



## **Autism and Communication Competence: Effective Strategies and Solutions**

**Presenter:** Betsy Caporale, M.S., CCC-SLP, AAC/AT Specialist,

**Instructional Time:** 3 Hours

**Target Audience:** This interactive workshop is appropriate for anyone serving students with ASD, including teachers, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, behavior specialists, support staff and parents.

**Description:** Autism is characterized by significant deficits in receptive and expressive language, however; most of the interventions implemented for this population tend to focus primarily on behavior, not communication. Students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are visual thinkers who have difficulty processing verbal information. They also have difficulty expressing themselves using verbal speech. Sadly, many students with ASD have not learned how to become efficient communicators by the time they transition out of high school. When visual supports are incorporated into the learning environment, students with ASD are more likely to be active communicators and engaged learners. During this interactive workshop seven key evidence-based AAC interventions which integrate the use of visual strategies will be described. Suggestions for implementation across a variety of age and ability levels will also be shared, focusing on a collaborative team approach. The presenter will show videos demonstrating each of these interventions, while providing opportunities for audience members to comment and share observations. Participants will walk away with specific tools and strategies which have proved to be highly effective in developing communicative competence and independence in students with autism spectrum disorders.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

- Describe seven different evidence-based AAC interventions to enhance communication and learning for students with ASD.
- Demonstrate four ways to differentiate instruction incorporating the use of AAC.
- Identify appropriate learning activities for a student with ASD based on individual strengths, challenges and preferences.
- Explain how effective AAC strategies can reduce negative behaviors and increase independence in students with ASD.