

International ELINET Symposium 2018
“Literacy in the 21st Century: Participation – Inclusion – Equity”.

July 23-24, 2018, Cologne, Germany



Section VI: Instructional methods in early literacy teaching

Chairs: Patricia Schillings, University of Liège & Renate Valtin, Humboldt University, Germany

Tuesday, July 24, at 11.30–13.00 **Location:** Seminar Building / Room S 23

LITERACY CHANGES LIVES.

Literacy instruction for nonspeaking children with severe disabilities. Overcoming limiting beliefs

Presenter:

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Germany.

Abstract:

Every child has the basic right to good literacy instruction, to a language and print rich environment to provide meaningful experiences. Yet, many of those with severe disabilities like cerebral palsy, Angelman or Rett syndrome do not receive the instruction they need. There is a variety of reasons for that – some say, these children are ‘too disabled’ to learn to read or preschool-teachers simply do not know how to teach nonspeaking children – ‘they won’t be able to use their own voice to produce letter sounds or to sound words out’. While we gather knowledge in the field about good instruction, limiting beliefs are still one of the most prominent barriers for high quality literacy instruction for these children. Even though those disabilities are often associated with a variety of special needs, this does not imply that the kids cannot learn. They can and they do – when provided with good and meaningful literacy instruction.

This lecture will address some of the activities to provide from an early age and onwards; the adaptations and tools nonspeaking students need to achieve literacy skills (Skotko et al. 2004; Koppenhaver et al. 2001; Erickson & Koppenhaver 2007; Erickson & Hanser 2008). Literacy skills as a teaching priority is even more important for those children who cannot speak – to learn to spell means they can communicate every thought.

Literacy skills have the highest impact on their lives, and friendships. Therefore and in line with the “Literacy Bill of Rights” (Yoder et al. 1997), it is our responsibility and obligation to provide high quality literacy instruction to ALL children right from the start.

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References:

Erickson, K. & Koppenhaver, D.: Children with Disabilities: Reading and Writing the Four Blocks Way. Carson-Dellosa 2007.

Erickson, K. & Hanser, G.: Write from the Start: Supporting Communication Development Through Writing. Powerpoint-Handout International Isaac-Conference, Montreal 2008.

Skotko, B.G., Koppenhaver, D. A., and Erickson, K. A.: Parent reading behaviors and communication outcomes in girls with Rett syndrome. *Exceptional Children*, 70(4), 2004.

Yoder, D.E., Erickson, K.A. and Koppenhaver, D.A. (1997): A Literacy Bill of Rights. Center for Literacy and Disability Studies.

Bio note:

Stefanie K. Sachse, Ph.D., studied special education, specialized in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for nonspeaking people of all ages; work experience in AAC consultation and intervention, teaching at the university, working in several research projects. Currently in a teaching position and a Literacy and Inclusion project at the University of Cologne, special interests are vocabulary selection and literacy in AAC. Speaker at several European and international conferences.