



Simplify procurement.
Maximize results.

**Impacts of House Bill 456
(Amending NMSA 13-1-154.1)
Expanded Procurement Limits for
Architectural/Engineering Services and
Construction**

Effective Date: June 20, 2025

Overview

House Bill 456 updates the statutory limits on multiple-source contracts for architectural and engineering (A/E) services and construction under price agreements. The legislation is a direct response to cost escalations in the construction and professional services markets and reflects the practical needs of state and local agencies.

Key Improvements and Benefits

Provision	Old Limit	New Limit
A/E Single Contract (PO) Cap	\$650,000	\$2,000,000
A/E Aggregate per Firm	\$7.5M over 4 years	\$15M over 4 years
Construction PO Cap	\$4M	\$7M
Construction Aggregate per Contractor	\$12.5M over 3 years	\$30M over 10 years

Positive Outcomes

- Realistic Budget Alignment - The updated thresholds reflect modern project costs, which have more than doubled in most areas since 2020. This change allows agencies to fully scope and fund projects without artificially splitting work.
- Increased Efficiency - Fewer procurement cycles reduce administrative burden, speed up project delivery, and save time and resources for both agencies and contractors.

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- Improved Long-Term Planning - The 10-year cap for construction contracts supports phased implementation of capital improvement plans, maintenance schedules, and infrastructure upgrades.
- Enhanced Service Continuity - The ability to maintain contracts across a broader scope improves consistency in design, project management, and delivery—especially beneficial for rural or high-need areas.
- Greater Flexibility for Agencies - Allows procurement professionals to manage complex projects with modern tools and budgets, helping agencies remain responsive and adaptive to changing needs.

Additional Consideration (For Awareness)

While overwhelmingly positive, the bill also underscores the importance of maintaining competition and transparency. Continued use of best practices—such as contract reporting—will ensure these expanded thresholds continue to benefit New Mexico taxpayers.

Conclusion

House Bill 456 is a timely and pragmatic modernization of procurement limits that

enables New Mexico’s public agencies to operate more effectively in today’s cost environment. The bill supports better service delivery, project completion, and long-term stewardship of public infrastructure.

CES appreciates the teamwork exhibited by many members and Procurement Partners in working with the Legislature and the Governor to see these changes enacted in NM Statute. Onward and upward—together!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 5/1 TAP: Autism Toolbox Series / School Social Supports
- 5/1 National Day of Prayer
- 5/5 NMML Grants 101 Webinar
- 5/6 TAP: Early Childhood Compliance Indicators
- 5/7 TAP: Gifted Teachers Toolkit: End of Year Edition
- 5/8 TAP: Mindfulness-Based Practices to Support Educator/ Student Well-Being
- 5/11 Mother’s Day
- 5/26 Memorial Day

	May					
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	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

- Contract Extensions:**
 - Amergis (formerly Maxim Staffing) 2021-28-C115-ALL, 1 year Extension
 - iStation 2020-12N-AC02-ALL, 6 mo. Extension
 - Fidalgo CPA, Accounting & Consulting LLC 19-036N-C003-ALL, Exp. 6/22/2026
 - The Vigil Group LLC 19-036N-C001-ALL, Exp. 6/23/26
 - Labatt Food 2020-30N-C101-ALL, Exp. 6/29/2026
 - Fire Tech 2020-03B-C115-8, Exp. 2/29/26
 - Game One 2021-31-C116-ALL, Exp. 5/1/2026
- Name Changes/Change of Ownership:**
 - Team 1st assigned their contract to CalLord Unified Technologies – 2024-19-C115-ALL

3) New Contract Awards:

RFP	Awardee	Contract Number
2025-11 <i>Student Management, Special Education & Educational Managed Curriculum</i> Category 1: Lot 1-Student Management & Data Software	Edupoint Educational Systems Infinite Campus, Inc. PowerSchool Group LLC	2025-11-C111-ALL 2025-11-C112-ALL 2025-11-C113-ALL
2025-11 <i>Student Management, Special Education & Educational Managed Curriculum</i> Category 2: Lot 1- Special Education Tracking Software	Ed Tech Soft, Inc. Edupoint Educational Systems Infinite Campus, Inc. TTCO Holding Company, Inc. PowerSchool Group LLC	2025-11-C211-ALL 2025-11-C212-ALL 2025-11-C213-ALL 2025-11-C214-ALL 2025-11-C215-ALL
2025-11 <i>Student Management, Special Education & Educational Managed Curriculum</i> Category 3: Lot 1- Educational & Training Software	MindPlay Education, LLC Edmentum, Inc. PowerSchool Group LLC Imagine Learning LLC n2y LLC	2025-11-C311-ALL 2025-11-C312-ALL 2025-11-C313-ALL 2025-11-C314-ALL 2025-11-C315-ALL
2025-11 <i>Student Management, Special Education & Educational Managed Curriculum</i> Category 3: Lot 2- Instructional Management System	Edmentum, Inc.	2025-11-C321-ALL
2025-12 <i>Temporary Employment and Recruitment Services</i>	Keeda Inc ITSQuest, Inc. 22nd Century Technologies Inc Infojini, Inc. COGENT Infotech Corp Empat Speech Language Path. P.C.	2025-12-C111-ALL 2025-12-C112-ALL 2025-12-C113-ALL 2025-12-C114-ALL 2025-12-C115-ALL 2025-12-C116-ALL
2025-13 <i>Flooring Systems & Related</i>	High Tech Floors Inc Robert Cohen Co LLC Benchmark Wood Floors, Inc. ARBO's Floor Service LLC Stout Hardwood Floor Company Floor Tech Contracting LLC Atmosphere Commercial Interiors WWRC AAA Restoration & Construction Services Restoration Enterprises, Inc. Global Maven Enterprises, LLC Southwest Carpet and Floors Advanced Healthstyles Fitness Equipment	2025-13-C111-ALL 2025-13-C112-ALL 2025-13-C113-ALL 2025-13-C114-ALL 2025-13-C115-ALL 2025-13-C116-ALL 2025-13-C117-ALL 2025-13-C118-ALL 2025-13-C119-ALL 2025-13-C1110-ALL 2025-13-C1111-ALL 2025-13-C1112-ALL 2025-13-C1113-ALL
RFP# 2025-14 <i>Health & Training Supplies</i>	JJW Inc. Fitness Superstore Advanced Healthstyles- Fitness Equipment Inc. Samson Equipment Inc. School Specialty LLC	2025-14-C111-ALL 2025-14-C112-ALL 2025-14-C113-ALL 2025-14-C114-ALL

	School Health Corporation School Nurse Supply	2025-14-C115-ALL 2025-14-C116-ALL
RFP# 2025-15 <i>School Safety Audits, Inspections, Consulting and Training Services</i>	Playsafe LLC.	2025-15-C111-ALL

4) Current & Upcoming Solicitations:

RFP #	RFP Description	Release	Due	Award
2025-05 (PaaS for PED)	<i>Community Schools Accreditation (NMPED)</i>	11/18/24	12/6/24	12/20/24
2025-16	<i>2025.5 AEPA – eRate Consulting Services</i>	1/21/25	2/14/25	3/3/25
2025-17	<i>Construction Management Services</i>	2/21/25	3/21/25	4/7/25
2025-18	<i>In Vehicle Telematics Systems</i>	2/21/25	3/21/25	4/7/25
2025-20	<i>Fleet Management System</i>	2/21/25	3/21/25	4/7/25
2025-21	<i>Supplemental Employee Benefits –</i> <i>a) Section 125</i> <i>b) Retirement</i> <i>c) other Benefits</i>	3/24/25	4/25/25	5/13/25
2025-22 new Category	<i>Public Sector Payment Systems</i>	3/24/25	4/25/25	5/13/25
2025-24 new Category	<i>SCADA Systems</i>	3/24/25	4/25/25	5/13/25
2025-19 (2021-01 Exp 8/5/25)	<i>Medicaid Billing & Collection Services</i>	4/21/25	5/23/25	6/10/25
2025-25 New Category	<i>Weight Scales</i>	4/21/25	5/23/25	6/10/25
2025-26 (17-026 Storage) (17-028 Moving)	<i>Moving, Storage Solutions</i>	4/21/25	5/23/25	6/10/25

New Contract Awards – Descriptions

2025-14

Health & Training Supplies:

CES Members Agencies have a continuous need for indoor and outdoor physical education, athletic, activity, recreational, athletic training supplies, equipment, and related items. CES Members Agencies provide a variety of quality team sports and physical education programs for students and the public for pre-school, elementary, intermediate, middle, and high school and post-secondary physical education programs, community, youth, and seniors programs offered in New Mexico.

Vendors provide complete catalogs from manufacturers or distributors of indoor and outdoor physical education, athletic, recreational, and training supplies, materials, equipment, and related items for its Members.

2025-15

School Safety Audits, Inspections, Consulting and Training Services

Vendors to provide school safety audits, inspections, consulting, and training services for Cooperative Educational Services (CES) members. It covers areas such as facility safety, access control, emergency preparedness, regulatory compliance, risk management, and staff training to ensure a safe educational and

work environment. The proposal emphasizes compliance with federal, state, and local safety regulations while providing ongoing consulting, technical writing, and program development to enhance school security and operational safety.

ORDER CORNER

Don't Miss Out on Your Member Service Credits!

We're excited to remind our members that many of you have earned valuable Member Service Credits—but some have yet to apply them toward this year's purchases! These credits are like rebate coupons, earned through your organization's purchasing activity with CES during the fiscal year.

Certificates were provided in October/November to qualifying members, based on purchasing volume between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024. This year, CES proudly distributed a total of \$400,000 in credits—\$200,000 to educational members and \$200,000 to non-educational participating entities (PEs)—as part of our commitment to give back to those we serve.

Applying your credits is easy and adds instant value to your purchases:

1. **Traditional Purchase** – When uploading your order, upload your

certificate under "Other Documents" and add instructions under "Comments." The credit will be applied as payment toward your balance.

2. **Direct Purchase** – When uploading your order, upload your certificate under "Other Documents" and add instructions under "Comments." Pay the full vendor invoice, and CES will **reimburse you** for the credit amount.
3. **Shop Vendor Portal Purchase** – Simply email your online invoice and the credit certificate (or application directions) to kelly@ces.org, and **we'll reimburse you**.

Important: Member Service Credits **expire June 15th**, so be sure to use them while you can. It's a terrific way to stretch your budget and make the most of your partnership with CES.

Let us help you save—**don't leave your credits on the table!**

EDUCATION ARTICLES



DEAR MS. M

Gifted Education Questions Answered

Dear Ms. M,
Why does the Gifted IEP matter?

Here in New Mexico, we know that gifted students have unique needs—and they deserve learning experiences that challenge and inspire them. That’s where the Gifted Individualized Education Program comes in. Unlike traditional IEPs, which focus on students with disabilities, a GIEP is designed specifically for students who show exceptional intellectual or creative abilities. These students need more than just extra work—they need meaningful, personalized learning that keeps them engaged, curious, and growing.

A strong GIEP helps make that happen. It’s a roadmap, created by a team that includes parents, teachers, gifted specialists, and even the student. Together, we work to build a plan that reflects the student’s strengths, interests, and future goals. In New Mexico, state guidelines ensure that GIEPs cover everything from how a student qualifies as gifted to the goals they’re working toward, the services they’ll receive, and the strategies we’ll use to help them succeed. It’s not just about meeting requirements—it’s about honoring who each student is and what they need to thrive.

As gifted teachers, we know that equity is just as important as excellence. Across our state, too many bright, capable students are overlooked—especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, like English language learners, students from low-income families, and students of color. That’s why we’re committed to identifying giftedness in many forms, using tools that recognize potential, not just performance. The National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) encourages practices like using local norms, multiple ways to qualify, and family-friendly referrals, so that every student with advanced potential has a fair shot.

We also know that the role of the gifted teacher and caseload manager is more than just writing plans—it’s about building relationships, providing support, and being an advocate. We work closely with classroom teachers to make sure gifted students are getting what they need every day—not just during “pull-out” times. We collaborate with families, listen to students’ voices, and help create learning environments where gifted kids feel seen, heard, and challenged. That includes developing flexible goals, thinking creatively about services, and keeping the GIEP as a living document—not something we file away and forget.

At its core, the GIEP is a tool for personalized learning. It helps gifted students go deeper, explore their passions, and stretch their thinking. Across New Mexico, we’re proud to be part of a community of educators who believe in our gifted learners and want to help them reach their full potential—not just as students, but as future leaders, creators, and problem-solvers. When we get it right, a GIEP isn’t just paperwork—it’s a promise.

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.

Compliance Corner

May 2025

By Cindy Soo Hoo, TAP Consultant

**Is it Hit or Miss Regarding Your
Prior Written Notice? (Part 4 of 4)**

Part four of this four-part series on Prior Written Notice (PWN) explores the remaining portions of the regulations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These remaining portions contain language that is often embedded in your district's Individualized Education Program (IEP) template. It likely contains language that informs parents that they and their child have rights under the IDEA. In addition, information is provided for parents as to whom to contact should they have questions regarding these rights as well as any questions they may have about their child's IEP services and supports.

The remaining portions appear to include general language that addresses proposals that are not delineated by categories in the previous citations. It allows school districts to include any other information they determine appropriate and pertinent.

IDEA 34 CFR §300.503(b) states:

Content of notice. The notice required under [paragraph \(a\)](#) of this section must include—

- (4) A statement that the parents of a child with a disability have protection under the procedural safeguards of this part and, if this notice is not an initial referral for evaluation, the means by which a copy of a description of the procedural safeguards can be obtained;*
- (5) Sources for parents to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of this part;*
- (6) A description of other options that the IEP Team considered and the reasons why those options were rejected; and*
- (7) A description of other factors that are relevant to the agency's proposal or refusal.*

While IDEA does not require parents to acknowledge receipt of their procedural safeguards, it would be prudent for IEP Teams to record such in the PWN. It leaves no doubt as to whether the parent was offered a copy. An example of this might be:

“The parents were provided with a copy of their procedural safeguards entitled SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES REQUIRED UNDER IDEA PART B (Revised December 2020)”

However, procedural safeguards should not be just handed to parents without staff being knowledgeable about the contents of the document and being able to answer whatever questions the parents may have. It would be important to familiarize yourself with the information in order to understand the rights of parents as well as students who are eligible and not-yet-eligible under the IDEA.

In addition, notices must be provided to the parent in his/her native language or translated so the parents are able to understand its contents.

IDEA 34 CFR §300.503(c) states:

Notice in understandable language.

(1) The notice required under [paragraph \(a\)](#) of this section must be—

- (i) Written in language understandable to the general public; and*
 - (ii) Provided in the native language of the parent or other mode of communication used by the parent, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.*
- (2) If the native language or other mode of communication of the parent is not a*

written language, the public agency must take steps to ensure—

- (i) That the notice is translated orally or by other means to the parent in his or her native language or other mode of communication;*
- (ii) That the parent understands the content of the notice; and*
- (iii) That there is written evidence that the requirements in [paragraphs \(c\)\(2\)\(i\) and \(ii\)](#) of this section have been met.*

When circumstances require school districts to provide a copy of the PWN or procedural safeguards in a language other than English or when the need arises for someone to interpret the contents, it would be important to record such in the PWN. An example of this might be:

“The parent’s native language is Spanish. A Spanish interpreter was present during the meeting to interpret the discussions for the parent. A Spanish copy of the procedural safeguards was provided to the parent. In addition, their child’s IEP, including the PWN, will be translated into Spanish and provided to the parent.”

As we have stated before, the PWN captures all proposals that were discussed along with the decisions that were made during the IEP meeting. Decisions aren’t made until members of the IEP Team have had the opportunity to discuss the student’s strengths and needs as well as how that child’s disability impacts their access to the general education curriculum. Following this discussion, the IEP Team develops the goals, services and supports that are necessary and determines the setting(s) in which these services and supports will be implemented. IEP Teams must take precautions in not pre-determining the outcome of these decisions. Prior Written

Notices should not have decisions recorded prior to discussing and making the determinations during the meeting.

At the conclusion of the meeting, parents should be given a copy of their child’s IEP, which includes the Prior Written Notice. The New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) 6.31.2.11 B 3 states the following:

Written notice of actions proposed or refused by the public agency shall also be provided in compliance with 34 CFR Sec. 300.503 and Paragraph (2) of Subsection D of 6.31.2.13 NMAC and shall be provided at the close of the IEP meeting.

In conclusion, the PWN is probably the most challenging portion of the IEP as it requires teams to accurately and succinctly record all decisions made during the meeting as they pertain to the child’s programming needs. Teams must justify these decisions based on data and other information we know about the student. This becomes even more challenging if charged with facilitating the meeting as well. School teams might consider assigning specific roles during the IEP meeting, if possible, in order to share responsibilities. Doing so may result in a more productive meeting and comprehensive IEP documentation.

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.

From Chaos to Calm



By Rene Rohrer, M.A.
LEAP Facilitator & TAP
Consultant

rrohrer@ces.org

MAY 2025

SEL: The Critical Role of Social Emotional Learning in Today's Schools

Understanding the Foundation: Why SEL Matters Now More Than Ever

In today's rapidly evolving social and educational landscapes, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) has emerged as a crucial component of comprehensive education. SEL isn't just another educational initiative; it's a fundamental approach that helps students and educators develop essential life skills, manage emotions, build positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. It is an essential part of holistic education and preparing our students for life after academics. Social-Emotional Learning cannot be isolated and removed or ignored. At its most basic it is what we have always done in Early Childhood learning communities and should not be used to create fear and distrust between parents and teachers. If our goal is to support students to become productive and healthy citizens able to navigate towards the quality of life that they and their families value, regardless of what that looks like, social emotional skills are essential.

Impact of SEL on Student Success

There are hundreds of independent studies across multiple fields and sources that show

that SEL leads to beneficial and improved outcomes for students, from academic performance, school climate and safety, post-secondary outcomes, to mental well-being. We know that when SEL is implemented focusing on the five Casel Competencies (casel.org), that we see a consistent 11 percentile point increase in students' academic performance.

Research consistently demonstrates that effective SEL implementation leads to:

- Improved academic performance
- Better classroom behavior
- Increased ability to manage stress and anxiety
- Enhanced problem-solving skills
- Stronger peer relationships
- Higher graduation rates

Check out this article "[What We Know, and What We Need to Find Out About Universal School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs for Children and Adolescents: A Review of Meta-Analyses and Directions for Future Research](#)"
[The Impact of Social Emotional Learning Video](#)

Practical Strategies for SEL Integration

Outside of direct instruction and modeling of SEL, there are three main ways that you can integrate social emotional learning across your teaching day: embed in daily routines, integrate across content, and work to create safe spaces.

Embedding SEL in daily routines can be as simple as starting a class with an emotional check-in, using times before, during, and after transitions as times to incorporate quick mindfulness exercises, and using the end of a class or day to incorporate reflections time and closing connections. Check out this reader [friendly article](#) for mindfulness tips and ideas.

Integrating SEL across content is a wonderful way to address the skills and competencies, while also addressing the content necessary in your teaching. Using cooperative learning and problem-solving situations can be integrated into everything from mathematics to art. Consistently providing opportunities and structures in competencies such as conflict resolution, problem solving, analyzing emotions and decisions, building self-management through scaffolding and protocols like the experimental process or working through multiple step problems, and even viewing historical events through a lens of empathy and self-reflection all support SEL across the curriculum. Intentional and consistent collaboration amongst the adults in the learning community towards integration of SEL is another way to model and support these skills.

Another key factor in successfully bringing SEL into the classroom is through creating safe spaces. We created safety through consistency and predictability in our communication, our expectations, and the environment. When asking students to collaborate in a group, provide a protocol and guidance on how to work together. Find ways to build community through conversations, circles, and other community building activities. Most importantly, model empathy, consistency, and competency in SEL through your own behavior, reflection, and language.

Adult SEL: Why Educator Well-being Matters

To be able to model prosocial behavior and social emotional competence, there is the need to prioritize our own social emotional well-being and build our own resilience, capacity, and skills. This process starts with self-reflection and an honest look at the skills and

competencies that are strengths or weaknesses and doing the work to build those skills and the resilience and capacity to model and support students. Here is a great toolkit from [Panorama Education](#) that can support your work around your own social emotional competence. Also, administrators can view this [resource](#) and many others at [casel.org](#) to see how to support staff with SEL.

Meeting Current Challenges: Addressing Post-Pandemic Needs

Whether we care to admit it or not, we are still addressing post-pandemic needs in our social and academic communities. Acknowledging this and taking steps to be mindful and present in our awareness by practicing reflection, recognition, and action around ongoing stress and anxiety can support our ability to support our students. Working to build flexibility into expectations, continuing to focus on relationship building, and on identifying and strengthening additional support systems for both adults and students is key in being able to address needs. Additionally, despite the current pressure in our society, creating inclusive environments through cultural responsiveness can help foster belonging for all students.

Implementation Tips for Success

How can I implement SEL into my classroom and practice? First and foremost, start with yourself and reflect on your own SEL competencies, reflect on the strengths and needs in your students, and start small. Here are some ideas of steps you can take:

- Assess your current SEL practices
- Identify one area for growth
- Use observation and reflection tools
- Collect student feedback and provide opportunities for voice
- Identify student strengths and weaknesses

- Choose one SEL competence to focus on in your classroom
- Gradually expand integration efforts in your own classroom and with colleagues
- Track behavioral changes or reinforce approximations and skill growth
- Celebrate small wins and share those with the learning community and beyond
- Build community support, engage families and partner with local organizations

Looking Forward

The time to prioritize SEL is now. Our students and educators deserve learning environments that nurture both academic excellence and emotional well-being. Together, we can create schools where everyone thrives. The investment in SEL is an investment in our future. By prioritizing both student and adult social-emotional development, schools can create resilient, compassionate, and successful learning communities. Remember that SEL implementation is a journey, not a destination. Start where you are, use what you have, and build on your successes.



The Reading Room: Strategies for Teaching Trick Words/Irregular Words May 2025

This month we will be focusing on tips and tricks for teaching Trick Words or words that don't follow phonetic rules. First, we need to talk about what makes these words unique. There are many different terms used to reference these particular words.

Often people refer to these words as High Frequency Words, Sight Words, Heart Words, Tricky Words, among others. In this article we

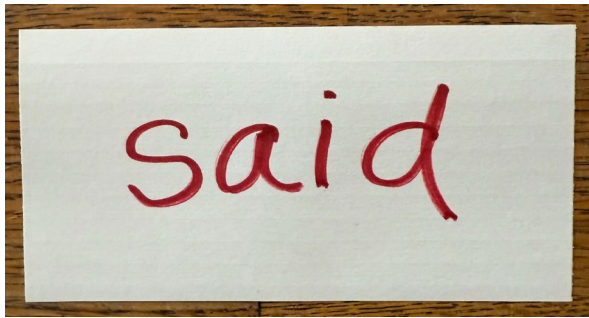
will be referring to these words as Irregular Words or Trick Words. They are tricky because some of the letters in these words do not make the expected sounds. Hence, they can be tricky to read and particularly tricky to spell. Most of these words are also High Frequency Words (HFW), meaning that they appear most frequently in text. Not all HFW are irregular though. The word **and** is a HFW but it is also phonetically regular. Conversely, the word **the** is a HFW but is not phonetically regular. The term "Sight Word" is no longer interchangeable with Irregular or High Frequency Word. Sight Word refers to a word we read automatically without having to sound it out or think about its pronunciation. We will be concentrating on the Tricky Words or Irregular Words.... the ones that don't follow the phonetic pronunciation of the letters that make them up.

I have included a list of Irregular/High Frequency Words in the resources at the end of this article. Most students can read these words even if they are poor decoders because they appear so often in print. Seeing these words over and over again, gives students

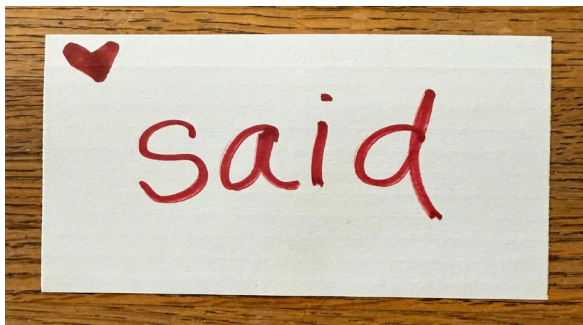
repeated practice with them. However, spelling them is much more difficult because students can't sound them out.

TIPS:

Present these words differently than decodable words. I like to write them on index cards in red marker. This makes them stand out as words that can't be sounded out.



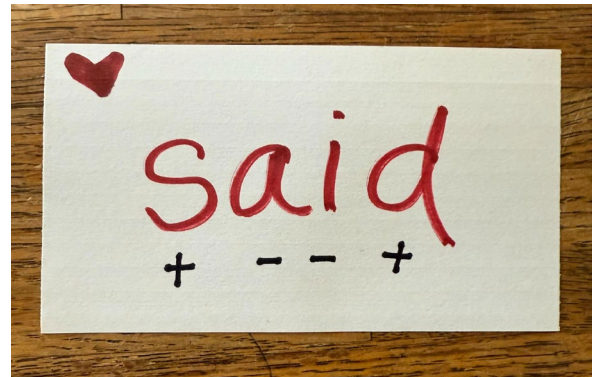
Linda Farrell, creator of Readsters.com refers to Irregular Words as Heart Words, referring to the fact that you have to memorize them or know them by heart. Having that in mind, you can add a heart to the index card.



You can have students code the word according to expected and unexpected sounds. For example, the word shown below has been coded. You can walk your students through this activity by using questioning techniques. Students actually draw the symbols under the letters to help cement their learning in their orthographic memory.

T: This is the word said. Does the s make the expected sound? **S:** Yes - and marks it with a plus (or symbol of your choice). Does the a make the expected sound? **S:** No - and marks

with a minus sign (or symbol of your choice). Does the i make the expected sound? **S:** No - and marks it with a minus. Does the d make the expected sound? **S:** Yes - and marks it with a plus.



In order to do the coding activity, it is important that before you teach a word, you know if the sounds are expected or unexpected.

Practice Coding these Words:

soon
four
and
the

Answers:

s o o n (irregular spelling & HFW)
+ + +

f o u r (irregular spelling & HFW)
+- - +

a n d (regular spelling & HFW)
+ ++

t h e (irregular spelling & HFW)
++ -

As with all Structured Literacy curriculum, it is important to make the instruction as multisensory as possible. You can have your students sky write the Tricky Words with an extended arm and two fingers writing the

letters in the air naming them as they write. Have them do this three times per word. You can also have them do this on their desks or on sandpaper for added tactile input. Have them repeat three times for each word. As a final tip, I suggest not introducing more than three Tricky Words per week for reading and spelling. Have students practice writing these words in assignments outside their Structured Literacy block so that they can get adequate practice. Remember, struggling readers need repeated practice.

Resources:

The words below have both regular and irregular spelling patterns. If a word cannot be sounded out it is considered to be irregular. If you have a question about a word being regular or irregular, don't hesitate to contact one of us.

Fry's First 100 Words				
1. the	21. at	41. there	61. some	81. my
2. of	22. be	42. use	62. her	82. than
3. and	23. this	43. an	63. would	83. first
4. a	24. have	44. each	64. make	84. water
5. to	25. from	45. which	65. like	85. been
6. in	26. or	46. she	66. him	86. called
7. is	27. one	47. do	67. into	87. who
8. you	28. had	48. how	68. time	88. am
9. that	29. by	49. their	69. has	89. its
10. it	30. words	50. if	70. look	90. now
11. he	31. but	51. will	71. two	91. find
12. was	32. not	52. up	72. more	92. long
13. for	33. what	53. other	73. write	93. down
14. on	34. all	54. about	74. go	94. day
15. are	35. were	55. out	75. see	95. did
16. as	36. we	56. many	76. number	96. get
17. with	37. when	57. then	77. no	97. come
18. his	38. your	58. them	78. way	98. made
19. they	39. can	59. these	79. could	99. may
20. I	40. said	60. so	80. people	100. part

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For questions, please contact:

Chris Fox - cfox@ces.org, Jessica Powell - jpowell@ces.org



Teacher Toolbox



Teacher Toolbox – May 2025

By Margaret Wood, Speech-Language Pathologist and TAP Consultant

mwood@ces.org

Creating Compassionate Classrooms: Supportive Student Spaces

We are all unique! This is one statement upon which we all can agree. All students that we interact with have a unique presentation of strengths and social, emotional, intellectual and academic needs, including students with

and without individualized education plans (IEPs). Students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), specific learning disabilities (SLD), intellectual differences, and other areas of exceptionality also exhibit a unique profile of strengths and challenges. Although those strengths and challenges might seem quite different to other students, the principles we employ to utilize strengths to overcome challenges remain the same.

Over the years in education, we have spent significant amounts of money, time, and energy employing a variety of ideas and programs to address our students' uniqueness. Among those were the "7 Intelligences", multisensory and multimodal learning, differentiated instruction, and most recently, the Universal Design for Learning. Reframing Autism is a charity run by Autistic people, for Autistic people and their families and allies who share their combination of lived experience and innovative, respectful, and inclusive research to produce respectful and evidence-informed approach to autism. They describe Universal Design for Learning as "*a set of principles or guidelines that allows students to access information in different ways, engage with information in different ways, and demonstrate their knowledge and skills attainment in different ways.*" UDL helps educators to differentiate the curriculum and ensure that the processing style and learning differences of autistic students are consistently considered and addressed.

Consider the following five categories for creating compassionate and supportive spaces for all students:

- 1. *Sensory Environment:*** Every person receives information from the environment through our senses before processing and responding. Many individuals experience sensory differences where certain sensory stimuli may negatively impact their

ability to tolerate certain situations, which in turn impact the ability to concentrate, learn, and communicate effectively. For example, certain sounds like a pencil scratching paper on top of a desk may go unnoticed by some individuals, be perceived as distracting by other individuals, or significantly irritating or even painful to others. This sensory sensitivity often triggers the primitive "fight, flight, or freeze" center of our brain, which may lead to challenging behavior. Frequently utilizing an "autism friendly classroom checklist" helps to evaluate our classroom sensory environments. This will remind us to consider all aspects of sensory input, to avoid inadvertently overlooking things that some of us may easily tolerate, such as the strong (or subtle) scents of perfume, food, coffee, or cleaning products.

- 2 *Movement Matters:*** Teach and encourage breaks of all varieties and at different times. Scheduling brain, body, and movement breaks into our busy schedules is critical, but we must be attentive to the possibility some students may need additional breaks at other moments too. Providing breaks when they're needed will lessen their overwhelm and increase their self-regulation, leading to increased attention and task endurance. Some autistic students will seek movement and will "stim" (engage in self-stimulatory behaviors) to help them to process information, to self-regulate, and to manage elements of overwhelm. Incorporating and modeling various modes of movement (e.g., using a fidget object while concentrating) will encourage students to identify what supports their individual needs.

3. ***Clear Communications:*** Individuals with autism exhibit characteristic difficulties associated with all three broad areas of communication, which include comprehension, expression, and pragmatics (e.g., social interaction with others). Autistic communication is often literal, straightforward, and honest. Students will appreciate our commitment to using literal language (rather than sarcasm, slang, idiom, and metaphor) to decrease the amount of miscommunication. Providing clear explanations of what a given expression “really means” will increase comprehension by clarification of information, especially when repeated and applied in different contexts for generalization. Patiently provide extra time for students to process and respond to directions or questions presented to the class. Warn students that you will be asking them to respond to the question next and have the class think about or write down answers for 15–30 seconds before raising their hands. Demonstrate and identify expected communication and social skills. Model and point out examples of effective communication skills and social skills to all students. Calmly and clearly explaining misinterpretations in each context (sometimes in the moment or after a given interaction, as appropriate).
4. ***Identify Important Information:*** Many autistic students struggle to understand the relevance of many elements of the curriculum, and they are much less likely than their neurotypical peers to simply accept the need to learn “irrelevant” information. Many students appreciate learning the rationale for

what they are being told to do. Explaining the “why” (i.e., the reason) behind a directive often increases calm compliance, by decreasing confusion and uncertainty. Priming is another strategy that provides the student with information about tasks or activities ahead of time, which supports comprehension and expressive communication in the classroom. Providing an outline of class notes or written directions and offering a list of questions to student before the beginning of class so they can formulate answers ahead of time decreases the overwhelm some individuals experience when trying to determine “what’s important”.

5. ***PeerPower:*** Systematically and consistently teach students the elements of respect by practicing perspective taking. Empathy is the ability to look at the world from another person’s point of view. “Putting ourselves in someone else’s shoes”, provides understanding that may not come naturally to some individuals. Encourage and expect peers to provide support to each other as a critical element of your classroom culture. For example, coach students how to ask a peer for their opinion during a small group project or how to invite others to join in an activity or conversation. Intentionally seat specific students near peers who you have coached to provide support. Give students specific roles within small group activities that challenge the student with ASD to practice target skills (e.g., group leader for a student who needs practice initiating). Model and explicitly teach all students active listening skills so they may provide the necessary wait

time and respond to each other with a related comment or relevant question, to show that they are engaged and that they care. Give students an idea list of topics or questions to use when initiating conversation. Provide expected social connections by pointing out common ground (e.g., areas of interest) and encourage students to connect with peers in and out of class. Consider offering your classroom as a meeting place and arrange a lunch group once a week. See below for the link to sign up for the upcoming ***Autism Toolbox Series School Social Supports*** or many more tools and strategies to support students of all ages and developmental levels!

In closing, remember that it is critical to offer frequent, specific, positive and constructive feedback to reinforce our students' expected choices. General feedback, such as "good job" or "nice work", does not provide enough information to reinforce specific target skills. Instead, offer genuine and specific feedback, such as "Nice job focusing on the main idea. Next time try looking up at your partner to show you are listening and are interested in what they're saying." When a strategy makes a positive impact on our students, keep doing it! When an accommodation works for students with an IEP, we are sometimes tempted to

discontinue it. Don't be tempted to fade support when they're doing what they should! Instead, our students' positive responses should reinforce our consistency in providing (and documenting) effective, evidence-based supports. May we all go forth and help our students to not just survive – but to thrive – throughout their educational careers!

References and Resources

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To register for the next complimentary live virtual Autism Toolbox Series professional development workshop on 5/1/25, *School Social Supports*, go to <https://www.ces.org/> and click on CES+ for more information!



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Carolyn Mole

Finance Director

cmole@nmsba.org

Lorraine Vigil

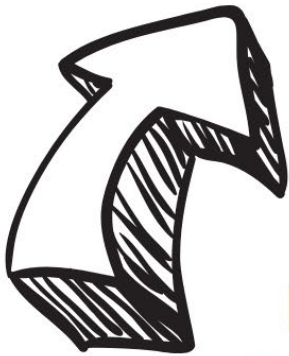
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CES CONTACTS

Mohamed Al-Hussaini
Procurement & Contract
Specialist
Email: mohamed@ces.org
Phone: Ext 128

Kim Alvarado
Purchasing Specialist
Email: kalvarado@ces.org
Phone: Ext 137

Jim Barentine
Southern Services Manager, Media
Email: jim@ces.org
Phone: 575.646.5965

Kelly Bassham
Financial Specialist (AP)
Email: kelly@ces.org
Phone: Ext 135

Mathew Bayhan
IT Specialist
Email: mathew@ces.org
Phone: Ext 152

Paul Benoit
Northern Services Manager, REAP
Email: paul@ces.org
Phone: 575.562.2922

Kimberly Buckner
Purchasing Specialist
Email: kbuckner@ces.org
Phone: Ext 131

Valarie Castillo
Purchasing Specialist
Email: vcastillo@ces.org
Phone: Ext 106

David Chavez
Executive Director
Email: dchavez@ces.org
Phone: Ext 109

Katherine Densmore
Purchasing Specialist
Email: katherine@ces.org
Phone: Ext. 148

Katie Effert
Executive Admin Assistant
Email: katie@ces.org
Phone: Ext 127

Alexis Esslinger
LEAP Director
Email: alexis@ces.org
Phone: Ext 139

Ilene Gallegos
Finance Specialist (AR)
Email: ilene@ces.org
Phone: Ext 122

LeAnne Gandy
Leadership Development Prog Dir
Email: leanne@ces.org
Phone: 575.704.9904

Loretta Garcia
TAP Director
Email: lgarcia@ces.org
Phone: 505.985.8454

Abigail Hansen
Business Office Admin Assistant
Email: abigail@ces.org
Phone: Ext 145

Norma Henderson
Finance Manager
Email: norma@ces.org
Phone: Ext 104

John King
Construction Analyst (N)
Email: jking@ces.org
Phone: Ext 150

Delores Lujan
LEAP Admin Assistant
Email: delores@ces.org
Phone: Ext 144

Doug Marshall
IT Director
Email: dmarshall@ces.org
Phone: Ext 114

Margaret Mikelson
Finance Specialist
Email: margaret@ces.org
Phone: Ext 126

Kim Mizell
SITE Director
Email: kmizell@ces.org
Phone: Ext 136

Monica Myers
Lead Purchasing Specialist
Email: monica@ces.org
Phone: Ext 134

Bertha Ochoa
Purchasing Specialist
Email: bertha@ces.org
Phone: Ext 123

Thad Phipps
Construction Analyst (S)
Email: thad@ces.org
Phone: 575.308.3193

Lianne Pierce
Director of Ancillary Services
Email: lianne@ces.org
Phone: Ext 103

Jeanne Rayburn
Office Assistant/Receptionist
Email: jeanne@ces.org
Phone: Ext 101

Lisa Romo
Procurement & Contract
Specialist
Email: lisa@ces.org
Phone: Ext 129

Gustavo Rossell
Procurement Director
Email: gustavo@ces.org
Phone: Ext 117

Teresa Salazar
Chief Operations Officer
Email: teresa@ces.org
Phone: Ext 149

Angelina Sandoval
Ancillary Admin Assistant
Email: angelina@ces.org
Phone: Ext 119

Kara Scheib
Purchasing Specialist
Email: kara@ces.org
Phone: Ext 125

Kelley Scheib
Financial Specialist (Payroll)
Email: kelley@ces.org
Phone: Ext 107

Robin Strauser
Chief Financial Officer
Email: robin@ces.org
Phone: Ext 108

Tara Summers
Leadership Admin Assistant,
Media Assistant
Email: tara@ces.org

Yvonne Tabet
Human Resources Specialist
Email: yvonne@ces.org
Phone: Ext 113

Angela Valadez
Procurement Admin Assistant
Email: avaladez@ces.org
Phone: Ext 116

Anita Valencia
Purchasing Specialist
Email: anita@ces.org
Phone: Ext 110

Joe Valencia
Procurement & Contract
Specialist
Email: joe@ces.org
Phone: Ext 124

Victoria Webb
Purchasing Specialist
Email: victoria@ces.org
Phone: Ext 147

Valerie Yoakum
Ancillary Admin Assistant
Email: valerie@ces.org
Phone: Ext 111