



**QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER**

April 2023

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# Teaching Self-Care



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## Letter from the Editor

Haluugivsi (hello in Iñupiaq),

Spring has sprung. With only a few months left in the school year, this is a great time to reflect on students' level of skills with self-care. Self-care can look different to different people. It may be grooming, dressing, independent living skills such as completing laundry. Self-care can also be learning new strategies to self-regulate, new recreation or leisure skills for our students that don't have many, or trying a new activity to help relieve stress such as yoga or walking. We have seen time and time again in the research that most intensive needs students require direct instruction to learn these skills. However, how many programs can say they have built this instruction into the school day for students?

We hope that this newsletter on teaching self-care to our students with low incidence disabilities is beneficial for not only the remainder of this school year, but also in preparation for the upcoming

year. As planning and scheduling may have already started, it is important to value the need for explicit instruction in the area of self-care for our students so they can grow and learn to become more independent individuals.

SESA Specialists can help with instructional materials, suggest curriculum, and assistance with planning to establish programming in the area of self-care. Don't forget our lending library is a free resource available to all Alaskans!

**Please complete the survey attached to this newsletter for a chance to win a \$15 iTunes gift card. This information is used to establish the topics for next school year and we want to hear from you!!!**

Happy Spring!

**Amy Topmiller**

Newsletter Editor and Multiple Disabilities Specialist

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## Paraprofessional Spotlight



Our nominated paraprofessional for our April Newsletter is Kyle! This is what makes her a fantastic paraprofessional:

- She works hard every day to help her students communicate with words and AAC.
- She keeps learning fun by trying new programs so her students are engaged.
- She is always self-reflective and getting better at her skills.
- Others watch her to learn how best to work with students.
- She is an advocate for her students and never gives up.

**Keep up the great work, Kyle!**

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## Teaching Self-Care for Students with Print Disabilities

by Luke Martin, Coordinator for the Alaska Center For Accessible Materials (AKCAM)

For a student with a print disability, self-care may look a little different. At times, when a student does not have typical access to literacy resources, teachers and parents provide alternative access for them to learn and grow in a variety of settings with self-care. They might add assistive technology and alternative formats or try new strategic teaching avenues in order to aid the student. Occasionally, with the addition of these supports and depending on student needs, we may often see parents and teachers wanting to provide assistance with personal hygiene, emotional self-regulation, or the general well-being of the student. But how do we know where to begin with these self-care supports and when to acknowledge that the student needs independence in these skills? That is where best practices are helpful when working with a variety of students with low-incidence disabilities.



Below is a list of different resources for parents, teachers, and other support individuals:

[Self-Care for Students with Low Vision](#)

[Teaching Your Child Self-Care Skills](#)

[Activities of Daily Living in Cerebral Palsy](#)

[Hand Under Hand Techniques](#)

[Hygiene and Self-Care](#)

[Guide for Better Sleeping](#)

[A Self-Help Guide for Dyslexia](#)

For any questions or comments about how to aid students in accessing printed materials, please contact the [Alaska Center for Accessible Materials](#) to request free resources, on-site or distance training, or consultations. [www.akcam.org](http://www.akcam.org) | (907) 334-1320

### Teaching Life Skills to Empower Our Students

by Alison Adkins, SESA Autism Education Specialist

As educators, we have all heard, “Make sure you are practicing self-care,” but what does practicing self-care mean? For some of us, it may be a walk after work; for others, it might be spending time with friends and family, but self-care covers even more than leisure activities we enjoy. Self-care is the act of taking action to preserve one’s health.

Each day we make thousands of choices. Some of these we are consciously making, and others we are doing naturally without a second thought. We decide what we want for breakfast, brush our teeth before bed, and make a plan for our careers. All of these choices that we make contribute to our overall well-being and health. So how do we teach these

concepts that we engage in so instinctively to students? Teaching students life skills allows them to learn how to actively practice self-care, recognize their own needs, make choices, and become more empowered and independent individuals.

Life skills, as a title, is vague and can be overwhelming. So, what are life skills? Life Skills is broken down into seven essential domains. Below is a quick list to help guide you when selecting areas that would most benefit your student.

**Focus and Self-Control** For many students with autism, having a consistent routine and schedule is extremely beneficial. This takes away some of the anxiety surrounding tasks that, at first, seem intuitive but can be challenging without the expectation set. Utilize visual schedules, reminders, and task analysis to teach multi-step routines such as hygiene routines and arriving/leaving school routines.

**Perspective-Taking** Understanding another person's point of view is not something that comes easily to many with autism but can be developed. Throughout the day, ask the student about their thoughts and feelings and talk about how you are feeling as well. When reading or working on a task together, ask the student open-ended questions about the characters and how they think they may be feeling and why. Following a challenging time, it will be beneficial to go through what happened, how the student was feeling during and after, and how they think others may have felt during this time.

[Read More](#)



## **Mental Health & Hearing Loss**

by Abby Steer, SESA Deaf & Hard of Hearing Specialist

Mental health has been a growing topic of discussion in the last decade. People have begun to realize just how critical taking care of one's mental health is. Those with hearing loss are at risk as well; however, they may not have access to the information or to seek help. It is important to teach your student with a hearing loss some simple self-care tips that can make a difference in their mental health and wellness. It is also essential to recognize what mental health concerns they face and the issues affecting access to services.

Below are two excellent resources from the Nations Deaf Center (NDC) regarding those concerns and some simple self-care tips that can be utilized with students. While they are short reads, they are full of important information.

[\*\*Mental Health Care for Deaf Individuals: Needs, Risk Factors, and Access to Treatment\*\*](#)

[\*\*Self-Care as Part of Mental Health\*\*](#)

## **Teaching Self-Care to Kids**

by Jessica Williams, SESA Emotional Disabilities Specialist

As the need for mental health services continues to be on the rise, it is more important than ever to introduce young children to self-care techniques. Kids have big feelings, and they oftentimes need help navigating ways to manage those feelings. Introducing self-care techniques can help students reduce stress as well as teach them ways to improve coping skills and enhance their overall mental and physical well-being.

### **Why is self-care important for kids?**

Research suggests that self-care achieves the following:

- Improvement in physical health
- Reduction in stress and anxiety
- Boost in self-esteem
- Protection of mental health
- Promotion of healthier relationships
- Improvement in focus

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## **Self-Care is a Skill that Everyone Needs**

by Kristina Bower, SESA Multiple Disabilities Specialist

Teaching self-care can be a great way to foster independence and communication. When thinking about how to teach self-care to students with complex bodies, a variety of aspects need to be taken into consideration. How can the student access the tools he needs to be successful? How can the student communicate that she needs to use the bathroom or is hungry? What if the student has sensory processing needs that make brushing his hair uncomfortable? Although there is a lot to consider, teaching a student to be independent in self-care is a necessary task and can be empowering and rewarding for the students, the school team, and the family.

When thinking about teaching self-care, it's important to identify what tasks the student needs to work on. Self-care can generally be broken down into four categories: hygiene, dressing, toileting, and feeding. Examples of each category include, but are not limited to:

- Hygiene Skills: Washing hands, brushing teeth, bathing, blowing nose
- Dressing: Putting on clothes, jacket, & backpack
- Toileting: Knowing when the bathroom is needed, using the bathroom, using a public bathroom
- Feeding: Knowing when to eat, opening food, feeding oneself, pouring a drink



Once the tasks that will be worked on are identified, instructional approaches can be considered. First, one must consider who the student is from an access point. For example, what are their fine and gross motor skills like? Are they able to communicate their wants, needs, and interests in a way that most people can understand? Do they have sensory processing issues or needs? Will they be using adaptive equipment to aid in self-care? Once these strengths and limitations have been determined, the next steps in teaching self-care can begin.

[Read More](#)

## Students with Low Vision and Teeth Brushing??

Angel Black, M.S.Ed., TSVI, COMS, SESA Vision Education and O&M Specialist & Alaska Deafblind Project Director

The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) speaks to the knowledge and skills needed by students with low vision/blindness due to their unique disabilities and specific needs. It enables these students to not only access the world but also begin to make individual life choices. There are nine areas of the ECC:

1. **Compensatory and Functional Skills / Including Communication Modes**
2. **Orientation and Mobility**
3. **Social Interaction Skills**
4. **Recreation and Leisure**
5. **Career Education**
6. **Assistive Technology**
7. **Sensory Efficiency Skills**
8. **Self-Determination Skills**
9. **Independent Living Skills**

The Independent Living Skills category of the ECC provides instruction in those specific skills of daily living that are needed for a student to learn to care for themselves independently; this includes; food preparation, cleaning, clothing care, money management, and personal hygiene.



As a TSVI and COMS, I get asked a lot of questions about teaching personal hygiene, especially teeth brushing! This is a skill that a great many students work on daily at home and at school, so I thought I'd share a few tips on teaching this skill here.

[Read More](#)

## Youth Brain Injury Program

SERRC (Alaska's Educational Resource Center) has partnered with the Division of Public Health, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, the Division of Juvenile Justice, and Oregon's Center for Brain Injury Research to create a statewide Youth Brain Injury Program. This program supports students ages 0-21 with suspected or diagnosed brain injury and oversees brain injury screening for youth served by the Division of Juvenile Justice. Services available to schools include educational resources, in-service training, and student consultations.

Visit [returntoschool.org](http://returntoschool.org) and identify "AK" in the upper right-hand corner to access free printable resources and registration for monthly webinars

Visit the [Youth Brain Injury Program](#) website to submit in-service training requests



**ALASKA'S EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**

### YOUTH BRAIN INJURY PROGRAM

*A collaborative system of support for Alaska students with brain injury*

#### ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

The Youth Brain Injury Program is facilitated by SERRC with support from Alaska's Division of Public Health, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, and Oregon's Center for Brain Injury Research. The program supports students aged 0-21 with suspected or diagnosed brain injury and provides screening to youth served by the Division of Juvenile Justice.

#### WHAT WE OFFER

- Statewide leadership, educational resources, **training and consultation.**
- The program's **Brain Injury Coordinator** is available to consult with and coach school district personnel in knowledge and evidence-based methods to support students with TBI and their families.
- Specific services** may include: assistance with the formation of brain injury teams; in-service presentations; student and family education; consultation regarding education plans, accommodations, and behavior strategies; and facilitating communication between school, medical, and corrections staff.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**  
**SENA GILBERT MS. CCC-SLP - YOUTH BRAIN INJURY PROGRAM COORDINATOR**

907-433-7299 | [returntoschool.org](http://returntoschool.org) | [braininjury@serrc.org](mailto:braininjury@serrc.org)

### Youth Brain Injury Program

**FREE Inservice Presentations**

#### ABOUT

The Youth Brain Injury Program is facilitated by SERRC with support from Oregon's Center for Brain Injury Research, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, and the Division of Public Health.

#### TOPICS

- Concussion? Know how to Recognize and Respond.
- Accommodations, 504s and IEPs Following Brain Injury.
- Building a Brain Injury Team in Your School.

#### LEARNING OPTIONS

Interactive trainings are flexible and customized for optimal relevancy. On-site and distance options are available to support educators around the state.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

- 564,000 U.S. children are seen in emergency departments for brain injury annually.
- 79% of children with severe brain injury failed a grade or needed special education.
- 14% of children with a mild TBI needed school support services 12 months post injury.

Call, Email, or use the QR Code for More Information and Registration | 907-433-7299 | [braininjury@serrc.org](mailto:braininjury@serrc.org)



## Newsletter Survey

Want a chance to win a \$15 iTunes Gift Card? Please complete the quick survey below for a chance to win (one entry per person). Two winners will be drawn.

Surveys must be completed by May 7th to be entered.

[Take Our Survey](#)

## Our Office has Moved!

**Our New Address:**

**2600 Denali Street, Suite 200. Anchorage AK 99503**

