and understandings made during the emergent literacy phase of development
- To produce and understand conventional literacy an individual must develop phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension of connected text (National Reading Panel)
- Working toward constructing messages that can be accurately interpreted by other conventional readers

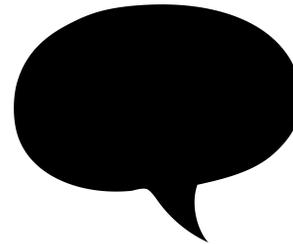
# Ask 4 questions / Does the learner...?

The letters 'abc' are displayed in a large, bold, pixelated font.

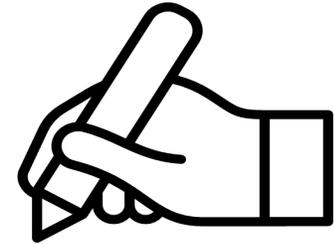
Know most of the letters most of the time?



Engage actively during shared reading?

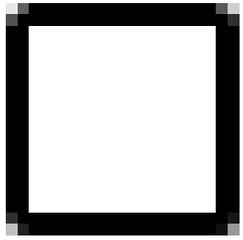


Have a means of communication and interaction?



Understand that writing involves letters and words?

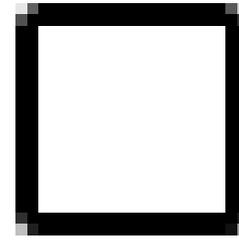
# Does the learner...?



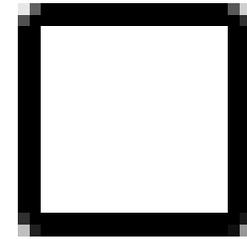
Know most of the letters most of the time?



Engage actively during shared reading?



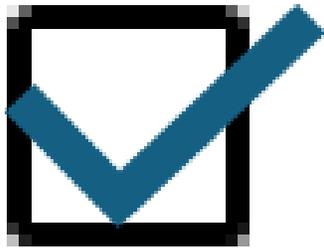
Have a means of communication and interaction?



Understand that writing involves letters and words?

Emergent (if the answer is no to ANY question)

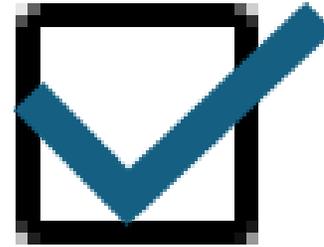
# Does the learner...? Continued



Know most of the letters most of the time?



Engage actively during shared reading?



Have a means of communication and interaction?



Understand that writing involves letters and words?

**Conventional** (if the answers are yes to ALL questions)

# Instructional routines for emergent learners

1. Shared reading
2. Predictable chart writing
3. Alphabet and phonological awareness
4. Independent writing
5. Self-directed reading
6. Symbolic communication (with few exceptions)

# Instructional routines for conventional learners

1. Guided reading (text comprehension)
2. Vocabulary
3. Self-directed reading
4. Phonemic awareness/Phonics/Spelling
5. Writing

# Goals of shared reading vs. guided reading

## Shared reading **Emergent**

- Encourage interaction
- Support communication
- Attribute meaning to text
- Allow learners to lead interaction
- Cultivate enjoyment of reading
- Engage learners
- Demonstrate connection between language and print

## Guided reading **Conventional**

- Actively engage in text
- Think critically about text
- Apply background knowledge
- Make personal connections to text
- Read for set purposes
- Process text in entirety

# An example: The Three Little Pigs



# Shared Reading [Emergent]

## Follow the Car [Comment – Ask – Respond]

- **COMMENT**
- STOP and wait 10-15 seconds (or much more!)
- **ASK** for or invite participation
- STOP and wait 10-15 seconds (or much more!)
- **RESPOND** by repeating and adding more

## Example

**GOOD** pigs

[child points to pig]

Yes, **YOU SEE** pig

**I SEE THREE** pigs too

**I LIKE** pigs

[child reaches to turn page]

Let's read **MORE**

## Engagement, Interaction & Communication

# Guided Reading [Conventional]

## Anchor - Read - Apply

- **ANCHOR**
  - Activate or teach background knowledge
  - Determine purpose for reading
- **READ (OR LISTEN)**
  - Read entire text, without pausing
  - Takes most time
- **APPLY**
  - Complete brief activity directly related to purpose for reading
  - Confirm responses

## Example

### **ANCHOR**

Purpose: Sequence events of story

Activity: Sequence events of school day

### **READ (OR LISTEN)**

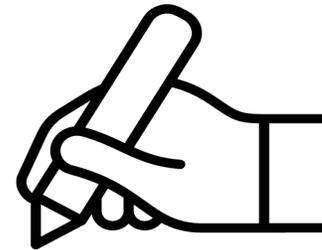
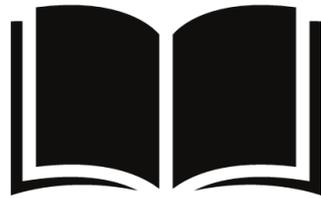
### **APPLY**

Activity: Sequence the actions of the wolf

Return to story to confirm

## Critical thinking

# All means all



All individuals, regardless of disability, can learn to read and write with comprehensive instruction. All individuals have a right to learn to communicate, read and write. All means all.

# Tools for deeper exploration

## [Comprehensive Literacy for All](#)



Easy to read for parents, educators, teachers and administrators! Available in print and as e-book.

## [Tar Heel Shared Reader](#)



Professional development, materials, and technology that support the implementation of shared reading for learners who do not read connected text with comprehension above a 2nd grade level. No cost.

# Tools for deeper exploration, cont.

## [Project-Core](#)

Professional development, materials and resources that support emergent communicators and literacy learners. Includes core vocabulary boards that may be used for children who do not yet have access to robust AAC. No cost.

## [DLM Professional Development](#)

Professional learning modules about instructional strategies for both emergent and conventional literacy learners. Includes shared reading, guided reading approaches (such as Anchor-Read-Apply), writing with alternative pencils and predictable chart writing. No cost.

# Tools for deeper exploration, cont. 2

## [Camp ALEC](#)

Camp ALEC is a week-long, independent summer camp experience for conventional literacy learners ages 8-21 who use AAC with an emphasis on literacy. This AAC and literacy camp also provides advanced, hands-on training to educators. Camp ALEC offers workshops open to anyone seeking evidence-based strategies.

## [Building Bridges](#)

A collection of training and support resources for teachers and related professionals with new resources and supports posted as they are developed and evaluated. Check back periodically for updates. No cost.

# More tools for deeper exploration

## [Project VC](#)

Supports teams in their efforts to provide this instruction through a series of professional development, formative assessment, and implementation supports designed to track and improve literacy outcomes for all students. No cost.

# Be the one

to provide life-changing comprehensive literacy instruction!

# Thank you! Questions?

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