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Special Education Service Agency Newsletter



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Letter from the Editor

Jennifer Schroeder, SESA Multiple Disabilities and DeafBlind Specialist

Computers, iPads, Android tablets, iPods, dedicated communication devices, and more! It seems like new technology is continuing to pop up all of the time, and with that new technology comes new challenges. Along with those challenges, there also comes so much benefit - especially for the students we work with every day. While it may be daunting to look at the amount of technology, what that technology can do, and try to think of ways to incorporate it into an already busy day, learning how to use different types of technology can not only make things easier for your students, but it can also make things easier for you, as well! Technology can be used to help save time, to allow a student access to more independence, to allow someone access to communication, and as a way to help keep families in the "loop" when it comes to their child's education. Using technology does not have to be hard; in fact, it can be easy when it is done with the right guidance and support!

I have had teachers who realize their needs for technology, but who are hesitant to use it because it is outside of their comfort zone or they are afraid that they may break it. This is something that I understand; I have been in that position many times myself. As long as you have a kindergarten student handy, you will be okay. Why? Because children are not afraid of technology; it is something that kids are growing up with. If you have technology that you want to use, or to learn more about, ask a student to work on it with you. You will find that they are willing to explore and try things that we as adults might be hesitant to use. You will also find that if they do something unexpected, they just reset their device and move on. Technology truly is "easy" for them, and it can be easy and beneficial to your classroom as well.

Jennifer Schroeder, MD and DB Specialist, SESA
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Taking Your Tech Out to Dinner

By John Barrowman, SESA AI Specialist

The ultimate goal of communication tech is for the user to be able to communicate with a variety of other people. One note to consider is that in schools, people are typically familiar with tech and know how to respond to it. Out in the community, someone who has never seen voice output devices might misunderstand the electronic voice. Personally, I have seen students form a wonderful sentence, approach someone at a counter at a fast food restaurant, say their phrase, and then... the person at the counter only stares back blankly leaving both me and the student feeling rather confused.

So, why does that happen? The sentence was clear, the volume was high, and the clerk was even paying attention. What can we do? Well, it may have to do with the fact that the student's mouth did not move; a sound was made, but the listener did not put together that the sound was the student's voice. We need to prepare our students for these real-life situations. It can be as simple as adding a few things to the way we teach our students.

Consider these steps when using communication tech:

- Introduce one new communication partner a week.
 - This will allow lots of practice
 - New people can be:
 - visitors to the school
 - maintenance/janitorial
 - itinerants/new staff
 - students from other classes/grades
- Observe your student with new communication partners.
 - Observing allows you to see what works and does not work.
 - It is OK if interactions do not go well at first.
 - Make a list of to-do's and work at your own pace.
- Teach your student to repeat his or herself (persistence pays off!!!)
 - You may need to "pretend" to not hear what the student said.
 - Using phrases like "What?" or "I didn't hear you" can help.
 - Avoid prompting/reminding if possible; allowing the empty silence may encourage your student to take an extra step to get his or her point across.
- Teach your student attention-getting strategies.
 - Adding phrases to the device like "Hello" or "Excuse me" help.
 - Practice using those phrases daily.

Timers, Sensory Breaks, and Video Modeling

By Samantha Weiland, SESA AI Specialist

Students who are on the autism spectrum learn best when there is structured time, incorporated sensory breaks, and visual support. These strategies help students with autism because once you teach the student how to use the technology devices, they do not require frequent verbal prompting and redirection.

1. **Timers:** Students with autism spectrum disorder do not have a good concept of time, especially when verbally told "later" or "soon." The timer provides a visual representation of the prompts "later" or "soon." Also, this allows students to begin to develop the concept of time, and to understand how long it takes to complete tasks. There are various free timer applications that you can get on your school iPad or laptop. Some are simple count down timers, and some play music. Choose a timer that best fits your students' needs. Keep in mind that the timer should not distract the student from assigned tasks. The timer should not be overstimulating, and the student should not frequently look at the timer instead of completing a scheduled task. If the student is sensitive to high-pitch noises, set the timer with a soft sound. Also, keep in mind that the timer still has to be paired with a verbal prompt from the teacher, along with several reminders to let the student know how much time he or she has left.
 - Resources:
 - <http://www.online-stopwatch.com/classroom-timers>
 - <http://timer.onlineclock.net>

2. **Sensory Breaks:** Students with autism frequently need sensory breaks; often, those include gross motor sensory breaks. Gross motor sensory breaks are especially helpful for those who frequently seek out vestibular and proprioceptive sensory input. There are quite a few technology programs coming out to meet the students' needs for more physical movement to help them succeed in school. These programs provide step by step directions, along with individuals modeling how to complete the physical activity. GoNoodle is a great, free website where teachers can create an account. Each time students complete a certain amount of activities, they get a new avatar.
 - Resources:
 - <https://www.gonoodle.com/>
 - <http://therapals.com/sensory-breaks.php>
3. **Video Modeling:** Video modeling is a great way to teach students with autism social skills or how to complete a specific task. This support provides the students with a visual of the expected behaviors. It is beneficial to record the student demonstrating correct or expected behavior so that if the student is demonstrating negative behavior, the teacher can show the video of the student demonstrating the positive behavior. Video modeling can also include peers to help motivate students to complete an assigned task or desired behavior.
 - Resources:
 - <http://www.assistiveware.com/product/pictello>

Technology can easily be implemented into your students' daily school routine to support a stress-free learning environment.

Behavioral Technologies

By Lyon Johnson, *SESA Emotional Disabilities Specialist*

Behavioral technologies, such as Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), require skill, time, effort, and systems of support in order to be used effectively. However, the advancement of e-technologies has made specific skills within ABA and PBIS easier and quicker to learn. Keeping with the spirit of this newsletter, It's All About Easy, I will discuss three e-technologies, that meet the requirement of making practice easier for educators.

ClassDojo: In my opinion, ClassDojo is the single biggest e-technology for behavior. I have seen its positive impacts on student behavior, but also for educators and parents, and the communication between them. Early on, I heard about ClassDojo from teachers who were using it as a behavior management tool. I took a "wait and see" approach because I have invested much time in free tools only to see them disappear, or the company develop new rules and begin to charge for the service - that is never fun or easy! Well, ClassDojo is here to stay, as evidenced by how many teachers use it across Alaska and across the country. For a few years, I have integrated it within my practice at SESA. Basically, ClassDojo functions as a digital token economy system. It makes it as easy as possible to shape pro-social behaviors. Teachers can quickly respond to positive behaviors with specific positive praise paired with digital tokens. Although there is more involved in a comprehensive token economy system than just specific praise paired with tokens, using ClassDojo can grease the wheel and improve the behavior of many students who wouldn't typically respond to a classroom-wide approach.

For an introduction to ClassDojo, [access this video](#). To understand how ClassDojo can be used within a school-wide PBIS setting or as a tool for special education staff, [go to the teacher resource page](#).

Cameras in the Classroom: Placing cameras in the classroom allows teachers to self-reflect or access peer assistance in a professional development context. Moreover, cameras allow teachers to receive consultations from SESA specialists. With the flip of a switch, SESA specialists can observe (i.e., video and audio) a student interacting in classroom setting without the students "reacting" to a new person being in the room. Furthermore, it provides immediate and meaningful recommendations to the teacher and team. Schools must follow appropriate privacy and security protocols to protect the rights and data of students. As long as schools do this, cameras can be extremely helpful.

Apps and Devices to Improve Self-Regulation Skills: Apps to help adults and youth learn mindfulness and relaxation skills have become widely available for Apple, PC, and Android operating systems. [Headspace](#) is probably the most well-known. However, getting younger students and those with emotional/behavioral disorders to learn and use self-regulation skills can be challenging even with the assistance of a well-designed app. The skill, time, and effort required to teach students how to differentiate between a dysregulated (i.e., frustrated, anxious, and/or unfocused) and a regulated state (i.e., calm and/or focused) can become a barrier. Combining the use of biofeedback devices and cognitive-behavioral techniques - such as behavioral scaling, progressive muscle relaxation, and positive imagery - has the potential to increase training efficiency and reduce barriers. I have combined these approaches in a protocol called the "How I'm Feeling Scale," which can be taught individually with a biofeedback device, or to groups without using such a device. Basically, teaching children to self-regulate without a biofeedback device could be presented as guidance lessons to educators with the pre-requisite knowledge and skills. [Here is an example of a class-wide self-regulation training protocol](#).

Data Sharing Technology By Aimee Smith, SESA AI Specialist

One of my favorite strategies in the classroom to manage data collection is using an easy and free tool, such as Google Drive or Office 365 (whichever is your preference). Both of these services are FERPA compliant. You can use these services to manage communication and data collection by having each staff log data and notes in the document in real time. When the new staff member walks into the classroom, whether or not they've had an opportunity to collaborate, they can see notes from the previous staff member (including if there were challenges in the morning or pertinent daily information), and data for the goals worked on that day. The special education teacher can take a glance any time to monitor what is happening and check in on each student. This also provides concrete data and consistent anecdotal notes for writing quarterly progress reports or communicating with parents, staff, and administrators.

I have used mostly iPads with this process, which allows a two-step login process: locking the iPad to only staff who have the password, and, if using Google Docs, locking the app to a password specific to the paraeducator or teacher. You may use any device that can access the service you choose. Even those who consider themselves "technology illiterate" can use this option easily with some basic training and follow up from their special education teacher. This tool will improve your data collection, improve your communication, and increase efficiency among your team members.

Low Tech Technology for Students with Visual Impairments

By Angel Black, SESA VI and MD Specialist

"Technology is a tool to unlock learning and expand the horizons of students... Technology can be a great equalizer... It enhances communication and learning and expands the world of blind and visually impaired persons in many significant ways" (Koenig & Holbrook). But does that technology have to be super techy, or can low-tech assistive technology be effective, too? Absolutely! Here are some easy, low-tech ideas to give your students with visual impairments access to literacy and communication in their school, home and community:

- a light box - This amazing tool helps students learn to use their residual vision more efficiently. (If you need one, please let me know!)
- 20/20 pens or dark colored felt tip markers with various size tips
- bold and thick lined paper
- reading stand/slant board
- desk lamp
- magnifier
- tactile and auditory material
- large print or Braille books
- books on tape
- picture/large print schedule and calendar

These are just a few low-tech ideas that can make the day of your student much easier. For more information or ideas please feel free to contact me at SESA!

An Introduction: Captioning Options for Students with Hearing Loss

By Olivia Yancey, SESA HI Specialist

According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), captions for deaf and hard of hearing viewers involve "words displayed on a television, computer, mobile device, or movie screen that describe the audio or sound portion of a program or video." They can also offer information about who is talking, or sound effects that are essential to comprehending the program or video. There are different types, methods of delivery, and devices to use for individuals with hearing loss.

The IEP team should consider if their student with hearing loss would benefit from captioning via media, phone, or live captioning of lessons or activities during your student's school day.

Some examples of captioning are:

- closed captioning turned on whenever there is a video being used in class
- real-time or computer generated captioning service during a lesson for the student to read what is being taught
- access to a captioned telephone

At the end of this article, there are several articles for your reference on what captions are for the deaf and hard of hearing, when to use captioning, and the different types.

- **Are you looking for educational materials that are already captioned?** Consider creating a free account with the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP). DCMP provides "premium media designed for students with disabilities and leads as a resource for families and teachers, supported by the Department of Education." <https://dcmp.org/>
- **Are you looking for information on classroom captioning via a provider or computer?** Consider the following options:
 - Northern Lights Realtime & Reporting's Communication Access Real-time Translation (C.A.R.T.) <http://www.nlrr.com/CART.html>
 - Interact-AS™ (Captioning by computer) <http://successforkidswithhearingloss.com/interact-as/>
- **Are you looking for information on free captioned phones for your student with hearing loss?** Consider the following resources:
 - CaptionCall, LLC <https://captioncall.com/> (NOTE: landline and mobile options available for the student)
 - CapTel <http://www.captel.com/>

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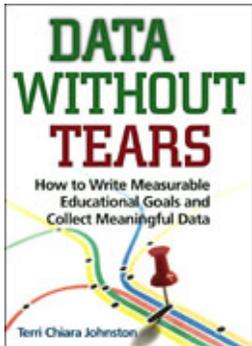
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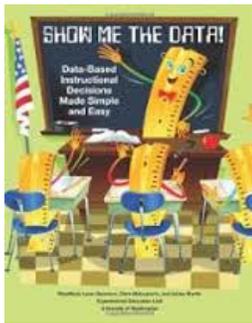
BOOKS



Data Without Tears: How to write measurable educational goals and collect meaningful data / Terri Chiara Johnston. Research Press, c2010.

Description: "All grade levels. This valuable resource is designed for educators faced with the daunting task of collecting meaningful data to meet a variety of legal and administrative requirements. The author presents an easy-to-use model for writing goals and objectives efficiently, effectively, and in a straightforward manner. Educators will learn how to collect data; when and where to collect it; and how to interpret it, helping to determine how instruction and interventions can be adjusted to increase each student's success. Data Without Tears promotes

the use of data to document the progress, or lack of progress, in a student's academic and behavioral program. It is especially useful for helping students with autism, severe behavioral disabilities, or highly aggressive behavior." - Publisher's website.

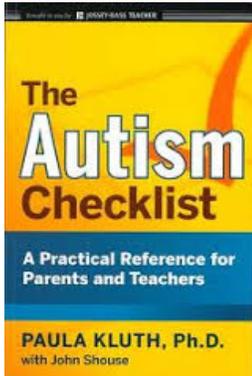


Show Me the Data!: Data-based instructional decisions made simple and easy / RinaMarie Leon-Guerrero, Chris Matsumoto, and Jaime Martin. AAPC Pub., c2011.

Description: Data collection is one of the critical elements of an effective, efficient, and accountable program that supports student development and learning.

However, many intervention teams struggle to develop reasonable and sustainable methods of gathering information about student performance and progress. Now comes SHOW ME THE DATA! This must-have resource consists of a brief discussion on data collection accompanied by a CD containing a comprehensive compilation of data sheets to help make that once-dreaded task

easier and simpler. The data sheets are of two types: generic forms appropriate for students of any age and/or ability and forms focusing on specific skills appropriate mostly for young children or children with significant cognitive delays. Forms may be customized for particular programs and individual students. Finally, to help teams figure out what to do with the data once they have been collected, samples of completed data sheets and easy-to-use graphs are included as a model for how teams can display their data visually and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention and efficacy of their program and/or intervention." - [Publisher's website](#).



The Autism Checklist: A practical reference for parents and teachers / Paula Kluth with John Shouse. Jossey-Bass, c2009.

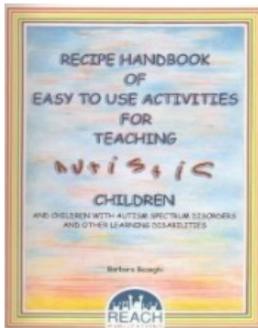
Description: "A practical resource filled with information, tips, and checklists for helping kids with autism. ... offers teachers and parents a better understanding of children on the autism spectrum and provides them with the kinds of support and intervention they need. Written in an easy-to-read checklist format, the book is filled with up-to-date research, practical advice, and helpful resources on a wide range of topics. The book covers five areas: basic information on autism, checklists for parents, checklists for teachers, effective support strategies, and helpful resources. Provides vital, accessible information for parents and teachers working

with children in the autism spectrum; contains a wealth of useful strategies, information, and resources." - [Publisher's website](#).



Home Life Checklist: Adolescents and young adults / developed by Home Programmers; revised by Kim Andis and Nancy Dalrymple. Indiana Resource Center for Autism at the Institute for the Study of Developmental Disabilities at Indiana University, c1987.

Description: Consists of checklists that can be copied and used to determine what tasks a student can do independently; with a verbal, physical or environmental cue; or will refuse; and the frequency the student will do the task. Space for comments.



Recipe Handbook of Easy to Use Activities for Teaching Autistic Children: and children with autism spectrum disorders and other learning disabilities: a system for packaging activities to be used again and again / Barbara Bazeghi. Reach Publications, c2003.

Description: "...useful book containing 'tried and true' activities to help autistic youngsters adjust to their confusing world. ...practical activity book for educators and parents of children on the autism spectrum ..."

EQUIPMENT



Time timers: We have these in three sizes, plus a watch and a digital clock version. Easy to set up and use.



Single message communication devices: We have a several versions, and all of them are easy to record a message and use: LittleMACK, BigMACK (pictured), One-step communicator, Put Em Around Personal Talker, Talk Trac, Talking Brix, Partner Plus

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

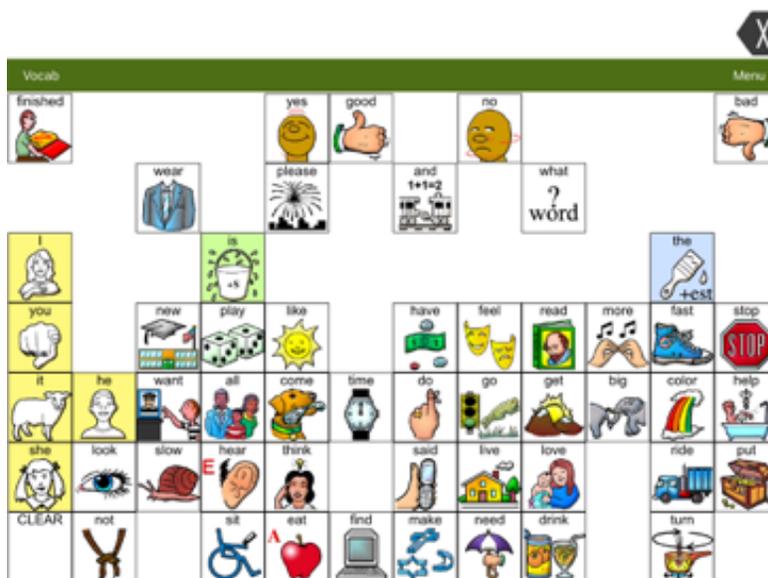
My SESA Story - A Speech Language Pathologist's Perspective

By Jackie Kempf, Amy Hogue, and Emily Kornelis - Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Speech Language Pathologists (KPBSD SLPs)

SESA services are of great importance to the KPBSD SLPs, school teams, and families, for the ongoing support provided by SESA consultants, and the SESA extensive lending library of adapted toys and equipment, books, and other resources. As KPBSD SLPs, we have had the opportunity to collaborate with SESA multiple disabilities specialists on an ongoing basis as consultants for a number of our students. Students served range from those presenting with low incidence disabilities, such as Rett Syndrome and Smith-Magenis Syndrome, to individuals with complex communicative needs associated with cerebral palsy, autism, etc. Consultants visit KPBSD approximately three to four times annually, and spend one to two days working with targeted students, teams, and families. SESA specialist consultations are comprehensive, and a highly effective use of time. We particularly appreciate the hands-on approach. SESA consultants work directly with students to demonstrate strategies, use of devices, problem solve with teams, and conference with families.

Emily Kornelis, KPBSD SLP; Soldotna High School

I've had the privilege of working with SESA over the past two and a half years while providing services to a student with complex communication needs. I have watched our student grow from a young lady with significant behavioral concerns and no functional communication, to one who is effectively utilizing an AAC device to communicate her thoughts and needs, and interacting appropriately with those around her. As an SLP, I value our consultant's commitment to assisting all individuals in their right to communicate. She has brought a range of knowledge and ideas that she is willing to model and troubleshoot for a variety of staff. In addition, she has offered practical and realistic suggestions for everyone - from the student, to parents and caregivers, to school staff - and then assisted with implementation.



Communication boards take on a variety of different appearances_ and it is important to find one that works for the specific student.

Jackie Kempf, KPBSD SLP; Soldotna Elementary School

Over the past five years, I've worked with Jennifer Schroeder, Multiple Disabilities Specialist, with a variety of students. I find it very helpful to have a resource who has a passion to improve communication and quality of life for our students and vast knowledge and experience working with students who have very complex communicative needs. During a recent visit, she demonstrated partner assisted auditory scanning (PAAS) and visual scanning and choice making, both of which are communication strategies that I had not previously implemented. It is exciting to see how these low and no tech communication strategies open up a world of choice and communication in our very young students who do not yet have consistent and functional communication systems. Another of my favorite SESA practices is the provision of Student Service Reports and Service Feedback Reports following site visits, both of which are packed with comprehensive reviews of student specific observations and recommendations, and tips, tricks, activity ideas, and strategies that may be implemented with targeted students or just go into my tool box!



Communication can be used to ask for a favorite toy.