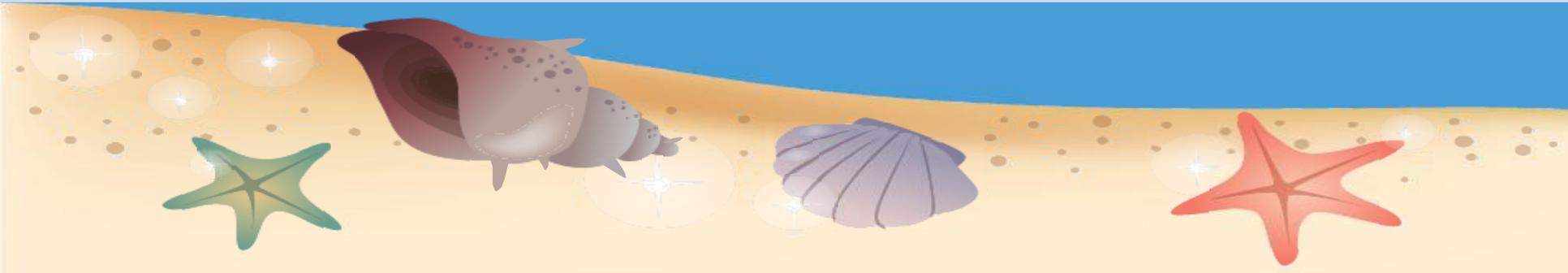


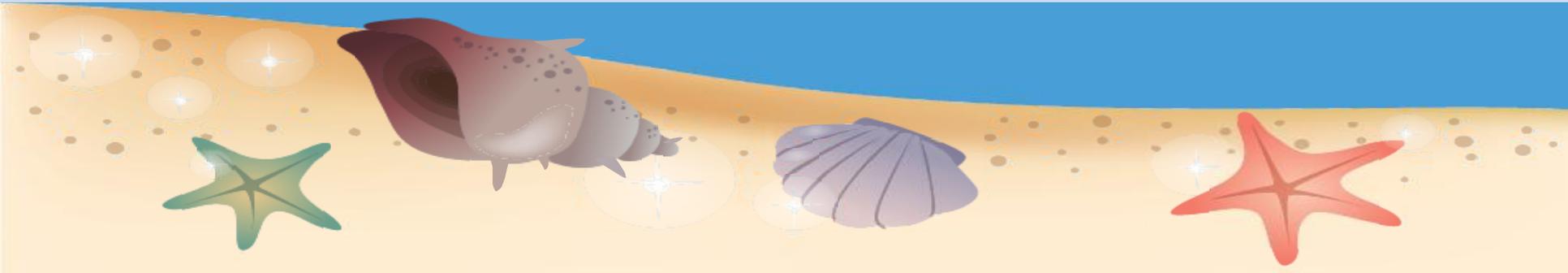
# Supporting Families of Children Using AAC

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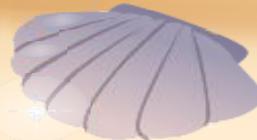
# About This Session

- As educators and professionals who support children who use AAC, we sometimes struggle with how to involve families in effective ways to assist academic success. This session will provide a general overview of research, conducted by the presenter, examining how families and educators can work to achieve academic success of children who use AAC. Close attention will be made to the positive methodologies used between professionals and parents to support academic success. A major learning outcome of this session is to provide possible practical applications to support family involvement in children's education. This session will discuss the factors to full involvement that are challenging for families who do not have resources and provide discussion about possible solutions.



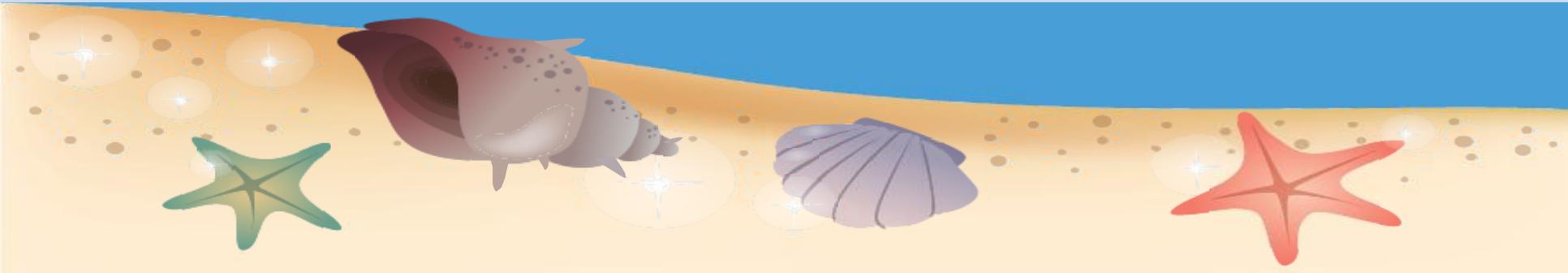
# Discussion

- Please introduce yourself. Describe / Say your:
  - Name
  - Position
  - Your role with students who use AAC
  - Your hopes for this session (i.e., why you came to this session)
  - One thing you have done / will be doing for fun on the island



# The Research Study

- Conducted a research study regarding former high school students' using AAC perceptions of how their families influenced academic success
- The research study is called, *Family Influences and Academic Success: The Perceptions of Individuals Using AAC*



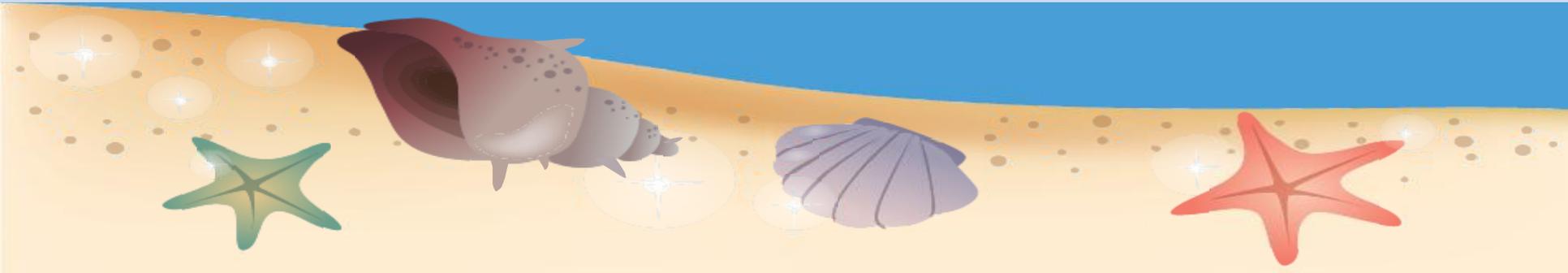
# General Overview of Research Study

- This study asked eight high school graduates who used augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) the following. How do family influences positively affect students who use AAC abilities to specifically succeed in the secondary academic environment? Five themes emerged from participants' qualitative narratives. These themes included: a) impact of the family related to seeking appropriate educations, b) homework as a challenge made easier to deal with by family involvement, c) family roles in relaying the importance of education, d) mothers as driving forces of support, and e) family encouragement to be self-determined. This research allows families and schools to recognize and act to meet the needs of students.



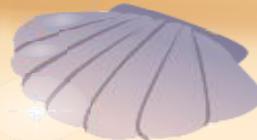
# AAC

- Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) increases the quality of life for individuals with complex communication needs.
- AAC refers to any number of methods or techniques used by individuals who have difficulty communicating verbally due to disabilities or health conditions.



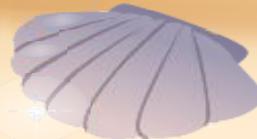
# Issues Facing Students Who Use AAC & Their Families

- According to Hamm and Miranda (2006), students with disabilities, compared to their peers without disabilities, possess a significant increased rate of not receiving regular high school diplomas.
- Many students with developmental disabilities, including those who use AAC, do not get tracked into the correct sequence of courses that lead to standardized diplomas.



# Issues Facing Students Who Use AAC & Their Families

- Non-standardized diplomas impede students' abilities to attain further educational and well-paid employment opportunities.
- Policies and denial of accommodations sometimes impede students' actual abilities to excel in the general curriculum and pass standardized examinations.



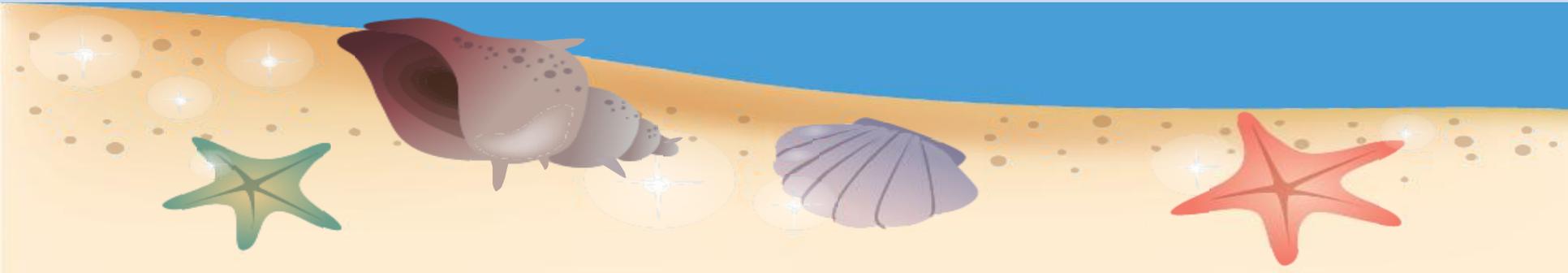
# Discussion

- Think about the students you work with...
  - Are they on track to receive standardized high school diplomas?
  - If they aren't on track to receive standardized high school diplomas, why?
  - What are the expectations of the school regarding students using AAC?
  - What are the expectations of parents regarding students using AAC?



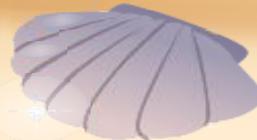
# Issues Facing Students Who Use AAC & Their Families

- Due to discrimination, stereotypes, and beliefs toward people with complex communication needs, family influences may exist as more critical for students using AAC.



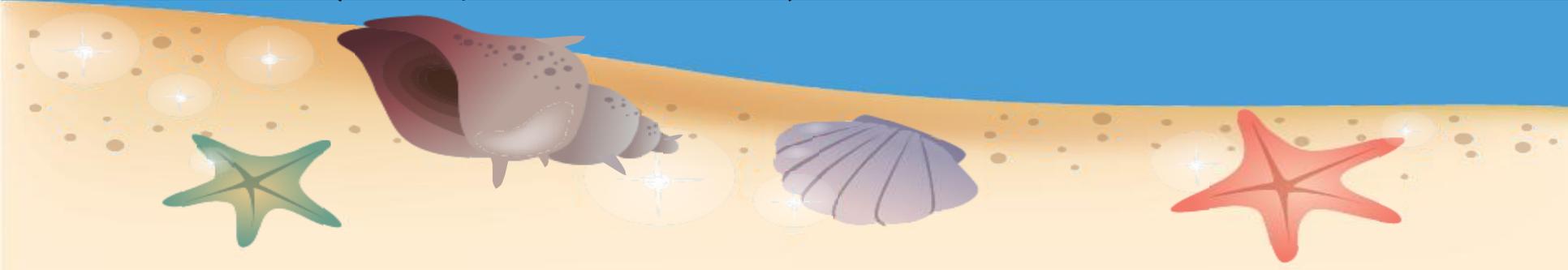
# Importance of Family Involvement

- Lund and Light's (2007) examination of factors determining the general success of individuals using AAC from multi-perspectives, reveals the following. Community support, parent and family support, personal characteristics, and appropriate high-quality AAC services impacts positively the lives of students using AAC.
- Parents' high expectations and coordinating of their children's accommodations has led to increasing the children's achievements.



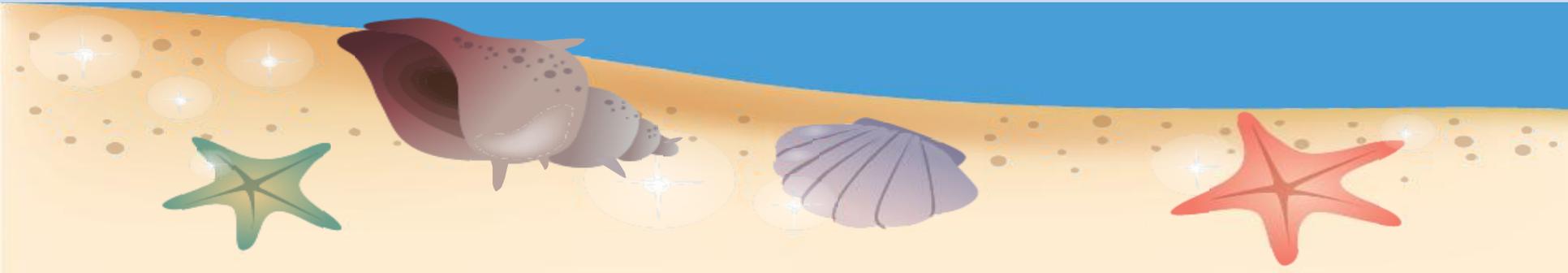
# Importance of Family Involvement

- Parette and Marr (1997) state children who rely on augmentative communication need the support of families to achieve best possible outcomes with regard to accommodations for their social and academic successes.
- The roles of families in supporting the accommodations children who rely on augmentative communication receive prove significant to children's abilities to adapt and cope with challenges faced within school environments (Granlund, Bjorck-Åkesson, Wilder, & Ylve, 2008; Rackensperger, Krezman, McNnaughton, Williams, & D'Silva, 2005).
- Children whose parents do not get involved in accommodation processes often experience difficulty using accommodations to succeed (Cooley & Ziviani, 2004).



# Importance of Family Involvement

- Supporting the self-determination of individuals who use AAC enables these individuals to become self-reliant, and successful at the things important to them. Fostering self-determination in childhood assists students as they transition into adulthood.



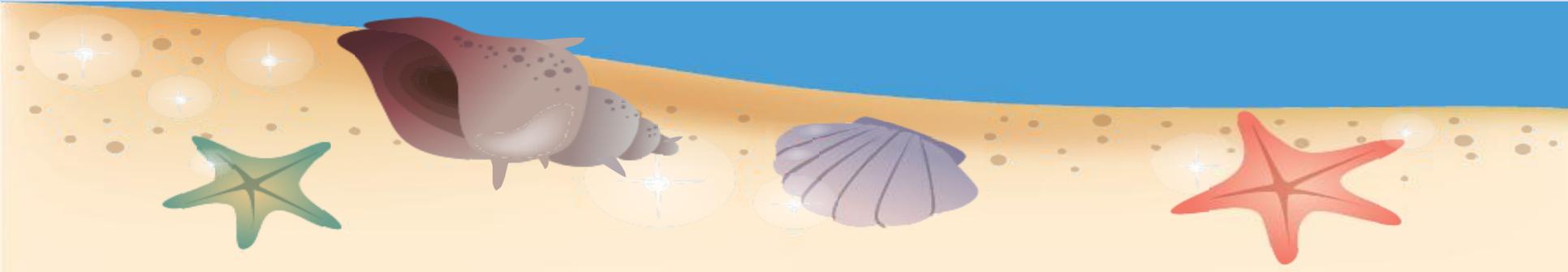
# Importance of Family Involvement

- Family facilitation and support of self determination in their loved ones with disabilities lives has tremendous impact.
- Motivation plays another key factor in determining academic success. Students, who do not see positive outcomes of doing well in academia, fail to progress in school (Landman, 1987; Linnenbink & Pintrich, 2002).



# Discussion

- In Georgia...
  - How do schools support the self-determination of students who use AAC?
  - How do schools support families in teaching their children self-determination skills?



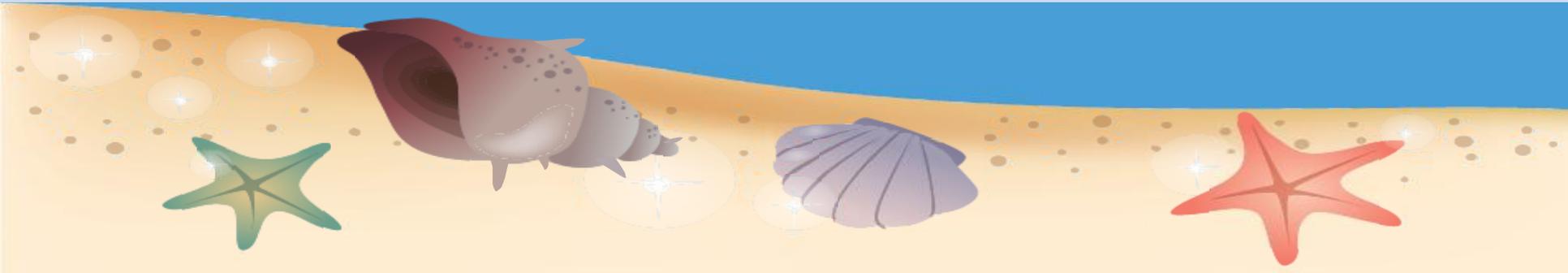
# Conducting the Study

- How do positive family influences affect students who use AAC abilities to specifically succeed in the secondary academic environment?
- The study used qualitative interviews, via electronic mail, with eight young adults using AAC who retained a standard high school diploma within the last nineteen years (1991-2010). For this study, the researcher chose to define “succeeding in the academic environment” as receiving standardized high school diplomas.



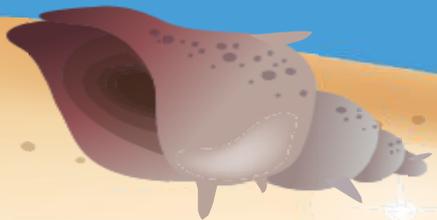
# Recruitment

- Given the small population size and location diversity of the target population of the study, random sampling did not occur. The researcher contacted specific individuals requesting they pass along the information to those individuals who met eligibility criteria.



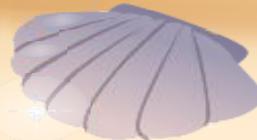
# Participants

- Participants in this study ended up meeting the following requirements: a) individuals had reached at least 18 years of age and used AAC while in high school, b) individuals had received standard high school diplomas from U.S. public high schools enrolling students with and without disabilities, c) individuals lived in households during school years (verses institutionalized settings), and d) individuals had access and correspond fairly promptly to e-mails.



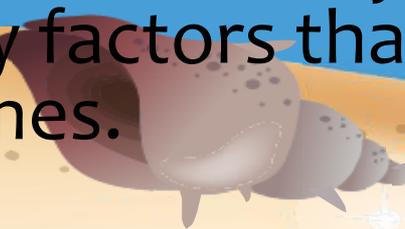
# Participants

- Participant ages ranged from mid-20s to late 30s. Most participants identified themselves as white. There existed one participant who identified himself as Asian-American. All, but one person used speech generating devices. The one who did not use electronic devices used a variety of low technology methodologies, such as writing things down, gestures, and sounds. Years out of high school ranged from six to nineteen.



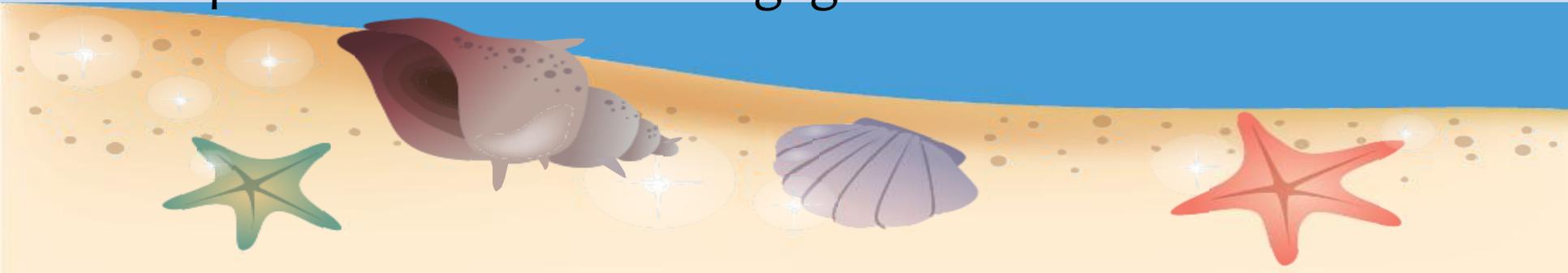
# Methodology

- The present study used qualitative interviewing techniques somewhat based on Lund and Light's (2007) investigation. Qualitative interviews used in Lund and Light's study determined particular contextual features positively and negatively contributing to the individuals' outcomes. Lund and Light used semi-structured, open-ended discussions with individuals using AAC, their families, and people who professionally supported individuals to identify factors that contributed to the outcomes.



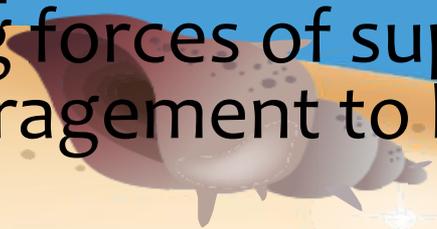
# Data Analysis

- After the interviews concluded, the data captured then received organization by identifying common themes and issues brought up by participants. This study's analysis used Grounded Theory through content analysis, recognizing commonalities of issues. Content analysis captures systematic relationships between participants' responses to identify common themes and similarities between narratives. Grounded Theory operates on the notion reasons exist behind participants' actions. Using the theory as basis for analyzing data, the results display relationships between the content of the conversations and what those conversations reflect about the experiences individuals engage.



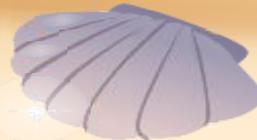
# EmergEd Themes from Data

- After analyzing the raw data, five themes emerged giving information as to the factors related to the impact of family influences on the academic successfulness of these participants who used AAC. These themes included: a) impact of the family related to seeking appropriate educations, b) homework as a challenge made easier to deal with by family involvement, c) family roles in relaying the importance of education, d) mothers as driving forces of support, and e) family encouragement to be self-determined.



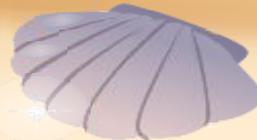
# Impact of the Family Related to Seeking Appropriate Educations

- A number of participants told stories of negative attitudes held by school personnel that, if not for family interferences, would have potentially stopped any opportunities for successes.
- One person wrote in an e-mail about how she was always labeled incorrectly as a person with intellectual disabilities who did not need to be placed in academically stimulating classes.



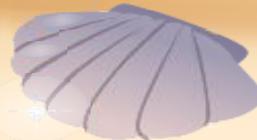
# Impact of the Family Related to Seeking Appropriate Educations

- After moving away from a school district having no interest in helping her academically to a more supportive district, her parents became more involved in the happenings at the school. Her mother, especially, became more proactive in helping her daughter have some of the accommodations the school district, even as supportive as reported, could not or would not provide.



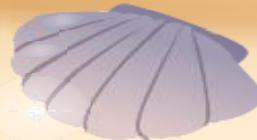
# Impact of the Family Related to Seeking Appropriate Educations

- In another participant's case, her mother and her father actively participated in her public education and fought for her right to receive an appropriate education. After given poorly qualified paraprofessionals to assist her with the physical aspects of attending general education classes (e.g., taking notes) and sometimes having placement in the special education classroom with no appropriate reasoning, her father got involved.



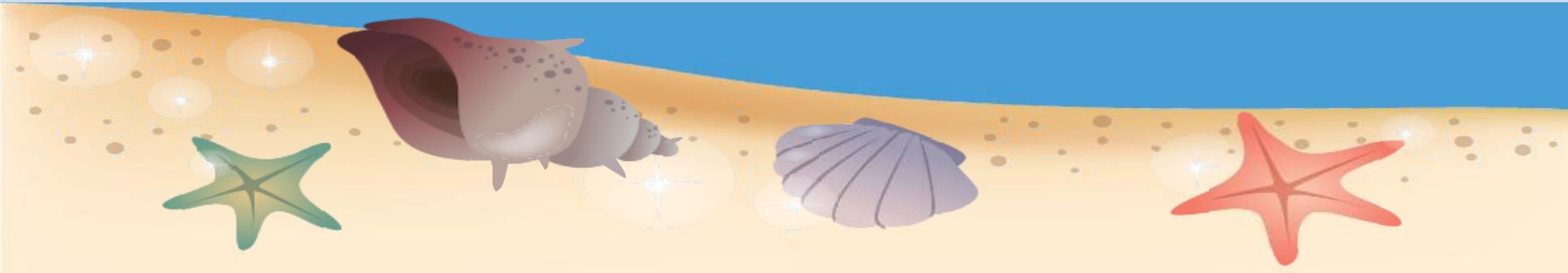
# Homework as a Challenge Made Easier to Deal with by Family Involvement

- When asked about what they least liked or saw as most challenging about being academically successful in school, a number of individuals specifically talked about homework.
- The reasons for disliking homework went beyond the typical students. Most indicated their communication devices as the tools used for writing. If not for interventions, some people implied it would have taken hours for them to complete homework.



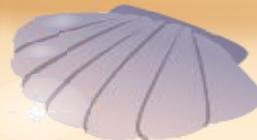
# Homework as a Challenge Made Easier to Deal with by Family Involvement

- Two participants recalled their parents not assisting much with homework, but they did what they could. One participant used his limited parental assistance to type large essays and such. Siblings also played an important role in getting homework completed.



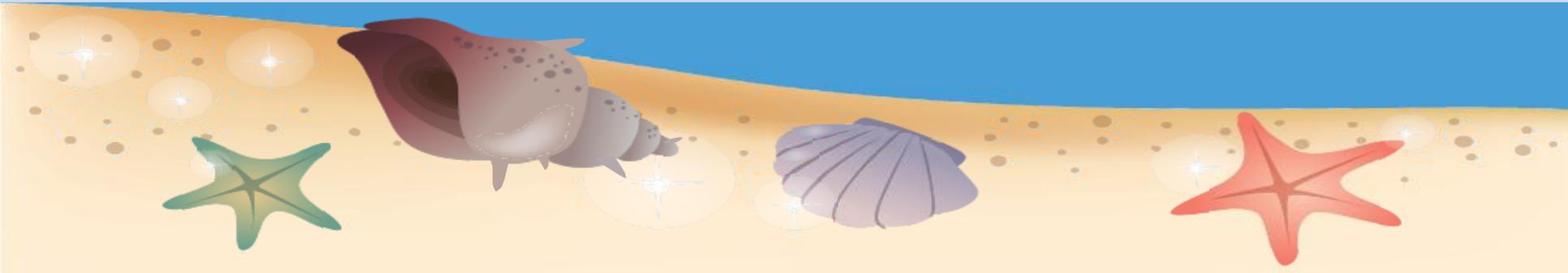
# Family Roles in Relaying the Importance of Education

- Participants wrote in their e-mails their families, not only talked about the importance of education, but demonstrated it.
- Many participants wrote in e-mails how their families showed how much they valued their need for educations. Parents would get involved in developing Individualized Education Plans, advocated for inclusion in general education classrooms (many participants viewed self-contained classrooms as impeding academic successes), and assisted in the acquiring of needed technological and other supports.



# Family Roles in Relaying the Importance of Education

- By their families' influences in these and other processes and activities, many participants made comments towards families displaying their belief educations as valued, not only to their children without disabilities.



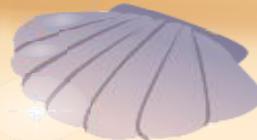
# Mothers as Driving Forces of Support

- Six out of eight participants in this study made some kind of reference to the active influences of their mothers in ensuring creating environments where they could succeed. As mentioned before, mothers frequently became active in the physical aspects of supporting their sons and daughters to be successful.



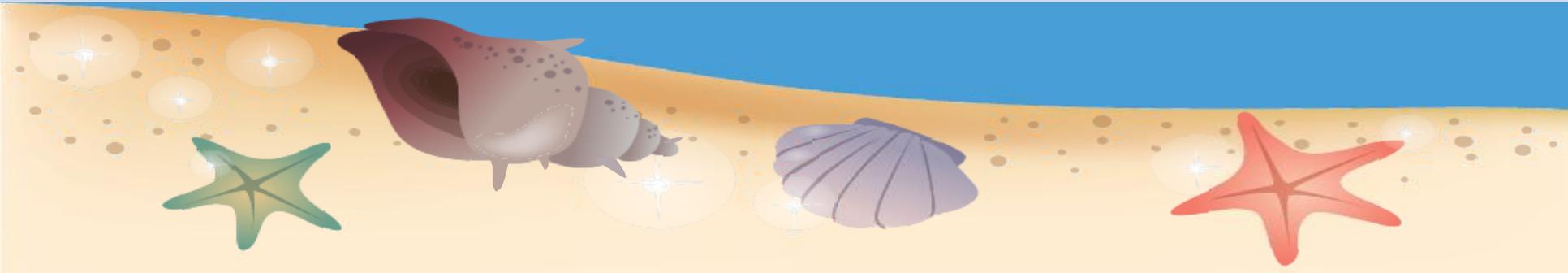
# Mothers as Driving Forces of Support

- Several of the study participants did not directly talk about their closeness to their mothers. However, participants shared a number of antidotal stories about their mothers, fewer about their fathers or siblings. These stories ranged from their mothers discussing their own educations, to how the mothers support the participants to seek out what they wanted to do, to making sure the participants had appropriate supports through discussions with school personnel and involvement in IEP development.



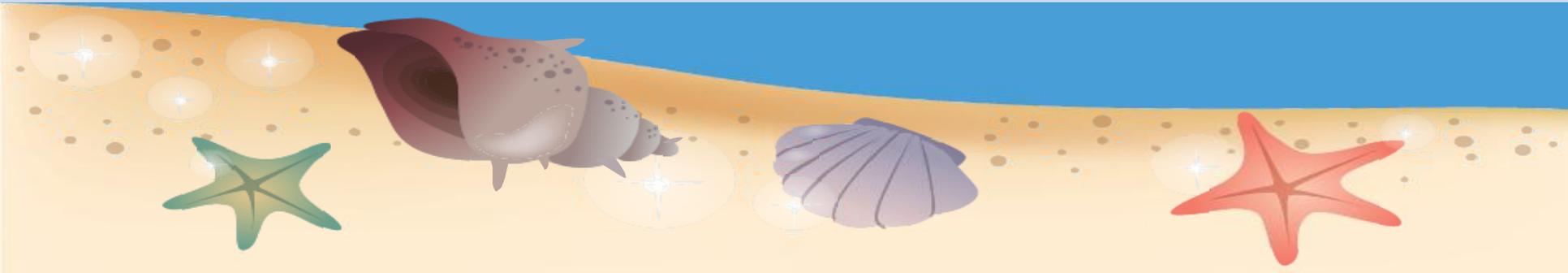
# Family Encouragement to be Self-Determined

- To a lesser extent than the previous themes derived from the data, a few participants made reference to family actions indicative of how families supported their self-determination.



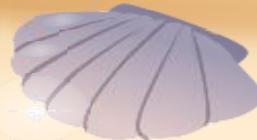
# Discussion

- Do these findings resonate with your students?
- What are some of the important lessons we, as professionals, need to take with us as we involve families in assisting the academic success of students who use AAC?



# What Can We Do As Professionals

- Families need familiarity with the content of their children's curriculum so they can assist them with the physical acts of doing homework.
- Families need to know the content of the work to understand what their children communicates.
- Create ways to welcome and build upon family involvement in the selection of the augmentative communication technologies needed for academic success.



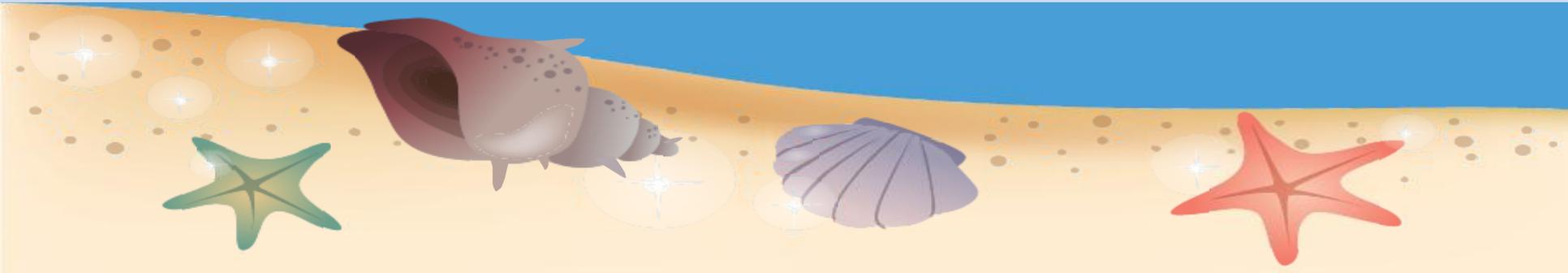
# What Can We Do As Professionals

- Develop good relationships between teachers and parents
- Explain to parents tracking options and their consequences
- Provide parents with standards
- Work to address accommodations
- Educate parents on technology



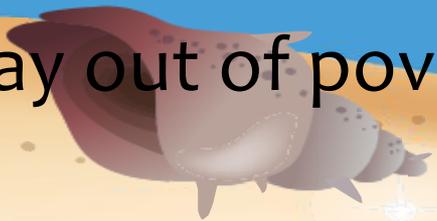
# What Can We Do As Professionals

- Encourage parents to hold high expectations
- Challenge parents to think regarding post-high school education, employment, and community living opportunities
- Believe, ourselves, in the potential of students who use AAC



# Assisting Families with Limited Resources

- As demonstrated by the narratives of the participants involved in the study, the families of the participants had the time, knowledge, and energy to support their sons' and daughters' academic successfulness.
- Some ways we can assist families with limited resources are to advocate for full legal compliance of IDEA and promoting education as a way out of poverty.



# Discussion

- How do you feel about these solutions?
- Please ask questions regarding content we have covered.

