

The background of the cover is a solid red color. It is decorated with white snowflakes of various sizes and shapes, some in the corners and others scattered. At the bottom, there are white silhouettes of evergreen trees of different heights. The text is centered in white, with the word 'NASET' in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below it, 'Special Educator' and 'E-Journal' are also in a bold, sans-serif font, with 'E-Journal' having a slightly larger 'E' and a hyphen.

**NASET**  
**Special Educator**  
**E-Journal**

**December 2019**

## Table of Contents

- Special Education Legal Alert. By Perry A. Zirkel
- Buzz from the Hub
- Book Review: Go See the Principal: True Tales from the School Trenches. By Miranda Freites
- Universal Design for Learning: Assistive Technology. By Rebecca Fields & Marissa Pardo
- Post-School Transition Strategies and Services for Students with Disabilities. By Lauren Bacus
- Graduation Rates Are Increasing, but Students with Special Education Needs Are Still in Peril. By Christine Powell
- Critical Analysis: Strength-Based Approaches for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities. By Natasha Quesada
- The Effect of Music Intervention on the Attention Span of Students with Disabilities. By Jovana Maximilien
- Book Review: The Mindful School Transforming School Culture through Mindfulness and Compassion. By: Amairany Paniagua
- Book Review: The Power of Positive Leadership. By Karina Constantine
- Acknowledgements

## Special Education Legal Alert

By Perry A. Zirkel

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This month's alert summarizes an unpublished federal district court decision that illustrates various current issues, including the possible child find-RTI connection and a published federal appeals court decision that illustrated the generally nondramatic impact of Endrew F. These various issues are further explained and updated in various articles listed in the "Publications" section of [perryzirkel.com](http://perryzirkel.com).

**In *Avaras v. Clarkstown Central School District* (2018), a federal district court in New York addressed a child find claim in the context of response to intervention (RTI) plus subsequent IEP FAPE and tuition reimbursement claims. The basic factual sequence was: kgn – RTI Tier 2 in reading; gr. 1 – RTI Tier 3 in reading and math plus IEE diagnosis of dyslexia, with parental request in May and district evaluation in June, resulting in eligibility and IEP for SLD for last few days of the school year; gr. 2 – unilateral placement in private school and no IEP review and proposal; and gr. 3 – district revised and proposed IEP, which included a self-contained class for language arts, resource room for 30 minutes per day, and consultant teacher services for 30 minutes per week.**

For the child find claim, the court ruled that "the duty to evaluate, at the very least, was triggered 8 weeks after [the child] started Tier 3 services in first grade." Since the district did not initiate the evaluation within a reasonable time thereafter and the evaluation revealed his eligibility, the court found that this procedural violation impeded the child's right to FAPE.

The court apparently based its specific calculation on the fact that the district's RTI program had 8-week cycles. However, reasonable adjudicators can and do reach different conclusions based on these factual features. For example, both the hearing officer and the review officer had rejected the parents child find claim in this case. The general trend is infrequent case and largely pro-district rulings.

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| For the next year, which was gr. 2, the court ruled that the district denied FAPE because it did not have an IEP in place at the start of the year, concluding that the parents' unilateral placement did not excuse the district's continuing obligation to "provide FAPE"—i.e., propose annual IEPs. | The court deftly ducked the nuances of (a) the parent's consent for initial services, which in this case was an agreement for special education but not for the district's initially IEP proposals, and (b) the district's belated IEP for grade 2, which without review merely amended the previous IEP to show the unilateral placement. |
| For gr. 3, the court concluded that the proposed IEP provided FAPE in the LRE, finding the interaction with nondisabled students at an appropriately integrated level.                                                                                                                                 | The court attributed the separable IEP problem of lack of updated information from the private school to the parents' failure to provide the requisite consent for this information.                                                                                                                                                       |
| For the remedy, the court awarded tuition reimbursement for the gr. 2 school year, finding that the private placement met the applicable substantive standard and that the equities supported this period.                                                                                             | Oddly, the court did not award compensatory education for the child find violation in grade 1. Perhaps the parents did not sufficiently raise this remedy as an issue separable from tuition reimbursement.                                                                                                                                |
| The court rejected the parents' claims (a) for money damages (as unavailable under the IDEA), (b) against the state education department (for lack of systematic violations); and (c) under Sec. 504/ADA (for lack of gross misjudgment or deliberate indifference).                                   | These various additional rulings illustrate the increasing "spaghetti strategy" (throwing multiple claims against the way in hopes that something sticks) of special education litigants and the prevailing judicial standards for each of these claims.                                                                                   |

**In *Johnson v. Boston Public Schools* (2018), the First Circuit Court of Appeals addressed various parental claims arising from the successive IEPs for an elementary school student who had a substantial hearing impairment despite a cochlear implant. The student's initial IEPs included instruction in both sign-supported spoken English and American sign language (ASL) per the recommendations of his evaluations. Despite the child's reported progress, the district agreed to change his next IEP to exclude ASL based on his mother's insistence. His subsequent progress was negatively affected by his mother's**

**intransigent opposition first to the use of ASL and, later, sign supported English; her lack of cooperation with district and clinical personnel; and the student's inconsistent use of the cochlear processor. After additional evaluations, the district proposed to increase the services, but the parent remained dissatisfied and filed for a due process hearing. As part of settlement negotiations, the district agreed to place the student in a private school for students with hearing impairments. However, the settlement fell apart during the prehearing conference, and the impartial hearing officer (IHO) subsequently issued a decision in the district's favor. After the federal district court affirmed the IHO's decision, the parent appealed to the First Circuit Court of Appeals, which encompasses Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island.**

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| First, the parent claimed that the district court had erred by ruling that she had waived her "mainstreaming" claim. The appellate court readily rejected the parent's claim, pointing out at the due process hearing she sought placement in a private school for hearing impaired students.                                                                                                                                                                                         | Perhaps attributable to the parent proceeding pro se (i.e., without any attorney) at the due process hearing, she failed to clearly preserve a mainstreaming claim via her complaint statement, the prehearing conference, and opening arguments, which amounted to waiver..                                                                                                                                                            |
| Second, she raised various challenges to the conduct of the impartial hearing officer (IHO). The appellate court ruled that (1) the IHO's reliance on the mother's statements during the prehearing conference did not violate the IDEA; and (2) the IHO's consideration of these statements, the IHO's warning that proceeding with the hearing was a gamble, and the IHO's adverse assessment of the parent's credibility did not violate the impartiality requirement of the IDEA. | (1) The Rules of Evidence do not apply to due process hearings unless state law specifies otherwise, and settlement discussions during the prehearing conference do not transform the IHO to a mediator unless the parties agree otherwise.<br><br>(2) These various instances of conduct, although arguable as a matter of best practice, did not fail the IDEA test for IHO impartiality, which is actual—not the appearance of—bias. |

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| <p>Finally and most significantly, the parent claimed that the Supreme Court’s decision in <i>Endrew F.</i> significantly raised the bar for substantive FAPE. She argued that the adequacy of the district’s challenged IEPs should be remanded to the IHO level for reconsideration, since the IHO’s and district court’s FAPE rulings were based on the pre-<i>Endrew F.</i> standard. The First Circuit affirmed rather than remanded the previous substantive FAPE rulings, concluding that the jurisdiction’s prior standard of meaningful benefit comported with <i>Endrew’s F.</i>’s formulation of being “reasonably calculated to enable [the] child to make progress appropriate in light of the child’s circumstances.” The court pointed to the similarity of the educational methodologies between the district’s original placement and the subsequent temporary private placement, which both yielded sufficient progress under the circumstances.</p> | <p>Notably, in response to the parent’s reliance on the undisputed findings that the child’s progress was “slow” and that his linguistic skills were “significantly delayed,” the court emphasized the importance of the individual circumstances. In this case, the court identified as examples of relevant circumstances for this child “his starting point and [the parent’s] own resistance to educating him. in ASL and spoken English.” Thus, neither slow progress nor more rapid progress is generalizable as the <i>sine qua non</i> of <i>Endrew F.</i> in light of its individualized, ad hoc consideration of the substantive appropriateness of IEPs. Of course, this standard is the legal minimum, and there is good reason for IEP teams to aspire to the higher bar of best practice norms as a matter of partnership with parents and adherence to professional ethics.</p> |
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[To top](#)

## Buzz from the Hub

All articles below can be accessed through the following links:

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-oct2019-issue2/>

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-nov2019-issue1/>

### Guardianship: Clashing Views from Self-Advocates and Family Leaders

This blog post from Rylin Rodgers at the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) readily acknowledges that passions are likely to flare and clash when the topic of guardianship comes up. She focuses her blog on the range of options that exist to provide support without the stripping of rights that guardianship represents—in particular, the role that supported decision-making can play.

### Seizing the Opportunity: Educating Students with Disabilities in Charter Schools

This report by the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) and the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) examines how some charter schools are improving outcomes for students with disabilities and what factors influence their ability to do so. It offers lessons for all schools working to improve how we educate students with disabilities.

### Bullying and Harassment of Students with Disabilities: Top 10 Facts that Parents, Educators, and Students Should Know

This article in the current issue of *eParent* addresses the worrisome reality of bullying of children with disabilities. [A companion article](#) focuses on the bullying of youth and those with special health care needs, and offers proactive strategies to support these students and prevent their bullying at school.

## Understood's Fact Sheets

Understood.org has redesigned 6 of its fact sheets, paring them down to 1 page, with wonderfully simple reading levels and layouts. The fact sheets in question are: [ADHD](#), [Dyslexia](#), [Dyscalculia](#), [Slow Processing Speed](#), [Developmental Coordination Disorder](#), and [Sensory Processing Issues](#).

### Videos | High-Leverage Practices in Special Education

What do high-leverage practices (HLPs) look like in use? CEC's new video series on the subject can support teacher educators and teachers with concrete, easy-to-access examples of HLPs in action, in real classrooms, with real students. Definitely a great new resource to share with schools!

### Active Listening and Effective Questioning

When a family or professional first contacts your Center, you have to gather information about *why*.

What issue or concern brings them to you? What type of help are they looking for? While many newcomers can answer insightfully, many others are not sure *what* to ask or what kind of assistance is needed. Often, you have to tease this information out of them, which is where skillful listening and questioning come in. This 8-page PDF provides lots of information about both, as well as useful examples.

### [Become a Better Listener: Active Listening](#)

This article includes a lot of information immediately useful to Parent Center staff working directly with families. Individual sections focus on 13 steps to better active listening skills, 7 communication blockers, 5 simple conversation courtesies, and the art of questioning.

### [Interpersonal Skills](#)

This article gives an overview of interpersonal skills and discusses how you can strengthen yours. The article explores listening and speaking skills in particular and looks at barriers to effective interpersonal communication. There's a free self-assessment tool that can give you valuable feedback on the quality of your own listening skills, verbal communication, emotional intelligence, and ability to work in groups.

### [School-Age Family Engagement | Online Module](#)

This online, 5-part module is all about how family-centered practice, strong family engagement, and effective communication contribute to high-quality school-age programs. The module includes sections that focus on strategies for working with and strengthening families of children with special needs, military families, and families facing challenges.

### [We Have to Talk: A Step-By-Step Checklist for Difficult Conversations](#)

This article gives a brief synopsis of best practice strategies: a checklist of action items to think about before going into a difficult conversation; some useful concepts to practice during the conversation; and some tips and suggestions to help you stay focused and flowing in general, including possible conversation openings.

[To top](#)

## **Book Review: Go See the Principal: True Tales from the School Trenches**

### **By Miranda Freites**

#### **Bibliographic Citation**

Brooks, G. (2019). *Go see the principal: True tales from the school trenches*. New York: Hachette Book Group. 190pp. \$15.99.

#### **Introduction**

The book I choose to review for this assignment is entitled *Go See the Principal: True Tales from the School Trenches* by the author Gerry Brooks (2019). This book initially caught my attention because of who the author is, Gerry Brooks. Gerry Brooks is an elementary school principal turned viral YouTube star for K-12 teachers, administrators and even parents. In short videos he tells jokes about real life issues that every faculty member at a school may relate to and even get a good laugh from. His book is a great addition to his videos, discussing with humor the events teachers, administrators and even parents may face every school year.

The book outlines that there are many opportunities for improvement in a child's educational life, in which he addressed each of them by calling out how administrators can better support teachers, teachers can better communicate with parents and parents can better understand their child's teacher, all in the spirit of serving students. Ultimately, used with a great sense of humor, Gerry Brooks' goal is to empower educators in order to empower all of us.

#### **Summary**

The author states "Administrators, teachers and parents don't always have to agree, but they need to reach an understanding through communication, compassion and compromise. It's pretty simple" (Brooks, 2019, p.xvi). As the author points this out, many educators may think this is easier said than actually done. Throughout the book, the author stresses the importance of the three factors of communication, compassion and compromise in order to better serve students.

The book starts out by being divided up into nine different sections, all compromised of the underlining factors communication, compassion and compromise. Each section of the book takes a deeper dive with much humor, the day to day encounters students, parents, educators and administrators will face in a typical school day.

The book first starts out by describing what happens behind the scenes before the bell rings at school. In particular how administrators can motivate and bond school teams while also setting up teachers and parents for a great school year. A great leader's success is depended on working through

and driving the emotions of followers in the right direction. Brooks (2019) states, “If you can get your staff bonded and optimistic ahead of time, this sets the right tone not just for the first day but for the whole year, and the benefits trickle down to the kids and parents”. This is especially true of the leader simply because everyone watches the leader. Even when the leader isn’t visible, his or her attitude impacts the mood of his direct subordinates, and a domino effect will eventually ripple through the emotional energy. In this way, the authors demonstrates the reason why a successful leader must be credible and communicate at all times.

The book then goes on to describe how having great communication and compassion is key in school administration and relationships. This idea stems from the top all the way down to the students. Part of being a great leader is being a great communicator. In a comical way the author describes “Being a principal is like being a parent. Before you become one, you have big ideas about what you will do differently and better than those who came before you” (Brooks, 2019, p.97). The author expressed how vastly different being principal is compared to being in the classroom. Some may lose site where they first started out, which was in the classroom. When being in the administrative hot seat decision making may be vastly more complicated and different in comparison to a classroom teacher’s perspective. Brooks (2019), expresses “if more administrators adopted an ‘anything I can do to support my teachers’ mentality and an ‘any feedback is valuable’ perspective, they too could work with teachers who are happy 90 percent of the time”.

In general, the author is trying to point out with endless amount of humor that in order to make a difference in kid’s lives and the lives of their parents as a team we, educators and administrators must have communication, compassion and compromise. Aside from educating as a team we should be understanding students and their home life. Brooks (2019) states, “Today’s children grow up in a world 10 times more stressful than what we ever dealt with, between overwhelmed parents, social media, and violence in schools”. Creating a safe environment is a number one factor within schools and that mood starts from the top, the jobs of administrators. Then again, safety is a team effort from all parties, parents and school officials need to work together for the well-being of the child. This idea is simply what the author is trying to say, how administrators can better support teachers, teachers can better communicate with parents and parents can better understand their child’s teacher, all in the spirit of serving students.

### Critique

The central ideas contained in this book closely parallel with Michael Fullan’s book *Leading in a Culture of Change*. Fullan (2001), argues that there are five components of leadership and they represent independent but mutual reinforcing forces for positive change. Fullan’s framework of leadership is comprised of moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making (Fullan, 2001, p.4). Brooks substantially agree with these essential concepts of leadership, just not the form of these categories.

Moral purpose, according to Fullan, “means acting with the intention of making positive difference in the lives of employees, customers and society as a whole” (2001, p.3). If leaders don’t treat others for example teachers well and fairly than the leader will be one without any followers, it is plain and simple. This idea is a common theme throughout Brooks’ book as well. Brooks(2019) states, “ I truly believe , teachers that if there’s something your struggling with, you need to go see the principal.” In other words the authors believes in an open door policy, this is an idea that he believes in and the common good for his staff. The authors also agree that effective leadership is constantly working on developing relationships at all levels of the organizations with the intentions of making a positive environment for all or at least try.

Fullan emphasizes that, “the relationships that make the difference”( Fullan, (2001) p.51). According to Fullan, “All successful organizations in a culture of change have been found to certain extent to seek diversity of employees, ideas, and experiences while simultaneously establishing mechanism for sorting out, reconciling and acting new patterns”(2001, p.75). Great leaders are able to recognize others strengths and how they may add to their organization. If all educators were all the same, collaboration would be weak not to mention differentiation would be non-existing. Fullan stresses, “...investing only in like-minded innovators is not necessarily a good thing. They become more like-minded and more unlike the rest of the organization while missing valuable new clues about the future” ( 2001, p.75).

### **Recommendation**

While reading this book I found there to be strength after strengths, primarily with the added humor twist to each chapter. The author did use some phrases I have unfamiliar with but in a creative way added a glossary. For example the author used the phrase “finger eyeballs”, going to the glossary his definition is the following, “Finger eyeballs: When you point to your eyes and then you eyeballs become your fingers; a nonverbal way of getting children to understand, at assembly, that’s you’re watching”( Brooks, 2019, p.165).

Another strength within this book and one I agree with is it stresses the importance of the three factors of communication, compassion and compromise in order to better serve students. Brooks stresses “What we model for kids make a big difference. Administrators, teachers and parents don’t always have to agree but they need to reach an understanding through communication, compassion and compromise” (2019, p.xvi). Three simple things can make a huge difference is any type of organization. His theory is effective, simple and straight to the point. Also these three factors should be emphasized daily in order to make a better tomorrow in our schools.

A weakness or flaw I found with this book was no notes or acknowledgement of knowledge building and how professionals should work together. Fullan describes that “leadership in a culture of change will be judged as effective or ineffective not by who you are as a leader but by leadership you produce in others”(2001, p.137). Fullan discusses that being a great leader is a process and one that is

something not to work on alone. Collaboration is key and a process of checks and balances. Brooks did not acknowledge any of these ideologies in his book.

After reading this book, I would defiantly recommend this book to someone wanting a good laugh while learning about leadership and how to be a better educational leader. This book ideally targets any person that works in a school system or even volunteers at a school. It seems there is a chapter for everyone to relate too and laugh along the way.

### **References**

Brooks, G. (2019). *Go see the principal: True tales from the school trenches*. New York, NY: Hachette Book Group.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass: A Wiley Imprint

[To top](#)

## Universal Design for Learning: Assistive Technology

By Rebecca Fields & Marissa Pardo

### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to define what Assistive Technology (AT) devices and services are and how students with disabilities (SWD) may benefit from these tools. Assistive technology can be no-tech, mid-tech, or high-tech devices that can be electric or non-electric in nature. These devices are meant to assist SWD and to provide them with equal opportunities to access the general education alongside their non-disabled peers. Different types of AT will be discussed as it pertains to specific cognitive and physical disabilities. The criteria to determine the need for AT will be explained.

Universal Design for Learning: Assistive Technology

### Definition of Assistive Technology

According to Sec. 300.5 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), an AT device is any item or piece of equipment that is meant to improve the functional capabilities of a SWD. This tool can be electrical or non-electric and can vary from complicated online software to simple tools, such as a pencil grip. These tools enhance a child's access to their learning environment and help them achieve goals within the school setting or outside of school. When developing an IEP for a SWD, AT must be considered to determine if the child needs the tool to provide equal access to the general education curriculum. If there is a need for an AT device, then the school must provide the tool free of cost to the parents to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). AT is not a curriculum or a framework for learning, nor is it a type of therapy. AT is geared toward addressing cognitive and physical impairments, not behavioral issues.

### Types of Assistive Technology

There are a variety of AT categories that are meant to enhance the functional capabilities of SWD. Academic and learning aids can be electronic or non-electronic aids that are for students who struggle in accessing the academic curriculum. Some of these tools include predictable books, electronic books, recorded material, etc. Aids for daily living assist the student in necessary activities of daily living that are impeded as a result of a physical disability that can affect fine motor skills, gross motor skills, or the child's mobility. These aids can be used for eating, bathing, cooking a meal, or toileting. Some examples may include adaptable utensils to eat lunch or powered wheelchair to navigate the school campus. Assistive listening devices and environmental aids assist students that have auditory impairments or hearing disabilities. These aids can be electronic or non-electric and

can help SWD access information that is usually presented aurally, such as videos or an oral read aloud. Some of these aids are amplification devices or closed captioning for students that are deaf or hard of hearing. Augmentative communication can also be either electric or non-electric and can provide a means in which SWD can communicate expressively or receptively due to a language or speech impairment. Some AT that falls under augmentative communication include speech-to-text devices for students that struggle in reading or writing (receptive and expressive communication) or text-to-speech devices for students that struggle in the area of speaking or writing (expressive communication). Computer access and instruction aids can include both input devices, such as the use of modified or alternative keyboards and the mouse, and output aids, such as speakers and headphones. These aids are beneficial for a variety of SWD who require the use of a classroom computer or their home computer to engage in learning activities, including students who have physical or hearing impairments.

Environmental control includes electronic or non-electric aids that are meant to aid students with physical disabilities that enable them to be more independent when accessing their curriculum. Some devices under this category include switches, communication apps or devices, voice-output devices, or pencil grips. Mobility aids are for students with physical disabilities that increase their mobility within the school setting and can include wheelchairs or a posture control walker. For students in the higher-grade levels, there are pre-vocational and vocational aids that assist them when they are in the process of completing pre-vocational or vocational tasks. These aids may include visual-based task analysis sheets or adapted watches and timers. Recreation and leisure aids are crucial for SWD for unstructured activities or free reading in the classroom. There are switch activated books and toys and adapted books with enlarged or highlighted text. These tools increase the students' independence during leisurely activities they may enjoy outside of academics. Seating and positioning aids are meant to allow students with physical disabilities optimal positioning when participating in the classroom. Common seating and positioning aids include Rifton chairs or a non-slip surface on chair. Visual aids are used for students who have visual impairments or blindness and can be electric or non-electric. Some aids include magnifying glasses, braille writers, or screen reading and text enlarging software (www.gpat.org, 2004).

For writing, some written language AT tools to assist students with learning disabilities includes spell checkers. A spell checker can help students who may have disabilities like dyslexia, which affect their ability to write and read. The limitation is that spell checkers do not check for grammar, and therefore if a child misuses words that sound the same, such as 'there' and 'their', a spell checker cannot detect that error. There are also speech recognition devices that allow students to speak into a microphone and the audio is converted to text on a computer screen. If the sound is not captured accurately, the child can select from a box with similar sounding words. This is imperative when a child has many superior oral expressive skills than writing skills.

For children that may have reading disabilities, a device that recites recorded texts or books can help students follow along during reading aloud. Students that struggle with fluency may also benefit from the print being read aloud through a device because difficulties in reading affect comprehension of texts. For students that may be visually impaired, Microsoft Word is a tool almost every teacher has in the classroom, and it can be used to enlarge or highlight text. This can not only aid the students with visual impairments but allow other students to focus on specific parts of a book that a teacher may highlight. One Mathematics AT beneficial for students that are deaf or hard of hearing, visually impaired, or identified as having a math or reading-related disability is a talking calculator. This tool can speak numbers, mathematics symbols, and operation symbols whenever a key is pressed. A child can visually see the problem and hear the buttons being pressed. This makes it possible for a child to double check for mistakes when solving a problem or when copying numbers or symbols on a sheet of paper.

### **Augmentative and Alternative Technology**

Augmentative communication devices are an alternative way to assist students in communicating their wants and needs using aided systems. For SWD, specifically those with speech-language or hearing impairments, the use of augmentative and alternative communications, or AAC, can be useful to aid them in communicating in the classroom setting and in the community. AAC can be the use of an electric device that can speak for the students, or non-verbal forms of communication, such as facial expression or American Sign Language (ASL). AAC has aided and unaided systems. An aided system uses a device or tool to help students communicate. A basic aided system may be a pencil and a paper or the use of pictures on a board. A high-tech aided system can be a voice output device, speech-generating devices, or the use of communication software. ([www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org))

### **How to Determine the Need for Assistive Technology**

AT is meant for students that suffer from physical or cognitive disabilities, not to be confused with struggling students who do not have a disability. Raskind (2000) developed guidelines that are meant to help determine students find suitable AT, considering the child's deficits, strengths, and the task the student wants to achieve. The first step is to determine the child's specific problem. What area is the child currently struggling in that would require the use of an AT device? For a child with visual impairment, software with enlarged text could be an aid that would benefit them in reading a text. For a student with difficulties with fine motor skills, a pencil grip or adaptive utensils would enhance their gripping skills. The tool should serve the function of the identified problem.

The child's strengths must be identified throughout this process as well. For a child who can read a text, but struggles in expressive language skills, such as speaking, a voice output device or task cards with words can be used to help them beginning bridging the gap in their communication skills. This anecdote is taking the child's reading skills into account and finding a tool that enhances the skills

the child has, while also taking the deficits into account to improve his/her learning progress. The child's weaknesses must be considered when evaluating a student for AT. When choosing a tool, consider whether it suits the needs of the student. Although a device may be used and is highly praised, an evaluator should think whether it is helpful for the student. The child should be involved in the selection process of an AT tool. The child's interest in the technology is crucial to determining whether he/she will use it in the classroom or be interested in its functions. The child will also be more motivated to learn how to use the tools in the school. The setting is also important when considering the use of AT. The location can vary from home to school, to outdoor environments. If a child requires a mobility tool to be able to move from the sidewalk to the grass, the classroom would not be an appropriate place to use that tool. The devices also need to be technologies that work together. For example, if you have a container full of switches, but the tools are not compatible with your current computer system, then it renders the devices useless. Finally, the tools must be easy to use for both the interested stakeholders and the student. Children, especially those with cognitive and physical disabilities, may struggle with memory or motor skills. The tools must be simple enough for the child to use, so he/she can operate the AT on their own after being taught how to use it. A tool that is too difficult may cause the child to lose interest in the use of becoming frustrated.

### **Assistive Technology Services**

An AT service can directly help a child select, acquire, and learn how to use an AT device. A functional evaluation must be conducted on the child to determine the need for AT and how the needs can be met through the device. As part of the service, AT devices are provided, tested, repaired, and replaced when the need for it arises. As children get older AT may need to be modified or changed depending on how the child's needs may change. There is also strong assistance in coordinating therapies and interventions with the use of the AT device, so as to teach the child how to use the device in multiple settings. Training is provided to the teacher and the child's family when necessary.

### **Why Students Need Assistive Technology**

SWD, mainly learning disabilities, suffer from impairments that impede their ability to communicate. Their receptive and expressive language, their ability to listen, speak, read, write, is impaired, which can branch out into other academic content areas. Executive functioning skills can also be reduced, including the ability to plan and prioritize tasks, organize oneself, remaining focused during an assignment, paying attention, managing time, regulating emotions, and self-monitoring. AT can assist the student in completing tasks more independently and is meant to improve the functioning of SWD so that they can use the tools in different settings (Adebisi, Liman & Longpoe, p.2, 2015).

To improve the learning of SWD who require the use of AT to access their knowledge and their physical environment, Allan (2015) listed seven principles that explained the critical reasoning

behind the use of AT in the field of education. AT is used to enhance or teach necessary skills in the classroom. It is not meant to replace skills. For example, an adaptive spoon can improve the way a student holds the utensil, or it can teach the student how to grip an eating utensil properly. AT tools are as imperative to the learning of SWD as pencil and paper are to their non-disabled peers. It is meant to help them access their learning environment to allow them to reach the same standards as their peers in a manner that is appropriate for their capacities. The use of AT is meant to provide equal access for SWD to complete educational tasks, access standard tools within the classroom, and have equal opportunities to participate alongside their non-disabled peers. This does not mean that these tools always make education accessible to students. It must be a tool that the student can benefit from using and fits the needs of that student. What may work for one student may not necessarily be used by another student. An evaluation is necessary and must be conducted by a professional that understands AT to determine if there is a need for AT or AT services. Alternative and augmentative communication needs must be addressed. The evaluation must be an ongoing process to be effective so as that AT can be changed as the students' needs begin to shift. These principles will ensure that AT is used appropriately to ultimately provide more independence for the SWD using them so as not to become dependent on other adults when transitioning out of school and into adulthood.

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[To top](#)



## **Post-School Transition Strategies and Services for Students with Disabilities**

**By Lauren Bacus**

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to explore current research regarding the various perspectives and practices of implementing transition planning before, during, and after individuals with disabilities exiting the public education school system. To examine current research on this topic, four articles were selected to analyze perspectives of educators and parents regarding transition planning and the actual implementation of transition plans. The articles found through Florida International University's online library include: Making Community Connections: Educator Perspectives on Transition Planning for Students with Intellectual Disabilities, Transition Planning for Students with Intellectual Disability, Autism, or Other Disabilities: Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2, and Transition Strategies and Recommendations: Perspectives of Parents of Young Adults with Disabilities. The fourth article, Specific Needs of Families of Young Adults with Profound Intellectual Disability During and After Transition to Adulthood: What are we missing? was found through Google Scholar. Many similarities between the four articles are noted, as well as the various flaws and implications with each study. Topics and hypotheses for future research are mentioned, and recommendations for practices regarding transition planning are shared based on participants' knowledge, concerns, and experiences.

### **Post-School Strategies and Services for Students with Disabilities**

Transition planning is a critical time for students with disabilities and should be a thorough, student-centered process that is completed in a timely manner prior to exiting the school system. This preparation should make students and parents or guardians aware of all options available for post-school programs and provide ample time to make arrangements with agencies, resources, and programs to reduce the risk of a lapse in services for students. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act "defines 'transition services' as a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed within a results-oriented process, focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child to facilitate movement from school to postschool activities," (Shogren & Plotner, 2012, p. 16). Shogren & Plotner (2012) also point out that "researchers have

suggested that adolescents with autism or intellectual disability or their families particularly struggle with the transition to adulthood” (p. 16). Schwartz, Mactavish, & Lutfiyya (2006) found in the first phase of their study that parents of students transitioning into adulthood were frustrated at the lack of information regarding the options available during this transition. Research completed by Gauthier-Boudreault, Gallagher, & Couture (2017) corresponds with other research on this topic in that the lack of information, options, and timely planning for the transition of students with disabilities into postschool services leaves a lapse in services for the student and contributes to the frustration, financial difficulties, and emotional distress felt by the parents and families. The research included in this article should support the need for a streamlined process and guidelines that will help improve the quality of transition planning for students with disabilities as they proceed through the public education system, and, ultimately, into the postschool world.

### **Methods and Participants**

The research studies cited are all qualitative studies in nature, with the exception of quantitative data also collected within the study completed by Shogren & Plotner (2012). The qualitative data collected within each study gives a more in-depth analysis into the feelings and perspectives of the various participant groups. The study completed by Schwartz et al. (2006) was a qualitative study that used a criterion-based sampling strategy to recruit a total of six participants comprised of experienced educators and administrators to be interviewed. The study completed by Shogren & Plotner (2012) used data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), beginning in 2000, from 2-year waves over the span of 10 years. The sampling from this data was a random sampling of students across the nation in 7<sup>th</sup> grade or above, between the ages of 14-16 years, and under the 12 IDEA disability categories. Parent Telephone Interviews, completed by willing parents, and the School Program Survey, completed by willing teachers were also used to compare and contrast with the quantitative data from the NLTS2. The study completed by Francis, Stride, & Reed (2018) was a qualitative study that used a three-step convenience sampling process to select interested parents of students with disabilities who graduated from a postsecondary education program within the previous four years to this study. The participants were then interviewed in person or over Skype or FaceTime. Finally, the study completed by Gauthier-Boudreault et al. (2018) was also a qualitative study that interviewed the parents from a variety of settings, urban and rural, of young adults between the ages of 18-26 years of age with profound Intellectual Disability.

### **Findings and Implications**

The findings in all four articles seemed to have the participants, both parent and educator groups, in agreement with certain concerns, issues, and suggested strategies. Overall, parents and educators from all four studies would like to see more progress and importance placed on inclusion of students with disabilities in the educational setting as well as within the community. They would also like to see better communication and create collaborative partnerships between all current and future

stakeholders, improve access to information regarding postschool opportunities and adult agencies, more efficient information dissemination, actively plan for the final transition to adulthood in advance, and create a more consistent knowledge base for educators regarding postschool transition planning and services (Francis et al., 2018; Gauthier-Boudreault et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2006; Shogren & Plotner, 2012). In addition to these main findings, the two studies explored by Francis et al. (2018) and Gauthier-Boudreault et al. (2017) involved parent interviews which emphasized the critical need for parent skill development and support. Participants in the study conducted by Francis et al. (2018) stated that they “felt relieved when they could ‘network,’ ‘connect,’ ‘compare,’ and ‘just meet and talk’ with other parents.” Participants, in this study, who were already involved in support groups, expressed how these groups also provided a way of collecting information about resources and opportunities for their child with a disability that they may have, otherwise, not received (Francis et al., 2018).

It is also important to note that participants in three of the mentioned studies shared the belief to have high expectations of students with disabilities, and not limit them to a specific post-school track prematurely (Francis et al., 2018; Schwartz et al., 2006; Shogren & Plotner, 2012). Specifically, “there are ongoing challenges with stereotypes and low expectations related to the degree to which students with autism or intellectual disability can access integrated environments postschool and the appropriateness of goals that will facilitate access to postsecondary education, competitive employment, and community integration” (Shogren & Plotner, 2012, p. 28). While this finding is a crucial point that the transition planning team must remember, it is also important to consider the opportunities available for students with severe and profound disabilities. There is still a great need to explore the options available for this population of students since “current studies mentioned the limited post-school activities for young adults with pervasive supports needs and the lack of meaningfulness of these opportunities, but it is still difficult to understand the reality of people with profound ID [Intellectual Disability] since most of articles combine participants presenting different types or levels of disabilities” (Gauthier-Boudreault et al., 2017, p. 17). The results discussed further stress how crucial *individualized* transition planning is for all students.

### **Flaws and Future Research Recommendations**

The implications from these four research studies should help spur further research into the world of transition planning and services for young adults with disabilities. Some of the flaws in the four studies analyzed include a narrow pool of participants, lack of feedback from participants validating and/or clarifying their interview responses, incongruent interview questions between parents and teachers, and lack of a more diverse participant base (siblings, both parents, young adults with disabilities, etc.) (Francis et al., 2018; Gauthier-Boudreault et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2006; Shogren & Plotner, 2012).

Many considerations for future research were mentioned in all four articles as well. Researchers could look at including more educators at all three levels (elementary, middle school, and high school) as well as across more school districts in interview discussions, and exploring the effects of a “parent-driven information-sharing network” (Schwartz et al., 2006, p. 94). They could also complete studies on factors used to determine the appropriateness or lack of postsecondary education/vocational training, employment, and independent living goals for students with intellectual disability or autism. Researchers should also examine the expectations, involvement, and collaboration of professionals and agencies as related to students with disabilities in the transition planning process (Shogren & Plotner, 2012). Additional studies on the perspectives of all stakeholders, which could include siblings, educators, and service providers would help provide a more in-depth view of various perspectives. Studying the “advantages and disadvantages of inclusive versus disability-specific opportunities and environments” would provide a more meaningful discussion regarding the spectrum of inclusion (Francis et al., 2018, p. 20). Finally, there is a large research gap regarding studies focusing on transition into adulthood for adolescents and young adults with severe and profound Intellectual Disability. Further research into the impacts of poor transition planning leading to improper placement of young adults in this population, as well as studying the “risk factors that could lead some families to live a more difficult transition” would be very valuable to help the most severely disabled student population as they transition into a postschool environment.

### **Conclusion**

In reviewing the research discussed throughout this paper, it is very clear that many more research studies need to be conducted to help educational professionals at all levels understand the importance of transitions for students with disabilities. It seems as though “schools are in compliance with the transition mandates of IDEA” (Shogren & Plotner, 2012, p. 23), however, based on these studies, there is more work that needs to be done to help streamline this process across all school districts and help parents and educators find a sense of uniformity, collaboration, and finality in planning prior to their child exiting the public school system. According to the data collected, involving a collaborative team (consisting of parents, educators, specialists, agencies, and other pertinent stakeholders) that consistently communicates and shares information in a timely manner prior to any transitions or meetings is a huge step in the right direction regarding transition planning. It is also suggested that “a ‘guidebook’ or ‘information center’ to help direct parents to available resources” is something parents would find very valuable during this process (Francis, et al., 2018, p. 16). There are many resources and various literature on these topics available, but it seems as though parents are having to look in a variety of areas for all of this information. Perhaps, a well-researched, concise, and thorough “one-stop-shop” type of resource is what parents are desiring. This could be a compilation of agencies and resources separated by particular criterion as well as specific locations or regions, and might also include a timeline of when agencies or resources

should be applied for, included in the transition process, and what other steps might need to be taken at a particular time in a child's life.

Further research on effective strategies and practices during the transition planning process can and should be a priority to those interested in studying the many facets of special education.

Transitioning into adulthood is what every educator hopes to prepare his or her students for as effectively as possible. This is especially true in the world of special education. Students need to be prepared to become as independent, self-determined, and self-advocating as possible, and this can only happen if best practices are researched and utilized.

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[To top](#)

## **Graduation Rates Are Increasing, but Students with Special Education Needs Are Still in Peril**

**By Christine Powell**

At face value, the state of American education is on an upswing; 2014 was a landmark year, with the highest graduation rate on record in American high schools. An increase in the number of students that earn a diploma has been a reliable indicator of the preparedness of our youth to pursue college and career opportunities. The upward trend in graduation rates has some scratching their heads about the trustworthiness of these numbers. The argument made, is that the uptick has been realized by a lowering of the standards, making the value of a diploma seemingly less than it once was. But until there is another way to benchmark student achievement, the diploma is the standard, and it is better to have one than not.

Absent from this conversation is an acknowledgment that graduation numbers for students receiving special education services continue to be appalling, despite alleged cutting of the criteria. Many high schoolers receiving special education services never make it to graduation, as evidenced by graduation data. In 2016, 61 percent of students with disabilities graduated from high school; a glaring 20 percentage points lower than the national average of 82 percent for students without disabilities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 2013-2014 data indicates that in 20 states, the graduation rate for students with disabilities is lower than the national average by an additional 3 percent, meaning that these students often lack the fundamental skills to move into the workforce. These same students who leave their education early are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed, less inclined to go back to school, and less likely to live on their own (Newman et al., 2001).

The silver lining is that federal initiative, to include the Civic Marshall Plan, require schools to address the achievement gaps of subgroups to include students with special education needs. The aim is to raise graduation rates to 90 percent, and have students complete at least a full year of postsecondary education or training by the year 2020. With every passing year, schools and educators are learning more about how to help students with disabilities as research continues to explore available evidence and expertise for ways to assist with the systemic challenges in working with diverse populations.

Accordingly, there are recommendations to support students with special education needs. The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) recommends several practices to prevent students from dropping out of school. Included are targeted and schoolwide interventions such as assigning adult

advocates to students, providing increased academic support and enrichment, and adopting personalized learning and strength-based teaching schoolwide. Research supports inclusive education practices, finding that across all disability classifications, students with special education needs who were in inclusion settings for the majority of the school day, graduated at a higher rate than students in disability-specific programs. Additionally, a peer reviewed study showed that effective practices to include increased collaboration between special education and general education teachers, access to core curriculum, and targeted professional development for behavior management lead to improved student achievement for students in special education. And perhaps most promising are the positive effects of student engagement in career technical education (CTE) as a remedy to the alternative to dropping out. When students with special education needs successfully participate in a CTE course, they are less likely to drop out, more apt to compete for competitive wages post-graduation, and develop the skills and attributes required for future education and training.

These recommendations, although significant and revealing, will likely not be enough to substantially close the current 20 percent graduation gap between students with special education needs and their peers in general education. Keeping students engaged and in school requires acting on the above research-based recommendations, as well as continued investment in creating an ecosystem of support. Most importantly, there needs to be transparency in graduation rates, and a targeted pledge to close the gap and ensure all students graduate ready for what lies ahead.

[To top](#)

## **Critical Analysis: Strength-Based Approaches for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities**

**By Natasha Quesada**

In the article, “Inclusion of Students with Learning, Emotional, and Behavioral Disabilities Through Strength-Based Approaches”, the authors Ampuja & Garwood, (2018), discuss the need for finding ways to maximize the educational performance of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBD) in the general education setting. More and more students with EBD are being educated in general education classes rather than separate classrooms. By promoting a growth-mindset way of thinking, students will focus on their strengths rather than deficits.

Students with disabilities, particularly those with EBD and specific learning disabilities (SLD), often develop negative feelings toward school due to past experiences with academic and social failure. These experiences cause them to have low self-esteem, negative self-worth, and cause them to have unrealistic expectations of their abilities and potential (Ampuja & Garwood, 2018). More and more students with EBD are being served in the general classroom setting rather than separate classrooms due to federal requirements of least restrictive environment. Most general education inclusion teachers do not have the experience or training to provide students with disabilities the academic and behavioral supports needed for them to succeed. Inclusion teachers must have proper skills to help students develop self-esteem and promote growth-mindset to allow students to learn (Ampuja & Garwood, 2018).

The authors Ampuja & Garwood, (2018), base their argument on the cognitive-behavior approach by stating that, “Cognitive-behavioral therapy, which informs growth mindset training, is rooted in the idea that if people change how they think, their actions will change as well.” The idea is that students with a growth mindset will see failures as learning opportunities. The opposite of growth mindset is a fixed mindset, also called learned helplessness. Students with a fixed mindset do not believe they can change their intelligence and are prone to giving up when faced with failure, rather than trying things again and persevering. Students with EBD and SLD often struggle with fixed mindset. The authors suggest the implementation of a strength-based, growth mindset perspective in the classroom by following a nine-step process.

1. Gather baseline data on students’ current beliefs and knowledge of growth mindset.
2. Define and explain growth mindset and fixed mindset by using examples, visual aides, and charts.

3. Provide examples of growth mindset using videos, K-W-L charts, and vocabulary instruction.
4. Build a growth mindset community in the classroom by valuing all students' displays of growth mindset. Use charts and bubble maps to display the use in the classroom.
5. Influence the growth mindset in the classroom by modeling through teacher behavior.
6. Allow room to grow by encouraging discussion of experiences and learning lessons.
7. Use visual displays such as bulletin boards to show examples and be reminders of growth mindset in the classroom.
8. Conscientiously use words to promote and grade the progress of growth mindset by specifically commenting on the positive behavior.
9. Generalize growth mindset beyond the classroom by helping students apply ways to use it in other aspects of life (Ampuja & Garwood, 2018).

The authors evidence their argument through a report by Snipes & Tran (2017), conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Services, "Growth Mindset, Performance Avoidance, and Academic Behaviors in Clark County School District". The evidence based study found that interventions used to target the mindset of students can "lead to improved academic outcomes through changes in student disposition toward academic work and increased academic effort" (Snipes & Tran, 2017). As students' mindset improved, their academic behaviors improved. This suggests that students, especially those with EBD and SLD, will have improvements in academic achievement if they are taught to change their thinking from a fixed mindset to a strengths-based growth mindset.

The evidence reports regarding the implementation of strength-based growth mindset for students with EBD and LD is quite convincing. The belief that high expectations for students will in turn help students believe in themselves is a common one. However, teaching children to use a growth mindset toward challenges and struggles, rather than focus on failures allow students with disabilities to create a positive self-concept and provide confidence in their ability to progress and accomplish academic and behavioral goals.

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[To top](#)

## **The Effect of Music Intervention on the Attention Span of Students with Disabilities**

**By Jovana Maximilien**

### **Abstract**

With an increasing number of students diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Learning Disabilities, and Emotional Behavioral Disorders, the traditional classroom with straight rows, a blackboard, and complete silence have become obsolete. Nowadays, students come from a multitude of backgrounds, possess different cognitive, social, and emotional abilities. The formal teaching methods are often not engaging enough for the brains of these students that are wired differently. As many students struggle with staying on-task for assignment completion, classroom engagement has become quite a challenge in the classroom. Teachers often look for motivations, engaging activities, and reinforcers to captivate and retain the attention of students with disabilities. One budding research technique in the field is the use of music intervention for students with disabilities. This literature review focuses on the effect of music intervention (background music, music therapy, music as a reinforcer) on the increase of student engagement, on-task behavioral skills, and academic success.

*Keywords:* Music Therapy, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Emotional Behavioral Disorders

The topic of this review is based on “The Effect of Music Intervention (background music, music therapy, music as a reinforcer) on the Increase of Student Engagement, On-task Behavioral Skills, and Academic Success.” The purpose of this study is to research if the integration of music in the lives of students with disabilities affects their attention span, social interaction, and the overall increase in academic performance. This study is of particular interest to my professional career as the greatest challenge of students with disabilities is engagement and on-task behavioral skills.

The articles reviewed were carefully selected through a variety of search engines, including Google Scholar, PsychINFO, and ERIC. The pieces all focus on the addition of music as therapy, background music, and as a reward.

The following articles were reviewed: “The Effect of Background Music on Learning Disabled Elementary School Students’ Performance in Writing.” (Legutko & Trissler, 2012)

“A Survey of Music Therapy Methods and Their Role in The Treatment of Early Elementary School Children with ADHD.” (Jackson, 2003); “Empowering Students with Disabilities Through Music Integration in the Classroom: Music Therapy on Student.” (Sze, 2005)

“Creating order out of chaos: Music therapy with adolescent boys diagnosed with a Behaviour Disorder and/or Emotional Disorder.” ( McIntyre, 2007)

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), "In 2017–18, the number of students ages 3–21 who received special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was 7.0 million, or 14 percent of all public school students. Among students receiving special education services, 34 percent had specific learning disabilities, 10 percent with Autism Spectrum Disorder, 5 percent with Emotional Disturbances, and 14 percent with Other Health Impairments including students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders."

The perspective on how to best educate these students and provide them the tools necessary to increase their engagement is of crucial importance to educators. At the secondary level, students with disabilities struggle with motivation and on-task behavioral skills. The addition of music interventions in the daily lives of students with disabilities has been proven effective in some cases, while in some cases, the results were not conclusive. While the research is inconclusive, it's essential to consider that an effective intervention or therapy might work for one child or group and not another. It has been my experience, working with students with disabilities that music can make a massive difference in the behavior of some students but not others. Although music therapy is not used as a form of related service yet in Public Education, it has become increasingly popular in some school districts.

### *Music Therapy and intervention*

According to the American Music Therapy Association (2010), Music therapy is a well-established professional health discipline that uses music as the therapeutic stimulus to achieve non-musical treatment goals.

"Research supports connections between speech and singing, rhythm and motor behavior, memory for song and memory for academic material, and overall ability of preferred music to enhance mood, attention, and behavior to optimize the student's ability to learn and interact. Therefore, one of the purposes of music therapy for persons with autism is to provide the individual with an initial assist using melodic and rhythmic strategies, followed by the fading of musical cues to aid in generalization and transfer to other environments. (American Music Therapy Association, 2007)

Music therapy involves the use of music intervention with visuals to address the social, emotional, behavioral, communicative, and cognitive functions. For many students with disabilities, this form

of therapy or intervention provides an age-appropriate manner to illicit change in behavior and increase the development of skills. (American Music Association, 2004)

Music therapists are often hired in schools to provide music therapy services listed on the Individualized Education Plan for mainstreamed special learners. Music learning is used to strengthen nonmusical areas such as communication skills and physical coordination skills, which are important for daily life. (American Music Association, 2007)

According to the American Music Association (2007), Music therapy interventions focus on enhancing social, communicative, motor/sensory, emotional, and academic/cognitive functioning, or music skills in individuals with ASD. Music therapy services are based on each client's abilities, noting preferences, needs, the family's values, beliefs, and priorities. Music therapists work in partnership with clients, families, and teams.

### *Background Music and Students with Specific Learning Disabilities*

According to the National Institutes of Health (2019), Fifteen percent of the U.S. population, or one in seven Americans, has some type of learning disability. These students express difficulties with expressive language, reading, and writing. It is not a disability that can be cured but a lifelong issue. "A learning disability is a neurological disorder. In simple terms, a learning disability results from a difference in the way a person's brain is "wired." Children with learning disabilities are as smart or smarter than their peers. But they may have difficulty reading, writing, spelling, reasoning, recalling and/or organizing information if left to figure things out by themselves or if taught in conventional ways." (LD Online, 2019)

In the article, *The Effects of Background Music on Learning Disabled Elementary students Performance in Writing*, Legutko and Trissler emphasize the following: *Positive Effects of Music on Student Learning, Neutral and Inconclusive Effects of Music on Student Learning, Examples of Integrating Music into Learning*. One of the hardest tasks for educators is the motivation of students with disabilities, "Educators have a problem motivating students to become engaged in the literary process, and music may be one way of fostering this engagement (Ebistuani, Donlan, & Siebers, 1991). "Integrated music experiences improve students' reading, writing, thinking, and analyzing skills and strategies by providing excitement in learning." (Collett, 1992).

It was noted that some of the students who were subjected to background music experienced positive outcomes. According to O'Bruba (1987), the use of music in the teaching of reading at the elementary level may motivate and build the ability of students, whether or not they are musically talented or intellectually above-average. O'Bruba further stated that because of similarities in the symbol structure of music and written language, left-to-right framework, and visual and auditory discrimination, music could be used in beginning reading programs for stimulation and inspiration.

Legutko and Trissler, indicate that in their research, all students improved their writing efficiency throughout the experiment. As a group, students improved by 26.9 words correct per three-minute probe from the beginning to the end of the experiment. (p.3)

When the writing scores of the students were analyzed after the experimental process, it was clear that "In both cases where there was a change in environment – adding the music and removing the music – scores dropped immediately and markedly in the week of the change. When music was added in the treatment phase, the mean score dropped from 54.1 to 50.6 (difference of - 3.6). When music was removed in the return to baseline, the mean score dropped from 71.9 to 61.7" (Legutko & Trissler, 2012, p.3)

### *Impact of Music Therapy and Students with Behavioral Disorders*

Music Therapy has also had an impact on the behavior of students who showed a lack of interest, motivation, difficulty staying on-task, and high frustration levels. The article "Creating order out of chaos: Music therapy with adolescent boys diagnosed with a Behaviour Disorder and Emotional Disorder." (McIntyre, 2007) The following subheadings: What is a Behavior Disorder? What is an Emotional Disorder? What is Music Therapy? were reviewed in the article.

Many studies state that music therapy is beneficial to adolescents with Emotional Behavioral Disorders and reduce levels of stress and anxiety. In the article, McIntyre describes students with behavioral disorders as having behaviors outside the norm like lack of focus, attention, off-task behaviors, immaturity, disorganization, nonconforming behaviors, and having difficulty interacting with peers. The common behavioral disorders include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) and Conduct Disorders (CD) (p.8)

Wasserman (1972) saw music therapy as a tool to improve emotional responsiveness, and recently Layman et al. (2002) indicated that it helps with problems of impulsivity and self-regulation. Music therapy can also help with assisting the internal organization and coordination of the mind and body (Gaston, 1968; Montello, 1996)

Music therapy in an educational setting is acknowledged by Wilson (1991) as contributing significantly to an individual's learning capacity and just as importantly in their motivation to learn. (p.61) In the article, McIntyre states that students with emotional Behavioural Disabilities can benefit significantly from the addition of music therapy in their routines. "Students diagnosed with a BD/ED participating in group music therapy sessions for a study by Haines (1989), demonstrated more immediate differences in group dynamics than those participating in verbal therapy alone. Subjects were more motivated, more willing to work together, playing, discussing, composing, and reflecting, and made more choices regarding their interactions." (McIntyre, p. 7)

In the Literature Review, McIntyre (2007) says, "Music therapy appears to be especially effective with adolescents because they already relate extensively to the music of their peer culture, and it is a familiar medium to them. It can readily provide a common starting place for discussion and self-expression. The non-verbal aspect of music makes it an excellent resource for reaching people and facilitating self-expression through an alternate means of communication. Music is often the only tool that enhances communication with this population. (p.7)

Adolescents exposed to music therapy immediately improved certain skills. As noted by McIntyre (2007), students showed "positive attitudes towards their own education began to emerge, a stronger sense of "self" became evident, improvement in classroom relationships, motivation to improve their academic results occurred." (p.13) Although the research has been proven to be positive and beneficial to adolescents with Behavioral Disorders, there is still much work to be done in the field.

"More research is needed into the effects of music therapy on adolescents and children with BD/ED's so the best clinical interventions can be conducted with adolescents and families who are experiencing these challenging behaviors. Creating an evidence base in music therapy for this client group will assist music therapy clinicians in establishing best practices in mental health care. New measuring tools need to be developed and tested to ensure their efficacy. The literature needs to be enriched to include quantitative studies measuring the effects of music therapy on young people who have been diagnosed with a BD/ED as music therapy offers potential to attend to the cognitive deficits that few other interventions can address." (McIntyre, 2007, p.16)

### *Music Therapy and Students with ADHD*

According to the American Psychiatric Association, an estimated 8.4 percent of children and 2.5 percent of adults have ADHD. ADHD is often first identified in school-aged children when it leads to disruption in the classroom or problems with schoolwork. It can also affect adults. It is more common among boys than girls. (2017)

"Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common mental disorders affecting children. ADHD also affects many adults. Symptoms of ADHD include inattention (not being able to keep focus), hyperactivity (excess movement that is not fitting to the setting) and impulsivity (hasty acts that occur in the moment without thought)." (APA, 2017)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder can present itself in three different types: inattentive, hyperactivity/impulsive, and combined types. Scientists have not yet identified the causes of ADHD; however, the number of students diagnosed is increasing at an alarming rate. These students struggle with remaining focused and therefore completing their assignments. For many students, music can be an outlet where they feel free to feel and express themselves. Often the use of

background music, or playing an instrument provides them with the sensory stimulation they continuously crave.

In the article, A Survey of Music Therapy Methods and Their Role in the Treatment of Early Elementary School Children with ADHD by Jackson (2003), research was focused on the different areas: Music Methods Used with ADHD children, Goals Addressed by Therapy Methods, Music Therapy Treatment Formats for ADHD Students, and Perceived Effectiveness of Music Therapy Treatment for ADHD. In the article, Jackson focuses her study on the fact that music therapy is being used for students diagnosed with ADHD, the effectiveness of the treatment and the role of music therapy contingent to other treatment plans. (Jackson, 2003, p. 4)

In the study, "Subjects were asked to indicate the types of goals they address in music therapy for children with ADHD. Behavioral goals were identified by 92 respondents (94%), psychosocial goals were identified by 87 respondents (89%), and cognitive goals were identified by 68 respondents (69%). Most respondents indicated that they address two or more types of goals, and 81 (83%) ranked the types of goals according to the frequency with which they address them." (Jackson, 2003, p. 6)

According to Jackson, Music Therapy was requested mostly by parents and teachers. Significant improvement was noted on the behavioral, social, and cognitive aspects for some of the children, therefore, adding mandated music therapy on these students' IEP's. The respondents of the survey indicated that the students gained attention, on-task behavior improved, and there was an increase in self-esteem, self-expression, and frustration tolerance. "Most respondents indicated that the role music therapy plays in the treatment of ADHD children is multidisciplinary. It seems that a multidisciplinary approach may be the best for this particular population since, by definition, children with ADHD will present problems in multiple functional domains and in multiple settings." (Jackson, 2003, p.16)

The article "Empowering Students with Disabilities Through Music Integration in the Classroom: Music Therapy on Student." (Sze, 2005) focuses on the following subheadings: Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders, Students with Behavioral Disorders, Students with Learning Disabilities. In the article, Sze focuses on the numerous positive effects of music for students with disabilities and the importance of music intervention in the inclusion setting. She proclaims that music contributes to higher academic development, an increase in cognitive levels, and social skills. (Sze, 2005, p.82)

"Music creates physiological responses, which are associated with emotional reactions. Music explains the tension release sequence associated with emotional arousal (Abeles, 1980). The speed and intensity of the musical beat creates the different feelings in each type of song. The

opportunity to play an instrument can be used as a reinforcer for on task behavior.” (Sze, 2005, p.81)

In her research, Sze emphasizes the importance of empowering students with choice. She indicates that students with disabilities should be involved in the learning process thus allowing the students to select music as a reward, attending individual or group music therapy sessions, and using background music while completing an assignment.

“The author also argues that music can be used as a tool to encourage human development in cognitive, learning, perceptual, motor, social, and emotional development. In a related study, Stambough (1996) conducted an action research at a music camp to 37 campers ages from 9-45, each suffers varies degree of a genetic condition called Williams Syndrome, which leads to cognitive impairment. She found that several strategies and techniques, combined with a great deal of patience, helped to accommodate the special needs of the students. Other researchers suggested steps for facilitating the integration of students with emotional or behavioral disorders into the regular music classroom. Results gathered from King & Schwabenlender (1994) reported various supportive strategies for promoting emotional well-being in children from a diverse background. Allow children to be expressive provides them with a sense of empowerment.” (Dixon & Chalmers, 1990).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the research conducted on the “The Effect of Music Intervention on the Attention Span of Students with Disabilities” remains inconclusive. Although most authors indicated an overall increase on the social, emotional, and cognitive abilities of the students the quantitative data remains inconsistent. Most teachers and students interviewed expressed positive outcomes relating to the application of music interventions, but the numbers were more neutral. Students with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorders, those with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, and the students with Autism seemed to benefit the most from the studies. The application of music intervention is a growing trend in schools, and in the world of therapies. Although not yet widely accepted as a related service in all school districts, there is a significant amount of research and study praising the addition of music therapy or interventions for students with significant cognitive and behavioral disabilities. Perhaps, adding music intervention as a form of praise or accommodation in the student’s Individualized Education Plan is the next step in the quest to find the best possible learning environment for students with Disabilities.

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[To top](#)

## **Book Review: The Mindful School Transforming School Culture through Mindfulness and Compassion**

**By: Amairany Paniagua**

The Mindful School Transforming School Culture through Mindfulness and Compassion is a book that provides school leaders and their personnel with strategies that can help increase students academics as well as their social, emotional functioning, through the use and implementation of mindfulness and compassion-based programs. The authors Patricia A. Jennings and other contributors, review case studies, evidence-based practices, and use their collective personal experiences to help guide new and old school administrators in the ever-changing modern school system. They encourage school leaders to analyze and think about how implementing mindfulness and compassion-based program at their school will help them better serve their staff, students, parents, and themselves.

As mindfulness begins to have a more prominent presence in our educational system, it is essential to understand what it is; mindfulness is defined as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.” In the book, the authors discuss how using mindfulness-based educational initiatives can help support teachers manage the occupational stressors involved in teaching. When this happens, teachers can better support their students in the classroom. Rather than merely reacting to a situation, they encourage the reader to stop, listen, and see what is going on before they act on impulse.

When it comes to mindfulness-based programs, some of the primary goals of the programs discussed were to help students, teachers, and other school staff find skills and strategies that will allow them to manage stress and their emotions, while also teaching them to work with others to reach their goals cooperatively. The programs reviewed in this book lasted anywhere from 6 weeks to a full academic year, they also required specialists to come out and help teach the staff at schools how to identify and use mindfulness-based strategies in their classroom. While it is essential to be trained adequately, one must think about how this cost will affect a school where there is barely enough money in the budget to purchase books for the academic year.

Jennings defines compassion as “the process of recognizing suffering and the motivation to relieve suffering.” In the book, Jennings reviews some of the tell-tale signs of a student suffering--from signs that are obvious such as crying, to other signs that are not so obvious, such as acting up. Teachers are often the first to realize that a student is suffering; however, they require the support of the administration to help the students who may be suffering. When administrators and teachers use a

mindfulness-compassionate based program, they can work together to support all students in the classroom--especially those who may be suffering.

Many readers of this book will realize that the entire transformational process proposed by the authors can be difficult to do and difficult to implement. Things have to change, and mindsets have to be rewired to correct some of our mistakes from the past. However, while it may take years to see change happen fully, it is essential to know that things will change for the better. Some studies reviewed by the authors were also found to have “inconsistent or nuanced” data with regards to the effects of mindfulness programs at schools. This data could be one of the reasons why some people may be hesitant to implement a mindfulness program at their school, especially a costly one.

When compared to Michael Fullan’s book, *Leading in a Culture of Change*, one of the primary similarities is the focus on relationships when it comes to implementing lasting change. Forming relationships with peers, parents, and students is crucial in helping everyone meet their maximum potential. Working together allows people to develop “empathy and compassion” for the respective role of each member in a school community plays. When speaking about a school community, the authors are not only talking about teachers and principals; they are also talking about the parents and students that attend the school. As stated in the book, “...high-quality education relationships and attachments are central to healthy human development.” Not only are high-quality education relationships central to human development, but they also help students who come from vulnerable populations grow both educationally and emotionally.

The book ends with looking at the future of education and how the use of mindfulness and compassion-based programs will affect students, parents, teachers, and school leaders, and how contemplative teacher education programs may better prepare teachers for today’s educational world. Contemplative education means to “deeply consider one’s connection to a subject or discipline in unbiased, selfless, compassionate, and holistic ways.” The authors of the book found that using contemplative methods in teaching produced sustainable and meaningful personal and community transformations in teaching and learning. This type of teaching is based on teachers looking within themselves to learn and grow through their own experiences in and outside of the classroom. Ultimately, mindfulness and compassion-based programs are meant for creating a better future, not fixing the present.

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The Mindful School Transforming School Culture through Mindfulness and Compassion

Patricia A. Jennings, Anthony A. DeMauro, Polina P. Mischenko; The Guilford Press, 2019, 271 pp, \$32.00

[To top](#)

## Book Review: The Power of Positive Leadership

By Karina Constantine

Gordon, J. (2017). *The Power of Positive Leadership*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.

ISBN-13: 9781119351979 is *The Power of Positive Leadership* written by Jon Gordon and published April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Hoboken, New Jersey by Wiley. It costs \$12 on Amazon but you can also purchase a hardcover copy for \$22.50, or an audiobook version for \$17.83 from Barnes and Nobles. It has 187 pages and is 5.7(w), 8.6(h) and 0.9(d).

“Being positive doesn’t just make you better, it makes everyone around you better”. In his book *The Power of Positive Leadership*, Jon Gordon explains how he grew up in Long Island New York in a Jewish-Italian household with lots of love and guilt, but a lot of negativity as well. This in turn led to him always being a very negative person, so much so, that his personal life was in disarray, and with a rebellious teenage daughter and a wife about to leave him, he had to do something dramatic. He decided to do a 180-degree turnaround and transform from being a negative oaf to being a positive influencer and game changer. With the success of his transformation, he decided to write this book to not only show people how there is a power associated with positive leadership, but to also explain how and why positive leaders make such a marked difference. Gordon continues by providing a framework of positivity for leaders to follow, providing examples for each to show why and how this framework of positivity is so successful. It includes positive leaders: a) driving positive cultures, b) creating and sharing positive visions, c) leading with optimism, positivity, and belief, d) transforming and removing negativity, e) creating united and connected teams, f) building great relationships and teams, g) pursuing excellence, h) leading with purpose, and i) having grit. By following this framework, Gordon believes that positivity is the answer to building a successful life and career, no matter who you are or what you do.

Gordon starts his book with data from research by Manju Puri that shows how optimistic people work harder and achieve more. He also looks at research by Wayne Baker that confirms the opposite, namely that negativity affects morale, performance and productivity. Based on this research, he sets up his framework by giving great examples of successful leaders who build positive cultures within their settings. He argues that positivity is contagious, and that the time put into creating a positive culture is imperative for success. His arguments are not only very valid, but he also uses very powerful and real examples to support his opinions. He then carries on to talk about creating a positive vision, in establishing that “if you have a vision, then you have the power to make it happen”

(p. 32). He then backs his opinion up with numerous great examples, including fortune 500 companies, famous sports coaches and renowned education leaders. His arguments are profound, backed up with proof and numerous examples, as he moves into the subject of optimism, positivity, and belief. He uses the “positivity” and “negativity” dogs to show how people are always at a constant battle to choose either positivity, or negativity, and again backs it up, this time with an example of the Campbell soup company, who fought through major recession and came back on top with a staff full of positivity and optimism. The most powerful section is the one that talks about “positivity needing to be greater than all the negativity” (p. 72). It even goes as far as to establish not even being negative about negativity, and he uses Michael Phelps as a great example in this section. My favorite arguments about positivity, are the incorporation of communication and unity. Gordon really stresses the idea of teamwork, and again backs his opinions up with multiple examples in education, sports and business. His two strongest points are that “communication builds trust” (p. 104), and “where there is a void in communication, negativity fills it” (p. 106). Finally, he touches on positive leaders striving for excellence, always having a purpose, and never giving up. Many of Gordon's opinions are similar to Michael Fullan's *Leading in a Culture of Change*, especially his chapters on purpose, communication and teamwork, but where Fullan focuses on using change to bring about positivity and success within leadership, Gordon focuses on creating positivity and optimism as the driving force for successful leadership and lifestyles.

*The Power of Positive Leadership* is a great and very inspirational read for everybody. Even though it is aimed at leaders, it inspires and reflects on people in all positions, within all careers, as well as all personal situations. It is a feel-good book that uplifts the reader and gives practical examples of how the framework can be followed and lived by. He has truly established a way of living and not just leading, that can transform lives in every setting and at every age. Where Fullan's book is a great read for anybody in a leadership position, Gordon's book is a fantastic read for everybody period! It is not overly academic, and can be related to by young and old. I would recommend this book to middle and high school students in addition to ninety-year old's, and everything in between. Its strengths are its relatability and inspirational examples, and its only weakness is that it sometimes becomes a little redundant, but I would definitely recommend investing in this book. It will transform you!

[To top](#)

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[To top](#)

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[To top](#)