

# Christine's Chronicles: Serendipity

Follow along with one parent on her journey to make inclusion a reality for her son.



by Christine Lindauer

Just after Luke's 2nd birthday, a speech therapist recommended that he begin using a communication device. We had been using picture exchange for a year, having progressed from actual photos to flip books with rather small abstract images, and our team agreed he was ready. The local CDSA provided a few basic devices that to my surprise he quickly outgrew. So a few months later, we found ourselves checking out more advanced AAC (Augmentative and/or Adaptive Communication) devices from various manufacturers. With such a hefty price tag, this wasn't something my family was ready to just jump into. I wanted to know more. I wanted to understand how this device would really integrate into our daily routines. I was considering enrolling Luke in a childcare program, and I didn't know how a device could be used in a classroom setting. I wanted to see examples. So I went online. I scoured YouTube. I searched and searched and couldn't find anything that was relevant to our situation. In the end, I went with the recommendations of my son's therapists and in hindsight I'm confident we made a good decision. But I vowed that I would take videos of my son using his device throughout the day and post those online for others to see and learn from.

Serendipitously a month or two later, I got a phone call from Maggie Connolly at the CONNECT project looking for a family to be involved in the project. She explained that they were creating online modules (including video resources) to teach evidence-based practices and decision-making for serving children with disabilities. These modules would be publicly available for early childhood faculty and professional development providers to use in teaching pre-service and in-service practitioners. (What I heard in all of that – free online videos teaching best practices.) Well Maggie quickly discovered she'd have no trouble convincing me to help out.

Given Luke's disabilities and his recent enrollment in a childcare program, the CONNECT team felt that our family's situation would be a perfect fit for their upcoming module on embedded

interventions. So I dove right in, initially volunteering, and then joining the team as an employee, writing our story and helping to publish it online.

Now one year later, I'm happy to report that not only did we complete the module on embedded interventions, but within it are several video clips demonstrating Luke using the device at home, in the classroom and in the community.

Are you an early childhood faculty member or family as faculty who would like to use CONNECT's module on Embedded Interventions in a class you are teaching between January and May of 2010? If so, I invite you to register for our pilot and learn more about Luke's story.

Register for CONNECT Pilot

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## **AT resources**

Thank you so much Christine for sharing your and Luke's story. The videos you will make will be extremely helpful for everyone supporting inclusive education from SLPs, to teachers, to parents! I am sad to report, however, that due to extreme state and federal budget limitations, the ATRCs have had to significantly reduce their ability to provide assistive technology equipment loans and training services. NC no longer has the funds to support the ATRC system, but CDSAs still have equipment they can loan to families as time and personnel allow. We all hope that economy improves quickly because our most vulnerable citizens like infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families are surely suffering the consequences.

Reply

## **AT resources**

Patsy, that is so sad about the loss of ATRC funding. I'd hate to think of other kids out there like Luke who could benefit from AT and now not get it. This of course makes our work that much more important, and motivates us even more to get the word out.

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