

# The most functional skill of all

Andrea Creed's campaign to get Delaware schools to provide equitable literacy instruction for its students began years ago on behalf of her son. "He has complex communication needs," she says. "This is what we'd face: I told staff, 'He needs to learn to read.' They said, 'He's receiving an accommodation. He's being read to.'"

That's not acceptable, says Creed. Nor, she says, are the systemic obstacles that her literacy-advocacy workgroup has come across. "Many educators think teaching literacy to students with complex communication needs is too time consuming. Schools don't require it or complain they don't have the resources to provide it. And some question the intelligence of nonspeaking people and think they can't be taught literacy."

All students need literacy instruction and can benefit from it, says CDS School-Age Unit Director [Debby Boyer](#). To that end, her [Systematic Processes for Enhancing and Assessing Communication Supports \(SPEACS\)](#) team is sharing tools and offering coaching that promote literacy instruction to district educators. "The myth that students with complex needs should access a curriculum focusing primarily on 'functional skills' is misguided," Boyer says. "Literacy is actually the most functional skill of all. It increases opportunities in school and in life."

Delaware schools are moving toward a common goal, says the [Department of Education's](#) Lauren Irwin. "A presumption of competence among all its students.... We're striving to empower our teachers and the system to support all students."



Adrian and Andrea Creed converse on their front porch. Andrea says Adrian uses his [NovaChat 8 Active](#) device "for everything. To tell stories, to talk about songs, to say where he wants to drive or fly to."