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Maximize results.

New Year, New Beginnings, Same Commitment

Dear CES Members, Vendors and Staff,

Wishing a Happy New Year to all of you! The New Year symbolizes renewal, but we often see enthusiasm fade after initial resolutions. At CES, we are embracing 2025 as a fresh start, maintaining our unwavering commitment that has established us as the cooperative of choice in New Mexico.

As we wrap up another successful year, I want to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your unwavering support and loyalty to the CES Purchasing Cooperative. Your commitment is truly the backbone of our organization, and we deeply appreciate how your continued engagement enables us to thrive.

To our exceptional vendors, thank you for your dedication to providing outstanding service to our members. Your professionalism and quality offerings are vital in enhancing the value of our cooperative. We appreciate the seamless collaboration and innovative solutions you bring, ensuring our members have access to the best products and services available.

We also want to extend a big thank you to our dedicated staff. Your tireless efforts and commitment to customer service create a supportive environment for both our members and vendors. Your passion

CES MEMBER NEWSLETTER

January 2025

Contents:

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- Calendar of Events
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- Education Articles
- Job Opportunities
- Bulletin Board

and professionalism do not go unnoticed—thank you for making the CES Purchasing Cooperative a leader in the industry.

We recognize that without the loyalty of our members, CES would not be able to provide the quality and variety of contracts that you enjoy today. Your trust and engagement allow us to continually expand our offerings and improve the experiences we provide.

Together, we have built a strong and vibrant community, and with your continued support, we look forward to achieving even greater success in the future. Thank you again for being a vital part of our journey.

Sincerely,
David Chavez, Executive Director
CES

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

1/1 New Year's Day
1/2-17 NM Legislation may be prefilled
1/7-9 NMPED Winter Special Education Academy
1/9 TAP: Educators Resources for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders & Other Disabilities: Challenging Behaviors Toolkit - PART 1
1/14 TAP: Supporting Students Mental Health Part 3 Listening So They Talk and Talk So They Listen
1/15 TAP: Chromebook Assistive Technology Features: Promoting Independence for Students in all Academic Settings
1/16 TAP: A Structured Literacy Approach to Reading Instruction
1/16 TAP: Strategies For Struggling Readers: Focusing on Fluency, Vocabulary Development, and Comprehension
1/20 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
1/20 US Inauguration Day
1/20-23 NM Counties Legislative Conference
1/21 NM Legislature Opening Day (noon)
1/22 TAP: Gifted Program Plan
1/22 CES Workshop: Using the MLSS to Support Your District Education Plan
1/23 TAP: Educators Resources for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders & Other Disabilities: Challenging Behaviors Toolkit - PART 2

1/24 TAP: Accommodations: Removing Barriers to Learning in Inclusive Settings
1/28 TAP: Instructional Strategies-That Work in Inclusive Settings
1/29 TAP: Literature and Read Alouds for Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities: Beautiful Benefits and Meaningful Methods
1/30 TAP: Prevent Compassion Fatigue and Burnout: Implement Mindfulness-Based Practices in Your Classroom or School

January						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

PURCHASING NEWS

1) Contract Extensions:

Tyler Technologies-2020-38-C108-ALL (*Temporary Extension*, exp. 1-31-25)

2) Current & Upcoming Solicitations:

RFP #	RFP Description	Release	Pre-Prop.	Due	Award
2025-02 New category	<i>Elevator, Escalator, Motorized Walkways</i>	10/11/24	10/17/24	11/8/24 4:00 p.m.	11/25/24 under development
2025-03 New category	<i>Professional Services for Education *a) Career Readiness, b) Grant Writing, c) K-12 Tutoring, d) Title IX Remedial Services</i>	10/11/24	10/17/24	11/8/24 4:00 p.m.	11/25/24 under development
2025-04	<i>AEPA 25.5</i>	Feb 2025			
2025-05 (PaaS for PED)	<i>Community Schools Accreditation (NMPED)</i>	11/18/24	11/21/24	12/6/24	12/20/24 under development
2025-06 (2021-21 exp 2/1/25)	<i>Copiers, Printers, MDF's Products-Managed Print Services</i>	11/25/24	12/3/24	12/20/24	1/20/25
2025-07 (2021-19 exp 2/4/25)	<i>Computers, Devices, and Related, Products and Services</i>	11/25/24	12/3/24	12/20/24	1/20/25
2025-08 (2021-20 exp 3/2/25)	<i>IT Professional Services</i>	11/25/24	12/3/24	12/20/24	1/20/25
2025-09 (2021-24 exp 3/11/24)	<i>Music Instruments, Music, Performing Arts, Equipment, Materials, Supplies and Related</i>	11/25/24	12/3/24	12/20/24	1/20/25
2025-10 (2021-25 exp 3/23/25)	<i>Janitorial Products, Services and Related</i>	11/25/24	12/3/24	12/20/24	1/20/25
2025-11 (2021-27 exp 4/7/25)	<i>Student Management, Special Education & Educational Managed Curriculum</i>	12/13/24	12/18/24 10:00 am	1/17/25	2/3/25
2025-12 (2021-28 exp 4/12/25)	<i>Temporary Employment and Recruitment Services</i>	12/13/24	12/18/24 10:00 am	1/17/25	2/3/25
2025-13 (2021-32 exp 4/19/25)	<i>Flooring Systems & Related</i>	12/13/24	12/18/24 10:00 am	1/17/25	2/3/25

EDUCATIONAL ARTICLES

Compliance Corner

January 2025

By Cindy Soo Hoo, TAP Consultant

Questions and Answers: You've Given Me the Task to Answer the Questions You Ask!

- 1) **How are we to address absences with students? What happens when the absences occur because the parent doesn't get the student to school?**

Chronic absenteeism has been defined as missing at least 10 percent of the school year. Nationwide, according to the latest available data, 29.7 percent of students, nearly 14.7 million, were chronically absent in the 2021-22 school year. Children with disabilities were about three times more likely to have experienced excessive absenteeism compared to children without disabilities. Studies have shown excessive absences result in poor academic performance and an increase in school dropout rates.

School personnel are responsible for providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students who are eligible. If the absences are due to medical or social/emotional reasons, school staff and families should convene an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting to determine appropriate and effective supports and services needed (i.e. FBA/BIP or a school health plan) to address the absenteeism. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires school districts to address behavior that impedes the learning of the student by providing positive behavioral supports. Chronic absenteeism is a behavior that could impede a child's learning as the child is not receiving specially-designed instruction nor has access to the general education curriculum.

IDEA (34 CFR §300.324 (a)(2)(i)) *Consideration of special factors states:*

The IEP Team must—

In the case of a child whose behavior impedes the child's learning or that of others, consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and other strategies, to address that behavior;

In addition to the IDEA, the New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) requires school districts to address these concerns as well. NMAC (6.31.2.11(F)(1)) states:

Pursuant to 34 CFR Sec. 324(a)(2)(i), the IEP team for a child with a disability whose behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others shall consider, if appropriate, strategies to address that behavior, including the development of behavioral goals and objectives and the use of positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to be used in pursuit of those goals and objectives. Public agencies are strongly encouraged to conduct functional behavioral assessments (FBAs) and integrate behavioral intervention plans (BIPs) into the IEPs for students who exhibit problem behaviors well before the behaviors result in proposed disciplinary actions for which FBAs and BIPs are required under the federal rules.

It is also important to remember that IDEA requires school districts to convene an IEP when the student is exhibiting lack of progress. It is highly likely that students who are missing an excessive amount of school are not progressing toward meeting their goals. IDEA (34 CFR §300.324 (b)(1)(ii) (A)) states:

Review and revision of IEPs –

(1) General. Each public agency must ensure that...the IEP Team—

(ii) Revises the IEP, as appropriate, to address—

(A) Any lack of expected progress toward the annual goals described in § 300.320(a)(2), and in the general education curriculum, if appropriate;

School personnel need to be proactive and work closely with families to determine the reason(s) for the child's absences. Forming a relationship with the family is so important. Having conversations about the need for the child to be in school is essential. However, there are times in which the absences are due to the parent failing to ensure the child gets to school. In these situations, administration may need to get involved in

addressing the issue(s). Conversations with families and documentation of these conversations would be paramount.

2) Does a special education teacher need to attend an IEP for an initial or annual speech only?

IDEA (34 CFR §300.321(a)(3)) states:

(a) *General.* The public agency must ensure that the IEP Team for each child with a disability includes—

(3) *Not less than one special education teacher of the child, or where **appropriate**, not less than one **special education provider** of the child;*

In New Mexico, speech-only services are considered special education. NMAC 6.31.2.7 (20) defines special education in New Mexico as: “*Special education*” means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and instruction in physical education.

(a) *As authorized by 34 CFR Secs. 300.8(a)(2)(ii) and 300.39(a)(2)(i), “special education” in New Mexico may include speech-language pathology services.*

(b) *Speech-language pathology services shall meet the following standards to be considered special education:*

(i) *the service is provided to a child who has received appropriate tier I universal screening under Subsection D of 6.29.1.9 NMAC as it may be amended from time to time, before being properly evaluated under 34 CFR Secs. 300.301 through 300.306 and Subsection E of 6.31.2.10 NMAC;*

(ii) *the IEP team that makes the eligibility determination finds that the child has a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance;*

(iii) *the speech language pathology service consists of specially designed instruction that is provided to enable the child to have access to the general curriculum and meet the educational standards of the public agency that apply to all children; and*

(iv) *the service is provided at no cost to the parents under a properly developed IEP that meets the requirements of Subsection B of 6.31.2.11 NMAC.*

(c) *If all of the standards are met, the service shall be considered as special education rather than a related service.*

In this regard, the speech and language pathologist would serve as the special education provider of the child and would fulfill this

requirement, thus not needing a special education teacher.

3) Can schools ask parents to come to the school when the student is out of control?

I can understand how people would think it is appropriate to ask a parent to come to the school to deal with behavioral issues. However, the Local Education Agency (LEA) is responsible for providing a FAPE to the student. Just as we would not ask the parent to come to the school to teach their child how to read, we would not ask the parent to come to the school to address their child's behavioral concerns. The responsibility lies with school personnel. Schools need to employ whatever interventions and supports deemed necessary to address the behavioral concerns of the student. If needed, an IEP may need to be convened to discuss what services and supports may be required.

4) Under what conditions would an IEE be granted?

Under the IDEA (34 CFR §300.502 (b)) Parent right to evaluation at public expense.

(1) *A parent has the right to an independent educational evaluation at public expense if the parent disagrees with an evaluation obtained by the public agency, subject to the conditions in paragraphs (b)(2) through (4) of this section.*

(2) *If a parent requests an independent educational evaluation at public expense, the public agency must, without unnecessary delay, either—*

(i) *File a due process complaint to request a hearing to show that its evaluation is appropriate; or*

(ii) *Ensure that an independent educational evaluation is provided at public expense, unless the agency demonstrates in a hearing pursuant to §§~~300.507~~ through ~~300.513~~ that the evaluation obtained by the parent did not meet agency criteria.*

(3) *If the public agency files a due process complaint notice to request a hearing and the final decision is that the agency's evaluation is appropriate, the parent still has the right to an independent educational evaluation, but not at public expense.*

(4) *If a parent requests an independent educational evaluation, the public agency may ask for the parent's reason why he or she objects to the public evaluation. However, the public agency may not require the parent to provide an explanation and may not unreasonably delay either providing the independent educational evaluation at public*

expense or filing a due process complaint to request a due process hearing to defend the public evaluation.

(5) A parent is entitled to only one independent educational evaluation at public expense each time the public agency conducts an evaluation with which the parent disagrees.

Paying for an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) is typically the appropriate course of action and is usually in the best interest of the district, the child and the family. Districts have a choice to either defend their evaluation or agree to pay for an IEE when the parent disagrees with the LEA's evaluation. While filing for a due process hearing is permissible, it can be costly, both financially and in terms of irreparable harm regarding relationships with the family. The cost of the IEE would be minimal compared to the costs incurred by filing against the parent. However, school districts need to make this decision on an individual basis.

- 5) **What if a parent refuses to have their child evaluated when the school sees a need? What if after the evaluation the parent refuses services? How do we protect ourselves?**

The Procedural Safeguards (SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES REQUIRED UNDER IDEA PART B p.7) states:



DEAR MS. M

Gifted Education Questions Answered

Dear Ms. M,

Is New Mexico Leading the Way in Gifted Education?

Gifted education in New Mexico is on an exciting trajectory. Attending the National Association for

The school district must make reasonable efforts to obtain your consent for an initial evaluation to decide whether your child is a child with a disability. Your consent for initial evaluation does not mean that you have also given your consent for the district to start providing special education and related services to your child.

There are override procedures available to districts when parents refuse to consent to an evaluation. However, that can be quite costly, both financially and in terms of the relationship between the family and the school. To that end, this is something that might be pursued in rare and extreme circumstances.

While a district can utilize the override procedures pertaining to the evaluation, it cannot force a parent to consent to services. This will often feel that it's not in the best interest of the student, but ultimately, parents have that right. In this situation, the student is not afforded the protections under the IDEA and will be treated as a regular education student.

The information included herein is not intended to provide legal advice. Should you need legal advice or guidance on any issue involving special education, please contact the appropriate person for your district.

Gifted Children (NAGC) conference this year, I gained fresh insights into how far we have come as a state and our potential to be leaders in this field. New Mexico is now more than just trying to catch up with national best practices; we are carving out our own innovative path.

One of the key highlights that emerged at the conference was the recognition of New Mexico's progressive stance in gifted education, particularly in light of the major changes brought about by new gifted rule and the publication of the Gifted Technical Assistance Manual Update (2023). This updated rule reflects a comprehensive and inclusive approach to identifying and serving gifted students, ensuring equity across diverse populations. The changes address long-standing challenges in access and opportunity, paving the way for a more robust and equitable gifted education system. Our state's emphasis on

multidimensional identification processes and individualized supports stands as a model for others.

What also sets New Mexico apart is our state mandate for gifted education, a rarity across the nation. While many states struggle to find consistent funding and recognition for their gifted programs, New Mexico's mandate ensures that gifted services are not just an afterthought but a priority. The partial funding provided by the state, though not without its challenges, serves as a critical foundation for districts to build and sustain their gifted programs. Additionally, the future requirement for gifted funding to be accounted for and reported to the state by districts will be a game changer in ensuring that funds directly benefit our identified gifted students. This commitment by the state legislature signals an understanding of the importance of nurturing the potential of our most advanced learners.

The conference underscored the significance of these efforts, with many states looking to New Mexico as an example of what is possible when advocacy, policy, and practice come together. Our work is far from finished, but the strides we have

made demonstrate that we are on the right path. From the Yazzie-Martinez court case emphasizing the need for equitable education to the dedicated professionals in our schools, New Mexico is proving that it is serious about meeting the needs of gifted learners.

As educators, parents, and policymakers, we have an incredible opportunity to capitalize on this momentum. By continuing to refine our practices, advocate for additional resources, and prioritize professional development, we can ensure that gifted education in New Mexico not only meets but exceeds the standards set by our peers. Together, we are shaping a future where all gifted students in our state can thrive.

Kate Morris, MEd Gifted Education

Kate Morris is CES's Gifted TAP Consultant. She has been in gifted education for 10 years as a gifted educator and gifted instructional coach. She works for Central Consolidated School District in northwest New Mexico serving gifted and talented students in CCSD's Gifted, Talented, and Creative Program.



The Reading Room: Tips and Tricks
Inferencing: A Key Skill for Reading Comprehension and Critical Thinking
January 2025

Inferencing skills are one of the key skills required for reading comprehension. In fact, according to Marzano (2010), Inference is a “foundational skill” and is considered a prerequisite for higher-order thinking. Good comprehension simply cannot happen without inferencing, and inference is just a big word that means conclusion or judgement. If you infer that something has happened, you do not see, hear, feel, smell, or taste the actual event. However, considering what you know, it makes sense to think that the event has happened. Making inferences means choosing the most likely explanation from the facts at hand. This is a skill that we develop from an early age. Children as young as six years old start to use inference when reading. This is because making inferences is one of the most enjoyable parts of reading. We take the events of a text and use them to predict what comes next. If we did not infer, how could we enjoy mysteries, detective novels, or even romances?

Inferencing is a cognitive process that involves drawing conclusions or making predictions based on available information and prior knowledge, even when explicit details are not provided. It is a

fundamental skill used in everyday life, reading comprehension, and critical thinking, allowing us to "read between the lines" or understand what is implied rather than directly stated.

So, What is Inferencing, Anyway?

In essence, inferencing refers to the act of making educated guesses about information that is not directly expressed through words but instead is suggested through context, tone, and other cues. Especially when understanding language and communication, it is very important that children get the experience of high-quality discussion, along with exposure to a range of texts also helps to develop comprehension skills. Therefore, these skills are a crucial part of a developing reader's comprehension. The ability to infer also helps readers to think critically about a text and engage with it academically.

For example, imagine someone says, "It's really quiet in here," while looking around at a room full of people. The inference might be that the speaker thinks something is wrong, or that the room is too tense. While this is not explicitly said, it is a reasonable conclusion based on the tone and context of the conversation.

There are Two Primary Types of Inferences

Logical Inferences: These involve conclusions that follow from facts or statements. They are based on reasoning and are typically deducible. Logical inferences are supported by facts or clues in the text or situation.

- Example: If someone is wearing a heavy coat and gloves in the middle of winter, we can infer that the weather is cold.

Personal Inferences: These involve using prior knowledge and firsthand experiences to interpret or predict something. Personal inferences tend to be more subjective.

- Example: If a person walks into a room and immediately looks disappointed, we might infer they did not find what they were hoping for, based on similar experiences or general understanding of human behavior.

The Importance of Inferencing

Inferencing is vital in various aspects of life, particularly in language processing, reading comprehension, and problem-solving. This is why it matters...

- **Enhances Reading Comprehension:** Inferences allow readers to go beyond the literal meaning of a text and uncover deeper meanings. For example, readers can infer a character's motivations, emotions, or future actions, even if the text does not explicitly state these details.
- **Fosters Critical Thinking:** Being able to make inferences is a key part of critical thinking because it requires individuals to look at the evidence, evaluate context, and draw conclusions. This skill is essential for problem-solving and decision-making.
- **Supports Communication:** In verbal communication, much of what is conveyed is implied rather than stated directly. Being able to understand these implicit messages helps people navigate social interactions more effectively.
- **Encourages Empathy:** Inferences allow people to understand other people's perspectives, especially in ambiguous situations. For example, by inferring how someone feels based on their body language or tone, we can respond with greater sensitivity.

How Inferencing Works

Inferencing operates in several steps, often subconsciously, and it often happens through a process.

- **Observation of Information:** The first step is the collection of information—whether through text, conversation, body language, or other cues.
- **Contextual Analysis:** The next step involves considering the context in which the information appears. This could involve factors like the situation, surrounding details, or past experiences.
- **Application of Prior Knowledge:** Using prior knowledge, experiences, and common sense, students can draw conclusions or fill in gaps where information is missing.
- **Conclusion:** Finally, a conclusion is reached based on the available information, context, and personal understanding. This is often the inferred message or meaning.

For example, in a sentence like "Jane put on her raincoat and grabbed an umbrella before leaving," a reader might infer that it is going to rain or that the weather forecast predicts rain.

Teaching and Developing Inferencing Skills

While inferencing is a natural cognitive process, there are many ways you could teach inference skills. You must, however, consider the age of the students and if they have had prior difficulties in comprehension. Some teaching methods could include showing visual clues or pictures, creating mystery games, using picture books, and encouraging an inference journal. Inferencing can also be developed and refined. Here are some tips for improving inferencing abilities:

- **Practice with Texts:** Engaging with texts that require interpretation like poetry, fiction, and even news articles can help improve inferencing skills. Readers can practice identifying implied meanings, motivations, and themes.
- **Ask Questions:** After reading a passage or having a conversation, asking questions like "What might this imply?" or "What can I infer from the character's actions?" can deepen understanding and improve the ability to infer what is happening in the text.
- **Use Visual Cues:** In addition to text, body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions are all strong clues for making inferences. Paying attention to these signals helps sharpen inferencing, especially in social interactions.
- **Engage in Discussions:** Participating in discussions about complex topics encourages critical thinking. It also exposes individuals to different perspectives, which can help with inferencing.
- **Consider Multiple Perspectives:** When making inferences, it is helpful to consider multiple interpretations before drawing a conclusion. This approach encourages more thoughtful thinking.

Challenges in Inferencing

While inferencing is an essential skill, it also presents some challenges:

- **Over-reliance on Assumptions:** Making an inference based on incomplete or incorrect information can lead to inaccurate conclusions. It is important to be aware of biases and verify information before drawing conclusions.
- **Cultural Differences:** Different cultures may interpret certain cues, symbols, or expressions differently. Misunderstanding

context or norms can result in flawed inferences.

- **Difficulty with Ambiguous Information:** In some cases, the information available may be too vague, or the context may be insufficient to make a reasonable inference.

Inferencing is a vital skill in communication, reading comprehension, and everyday life. By understanding its processes and practicing the art of making educated guesses based on context and prior knowledge, students can enhance their ability to interpret both written and spoken information. Whether you are interpreting a story, engaging in a conversation, or solving a problem, inferencing empowers our students to make connections, fill in the gaps, and understand what is being communicated.

Resources

Marzano, R. (2010). Teaching inference.

Educational Leadership

<https://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership>

Happy Frog: Why You Need to Teach Inference Skills to Struggling Readers

<https://shop.happyfroglearning.com/blog/why-you-need-to-teach-inference-skills-to-struggling-readers#:~:text=Inference%20skills%20are%20one%20of,prerequisite%20for%20higher%20order%20thin king.>

Bedrock Learning: Inference in Reading Comprehension

<https://bedrocklearning.org/literacy-blogs/inference-in-reading-comprehension/>

EDVIEW360: Reading Between the Lines: What Does Inference Mean in Reading

<https://www.voyagersopris.com/vsl/blog/what-does-inference-mean-in-reading>

For questions, please contact:

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Teacher Toolbox



Teacher Toolbox – January 2025

By Margaret Wood, Speech-Language Pathologist and TAP Consultant mwood@ces.org

“Level 1” Autism Explained: “Higher Functioning” Students Require Support Too!

Autism is a developmental disorder that affects a child’s ability to communicate and interact socially and is often evident within the first 3 years of life. The prevalence of autism spectrum disorders (ASD) has increased dramatically over the last two decades. As of 2020, about 1 in 36 children have been identified with autism according to estimates from the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/ss/ss7202a1.htm>).

The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) explains, *“The effect of this increase in autism prevalence on education is profound. Since the passage of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975, more children with disabilities, including autism, are in the general education classroom. Chances are a child with autism is in your school, if not in your class.”* In addition to the overall prevalence of autism increasing, it is important to note that many students are misdiagnosed in preschool and elementary school with other areas of educational exceptionality (e.g., “Developmentally Delayed”, “Speech-Language Impaired”, “Gifted”, and/or “Other Health Impairment” for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or anxiety disorder), which often do not completely capture their needs in the educational setting. Other students go completely undiagnosed until secondary school or well into adulthood, since high intellect and strong academic skills tend to carry them throughout much of their educational careers, as their other challenges are overlooked. Many of these individuals previously met the criteria for “Asperger Syndrome,” which was often referred to as “High-Functioning Autism.” In 2013, the

American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5) determined that Asperger Syndrome is no longer a separate subtype of pervasive developmental disorders, therefore there is currently only one medical diagnosis of ASD.

In the educational setting, there are [13 qualifying eligibility categories](#) for special education services, one of which is autism. According to the [IDEA’s definition](#), autism is “a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.” As educators, we must remember that the criteria a child must meet to be eligible for special education under autism is not the same as the criteria for a [medical diagnosis of autism](#).

The Organization for Autism Research publication, *Life Journey Through Autism: An Educator’s Guide to ASD (Level 1 Supports)*, states, “Each student with ASD is different and, as such, presents his or her unique strengths and challenges. The chart below lists characteristics a student with ASD may exhibit that can impact the classroom experience. Remember that each student with ASD is unique and may display some, many, or none of these behaviors.”

Common Characteristics of Persons With ASD	
Social Communication and Social Interaction	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of understanding of social cues and social nuances• Literal interpretation of others’ words• Difficulty engaging in reciprocal conversation• Tendency to speak bluntly without regard for the impact of words on others• Universal application of social rules to all situations• Focus on a single topic of interest that may not be of interest to others• Poor judge of personal space—may stand too close to other students• Abnormal voice inflection and eye contact• Inappropriate facial expressions or gestures• Difficulty interpreting others’ nonverbal communication cues	
Restricted/Repetitive Patterns of Behavior, Interests, or Activities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inflexibility of behavior—same morning routines, rigid thinking patterns• Difficulty coping with schedule changes• Difficulty switching focus from one subject to the next• Problems with organization and planning• Excessive smelling or touching of objects	

Autism characteristics exist on a continuum, ranging from minor to severe impairment. The levels of autism severity include the following:

Severity Levels for Autism Spectrum Disorder
Level 1—Requiring support
Level 2—Requiring substantial support
Level 3—Requiring very substantial support

The severity level that accompanies a diagnosis of ASD symptoms is the first indicator of a student’s support needs. A student with a Level 1 severity level typically requires fewer and less intensive supports than students with a Level 2 or 3 severity. For example, students with Level 1 ASD may be able to speak fluently in full sentences, have an extensive vocabulary, and be high academic achievers. However, they may be less successful in reciprocal conversations with others due to their failure to understand context or the nuance of language, resulting in attempts to make friends that are perceived by peers as odd and are frequently unsuccessful. Many students with autism benefit from individualized services and supports provided through an [Individualized Education Plan](#) (IEP). For a small number of students with autism, a [504 plan](#) may be sufficient. It is crucial that we remember that the services and supports that a student with autism needs are not a “one-size-fits-all”, but instead should always be determined on a case-by-case basis by the educational team (i.e., teachers, ancillary providers, parents, the student, etc.).

with peers, and/or complete assignments correctly and in a timely manner. These challenging behaviors may also impact the whole class and in addition, may be inadvertently reinforced by the reaction from peers and the educational staff.

The characteristics of ASD translate into these common classroom challenges in learning, behavior, and socialization – for students with ALL levels of autism. These issues may pose significant difficulties for educators in terms of teaching, controlling behaviors, and maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning for all students. The severity level (1 - 2 - 3), is meant to capture the extent to which the student experiences these difficulties and how much support is required for the student to function optimally.

Common Classroom Challenges of Students With ASD

Interests limited to specific topics	Low frustration tolerance
Insistence on sameness/difficulty with changes in routine	Poor coping/emotion regulation strategies
Inability to make friends	Restricted range of interests
Difficulty with initiating and/or sustaining reciprocal conversations	Poor writing skills (fine-motor problems)
Pedantic speech	Poor concentration
Socially naïve and literal thinkers	Academic difficulties
Tend to be reclusive	Emotional vulnerability
Difficulty with learning in large groups	Poor organizational skills
Difficulties with abstract concepts	Appear “normal” to other people
Problem-solving abilities tend to be poor	Motor clumsiness
Vocabulary usually great; comprehension poor	Sensory issues

As educators, we are responsible for the education, safety, and behavior management of all students. Therefore, we must have a working understanding of ASD and its associated characteristics and interfering behaviors, which are a significant piece to autism. It is critical to identify which behaviors may be related to students’ skill deficits due to their exceptionality. Many autistic students have difficulty interpreting language and expressing their needs in socially expected ways, which may impact their ability to maintain attention, interact

As educators, our goal is to foster an inclusive environment that supports all learners, which requires education, understanding, and patience. Staff education is this critical first step that will provide you with the foundation needed to provide support to your students with autism and other needs. Start by encouraging your team to attend professional development opportunities that will help you all to grow your knowledge regarding autism spectrum disorder with practical ways to implement research-based strategies and increase positive educational and social outcomes for all students. Consider attending the **FREE** monthly educationally relevant topics provided by Cooperative Educational Services’ Technical Assistance Program as well as the extensive webinar collection found at www.cestap.org, including the *Autism Toolbox Series*. I look forward to partnering with you in furthering your knowledge regarding autism spectrum disorders this year!

References and Resources

- <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/ss/ss7202a1.htm>
- <https://researchautism.org/>



From Chaos to Calm

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Collecting Data on Behavior in the Classroom for Improved Student Outcomes

Understanding and effectively managing student behavior is essential to promoting a positive and productive learning environment. One of the most powerful tools educators and special education professionals have at their disposal is data collection. Often, educators can get overwhelmed with which data to take and how to take it. However, by identifying, operationalizing, and systematically tracking and analyzing behavioral data, educators can identify patterns, understand the underlying causes of behaviors, and implement interventions that support student growth.

Behavioral Goals in an IEP

The IEP outlines specific educational goals tailored to the unique needs of each student, including goals related to behavior. Often an IEP team can support students by addressing a skill deficit related to behavior through an IEP goal. This can be the least restrictive option and can often be the most efficient when dealing with a skill deficit. Collecting data on these behavioral goals is essential for determining whether a student is making progress and whether interventions need adjustment.

Setting Behavioral Goals

Behavioral goals in an IEP should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). These goals typically focus on improving or modifying a student's social, emotional, or behavioral skills to ensure better engagement in the classroom and successful interaction with peers and adults.

For example, a behavioral goal for a student with autism might be:

- **Goal:** "The student will independently raise their hand to ask or answer a question in 4 out of 5 opportunities during group instruction for 8 consecutive weeks."
- **Measurement:** The student's ability to raise their hand independently without prompting from the teacher.

Other common skill areas might include asking for help, waiting for reinforcement, resolving conflict, managing proximity, using tools for self-regulation, and applying strategies for self-management. The key to setting behavioral goals is identifying the skill and how you will measure whether that skill is developing or not. It is helpful to understand the baseline of the skill performance, the function of the problem behavior, and what is reinforcing to the student when you are identifying the replacement behavior.

Collecting Data on Behavioral Goals

To collect data on a student's behavioral goals, educators need consistent and objective methods to track the student's progress. It is also incredibly helpful to "operationalize" or define exactly what behavior is being tracked prior to data collection. If a team is tracking a specific behavior across a student's day and across settings, it is imperative that everyone be on the same page with what the behavior looks like. Once the team that is working to collect the data has defined the behavior, they should identify the method that will be used. This method and the tools used for data collection should be consistent across team members. Taking the time in the beginning to analyze and "operationalize" the behavior can save educators from finding themselves overwhelmed by the task and from collecting data that does not yield relevant information for decisions.

These methods can include:

1. **Frequency Recording:** Counting how many times a target behavior occurs within a specific period (e.g., raising a hand). This method is effective for behaviors that occur frequently, such as talking out of turn or leaving the seat. This can be a simple tally mark or moving paperclips from one pocket to another.
2. **Duration Recording:** Measuring how long a specific behavior lasts, such as a student's ability to remain seated. This method is useful for behaviors that may

3. not occur as frequently but have significant duration.
4. **Interval Recording:** Dividing the observation period into equal intervals and recording whether the behavior occurred during each interval (e.g., 10-minute intervals). This method is beneficial when tracking behavior over a longer period of time.
5. **Rate of Behavior:** This combines frequency and time to measure how often a behavior occurs per unit of time. For example, the number of times a student asks questions per 10 minutes during a lesson.

Data collected in this way can be analyzed to determine whether the student is meeting the behavioral goal, whether the goal needs to be modified, or if further interventions are required. [Here](#) is a link to a set of data collection tools for each method.

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is a comprehensive and systematic process used to identify the underlying causes of a student's challenging behavior. Rather than focusing solely on the behavior itself, the FBA seeks to understand why the behavior occurs and the environmental factors that may contribute to it. When a team conducts a functional assessment of behavior, they are able to collect data from multiple sources to help identify patterns across a student's day. This allows for the development of interventions that address the root cause of the behavior, increasing the chances of success.

Steps of a Functional Behavior Assessment

1. **Identifying the Behavior:** The first step is to "operationalize" or clearly define the specific behavior of concern in observable and measurable terms. For example, "out-of-seat behavior" could refer to a student getting up without permission and moving around the classroom. It is important for a team to discuss what the behavior looks like and to keep the description in observable and measurable terms. If the behavior is defined as "being disrespectful" that could mean very different things for different people across that student's day. It is neither observable nor measurable. Instead, as a team pull

out the specifics. That might be rolling of eyes, sighing heavily, cursing, talking loudly over other students or teachers, refusing to follow directions. Ultimately, the team should have worked to clearly define the behavior of concern in measurable and observable terms that allow for consistency in data collection.

2. **Gathering Information:** Information is collected through multiple sources, such as:
 - **Direct observations** of the student's behavior in different settings. Making sure to use consistent methods or tools. If conducting an FBA, the team needs to obtain written consent from the guardian prior to collecting assessment data.
 - **Interviews** with teachers, parents, and other staff who interact with the student. The NMPED Technical Manual on Addressing Behavior has interview forms.
 - **Review of past records**, such as previous IEPs, behavioral reports, and incident logs.
3. **Identifying Antecedents and Consequences:** The assessment looks at the events that occur before and after the behavior (the antecedents and consequences). Understanding these patterns helps identify what triggers the behavior and what may be reinforcing it.
 - **Antecedents:** What happens immediately before the behavior? For instance, is the behavior occurring when a particular task is presented, or when a peer interacts with the student?
 - **Consequences:** What happens immediately after the behavior? Is the behavior maintained because it results in avoidance of a task, access to a preferred item, or attention from peers or adults?
4. **Hypothesis Development:** Based on the information gathered, the team forms a hypothesis about the function of the problem behavior. The function refers to the reason the behavior occurs, the why, the need or want not being met, and might include:
 - **Escape/Avoidance:** The student engages in the behavior to avoid a task, situation, or person.

- **Attention:** The student engages in the behavior to gain attention from others.
 - **Access/Obtain Tangibles:** The behavior may occur to gain access to something the student wants, such as a toy or food.
 - **Sensory Stimulation:** The behavior may serve a sensory need, such as self-soothing or seeking sensory input.
5. **Developing an Intervention Plan:** Once the function of the behavior is identified, an intervention plan is developed. The intervention should address the underlying cause of the behavior. For example, if the behavior is a means of escape, interventions might include teaching the student alternative ways to request breaks or providing additional support during difficult tasks.

Collecting Data During the FBA Process

Data collection during the FBA process involves direct observation and recording of the student's behavior, antecedents, and consequences. Tools used in this process include:

- **ABC Data (Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence):** This method involves documenting the antecedents, the behavior, and the consequences each time the behavior occurs. The goal is to detect patterns and determine the function of the behavior. An easy way to gather ABC data with multiple members is to use an electronic form.
 - [ABC Data Collection Google Form Elementary](#)
 - [ABC Data Collection Google Form Secondary](#)
 - [Editable ABC Data Collection Google Sheets](#)

- **Scatterplots:** A scatterplot is a type of data collection tool where the time and specific occurrences of a behavior are charted. This can help identify the time of day or specific conditions under which the behavior occurs most often.
- **Behavior Rating Scales:** These scales, completed by teachers, parents, or other staff, help assess the intensity and frequency of behaviors in various settings.

The data gathered is used to adjust interventions as necessary, ensuring that the student's needs are being met effectively.

Integrating Data for Effective Behavior Management

Both behavioral goals within an IEP and Functional Behavior Assessments provide valuable insights into a student's behavior. Data collected through these methods can be used to:

- Monitor progress toward specific goals.
- Adjust interventions to maximize effectiveness.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations for further supports.
- Foster communication between educators, parents, and other professionals.

A collaborative approach, where behavior data from multiple sources is integrated and shared, ensures a holistic understanding of the student's needs and supports the development of targeted interventions that improve the student's success in the classroom.

By consistently collecting and analyzing data on behavior, educators and special education teams can create a more supportive and effective learning environment, leading to better outcomes for students.



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