

The following case study is part of a collection of inspiring stories about how educators in our communities are creating amazing opportunities for students with disabilities to learn, grow, and achieve extraordinary results. In showcasing people who are putting their passion into practice with exemplary leadership and sound intervention strategies that have a positive impact on student growth and achievement, the AbleNet Research Consortium provides a forum for honoring and sharing the efforts of inspiring educators worldwide.

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Executive Summary

As a strong and passionate advocate for literacy instruction, Barb Wollak believes that all students can progress along the literacy continuum, regardless of their disability. With a year's instruction, Barb and special education teachers Julie Mahoney and Natalie Cossetta have all special education students reading connected text with comprehension. Barb has several students with significant cognitive impairments who now read and write. For this report, Barb focused on the achievements of Kirsten, a 2008 graduate of Highland Park High, who Barb has worked with for five years.

The Call for Research

This month's feature story is an inspiring example of the positive impact that special educators implementing systematic literacy instruction can achieve with their students with disabilities. Going forward, more formal research is needed in order to collect scientifically-based evidence on promising programs that promote literacy growth and achievement with individuals who have moderate to severe disabilities. As you read this profile, we encourage you to put on your "research hat" and consider working with schools to answer questions addressing literacy or communication skills achievement and how you might become involved with that research. We welcome your ideas and encourage you to e-mail Cheryl Volkman at cvolkman@ablenetinc.com to share your research questions and interest in conducting research on any aspect of literacy and communication instruction using AbleNet products.

Meet the Student - Kirsten

Kirsten was a student at Highland Jr. High School in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her early development appeared normal, with developing language including some words and phrases. But at fifteen months, she experienced numerous ear infections. When healthy again, Kirsten stopped talking and was diagnosed with autism at age three. She attended early education and self-contained autism programs until she came to Highland.

When she arrived at Highland Kirsten used PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) and her only communication was handing someone a PECS book symbol card of something she wanted. Her speech was totally echolalic. (e.g. If you said, "Hi, Kirsten!" she'd say, "Hi Kirsten!" back to you.) Kirsten had a DynaMyte speech-generating device, but had not yet been taught to use it. Her IEP goal for reading included reading 150 functional words. Kirsten was able to sit in a classroom for ten minutes before she'd dart out the door and down the hall. Using the Informal Reading Inventory by Karen Erickson and David Koppenhaver, her reading abilities when she entered the junior high school program were assessed at first grade level for word identification, and she was unable to reach criterion for listening comprehension or silent reading comprehension.

Read about Barb's Approach

Barb is a strong and passionate advocate for literacy instruction and believes that all students can benefit from good reading instruction. With the approach Barb and special education teachers Julie Mahoney and Natalie Cossetta employ, all special education students in the Inclusion Program are reading connected text with comprehension by the time they leave junior high.

In the following interview with Cheryl Volkman, Barb shares her core beliefs and intervention strategies that provided the foundation for Kirsten's success.

Cheryl:

What drives your passion for literacy instruction for students with disabilities?

Barb:

In large part, David Koppenhaver and Karen Erickson have been responsible for instilling in me the importance of literacy for all. I have been trying to incorporate literacy into everything I do as a speech and language pathologist for the past five years. I have seen kids be able to read independently for the first time, be able to write e-mails and stories for "fun" and be motivated and excited about reading and writing. I see reading and writing as opening so many doors for our students. Parents talk about their children reading menus, writing e-mails at home and asking to visit the library! The exciting thing is to see how the skills students are learning through writing or reading, carry over to their speech.

Cheryl:

What approach and/or instructional methodology do you use to get the remarkable results like Kirsten's?

Barb:

The Highland Inclusion Team uses the Four Blocks literacy model (see Read about Resources below). Students receive daily literacy instruction, which includes working with words, guided reading, writing, and self-selected reading.

Our reading and writing class is 55 minutes a day. We provide our students experiences with multiple text structures including non-fiction; fiction, poetry, and Reader's Theater (see Read about Resources below). We have lots of books that we have purchased through grants and have tried to match our non-fiction books to our Minnesota state standards. Several of our students came to us in 7th grade only knowing a few sight words and with "copying" as their only writing experience.

Within the Four Blocks model, we try to target each student's specific weaknesses of word identification, language comprehension, or print processing.

Cheryl:

What is the focus of guided reading and how do you implement that component?

Barb:

During the guided reading block, students work on language and reading comprehension, where the focus is on vocabulary as well as teaching comprehension strategies. Many of our students lack basic background knowledge about the topics they read about, so opportunities to build background knowledge are important.

Short video clips that have been edited to include text of important vocabulary are often used for this purpose.

We use a “Before, During, and After” approach to reading. Sometimes we will use Question-Answer-Responses and Reciprocal Teaching (see Read about Resources below). For the before part, we include activation of background knowledge and setting a purpose for reading. The teachers and I meet every Monday after school and they decide what book they are going to teach. We use one book a week, or at the most two, and read it for a different purpose each day. We do include poetry and Reader's Theater on the same topic. On Wednesdays, I go into all three literacy classes and do a language/literacy group with whatever book the teacher has chosen. We have found United Streaming to be a great resource for finding video segments that match the text that we'll be reading. I edit the video in i-Movie and then add text, including target vocabulary or key concepts, to help with the background knowledge piece via a free program called CapScribe (see Read about Resources below). Some of our purposes include compare/contrast, summarizing, predicting, sequencing, and making connections to their lives and to other books they have read.

Cheryl:

What do you provide for self-selected reading instruction?

Barb:

For self-selected reading, students have access to a wealth of easy text. The Tar Heel Reader is another fantastic resource. This site is sponsored by the Center for Literacy and Disabilities Studies and the Computer Science Department at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. According to the site, the Tar Heel Reader is “a collection of free, easy-to-read, and accessible books on a wide range of topics. Each book can be speech-enabled and accessed using multiple interfaces (i.e. switches, alternative keyboards, touch screens, and dedicated AAC devices).”

We subscribe to the Young Explorer Magazine by National Geographic, which offers two different reading levels. We like these magazines because the text is easy and the topics are high interest with age appropriate pictures.

Our students are in a regular education homeroom. The focus during homeroom is self-selected reading. The special education teacher brings in a bucket of books to homeroom each day. It's funny. Many of the regular education students ask to read books from our bucket.

Cheryl:

What happens during the word block or working with words instruction?

Barb:

During the word block, students work on word wall activities as well as work with words. We teach students to read words with automaticity as well as have strategies for decoding unfamiliar words.

The automaticity or sight-word part of our word activities includes word wall activities. Five new words are added to the word wall each week. These are important words that students need often in their writing and reading. The words are practiced repeatedly so that students can spell the words accurately, use them to spell other words, and read them with automaticity.

Making words (a Four Blocks strategy) helps students learn to use spelling patterns to spell other words. Students learn to recognize the differences that result when a single letter is changed. (See the book Children with Disabilities: Reading and Writing the Four Blocks Way by Karen Erickson and David Koppenhaver for more information.) We just finished setting up the Word Writing Café where students write all the words they can think of in 10 minutes. It was fun to see students writing all sorts of words that they could not spell this fall. This quick assessment also gave us lots of information about our students' vocabulary, how they categorize words, interests, etc.

Cheryl:

What about the writing block?

Barb:

For the writing block, our students write to pen pals (who are undergraduate teacher education students) on a blog, in a journal, and create electronic books. Students learn that email is just like a conversation. You start with a greeting, you answer your pen pal's questions, you ask a question, and then you end with a salutation. My students can all get into their email independently. If they need reading support, Gaggle (see Read about Resources below) has a "say it" option for the computer to read the text. Most of the students use Co: Writer (a word predictor

program). Our first goals are to get students writing, (writing without standards) to get them to enjoy writing, and to get them to write as independently as possible. Many students come with very negative experiences about writing because everything they wrote in the past was corrected or changed.

Cheryl:

How did the literacy learning program work for Kirsten?

Barb:

We started with assessment. To assess her reading abilities, Kirsten was administered an adapted version of the Informal Reading Inventory (by Karen Erickson and David Koppenhaver) when she entered the junior high school program. Her word identification abilities on word lists were assessed at first grade level, and she was unable to reach criterion during listening comprehension or silent reading assessments. Four years later, similar assessments placed her at a sixth grade level for word identification, third grade for silent reading comprehension, and at a primer level for listening comprehension.

Cheryl:

Where did you start after the assessment and how did her progress evolve over time?

Barb:

It didn't take any of us long to realize that Kirsten was really smart and that we needed to teach her language and literacy. Initially, Kirsten was unable to decode any words. When she read, she would stop when she got to an unfamiliar word and wait until someone would help her. Despite the fact that we knew Kirsten has great visual memory skills, we knew we needed to teach her decoding skills. Now, Kirsten uses written language as a means of processing oral language (i.e., communication partners write their questions or comments, and Kirsten reads them in order to understand what they are saying before she responds orally or with her DynaMyte). Kirsten will now attempt to decode any word and is also an excellent speller.

Cheryl:

It sounds as though Kirsten has a fairly unique way of processing language.

Barb:

Temple Grandin and Daniel Tamet, individuals with high functioning autism, say that they process/perceive language differently than most people. Temple Grandin says that she does not hear that "inner speech" but that she sees video clips in her head when she thinks of words. I am sure that this is the case with Kirsten. Kirsten has learned language, first through her symbols on her DynaMyte, and now through

words. If I just talk to her (unless it is something very familiar) I might as well be speaking in Chinese. If you write something down, she reads it with understanding. My favorite example of this is going to the dentist. Before Kirsten learned to read, her mom had to have Kirsten sedated in order for the dentist to look at her teeth. A couple of years ago Kirsten's mom wrote down what was going to happen at the dentist's office. Kirsten read the message, opened her mouth, and let the dentist examine and clean her teeth. Thoughtful literacy is more important for Kirsten than any other student I have ever worked with.

This year we have been working really hard on getting Kirsten to generate her own thoughts. I will write something like, "Tell me about your weekend," or "Write about Melody." I purchased a diary for Kirsten. She writes in it every day and has begun to write sentences like, "I went to school. I ate lunch. I ate French fries. I ate chicken patty." We have now started to work on sentence combining. After Kirsten writes her thoughts down, I can ask her verbally about what she has written and she can tell us!

Cheryl:

What was Kirsten's experience during the writing block?

Barb:

Initially, Kirsten wrote her emails with the help of picture support from the software program Clicker 4. Kirsten's mom would email information about Kirsten's weekend and we would make Clicker grids based upon that information.

With Clicker, Kirsten would write by making choices from picture. When she selected a picture, a corresponding word would be sent to the talking word processor part of the program. After Kirsten got the idea of "writing," Clicker was phased out. Kirsten was then given multiple choice options in response to information that her mother provided such as, "This weekend I (went to Target; went to the zoo; went to piano lessons; none of these)

Kirsten would circle the appropriate answer and then write the sentence in her email. This year work has focused on getting Kirsten to initiate her thoughts through writing. She writes daily in a diary. Examples include, "I went to school. I went to SUMIT. I went to speech. I ate lunch. I run track." After Kirsten writes the information she is then able to respond to the same question verbally. Written language is definitely a way that Kirsten learns auditory language. Without the written component, Kirsten's response to many questions is still echolalic.

Cheryl:

In your opinion, what was the most significant impact within Kirsten's story?

Barb:

Reading and writing have been the vehicles for her to learn and then use language. Reading and writing provide a means for Kirsten to learn syntax, sentence structure, vocabulary, and a way for her to learn more about her world.

I think our pen pal program has had tremendous impact, for all of our students, including Kirsten. This is the seventh year we have implemented the pen pal collaboration. I have to say, in large part because of it, we have had many students who say they "love to write" and will actually choose to write during free time.

The one thing that I never considered when we started this collaboration was the friendships and social relationships that develop. My students now consider their pen pals "good friends." A couple of years ago we had a student who had many social-emotional issues. Sometimes she would tell her teacher, "I'm having a bad day. Can I write to my pen pal?" Just having a "friend to listen to her concerns" helped this girl a great deal.

Cheryl:

How do you incorporate AbleNet and other assistive technology products for DCD students?

Barb:

We feel that it is our responsibility to teach EVERYONE who comes to us how to read, write, and communicate. If we had a student with significant disabilities, including access, I would start with emergent writing, shared reading, self-selected reading, and word activities to give the students experience with writing and to teach them concepts about print, the alphabetic principle, and phonological awareness. This would include activities such as scribbling, exploring a keyboard (so they can see and hear letters on a screen), partner-assisted scanning (so they can choose words), and an AbleNet BIGmack (or other voice output communication aid) that says, "This is the one I want." Gretchen Hanser has some wonderful videos which demonstrate this <http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/available-for-purchase-1/available-for-purchase>.

Here is what all students need:

1. A means to communicate
2. Access to text
3. Good instruction
4. Access to some type of pencil for writing

Cheryl:

In your opinion, what were the critical attitudes and philosophies that allowed these remarkable shifts to happen?

Barb:

Attitudes are perhaps the greatest block. Believing that there are prerequisites to reading and writing, or statements from educators like “He’s reached his plateau” are the kiss of death to any hope of tapping the true potential for each individual to read and write. Instructional strategies that are limited and/or not effective also get in the way of success. We need to focus on what a student CAN do and build upon that.

Cheryl:

How is your instruction impacted by best practice?

Barb:

It started with Peggy Locke in the early ‘90s when AbleNet and other leaders in the field promoted the idea that “all students can communicate.” We’ve extended that way of thinking to reading and writing and to the belief that “Everyone can read and write.”¹ We now know that reading, writing, speaking and listening are all related and that improvement in one area can impact improvement in another.²

Research on effective regular education classrooms³ is applicable for teaching students with disabilities, too. Good teaching is good teaching. Some of these points include:

1. Excellent classroom management
2. Classroom is positive in tone
3. Many word-level, comprehension, and writing skills taught explicitly
4. Many excellent literacy experiences, with classroom flooded with literature
5. Students are spending majority of time actually reading and writing (not doing worksheets)
6. Teachers make sure tasks are matched to competency level
7. Teachers provide support, scaffolding student learning
8. Effective teachers encourage students to self-regulate and be as independent as possible

Motivation is also a key factor. Teachers need to find motivating activities that provide authentic reasons for reading and writing. Our Pen Pal program is a prime example and a perfect opportunity for students to work on topic maintenance, asking and answering questions, etc. Giving students access to a variety of text structures increases motivation to read and write in addition to providing opportunities for repetition with variety.

- ¹ Koppenhaver, D. A., & Yoder, D. E., 1992. Literacy issues in persons with severe speech and physical impairments. In R. Gaylord-Ross (Ed.), *Issues and Research in Special Education*, vol.2, pp. 156-201. New York: Teacher's College Press.
- ² Koppenhaver, D.A., Pierce, P.L., Steelman, J.D., & Yoder, D.E., 1995. Contexts of early literacy intervention for children with developmental disabilities. In M. Fey, J Windsor, & s. Warren (Vol. Eds), *Communication and language intervention series: Vol. 5. Language intervention: Preschool through the elementary years*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- ³ Allington et al., 2001; Pressley, Whaton-McDonald et al., 2001

Cheryl:

What is greatest learning you'd want to pass along to other educators?

Barb:

I have learned that we need to promote the current best practice view that all students can progress along the literacy continuum and that there is, in fact, a continuum. Because emergent literacy begins at birth, we must expose students to communication and literacy from day one. The bottom line is to believe in all your kids and teach them all how to read, write, and communicate!

Read What Kirsten's Mom Has to Say

Cheryl:

From the parent perspective, what insights and/or recommendation would you want to pass along to educators?

Jackie:

My first recommendation would be "Take the time to get to know THIS child." I'm saddened it took until seventh grade for Kirsten to make significant communication/literacy gains, even though she had wonderful teachers and support specialists up to that point. I know it may be hard for educators to dive so deeply into the needs of every student, yet stories like Kirsten's demonstrate how important it can be to pursue solutions that fit with the unique capabilities of a child with so much potential.

I would also say "Believe in the greater potential of all individuals, no matter where you start." As a parent this is natural, especially knowing that Kirsten was very bright outside of her auditory processing problems. Kirsten was phenomenal as a child at figuring out things (e.g. how to run the VCR, or knowing if anything had been moved in a classroom or in a location she had only been to once). She could also do 1000 piece puzzles fast! What really made the programs work for Kirsten was

getting together with professionals like Barb who also held these same core beliefs and would not give up until they found what worked.

Cheryl:

I know you also feel strongly about having realistic steps and a plan of action. Could you say more about that?

Jackie:

Yes, this is something Barb had going right from the start. In Kirsten's case, there were so many minor miracles achieved only by the determination and persistence of many people working together and not putting a tap on her capability. Kirsten was so sensory defensive that over time she regressed in what she would/could eat and had a very limited diet. Eventually, through much practice and intervention, she began eating a wide diet at about age 13. She now eats everything! One specialist told us "If she doesn't have language by six, she will never have it." My initial reaction was "I'm not buying it!" and some of Kirsten's best language development occurred after she was twelve. She is so much better now at 18 than two years ago.

Cheryl:

What specific advice would you give to help parents advocate for their child?

Jackie:

It's important to remember that people are here to help. Trust that the teacher is really the educational expert and advocate for what you believe within a collaborative environment. Be open and willing to listen to and learn from parents just as they learn from you. Kirsten's teachers played an important role in helping us encourage greater independence. They said "she can tie her own shoes" when we would have tied them for her.

Cheryl:

What is your most important message for parents?

Jackie:

I would like to leave a message of hope. I think it is important to note that there hasn't been a grand miracle. Kirsten has not been cured of autism. Her auditory processing is still very poor. However, she has accomplished more than any of us were sure she could. My advice to other parents would be take it a day at a time, get advice, try things in a planful manner. Don't freak out that your child doesn't respond to the same therapies that have worked for other kids.

So many times as parents, we feel guilty for not doing enough. DON'T PUT A CAP ON YOUR CHILD'S POTENTIAL. Hang in there. Our journey with Kirsten has been challenging, but it has stretched me. I am more comfortable with anyone with a disability. I am more caring, empathetic, patient and courageous because of Kirsten.

The joys of each little progressive step have been amazing. Maybe this has been the miracle.

Potential Research Studies and Questions

Going forward, more formal research is needed in order to collect scientifically-based evidence on promising programs that promote literacy growth and achievement with individuals who have moderate to severe disabilities. Consider how you might explore and/or get involved in addressing the following inquiries:

- 1. We know that motivation is a key factor in “good teaching” as is reading and writing with a purpose. How can motivation be more intentionally built into literacy learning to promote reading and writing that provides meaning and ultimately more engagement for students with more severe cognitive and physical disabilities?*
- 2. Literacy learning difficulties are widespread in individuals with severe communication disorders with perhaps as much as 90% of this population reading and writing at levels substantially lower than non-disabled peers (Koppenhaver & Yoder, 1992). How can teachers determine the most effective strategies for combining reading, writing, speaking and listening for specific students with severe communication disorders?*
- 3. Getting school-wide (or even district-wide) adoption of literacy learning as an educational priority for all students with moderate to severe disabilities can be a challenge in many districts. How do these settings adopt and sustain effective implementation of literacy learning curriculum and best practice methodology to achieve growth and progression along the literacy continuum for all students?*
- 4. What are the specific benefits and/or impact of literacy learning activities that involve correspondence with pen pals or other typical peers and what tools and strategies are necessary to involve students with a wide range of disabilities in these types of programs?*

Read about Resources Barb Recommends

The Four Blocks Literacy Model

The Four-Blocks® Literacy Model is a multilevel, balanced literacy framework that incorporates four different approaches each day to teach children how to become better readers, writers, and spellers. Developed by Drs. Patricia Cunningham and Dorothy Hall, this model acknowledges that not all children learn in the same way and provides substantial instruction to support the learning personalities of all students. <http://www.four-blocks.com> Or <http://www.wfu.edu/education/fourblocks> (articles on four blocks research and instruction)

Reader's Theatre

Reader's theater is minimal theater in support of literature and reading. There are many styles of reader's theater, but nearly all share these features:

- Narration serves as the framework of dramatic presentation.
- No full stage sets. If used at all, sets are simple and suggestive.
- No full costumes. If used at all, costumes are partial and suggestive, or neutral and uniform.
- No full memorization. Scripts are used openly in performance.

Reader's theater was developed as an efficient and effective way to present literature in dramatic form. Today most scripts are literary adaptations, though others are original dramatic works. Popular first in colleges and universities, reader's theater has now moved to earlier education, where it is seen as a key tool for creating interest and skill in reading. Young people love to do it, and they give it their all—more so because it's a team effort, and they don't want to let down their friends! Repeated readings bring fluency, and if a script is based on an available book, kids want to read that too. What's more, reader's theater is a relatively simple activity for the teacher, with no required setup other than making copies of scripts. Reader's theater has been found effective not only for language arts but for social studies as well. Performing stories based on another culture is one of the best ways for students to become interested in and familiar with that culture. (from <http://www.aaronshp.com/rt/whatis.html>)

See also <http://www.timrasinski.com> for information about Dr. Timothy Rainsky, the Reader's Theater "guru." Also <http://www.teachercreatedmaterials.com/podcasts/> for a link to several pod casts and handouts in this area.

[CapScribe](http://atmac.org/capscribe) (<http://atmac.org/capscribe>) is a new, open source application for adding captioning and video description to web and desktop video and audio files. CapScribe was created by Charles Silverman who oversees SNOW. It was originally funded as part of the CNICE grant, led by University of Toronto's Adaptive Technology Resource Centre (ATRC) and partners. [Download CapScribe](http://snow.utoronto.ca/capscribe/capscribe.zip) (<http://snow.utoronto.ca/capscribe/capscribe.zip>) - *Version: p6 Released: June 3, 2007*. The editor requires a Mac (OS 10.3 and greater). A fast G4 Mac or Intel Mac is recommended. Edited content will play back on both Mac and Windows. Quick Time 6.5 or higher is required for playback.

Gaggle

Gaggle is dedicated to providing safe email accounts for students. The tools provided allow schools to finally feel secure when giving their students email access. On the Gaggle Network teachers control what can be written and who can correspond with the students. Messages with inappropriate words are automatically re-routed to the teacher's account. This allows the teacher to decide whether or not the student gets to see the message. <http://www.gaggle.net>

United Streaming

Discovery Education provides engaging digital resources to schools and homes with the goal of making educators more effective, increasing student achievement, and connecting classrooms and families to a world of learning. The leader in digital video-based learning, Discovery Education produces and distributes high-quality digital resources in easy-to-use formats in all core-curricular subject areas. Discovery Education is committed to creating scientifically proven, standards-based digital resources for teachers, students, and parents that make a positive impact on student learning. <http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com/>

Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal teaching refers to an instructional activity that takes place in the form of a dialogue between teachers and students regarding segments of text. The dialogue is structured by the use of four strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting. The teacher and students take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading this dialogue. The purpose of reciprocal teaching is to facilitate a group effort between teacher and students as well as among students in the task of bringing meaning to the text.

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/atrisk/at6lk38.htm>

Key People and Information Links

- <http://faculty.rcoe.appstate.edu/koppenhaver/> - website for Dave Koppenhaver, Professor of Reading at the College of Education, Appalachian State University, Department of Language, Reading and Exceptionalities
- <http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/> - website for the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies at the University of North Carolina. The Center's mission is to promote literacy and communication for individuals of all ages with disabilities.
- <http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/projects/deaf-blind-model-classroom> - The Literacy and Communication Model Demonstration Classroom Project is for students with deaf-blindness. University of North Carolina, Center for Literacy and Disabilities Studies.
- <http://www.hpjh.blogspot.com> - Highland Jr. High blog
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqW4mOAhlg&feature=channel_page
- http://www.donjohnston.com/building_wings/index.html - Don Johnston of Don Johnston, Inc. wrote **Building Wings** to build self-confidence and to share his personal journey as a struggling reader with other students. In his new book **Building Wings**, Don shares the valuable lessons he learned from his 8th grade teacher who inspired him to think and learn in different ways. **Building Wings** also reminds teachers and parents of the disguised behavior signs that children often use to hide their learning deficiencies.
- <http://www.hpjhmnpbwiki.com> - Building Wings wiki (Note: A wiki is a database of pages which visitors can edit live. The building blocks of wikis are the "comments")

from visitors. You can generally edit a page in real time, search the wiki's content, and view updates since your last visit. In a "moderated wiki," wiki owners review comments before addition to the main body of a topic. Additional features can include calendar sharing, live AV conferencing, RSS feeds and more.)

- [Camp Courage](http://www.couragecenter.org/contentpages/youthsessions1.aspx?FromNavPK=657)
(<http://www.couragecenter.org/contentpages/youthsessions1.aspx?FromNavPK=657>)
- web page for Literacy Camp, a Courage Center Camp, located in Maple Lake, MN and led by David Koppenhaver and Karen Erickson.

Meet the Educator - Barb



Barb Wollak, is a Speech/Language Pathologist and AT Specialist in an urban junior high in St. Paul, Minnesota, that serves students in seventh and eighth grades. Barb works with 25 students in the Inclusion Program at Highland Park Jr. High School as well as serves on her district's assistive technology team.

Inclusion Program students range in age from 12 to 14 years and have labels of developmental cognitive disability (DCD), autism, other health impairments (OHI), and physically impairments (PI). Past students have been labeled as having a severe/profound cognitive disability and some have normal intelligence but are nonverbal due to cerebral palsy and communicate with a high tech communication device. Most of Barb's current students receive specialized instruction for literacy and math and are included in regular education classes during the rest of the school day.

In the summer Barb directs the AAC Session for Teens and is coordinator of the Literacy Session at [Camp Courage](http://www.couragecenter.org/contentpages/youthsessions1.aspx?FromNavPK=657) (<http://www.couragecenter.org/contentpages/youthsessions1.aspx?FromNavPK=657>). The Literacy Session is under the direction of Drs. David Koppenhaver and Karen Erickson. She also co-teaches "Effective Literacy Instruction for Students with Moderate to Severe Developmental Disabilities" at the University of St. Thomas.

Read about the Authors



Jackie Levin: Co-founder, AbleNet, Inc.; Founder of Jackie Levin & The Power of Possibility (www.thepowerofpossibility.com); Co-founder of the Butterfly Peace Path (www.butterflypeacepath.com) and Founder of Project M Families (www.projectmfamilies.com).



Cheryl Volkman: Co-founder and CEO Emeritus, AbleNet, Coordinator of the AbleNet Research Consortium. See www.ablenetinc.com/arcadvisors

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Disclaimer Statement:

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of AbleNet, Inc. AbleNet strives to tell the story as told by the people interviewed so it is truly their story. AbleNet adds value to the story in the form of research links and other resources to allow readers to pursue aligned data/information.