

# AAC Users Interview

## Jordyn Zimmerman

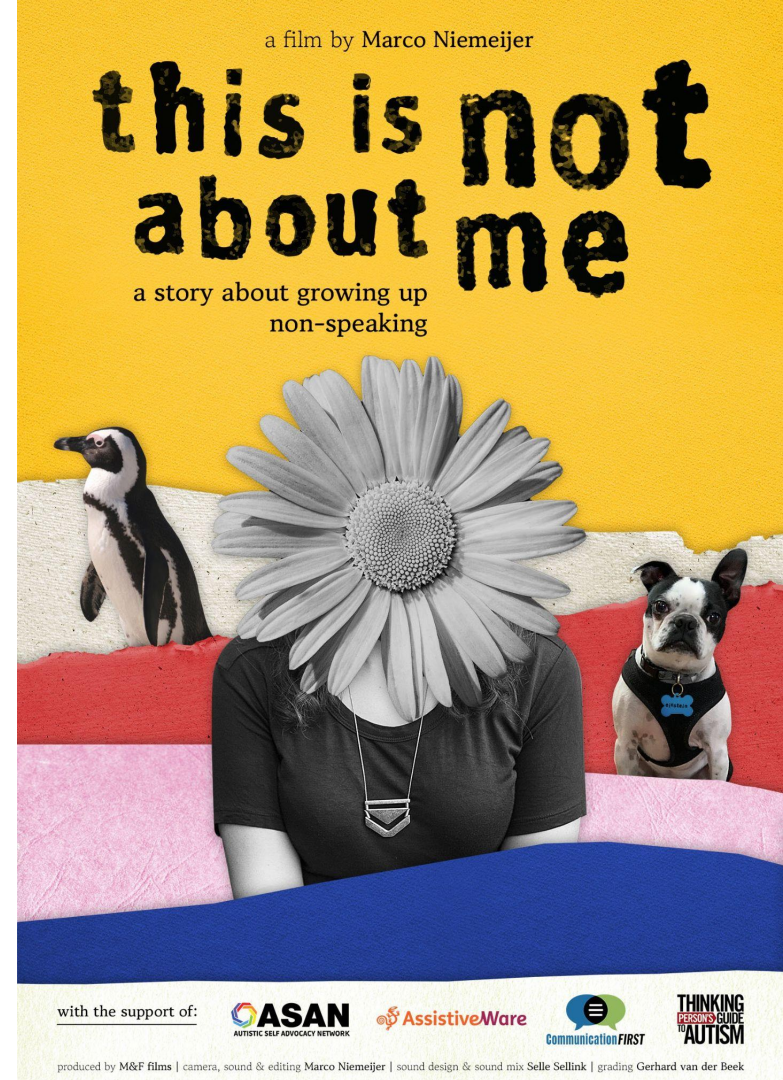
*Moderated by Bob Williams,  
Policy Director, CommunicationFIRST*

November 10, 2021



**CommunicationFIRST**

Because communication is a human right.



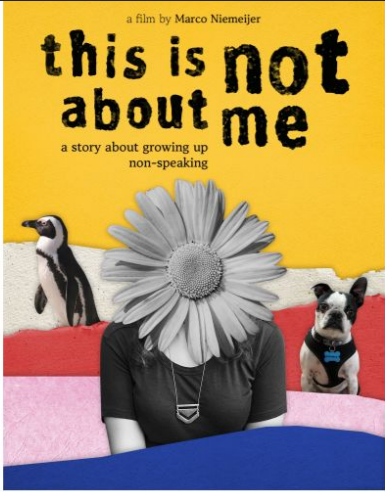
# Logistics & Accessibility

- Captions: Click on CC button at bottom of Zoom window
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation
- Chat box is turned off
- Q&A box is on instead
- This event is being recorded

# This Is Not About Me Film & Educational Toolkit

Film: <https://thisisnotaboutme.film/>

Toolkit: <https://thisisnotaboutme.film/resources>




a film by Marco Niemeijer

**this is not  
about me**

a story about growing up  
non-speaking

**A Toolkit for Educators of Students Who Cannot  
Rely on Speech to be Understood**



**Communication***FIRST*

Because communication is a human right.

Primarily authored by nonspeaking autistic AAC users Cole Sorensen (B.S., Special Education) and  
Jordyn Zimmerman (M.Ed. pending). Available at [www.thisisnotaboutme.film](https://www.thisisnotaboutme.film)  
October 13, 2021

# Moderator: Bob Williams

- Co-Founder and Policy Director, CommunicationFIRST
- Lifelong AAC user
- Former Director of the US Independent Living Administration
- Former Commissioner of the US Administration on Developmental Disabilities
- Former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Disability, Aging, and Long Term Care Policy at US Department of Health and Human Services
- Former head of the Social Security Administration's Office of Employment Support Programs



# Jordyn Zimmerman



- Final semester as graduate student of education at Boston College studying Curriculum and Instruction
- Former intern, National Disability Rights Network
- BSS in Education Policy at Ohio University
- Founded inclusive collegiate cheer team called the Ohio University Sparkles
- Board member, CommunicationFIRST



# AAC User Questions



1. Bob: The title of your film, *This Is Not About Me*, is extremely powerful. It comes, of course, from a speech that I believe you made at your high school. You used the phrase and go on to explain what you mean by it in that speech. I have several things I would like to ask you. Can you say why you felt it was important to use those simple 5 words, “This is not about me,” in an auditorium filled with teachers?



2. Bob: From your experiences with the high school teachers you addressed, how many do you feel took what you told them to heart? And how could you tell?





3. Bob: As someone that is getting her masters in education policy, and who, without a doubt, will help shape and transform education policy at the national, state, and local levels for generations to come, what are the film's major messages and lessons that you believe policy makers, teachers, and others should learn, and, most importantly, take action on?



4. Tyrone C.: How did you feel after that Teacher/Principal realised you did have things to say and all you needed was a way to reveal who you were?



5. Isabella S.: Need to ask how you learned to type independently?



6. Lily K.: Do you use other forms of AAC besides typing?



7. Rachel K-L.: What successful strategies do you have for regulation? I am struggling with sounds.



8. Sarah A.: How did you get into college?



9. Gabrielle H.: What do you hope to do after you finish your Masters in Education?



10. Tiffany J.: Do you feel there is anything that speaking Autistic people can do to better support nonspeaking Autistic people? If so, what?





11. Tiffany J.: How do you feel about people who can speak using AAC? Like Autistic people that can speak sometimes and not others. Does it seem like they are using accommodations they don't need? Does it help normalize AAC?



12. Bob: Many different audiences must see this film. In my view, the most important of these are the countless children, teenagers, working age, and older adults who, regardless of what they are branded, are going through either the same or something shockingly similar to the identity theft and injustices you endured. I say this because, based on my life, what I have received, and what I have tried to pay forward, I believe you and I and all others like us need each other, count on one another to pass on the hope, the possibilities we would not have dared to imagine, the dignity and will to push forward. What do you dare to hope they will take from this film? What are some ways that those who, I would argue, have the greatest to gain from viewing the film are afforded the chance to see it? What can CommunicationFIRST and others do to make certain this happens?



13. Bob: How old were you when you -- yourself -- first knew you could read? And how much longer did it take for others to catch on to the fact that you were quite able to read and write?



14. Bob: What advice do you have for kids who need AAC, their parents, and teachers on the importance of literacy, and how to prevent what you experienced?



15. Bob: Bill Clinton said that if you want a friend, get a dog. He gave that advice specifically to those of us who live in DC. But I apply it wherever I am. As my wife points out, I am far more friendly with the mutts I meet than I am to most of the people with them. It is clear from the film that you are from the same school. Dogs typically are more attuned to who I am, and far less judgmental. Do you find that to be true? And if so, what are its implications for education policy?



Other Questions?

Thank you, Jordyn and Bob!

