

# Developing Communication, Learning and Access Skills for Children Who Face Significant Physical and Multiple Challenges - 2 Day Course

Presented by Linda J. Burkhart



**Where:** Northern Illinois Conference Center (NIU)  
1120 E Diehl Rd, Naperville, IL 60563

**When:** Wednesday, November 6th and Thursday, November 7th  
8:30am to 4:30pm each day. Check in 8am daily.

**Cost:** Early Bird Registration: \$275 by 9/16/24  
After 9/16/24: \$325. Lunch is not included.  
\*Parents: please contact Shirley Sains before registering!

### Course Description:

Are you working or living with children who face severe physical and multiple challenges in addition to complex communication needs, such as Cerebral Palsy, Rett Syndrome or Traumatic Brain Injury? Do you find them struggling to juggle the challenges of motor coordination, sensory processing, communication, language, vision and cognition needed to effectively communicate what they are thinking and to access education? Many children in this group find it challenging to effectively use their hands to directly operate communication devices or access computers. In addition, some of these children face added complexity in this process due to cerebral/cortical visual impairment (CVI).

During this two-day presentation, we will examine how the brain processes new information and acquires knowledge. We will explore the innate motivational drives that can be leveraged to enhance engagement and foster internal motivation in the classroom. Come learn how to determine priorities among all the numerous challenges, and how to address the individual's many varying needs in parallel. How does CVI impact our decisions regarding the design and presentation of educational materials, teaching literacy, and communication systems?

We will investigate the subtle but significant strategies for teaching partner-assisted scanning as a non-electronic means of accessing educational materials and communication systems such as PODD. The 'Stepping Stones to Switch Access' process (Burkhart) will be shared with the focus on practical strategies and customizable electronic tools.

### Learning Outcomes:

- Describe the challenges faced by teachers, therapists and parents living and working with children who present significant multiple challenges and who are often not "testable" by traditional means of assessment.
- Discuss specific challenges presented by individuals with Rett Syndrome, CVI, and Significant Physical Challenges
- Discuss how the brain develops and describe implications for teaching and learning for those students who are developing differently
- Give practical examples and strategies to increase motivation, active engagement, and participation, based upon how the brain develops and processes information
- Discuss the characteristics of children who have cortical vision impairment and describe effective strategies for helping these children develop vision, communication and learning.
- Discuss the practical strategies of receptive language input and describe the process for creating an aided-language learning environment
- Briefly discuss which features of pragmatic organization of vocabulary (PODD) provides scaffolds for beginning communicators who face multiple complexities, and give examples of how this is used with multi-modal partner-assisted communication strategies.
- Describe strategies for teaching a yes/no response for the specific purpose of partner-assisted scanning
- Describe the motor-cognitive learning process for developing automaticity of motor skills, through the 'Stepping Stones to Switch Access Process'

Register at <https://ComCourse.givesmart.com>



Linda Burkhart is an internationally known teacher and leader in the field of assistive technology, adaptive play, and augmentative communication for children who face severe challenges with more than 50 years experience in this field. She has developed numerous adapted materials and innovative strategies for teaching children to be active learners and to develop their abilities to be participate in life. She is the author of a number of books and software titles on topics of assistive technology and augmentative communication. Linda was a classroom teacher for 15 years. Then for 8 years, she worked as an Augmentative Communication and Assistive Technology Specialist for the Center for Technology in Education, a joint project between Johns Hopkins University and the Maryland State Department of Education. Currently, Linda works as a private consultant, Assistive Technology and AAC integration specialist. She presents trainings and workshops nationally and internationally.

Any questions, please contact Shirley Sains at [stsains@comcast.net](mailto:stsains@comcast.net) (preferred) or 708-510-8956 (if necessary).