

## **Including Everyone – Adopting a Universal Language System in Inclusive Schools**

Kathy Howery<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> kATe Consulting, Inc.

### **Short Abstract**

This session will share the multi-year journeys of two school districts in Northern Alberta Canada who include every child in regular classes – there are no special schools nor special classrooms for students with disabilities – in providing all students with a means of formal communication. These school districts identified the need to better address the needs of their students with complex communication needs. Each district decided to adopt the PODD language system as the “universal” system for their students, while honouring the fact that some students in their district were already using other systems.

The session will highlight where they started, how and why they decided upon the PODD language system, what steps they took in both district wide implementation AND specific child centered implementation of AAC across the district(s). Highlights of how it is working, what benefits have been seen for both students and staff and as well the challenges encountered along the way.

### **Long Abstract**

This session will share the multi-year journeys of two school districts in Northern Alberta Canada who include every child in regular classes – there are no special schools nor special classrooms for students with disabilities – in providing all students with a means of formal communication. These school districts identified the need to better address the needs of their students with complex communication needs. Each district decided to adopt the PODD language system as the “universal” system for their students, while honouring the fact that some students in their district were already using other systems.

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