



Special Education Service Agency Newsletter



Letter from the Editor

When I went to school to become a teacher, no one ever told me how busy my classroom was going to be. Not busy because of the learning going on (and the kids moving around like busy little bees), but because there would be so many visitors to my room. As a special education teacher, my room was visited by school psychologists, speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, vision teachers and an AAC specialist. And, that was in addition to the paraprofessionals and kids that were there every day. I was very grateful for the support and the ideas, but there were days when I spent more time talking to adults than to children!

This month, SESA Specialists want to offer their tips and suggestions for making a visit to your classroom successful. After all, in the end, it is your classroom and we want you to feel comfortable and get the most out of the visit that you can. We know that when you have visitors in your classroom on a regular basis, it can be a challenge. And while every classroom and every specialist are different, having some strategies you can use when have visitors can make you feel calmer (which makes the kids feel calm) and will also allow you to get the “most bang for your buck”. If there is one thing that I hope all teachers and classroom staff remember about having visitor, it is this: you don't need to change things for me- I want to see the classroom as it typically is; I know that kids have bad moments and bad days and I am not judging you. Working together, we can have a successful specialist visit. After all, we are all here for the kids.

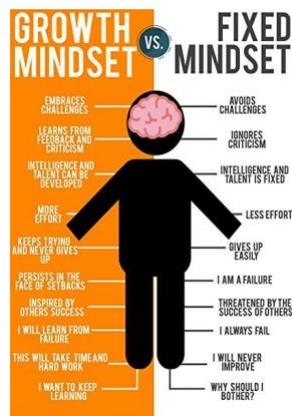
Specialist Visits

by Amy Topmiller, Multiple Disability Specialist

As a special education teacher, we are all familiar with having visitors in our classroom. When a SESA Specialist comes for a visit, you may not know what we do or how we can help. If you have ever been a list maker, you may have those items you wish you had the time to tackle. Well, you are in luck, because that is some of what we do. We can help make systems for students, help problem solve reoccurring issues, do research or provide resources for staff/parents, train paraprofessionals, generate solutions for communication, behavior, or instruction , and help with goal writing/IEP questions.

Organization: If organization is not your strong suit, specialists can help with this too. It may be challenging to keep track of the related services and different specialists visits. Specialists can provide some ideas and help to come up with a system that will work for you to keep things organized. Organization is helpful so that you can inform parents and staff when and who visitors will be working with. Specialists can also help create/organize student data collection.

Set Aside Some Time: As special education teachers, we often feel that there is never enough time in the day. A pre-meeting via Blue Jeans before a visit or once a specialist arrives is important so you have some time to communicate your “to do list” on things you need help with. The pre-meeting also is a good time to share information about what is going well (data driven) and what challenges the team is experiencing. At the end of the visit, having some time to recap is also helpful to be on the same page regarding any follow up items that need attention.



Growth Mindset: Often as special educators, we are so focused on student growth that we sometimes forget about our own professional growth. As professionals, it is just as important to focus on our own growth mindset and set goals for ourselves. Specialists can help support you in this process in achieving your own growth goals by providing customized resources or trainings based on your site needs.



It can be fun for students to have visitors. They are often excited to show off what they can do. Let your specialist know ahead of time if your student likes to have extra visitors, as Alani does, or if they struggle with new people.



Let us know what your student is working on, as well as what type of support you would like around it. Sometimes having an outside set of eyes can see a modification that will make a world of difference for your student.

Setting Up for a Specialist Visit

by Angel Black, Vision Impairment Specialist

As a teacher for the visually impaired, I have the privilege of conducting Functional Vision Assessments/Learning Media Assessments on most of the students I work with. These assessments give us a great deal of information on a student's functional (how they use) vision. The assessments also help us determine:

- Best practice strategies for the student's learning and communication.
- The appropriate media for literacy development and to gain access to the general education curriculum, Braille, tactual, or auditory.
- The areas of need relative to social skills, daily living skills, visual efficiency, assistive technology, compensatory skills and orientation and mobility.

There are a few things that are especially helpful to have before I give the assessments. These include:

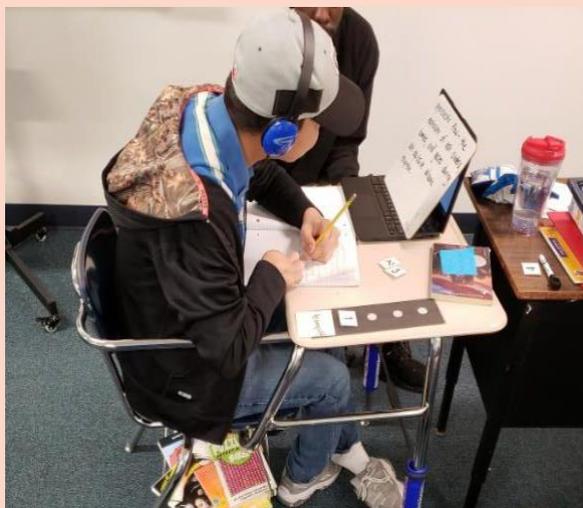
- Up to date vision reports
- The parent/guardian interview: It is very helpful to determine a family member's understanding of the child's visual impairment, how they feel the child's vision impacts their development, and what their main concerns are.
- An interview from the teacher/related service provider: This information will determine the kinds of teaching methods and strategies that have already been tried, with or without success, how they feel the student functions at



school, what their strengths and weaknesses are and what is their main concern for educating this student.

- The student interview: A detailed description of how the student feels their visual impairment impacts all aspects of their life, gives them a chance to express their own questions and/or concerns about their vision and how it will affect their education, and any specific areas that they are frustrated with or feel they need extra help to be successful in.

One last thing that I need as a specialist is for the teacher and their team, parent/guardian, related service provider, school administration and the student to know that I am there to help! Working together is the best way to ensure that our students have academic and personal success, independence, and a true quality education!



Every child needs different supports. For some kids, the support will be low-tech and in the classroom. If your student needs support in his general education classroom, please let us know. We are happy to move about the school with the student and suggest supports for all environments.



Teachers are busy folks. Let your specialist know what your students are focusing on, and we are happy to look at where they are now, as well as what the next steps may be. We love celebrating your students' successes along with you!

Two Important Considerations to Maximize Site Visits

by Lyon Johnson, Emotional Disturbance Specialist

Our specialists travel extensively throughout the school year with the goal of helping students with low incidence disabilities, their families, and school teams maximize successful educational outcomes. Many important tips are being shared by SESA Specialists in this newsletter to ensure a well-executed site visit (e.g., John Barrowman's article on Super-Powering Your Site Visit). I would like to suggest two specific considerations to ensure SESA site visits are as productive as possible.

Should a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) be conducted by the SESA ED Program before the site visit?

Referrals to SESA's Emotional Disturbance (ED) Program often arrive without an FBA being conducted. Lack of student progress, after all, is most often the reason for an initial referral to SESA's ED Program. If an FBA has not been conducted, the resulting behavior intervention plan (BIP) typically is not as effective as the team would like to see. So, it is important for teams to develop, implement, and then monitor a function-informed behavior intervention plan that considers the purpose(s) or motivating reason(s) a problem behavior serves. Determining the current function(s) of problem behavior is incredibly important to make positive changes in student behavior. Our specialists typically have conversation with the special education team prior to the initial site visit to determine whether or not conducting an FBA is necessary. If an FBA is needed, the ED program can help start the assessment process using web-based tools, such as Survey Monkey. Upon written consent from the student's parents, the FBA can be started even before the specialist's actual site visit. Direct observations will need to be conducted, but web-based technology speeds the process along. Starting the process before the site visit allows for more time being spent on training and consulting with staff members on recommended behavioral interventions.

Would placing one of SESA's remote observation cameras in a classroom benefit a student's educational program?

The Emotional Disturbance Program relies heavily on observational data for consultations—whether observations are for conducting an FBA, providing feedback to staff on recommended interventions, or monitoring student progress. When SESA staff set-up teachers to use a camera system, it provides a lot of flexibility. The parents of the referred student would need to provide written consent on SESA forms before remote observations occur. The cameras are typically set-up so they are real time only with no audio/video recording. This is a great option when staff are just getting used to having a camera in the classroom. An authorized staff member turns on the camera at mutually agreed upon times. The audio/video stream is encrypted from point-to-point and password-protected to protect confidentiality. In such a set-up, staff will know when a specialist is observing. In essence, it is the same as in-vivo classroom observations, without the distracting novelty of having a visitor in the classroom. Also, it gives the SESA specialist more opportunities to observe a student and classroom over time. I have shipped cameras out to schools prior to site visits for FBA data collection, as well as after site visits for progress monitoring purposes. I have set up camera systems to use while I'm on site--to reduce student reactivity to my presence in the classroom. Using remote camera systems to provide consultation and technical assistance over time can be incredibly helpful!

Steps for Prep

by Kelsey Koenigs, Deaf & Hard of Hearing Specialist

A need for support from a deaf and hard of hearing specialist has been identified, the referral is in, now what?

OWN WHAT YOU KNOW

When we reach out, it's okay if you are not sure what kind of support you need. You don't know what you don't know; you simply need to be able to tell us what you DO know.

- **Schedule:** Have the student's schedule sent in advance of the observation. Notify the specialist of any attendance issues.
- **Assistive Technology:** Take pictures of any and all devices then send them to the specialist. Notify the specialist of any problems with the devices. Monitor student use of device and inform the specialist of their routines/patterns of use.
- **The IEP:** Know it.
- **The Student:** We only get a snapshot of these kiddos when we observe and from what we read in their file. Help us get to know the student as a whole (e.g. preferences, behaviors, social, school performance, etc.)
- **Goals:** Identify the team's vision for this student. What outcome are you working towards? What has the family expressed they want? What about the goals the student has for themselves?

FRONT-LOAD

- **Prepare the Staff:** The more information that can be disseminated to the team/staff prior to the visit the better. Consider requesting an in-service for the staff with the specialist via VTC to discuss the educational impact of hearing loss (15-30 minutes). This allows the staff to meet the specialist, understand the purpose of the visit and subsequent observations, and ask questions.
- **Prepare the Student:** Discuss the upcoming visit with the student (geared to their language). Consider scheduling a brief meet and greet VTC with the specialist. We want the student to feel comfortable.
- **Prepare the Class:** Other students are often affected by the presence of another adult in the room. To limit distractions, be sure to notify the students in advance.
- **Prepare Parents/Guardians:** Invite the family to meet with the specialist during the visit. If they are unable to meet, offer to gather materials for them or ask questions on their behalf. Provide them with the specialist's contact information.
- **Prepare the Environment:** Decide where the best place is for the specialist to observe from, without interrupting the flow of the classroom, will be. If an assessment is scheduled, find a quiet room in the school where that can take place.
- **Prepare Yourself:** We know you are busy, so it's good to be pro-active about selecting time in your schedule for us to meet. And don't forget to breathe! We are there to support you.

Also, if there are materials available through the SESA Library that you already know you want to borrow, let the specialist know!



Make sure that your students have access to their schedule and their preferred reinforcements, especially when the day might be "different" because a specialist is following you around. Taking time to swing is as much fun for the adults watching as it is for the student!

Superpower Your Site Visits

by John Barrowman, Autism Specialist

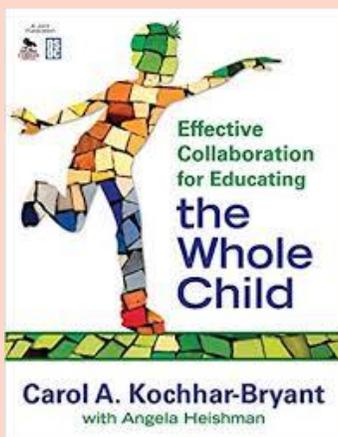
Other than SESA Specialists, most sites also work with several other professionals. Each of these professionals require both student and teacher time. If planned well, this time can be some of the most productive and valuable planning time and, if not, can result in avoidable stress. I will never forget when I had a clinical psychologist, two administrators, the district occupational therapist, four parents and twelve paraprofessionals in my room at the same time. That day has always reminded me to plan ahead so I do not have to revisit the chaos that ensued. Here are three important action items to superpower your site visits:

1. **Communication:** Alert and invite families, staff, administration, and any other stakeholders that a specialist is coming. Advanced notice allows more people to be involved and can also prevent any major scheduling mishaps. You may want multiple specialists to be present at the same time for collaboration, but it may also be better to space out the trips. If there are

any changes to the schedule, let the specialist know so that adjustments can be made. A note home, an email or a note written on the board can help keep everyone on the same page. Remember, time lost due to scheduling means services lost for students.

2. **To Do Lists:** Before a specialist arrives, make a list of what is going well, what needs to happen, and any questions that have come up. If possible, getting this list to your specialist in advance during a pre-conference can be helpful. If a specialist knows about student needs before arriving, materials can be made and gathered to be brought along on the trip. Some classrooms keep a clipboard or a note book where all staff can write down their thoughts and questions. Site visits go fast, so a list can help make every minute count!
3. **Be Present:** Showing up is half the battle, but can be easier said than done when many teachers are pulled in every direction possible. Do your best to make time to meet with specialists. This time can be streamlined (requiring less discussion and granting more time for action) if the trip has been well planned and you prepared your list of needs. Sometimes, meetings can be recorded and replayed at a later time for those who may have not been able to attend. Simple phone calls are often better than a complex meeting that never happens.

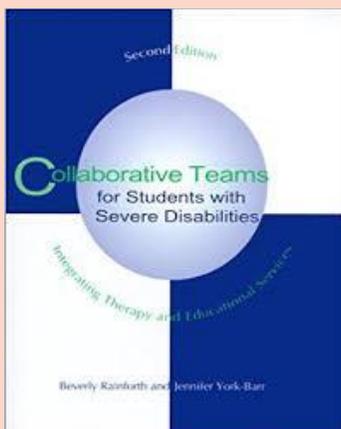
SESA Library Resources



Effective Collaboration for Educating the Whole Child

by Carol A. Kochhar-Bryant, with Angela Heishman. Corwin

Description: This book examines collaboration between teachers, administrators, student support specialists, community agencies, and service providers to improve outcomes for students with complex learning needs.

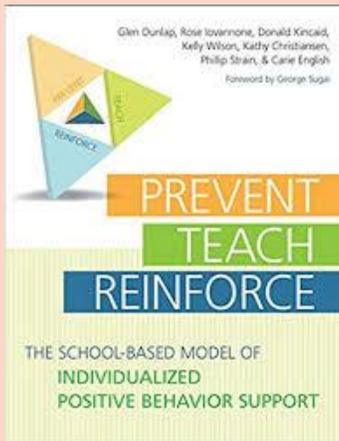


Collaborative Teams for Students with Severe Disabilities: Integrating Therapy And Educational Services

by Beverly Rainforth and Jennifer York-Barr. 2nd ed.

Description: Offers in-depth guidance on assessment, curriculum development, and instruction for students with severe disabilities, centering on a team approach. Provides core terminology and a rationale for collaborative teamwork; shows how occupational, physical, and speech-language services can become part of the curriculum and IEPs; addresses supports for implementation; and discusses scheduling, developing IEPs, co-teaching, conducting team

meetings, resolving professional differences, and communicating with parents. Includes 20 pages of blank forms. Useful as a training text and as a professional development tool.



Prevent, Teach, Reinforce: The School-Based Model Of Individualized Positive Behavior Support

by Glen Dunlap

Description: "Solve serious behavior challenges in K–8 classrooms with this easy-to-use book, the first practical guide to the research-proven Prevent-Teach- Reinforce (PTR) model. Developed by some of the most respected authorities on positive behavior support, this innovative model gives school-based teams a five-step plan for reducing problems unresolved by typical behavior management strategies. With this thorough blueprint for PTR, education professionals will

learn how to prevent behavior problems by adjusting the curriculum and environment; teach proactive communication skills; and reinforce prosocial behavior and academic achievement. [Read More](#)

For more information on any of the resources listed above, or questions about the SESA Lending Library, please visit our [website](#) or contact our Librarian, [Anne Freitag](#)