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## Special Education Service Agency Newsletter



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**Letter from the Editor**  
*Jennifer Schroeder, SESA Multiple Disability Specialist*

Happy Spring!

The sun is starting to shine more; the snow is starting to melt; and the kids (and staff!) are starting to look towards the end of the school year. However, while the end of the school year is approaching, there is still time for learning academically, socially, and behaviorally.

One of the things that teachers need to balance is time invested in curriculum and time invested in learning the "hidden curriculum". The hidden curriculum is different from school to school and grade level to grade level, but there are certainly some commonalities that apply to all students. It can be challenging to know how much time to spend on the hidden curriculum and how much time to spend on the district curriculum.

Making time during the day and throughout the school year to learn HOW to learn is so important. As you will see in the ideas and visuals that follow, if you try to move straight to academic learning without laying and revisiting a good foundation, both you and your students will experience unnecessary frustration. Even though we are heading towards the end of the year, it is a good reminder to always check that students have the skills they need in order to learn, and take the time to refresh them when they don't.

Jennifer Schroeder

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**Teaching Students with Multiple Disabilities**  
**How to Learn**  
*Julie Burger, SESA Multiple Disability Specialist*

When addressing what it means to "learn how to learn", I reflect on classroom experiences of implementing a well-planned lesson on a new topic. The students nod their heads in understanding throughout, but when it comes to assessing their new knowledge, I sometimes find that some did not grasp the concept. This is where the self-reflection comes into play; figuring out the missing piece of my lesson, an essential detail, or skill that was skipped over. Was I asking my students to run before they could walk?

As we teach our students new skills, regardless of their cognitive, social, or emotional level, we need to make sure we have already given them the necessary skill set required to reach mastery. This is where we may have to take a step back from the curriculum and lay the foundation for the content.

Always remember: No new skill is too small for task analysis. When we break down a task into smaller more manageable components, it allows for mastery to be reached each step of the way.

**Example: How do I brush my teeth?**

1. Get out toothbrush
2. Get out toothpaste
3. Open toothpaste
4. Put toothpaste on toothbrush
5. Brush your front teeth
6. Brush your left side
7. Brush your right side
8. Spit!
9. Rinse your toothbrush
10. Put your toothbrush away
11. Put your toothpaste away

Brushing Teeth		Done
	Wash hands & collect brushing supplies	
	Turn on cold water and wet toothbrush	
	Apply small amount of toothpaste	
	Brush teeth – top, bottom, sides	
	Spit out toothpaste Do Not Swallow!	
	Rinse mouth - spit out rinse water	
	Rinse brush and put away all supplies	

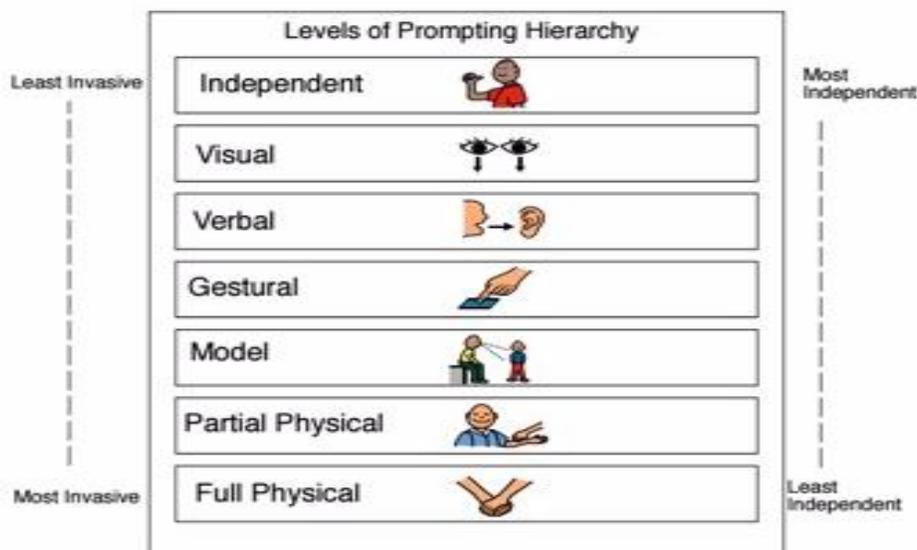
Before a student can learn, they need to be taught what behavior makes you a successful learner: sitting in a chair, looking at the teacher, following directions, and self-regulation:

- You need to know how to sit before you can learn how to listen
- You need to know how to listen before you can follow directions
- You need to know how to follow directions in order to learn how to keep your body calm

Remember, when you are learning how to learn, it might be in short snippets. If the student couldn't sit down for more than 2 seconds today, 5 seconds tomorrow is great. Keep working on the necessary learning behaviors before worrying about anything academic.

Children learn through making connections, and the more ways you can set up these connections, the better. Connect the topic to their life to make it relevant, show them pictures, videos or songs, or bring in tangible objects that they can relate to. Children need to have the language for what they are learning, before they can learn; pre-teach anything new.

As students work on new tasks, collect data on the level of modeling and prompting needed to guide them through it, keeping in mind to strategically phase out prompts.



## Helping Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders Get Ready to Learn

Kendra Wolf, SESA Autism Specialist

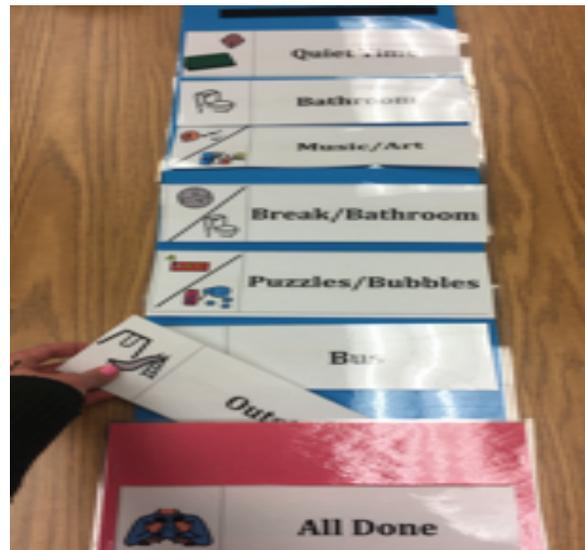
Students with autism may have cognitive deficits in the following areas: sensory, repetitive behaviors, lack of expressive language, and social nuances. Before implementing a curriculum, it is important that the students have various strategies in place to provide a calm and successful learning environment.

**1. Teach students routine:** Students with autism need highly structured routines to anticipate their activities and provide a sense of comfort. For example, when the student arrives to school, he or she should be taught how to put away backpack, hang up jacket, and turn in homework folder to show that they are ready for the day.

**2. Offer the student visual supports:** It is imperative to offer the student visual supports throughout the school day. Visual schedules assist students so that they are less anxious and can anticipate activities that will take place. Having a visual schedule will also help students to transition through change if they can identify on the schedule when the change is taking place. Other supports such as "First/Then" cards assist students by breaking down instruction or activities in small, specific tasks.



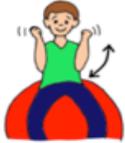
Individual Visual Schedule



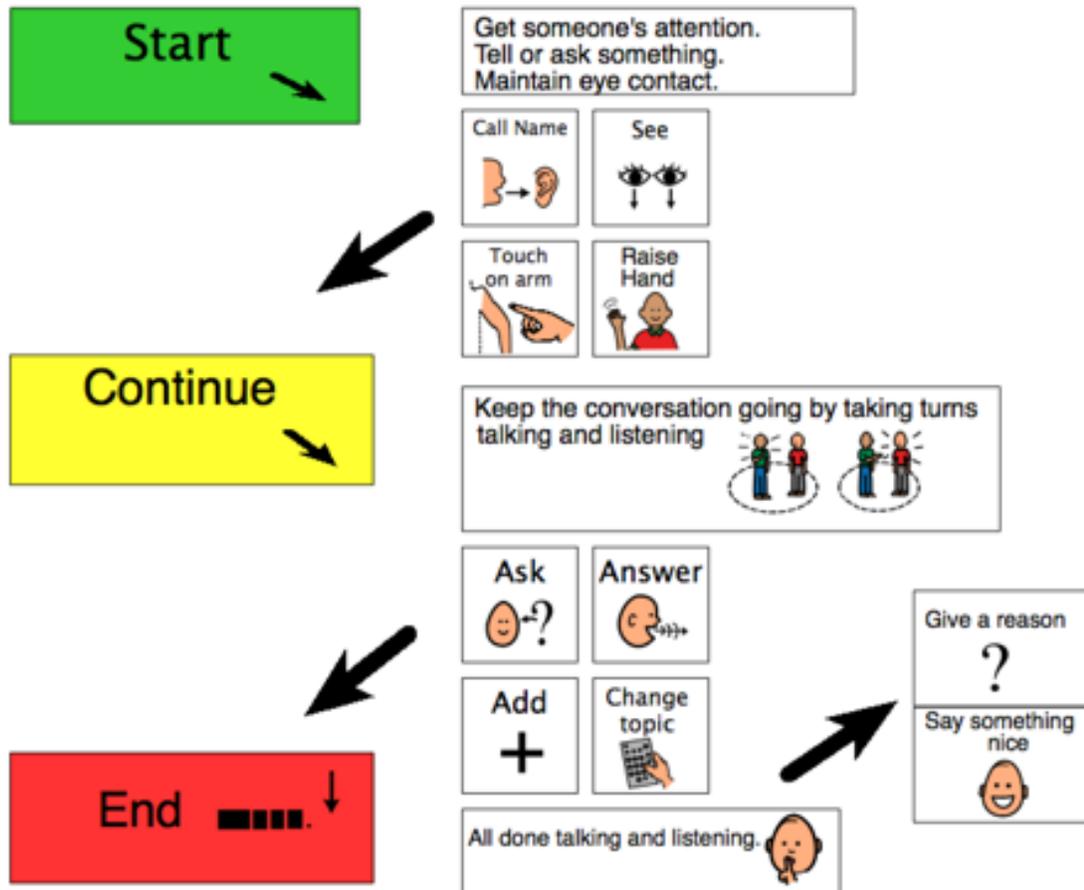
Classroom Visual Schedule

**3. Incorporating sensory breaks into the daily routine:** Each individual with autism has various sensory input needs: proprioceptive, vestibular, tactile, oral, and or auditory. Sensory breaks allow students to have their sensory needs met throughout the school day to be effective learners. These breaks also diminish negative and repetitive behaviors that would occur if the students did not have sensory breaks.

## Sensory Break Ideas

 I need a break.	 Crabwalk	 Rock
 Therapy Swing	 Bounce	 Spin
 Playdough	 Headphones	 Smell

**4. Encourage Communication:** Continue to provide your student with opportunities to communicate and interact with their peers. Teach your student how to appropriately initiate a conversation with a peer or adult (i.e. appropriately gaining someone's attention by calling name, touching their arm, or raising their hand). Try role-playing with your student to practice appropriate body language, facial expressions, eye gaze, and tone of voice. Provide your student with time to practice responding to the social cues of others.



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## Scaffolding Language Modeling

*Olivia Yancey, MDE, SESA DHOH Specialist*

Individuals with hearing loss have varying levels of receptive and expressive language that may not be the same as a person with normal hearing loss. In order to access curriculum at school, the need for direct instruction in receptive language and expressive language goals is important. Regardless of the communication mode, (e.g., American Sign Language, English, total communication) a language model is a good strategy to help model language targets. This language model could be a fluent adult or peer in the language the student is learning. When teaching a student with hearing loss, consider developing lesson plans that have both academic and language goals. As you are planning your academic lesson, consider the following guiding questions:

- What is my student's listening age? (i.e., How long has my student had access to consistent speech sounds?)
- How much expressive language does my student have? What typical response can I expect from him/her that indicates comprehension?
- Does my student have previous knowledge of the topic? If not, what mode of pre-teaching of the language target should I incorporate into my lesson (e.g., picture walk, video, vocabulary preview, video modeling)?
- Can my student advocate he/she doesn't understand? When planning my lesson, how many yes/no questions versus wh-questions do I have to check for understanding?
- Where can I provide a language model of the expected response for my student?
- Should the language model be a hearing peer?
- If my student obtains information in his/her first language of American Sign Language, how could I incorporate video modeling or interpreter to show the language target?

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## A Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teacher's "Aha" Moment

*Patrick Pillai, SESA Executive Director*

1. Deaf students do not build an inferential background of information through "overhearing". They are simultaneously learning language and content.
  2. The process of thinking must be modeled through short sentences accompanied by concrete images and animated gestures.
  3. The student's first step is usually imitation, most often of the specific word or gesture used (no comprehension).
  4. The teacher's first step is to guide comprehension and anchor individual concepts, through modeling classification into broad categories, e.g. food, clothing, etc.
  5. Once concepts are understood, the student can be taught to generalize concepts to more than the specific example used by the teacher.
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## Learning How to Learn for the Student with a Visual Impairment

*Angel Black, SESA Vision and Multiple Disabilities Specialist*

Did you know that researchers believe that more than 80% of what children learn comes to them through their vision? Incidental learning is learning gained by observing the people and activities around us. Students with visual impairments do not acquire information in this way but there are ways that we can prepare students in the classroom that will help them to learn right alongside their sighted peers.

- Be verbal! Verbal descriptions will help your student interpret what is happening in the classroom. These will be much more helpful than vague statements. Verbalize what you write on the board, add a few words of explanation when pictures help explain the plot in a book you're reading aloud.
- Explain your routine to help your student with low vision interpret situations which they cannot see.
- Help your student learn the workings of your classroom. It would be helpful to teach the student: when and how to move about the classroom, how to respond by raising their hand, answering questions in unison with their peers and simply answering aloud. Also, teach your student with a visual impairment how to recognize what others are doing in the room, where they are seated and why.
- Help the student to organize their work space, desk, and storage place for maximum independence.

And finally, make learning a meaningful experience for your student with low vision by providing lots of hands on opportunities that will engage all their senses, allowing them the opportunity and freedom to learn wonderful, new things each and every day!

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## Classroom Behavior Learning Strategies

*Samantha Cowper, SESA Emotional Disabilities Specialist*

A common mistake teachers make is the assumption that functional classroom behaviors should be inherently acquired in children and therefore, should not be conceptualized as an area needing instruction. The importance of functional classroom behaviors to school success is monumental, and as much consideration should be given to the instruction of these skills, as should be given to academic instruction. The following is a learning strategy that provides concrete instruction on how to listen in the classroom:

### FOCUS

#### F - Focus on speaker

- Eyes and mind on the speaker
- Resist talking to your neighbor
- Keep your hands and feet quiet

## O - Open your mind

- Clear your mind of distracting thoughts
- Be ready to learn and remember
- Set your mind on the subject
- Your brain is like a parachute, it only works when it's open
- Think about what is being said

## C - Connect

- Try to relate what you are hearing to things you already know and are related to the lesson
- Create a picture in your mind of the new information
- Listen to other student's related information

## U - Use your eyes

- Pay attention to the worksheet, chalkboard, book, overheads or other visual material

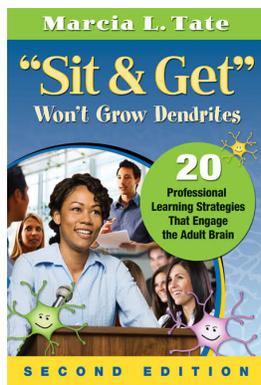
## S - Select

- Select the important parts so you know what to remember
- Say the important part to yourself in your own words
- Ask questions to make sure you understand

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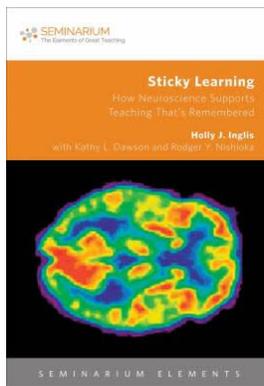
**SESA Library Resources for Helping ALL Students Engage and Learn**  
*Anne Freitag, SESA Librarian*

*For more information on any of the titles listed below or questions about the  
SESA Lending Library, please contact:  
[Anne Freitag, SESA Librarian.](#)*



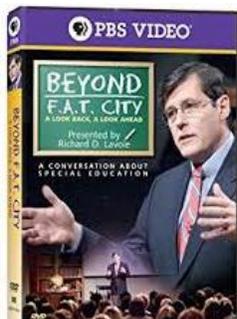
**"Sit & Get" Won't Grow Dendrites: 20 Professional Learning Strategies That Engage the Adult Brain / Marcia L. Tate. 2nd ed. Corwin Press, 2012.** Description: "Teaching busy adults can be a daunting task. How do you grab their attention, make material memorable, and create experiences that immediately improve their professional practice? What you'll find in the 2nd edition: 20 brain-based learning strategies proven to engage adults and boost long-term retention ; 150 professional learning activities that spark educator participation ; New findings on learning styles, brain research, and adult learning theory ; References to the Learning Forward Professional Standards ; Key differences between adult learners and younger students ; Samples of professional learning

designs ; Sections devoted to job-embedded practice, peer coaching, and action research ; Guided reflection and application sections. ...for staff developers, trainers, teacher leaders, and educational consultants ... "--Publisher's website.



**Sticky Learning: How Neuroscience Supports Teaching That's Remembered** / Holly J. Inglis ; with Kathy L. Dawson, Rodger Y. Nishioka. Fortree Press, 2014. Description: Educators are engaging with neuroscientists to reshape classroom practices, content delivery, curriculum design, and physical classroom spaces to enhance students' learning and memory, primarily in elementary and secondary education. Why not in seminary education? An overview of brain-friendly approaches to teaching enables seminary instructors to make concrete modifications in the structure and content of what they teach, making learning more 'sticky.' Inglis's synopsis of the use of neuroscience in the classroom and suggested action is followed by a collaborative dialogue

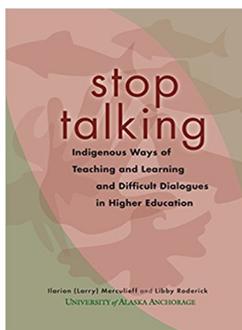
with Dawson and Nishioka. --Book cover.



**Beyond F.A.T. City [video recording (DVD)] : A Look Back, A Look Ahead** / workshop created and written by Richard D. Lavoie ; executive producers Niki Vettel and Dennis Allen. PBS Video, 2005. Description: Offers practical strategies and inspirational advice for teachers and parents of children with learning disabilities who constantly struggle with Frustration, Anxiety, and Tension (F.A.T.).



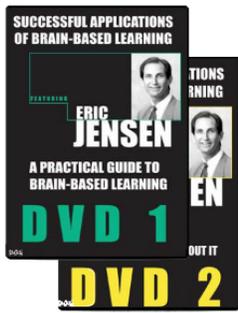
**Multiple Intelligences [video recording (DVD)]** / Sheryl Feinstein. Healthy Learning, 2007. Description: Provides general background information about multiple intelligences. Includes practical strategies to use in lesson planning, team-building activities, visual and spatial problem-solving, mnemonics, dance, drama and metaphor.



**Stop Talking: Indigenous Ways of Teaching And Learning And Difficult Dialogues In Higher Education** / Ilarion (Larry) Mercurieff and Libby Roderick. University of Alaska Anchorage, 2013.

Description: Over 10,000 years, Alaska's Native peoples perfected teaching and learning practices that ensured the survival of their communities. These ancient approaches offer strategies to make education more engaging to a wider range of students and more relevant to the challenge of teaching for global survival. Stop Talking includes reflections on education from Alaska Native Elders, strategies for applying indigenous

pedagogies in western learning environments, and reports from non-indigenous faculty who have tried these approaches in their classrooms. It brings fresh insights and new voices to the conversation about best practices and transformative experiences in higher education.



***Successful Applications of Brain-Based Learning [video recording (DVD)] /***

Eric Jensen. National Professional Resources, 2000.

Description: Disc 1 will help the viewer to make connections between what we know about the brain and what we can implement immediately in the classroom to enhance learning. Based on current research, this video will unveil numerous strategies to increase student motivation and learning.

Disc 2: Sometimes, in spite of all that we do right, students still do not learn. This video will provide a means to identify some of the problems, as well as the solutions to help students learn. An array of topics includes:

attention problems, depression, anxiety and stress.

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**Join the Discussion!**

SESA's new online forum allows you to register and join in discussions regarding our program services and disability specific topics. Ask questions and search answers! Let's chat today! <http://forum.sesa.org/>

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