

Inclusion Tools: Rosetta Stone—a Visual Way to Teach Language

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In too many classrooms, there is no expectation that learners with special needs will be able to learn and develop functional reading and writing skills. This is especially true for children with complex communication needs (CCN). Teachers in public schools trying to teach children with disabilities who require assistive technologies to read and write in an inclusive setting may find the task overwhelming. One of the biggest problems for teachers and therapists working with these students is the lack of ready-made instructional and assessment materials that can be used by learners with a range of physical and cognitive disabilities. Let's face it: adapting materials so that learners with CCN can be actively involved is a tremendous amount of work. Even with the best intentions, there is just not enough time in the day for teachers to keep up with the general education curriculum and adapt the materials for students with more significant disabilities, like those who cannot use pen and paper or who cannot speak. While teachers of general education students have pre-made activities (such as exercises, worksheets or other assessment materials) that can easily be downloaded or photocopied for their students to use, teachers of children with disabilities often have to make their own, which is prohibitively time-consuming. Teachers of general education students can find out how learners are progressing by asking questions and receiving oral responses. Teachers of children with CCN cannot rely on oral responses, since a great number of these students cannot speak. In many cases, teachers of individuals with significant disabilities don't even follow a specific reading or writing curriculum. This scenario provides inconsistent outcomes for learners who are most at risk for learning failure.