Meaning-making in interactions with students who use AAC in the school context

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During my time working in schools, I have become aware of how parents and professionals struggle to implement educational goals in ways that enhance student engagement and learning. We tend to prioritize our commitment to document measurable outcomes above the quality of our interactions with students with severe communication problems. Even though students may be compliant and participate in teaching activities, the level of participation does not necessarily indicate personal involvement in the process. The difference between "compliance" and "engagement" will be highlighted in promoting meaning-making and learning. Challenges in balancing task-driven instruction with relational oriented learning activities will be described while offering some guidelines in how to promote meaning-making processes. The following will be addressed in the presentation:

1. Importance of addressing the level of meaning-making in academic and home contexts
2. Integrating a meaning-making approach within instruction
3. Measuring and reporting progress

Assessing the student's level of participation as well as the level of engagement in an activity form the basis of meaning-making in context. Case studies will be used to contrast approaches focused on level of participation as well as those promoting the level of engagement of students.