

International Conference on

Speech Language Pathology

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Functional considerations and approaches to assessing and treating communication challenges in individuals with severe disabilities

This presentation will highlight functional assessment (e.g., circles of communication partners, ecological inventories and discrepancy analysis) and intervention strategies (e.g., vision statements, skill clusters and instructional matrices) that have been found to be highly useful in fostering communication, educational and related skills in individuals with severe disabilities. Particular emphasis will be placed on those with accompanying severe intellectual challenges. Limitations of standardized testing will be discussed and viable alternatives (i.e., non-standardized approaches) presented. While the greatest emphasis will be placed on the role of Augmentative and Alternative Communication and that of the speech-language pathologist, content will be readily applicable to other related services as well as overall instruction. Authentic assessment and intervention will be discussed with multiple practical examples of how these principles can be applied to foster functional and meaningful abilities. Overarching themes of the workshop will be participation, membership and inclusion. Rather than examining communication (i.e., AAC) as an isolated skill, this presentation will frame it as an essential component of an integrated program in which the broader objectives relate to functional life skills and quality of life. Strategies discussed will be those found to contribute to individuals' establishment and maintenance of relationships with others (i.e., friendships) as well as increased levels of participation in educational, vocational, leisure and other events. Emphasis will be placed on practices that foster, rather than hinder individuals' self-determination and independence. Practical considerations for selecting and then addressing instructional goals will be reviewed, once again emphasizing approaches that target communication skills in broader contexts. These include school and other community settings that support inclusive practices.

Biography

Stephen Calculator is a consulting Speech-Language Pathologist and Emeritus Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of New Hampshire, USA. Since earning his Doctorate in Communicative Disorders from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1980, he has published and lectured extensively in the areas of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and inclusive services for individuals with severe disabilities, drawing upon his ongoing experiences as a consultant to numerous schools and other agencies in the USA and beyond. His greatest contributions have been devoted to enhancing our understanding of the role communication and assistive technology can play in fostering the participation of individuals with severe disabilities in their communities.

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