

Abstract Title:-

Read It, Write It, Say It, DO IT!!

Keynote Speaker – Mr. Dan Phillips – Director – Technology Resource Center



Abstract:

Language and literacy are deeply connected— language builds the foundation for literacy, and literacy strengthens and expands language skills. Oral language (listening and speaking) develops first and supports the development of reading and writing by helping learners understand vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, and meaning in texts.

For students who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), early literacy instruction must intentionally include **core vocabulary and functional**

language. Beginning sight words often represent high-frequency core vocabulary, allowing learners to develop communication and literacy skills simultaneously. When these developmental steps are aligned, students can progress in language and literacy together in a meaningful and practical way.

In addition, many students benefit from text that is relevant, relatable, and rooted in real-life experiences. By using photos and videos of real people and familiar environments, educators can build social scripts, routines, and pragmatic language skills into academic literacy content. This session will outline the essential building blocks of literacy and language growth, break them into clear learning targets, and provide practical tools for creating customized AAC-friendly learning materials. Participants will receive resources and strategies that can be applied immediately in classrooms, therapy, and home programs.

Keywords:

AAC, language development, pragmatics, literacy

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the core developmental elements linking oral language growth to literacy development.
- Explain the role of core vocabulary and beginning sight words in supporting AAC-based literacy instruction.

- Recognize at least 10 pragmatic / social narrative skills that can be embedded into literacy activities for AAC learners.
- Apply practical strategies to build meaningful and relatable text-based learning materials using real-life images, videos, and routines.
- Select and use at least five tools or platforms that support curriculum modification and customized content creation for learners using AAC.

Short Professional Biography:

Mr. Dan Phillips is the Director of a leading Assistive Technology Resource Center in Marin County, California, supporting more than 4,000 students with additional learning needs. He designed and established the center over 25 years ago to strengthen school-based assistive technology services and inclusive educational practice. Dan teaches graduate-level coursework in Augmentative Communication and Assistive Technology at two universities, delivers international training, and serves as President of The Nika Project—a nonprofit organization supporting global neurodiversity and special education communities through practical innovation and outreach.