

A Land We Can Share

Kluth, P. & Chandler-Olcott, K.

Book Study



Chapter 1: What is Autism?

1. Examine the common characteristics of autism and how these characteristics may influence literacy learning. Have you personally seen how communication, movement, sensory, or other differences impact literacy learning? How?
2. Communication differences often cause students to get less rigorous literacy instruction than other students. Why? How can teachers provide rich and meaningful instruction to students who do not speak or have reliable communication?
3. Fascinations, “favorites,” and collections can be used to support the literacy learning of students with autism. Have you seen this happen in your school? Do you have students now who could benefit from having teachers integrate their fascinations into curriculum, instruction, and learning environment? How?

Chapter 2: What is Literacy?

1. When teachers presume competence, what does literacy instruction look like?
2. On page 27, we start to outline the research on literacy and autism. What surprised you about the research that has or has not been conducted on this population?
3. In this chapter, we are critical of programs that focus too much on functional literacy. We contend that all literacies are functional. What does this mean to you?

Chapter 3: Literacy Development in Inclusive Classrooms

1. Of the seven principles for promoting inclusive literacy practices, which ones seem most important to you? Which ones do you feel your school has mastered? Which ones do you feel need improvement in your school? Are there principles you would add to this list?
2. What “elastic” instructional approaches do you already use? How can you and your colleagues make your existing approaches even more elastic?

Chapter 4: Assessing Literacy Learning

1. In the introduction, we discuss problems related to assessing students with autism. What struggles do your students have in this area? Do you think Lucy Blackman’s story is a common one? Why or why not?
2. Did you get any new ideas for formal or informal assessment from this chapter? If so, what are these ideas?
3. Do you commonly provide adaptations to the testing environment for your students? Which supports have you tried? Not tried yet?

Chapter 5: Focus on Reading

1. What new ideas did you take away from this chapter?
2. Many students with autism struggle with comprehension. Some of their difficulties seem related to the autism, but others are clearly related to not being able to communicate reliably, not having the same experiences as others, and not having access to the same age-appropriate content as other learners (e.g., being excluded from science class). Keeping these challenges in mind, what ideas did you read about that would help your students learn or polish comprehension skills?

Chapter 6: Focus on Writing

1. What new ideas did you take away from this chapter?
2. One of the ideas in this chapter suggests providing handwriting alternatives. What alternatives do your students use? Are there new ideas you can try in the classroom?
3. How can you provide more writing experiences for students with limited communication? How could Digital Language Experience story be adapted? Or scribing?

Chapter 7: Literacy Learning for Students with Significant Disabilities

1. We shared a few common questions that educators raise when educating students with significant disabilities. What other questions have you heard?
2. In this chapter, we suggest that teachers attend to “small cues” of literacy learning. Can you think of examples of times when you have noticed “small cues” in your practice?
3. The classroom community is critical when supporting learners with significant disabilities in literacy learning. When you read our examples of using the community, what ideas came to mind for your own school or classroom?