



**December 2025**

# **NASET Special Educator e-Journal**

*Exceptional Teachers Teaching Exceptional Children*

## Table of Contents

<b>Special Education Legal Alert</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Buzz from the Hub</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Update from the U.S. Department of Education</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Effectiveness of Literacy Approaches for Students with Disabilities and Second Language Learners</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>General Education Teachers in the Inclusive Classroom: How Prepared are they?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Screen Time and ADHD: Implications For Families Raising Children With Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>29</b>

## Special Education Legal Alert

Perry A. Zirkel  
December 2025

This month's update identifies two recent court decisions that cumulatively revisit the recurring issues of child find, eligibility, substantive FAPE, tuition reimbursement, and IEEs at public expense, with the rising issues of attendance and after-school services. For related publications and special supplements, see [perryzirkel.com](http://perryzirkel.com)

<p><b>On September 22, 2025, the federal district court in New York issued an unofficially published decision in <i>R.F. v. New York City Department of Education</i>. The child in this case is a 10-year-old with severe deficits in academics, communication, sensory processing, self-help skills, and behaviors. In June 2023, the child's parents notified the IEP team that in the absence of an appropriate placement they would continue his placement in a private school and would seek reimbursement for his tuition and after-school services, which were applied behavior analysis, occupational therapy, and speech-language therapy. Soon thereafter they filed for a due process hearing seeking said reimbursement and funding for an independent educational evaluation (IEE) by a neuropsychologist. During the hearing, the district did not provide any evidence. Moreover, the district conceded that (a) it had failed to propose an appropriate placement for the child and (b) there were no equitable circumstances against tuition reimbursement. For the remaining issue for tuition reimbursement, the hearing officer ruled that the private school was appropriate. The resulting remedy was to reimburse the \$132k tuition for 2023–24, but not the parents' costs for either the after-school services or the IEE. The parents appealed the denied reimbursements.</b></p>	
<p>The parents argued that after-school services were warranted because the relevant equitable analysis was limited to the reasonableness of each side's conduct for which they had been cooperative participants in the IEP process.</p>	<p>Disagreeing, the court ruled that the equitable factors extended to the reasonableness of the costs in relation to the requirements for FAPE and that the after-school services, which were designed for generalization and maximization, were not necessary under the <i>Andrew F.</i> standard based on the individual circumstances of this case.</p>
<p>The parents argued that the IEE reimbursement was warranted because the district had failed to provide the required triennial reevaluation and, thus, the general requirement to convey disagreement does not apply.</p>	<p>To the contrary, the court concluded that the disagreement prerequisite applies to IEE reimbursement, and if no (re)evaluation, the parents' recourse is to request one and, if the district does not provide it, challenge the failure at the due process hearing.</p>

This decision is specific to its limited jurisdiction in New York, but it presents two issues that are relatively novel and suggest a resolution for future iterations elsewhere that may be persuasive. Note that the IEE ruling represented a blanket approach, whereas the after-school services ruling was based on the individual circumstances.

**On November 10, 2025, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which covers Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, issued an officially published decision in *A.P. v. Pearland Independent School District*, addressing child find and eligibility under the IDEA. After generally satisfactory attendance and achievement in the district during the earlier grades, A.P. was homeschooled in sixth grade. For grade 7, she returned to the district, missed 10% of her classes, and failed the state proficiency exams. In grade 8, the district responded with targeted interventions, and she passed all of her classes, although her attendance issues remained until the COVID-19 pandemic hit toward the end of the school year. She struggled with attendance during distance learning, which ended in late November of grade 9. The parents rejected the school officials' recommendation to move her from advanced to on-level classes. Upon completion of ninth grade, she had approximately 25 absences, for which the parents provided various excuses (e.g., family trips, indigestion, and menstrual cramps), and failed 5 of 7 classes. She attended summer school to make up for 3 of the 5 failed classes. For grade 10, the school again recommended, and the parents again rejected, switching to on-level classes. The absenteeism pattern continued, and the school suggested its special program for extra help. AP applied and was accepted for the extra-help program, but her parents did not permit her participation. Instead, in February of that school year, her parents withdrew her from the district for homeschooling. In the following September, they filed for a due process hearing and informed the district that they suspected that A.P. had dyslexia. During mediation, the district offered an evaluation for special education eligibility under the IDEA, but the parents refused consent. Instead, at their attorney's suggestion, they arranged for an independent educational evaluation (IEE) by a neuropsychologist. The IEE report, which did not include teacher input or a classroom observation, concluded that A.P. had specific learning disabilities in reading and math, but not dyslexia or ADHD. Upon receiving the report, the district scheduled an IEP team meeting, which the parents did not attend. The team determined that the IEE did not provide sufficient information to determine eligibility due to the lack of in-class performance data. After a due process hearing, which revealed that the neuropsychologist was not aware of A.P.'s homeschooling in grade 6 and her subsequent continuing attendance problems, the hearing officer ruled that the parents did not meet their burden to prove a child find or eligibility violation under the IDEA. Upon appeal, the federal district court affirmed. Next, the parents filed an appeal with the Fifth Circuit.**

The parents claimed that A.P.'s chronic absenteeism, poor grades, and teachers' concern combined to trigger the district's child find duty well before the district's initiation of an evaluation upon their filing for a hearing.

The Fifth Circuit was not persuaded. The court concluded that the absenteeism was not triggering factor in the absence of evidence of a suspected underlying disability linkage and that the poor grades were reasonably attributable to the absenteeism and parental refusals for the district's responsive recommendations.

The parents claimed that the neuropsychologist's IEE proved that the child was eligible under the IDEA in light of her chronic absenteeism and poor grades.	The Fifth Circuit reasoned that A.P.'s "consistent absences prevented her from receiving appropriate instruction" and that the IEE lacked evidence of the need for special education.
Both child find and eligibility continue to be individualized determinations based on multiple factors, with attendance continuing to be a difficult variable, but the parents' actions in this case certainly did not augur well for a favorable adjudicative outcome.	

---

### Buzz from the Hub

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-november2025/>

#### **Holiday Overwhelm: Resources for Families and Providers**

The holiday season is often filled with joy, but it can also bring added stress and overwhelm for many families. In this blog post, the **California Training Institute (CalTrin)** provides resources available to help parents and caregivers manage their stress as well as information on organizations that provide assistance to families.

Read the blogpost [here](#).

#### **Could Assistive Technology Help Your Child?**

This article explains how assistive technology (AT) can be valuable for providing immediate support while other services or therapies are still being explored and implemented. AT can range from simple tools like picture schedules or stress balls to advanced text-to-speech software and can help children who struggle with communication, sensory regulation, learning, or social interaction, even before a formal diagnosis.

Read the article [here](#).

## **U.S. Department of Education Announces Release of Record \$500 Million for Charter Schools Programs**

In case you missed the announcement, the U.S. Department of Education announced the release of 500 million dollars for charter school programs. The Department will award an additional \$51.7 million in supplemental funding to existing State Entity grantees to support the creation or expansion of charter schools focused on civics education; career and technical education; and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, among other innovative charter school models.

**Read the announcement [here](#).**

## **Resources for Your Teen, from 14 to 21 Years: Overview**

The article from Informing Families outlines key resources and steps for supporting youth ages 14-21 as they prepare for adult life. It focuses on early transition planning, building independent living and employment skills, and leveraging school-based services before they end at age 21.

**[Read the article here.](#)**

## **Supported Decision Making**

When a young person with a disability reaches the “age of majority,” their legal rights shift from their parents to them. This means they begin making their own decisions about things like school, health care, and finances. Many young adults benefit from support when making decisions, and there are options and resources available to help. This page provides resources to guide families and youth through this transition.

**[Explore the resources here.](#)**

## **Cultivating Leadership: Mentoring Youth with Disabilities**

This page from the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) outlines how mentoring can play a vital role in supporting youth with disabilities by developing leadership, interpersonal, and career-readiness skills. It also highlights the research-backed benefits of mentoring (such as improved academic outcomes, self-confidence, and work-transition success) and identifies characteristics of effective mentoring relationships.

**[Access the page here.](#)**

### **From Intention to Impact: Implementing the Adult Ally Toolkit**

Join Erin Black and Michael Scanlon for a practical walk-through of the Adult Ally Toolkit—a resource created to strengthen youth–adult partnerships and elevate youth voice in everyday practice. Learn how to launch the toolkit in your program and adapt its tools, stories, and podcasts to support meaningful youth engagement across your organization. This session includes a rapid tour of the final product and practical next steps for using the Adult Ally Toolkit as the powerful conversation starter and implementation tool it’s designed to be.

When: Monday, December 15th, 2025

Time: 2 pm ET

**[Register Here!](#)**

## Update from the U.S. Department of Education

<https://www.ed.gov/>

### **Birth to Grade 12 Education-Resources**

<https://www.ed.gov/birth-to-grade-12-education>

### **Available Grants**

<https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/apply-grant/available-grants>

### **U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon Participates in White House Roundtable on Left-Wing Ideological Capture of Universities**

December 3, 2025

U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon participated in a roundtable discussion with university leaders, think tank professionals, and education advocates about the need for reforms to address the far-left ideological capture of American universities.

### **U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon To Kick Off National “History Rocks!” Tour**

December 2, 2025

Today, U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon announced the U.S. Department of Education’s (the Department) History Rocks! Trail to Independence Tour.

### **U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon and Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin Celebrate 50th Anniversary of IDEA at Virginia School**

December 1, 2025

Secretary Linda McMahon, Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin, and Acting Assistant Secretary for OSERS Kimberly Richey visited Winding Creek Elementary School in Stafford, VA to celebrate IDEA's 50th anniversary.

### **U.S. Department of Education Announces New and Improved Portal for Universities to Report Foreign Funding**

December 1, 2025

Today, the U.S. Department of Education notified institutions of higher education of a new foreign funding reporting portal, set to launch on January 2, 2026.

### **Secretary McMahon Statement on Northwestern University Deal**

November 28, 2025

A statement from U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon on the Trump Administration's deal with Northwestern University.

### **U.S. Department of Education Announces Five Appointments to the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity**

November 25, 2025

U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon appointed five new members to the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity.

### **U.S. Department of Education Initiates Review of University of California, Berkeley for Potential Clery Act Violations**

November 25, 2025

Today, the U.S. Department of Education's office of Federal Student Aid initiated a focused review of UC Berkeley in response to a violent protest that erupted at a November 10, 2025, Turning Point USA event on its campus.

### **Myth vs. Fact: The Definition of Professional Degrees**

November 24, 2025

President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act placed commonsense limits on federal student loans for graduate degrees. This fact sheet sets the record straight regarding the proposed treatment of nursing programs under new lending limits.

### **U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon and University Leaders Participate in Higher Education Roundtable at the White House**

November 19, 2025

Today, Secretary McMahon and Under Secretary Nicholas Kent participated in a roundtable discussion with university leaders, think tank professionals, and education advocates about the need for bold reforms to restore public confidence in higher education.

**U.S. Department of Education Announces Six New Agency Partnerships to Break Up Federal Bureaucracy**

November 18, 2025

ED announced six new interagency agreements to break up the federal education bureaucracy, ensure efficient delivery of funded programs, activities, and move closer to fulfilling the President Trump's promise to return education to the states.

**U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon Announces Additional Appointment to the National Assessment Governing Board**

November 17, 2025

U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon today announced the appointment of former Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant to the National Assessment Governing Board.

**U.S. Department of Education Announces Richard Lucas to Serve as Acting Chief Operating Officer of Federal Student Aid**

November 14, 2025

The U.S. Department of Education today announced that Richard Lucas will serve as the Acting Chief Operating Officer of Federal Student Aid. Mr. Lucas previously served as Chief Financial Officer of Federal Student Aid.

**U.S. Department of Education Celebrates Senate Confirmations for Additional Education Leadership**

November 13, 2025

On October 7, the U.S. Senate voted to confirm Kimberly Richey as Assistant Secretary for the OCR, Kirsten Baesler as Assistant Secretary for OESE, Dr. David Barker as Assistant Secretary for OPE, and Mary Christina Riley as Assistant Secretary for OLCA.

**U.S. Department of Education Releases Seven Priorities Under the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education**

November 10, 2025

The U.S. Department of Education today unveiled seven priorities under the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education for the FY 2025 competition.

**U.S. Department of Education Concludes Negotiated Rulemaking Session to Implement the One Big Beautiful Bill Act's Loan Provisions**

November 6, 2025

The Department concluded its negotiated rulemaking session, where the Reimagining and Improving Student Education Committee reached consensus on the entire package of federal student loan-related changes advanced by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

## **Effectiveness of Literacy Approaches for Students with Disabilities and Second Language Learners**

*By Shannon Dix*

The primary functions of a school-based team meeting are to analyze student progress, identify areas of weakness, and determine interventions to increase the student's performance in a specific area. To do this, the team needs to understand the similarities and differences between language acquisition in second language learners and students with disabilities. Different methods to instruct both subsets of students must be discussed before an intervention can be implemented. This literature review aims to explore the effectiveness of different educational approaches used for teaching literacy skills to both second language learners and students with disabilities by discussing their implications for practice and research and identifying future directions for research.

Based on the various resources I consulted, I have made several observations. Tribushinina et al. (2023), focused on the effectiveness of cognates to enhance cross-linguistic awareness as part of an English as a Foreign Language curriculum. I have seen this strategy work at my school, particularly in the dual language Spanish program, however, one of the drawbacks is that students need to have a good grasp on vocabulary in their primary language. Many of my students with learning disabilities aren't able to keep up with the rigor of the dual language program and are moved to a monolingual classroom. Without the additional instruction in Spanish, the effectiveness of the cognate instruction is lessened.

Hall et al. (2020), focused on nurturing inference generation to integrate information within or across texts to create new understandings. The researchers focused on English language

learners at varying levels of English proficiency and below-average reading comprehension skills and used direct instruction including guided practice, modeling via think-aloud, inference-eliciting questions during reading, and graphic organizers in a gradual release model. All of these strategies work well with both second language learners and students with disabilities. The only flaw I find in their research, is that the control group worked independently with a computer program and did not receive any direct instruction. To determine its true effectiveness, I would like to see a future study comparing this inference generation strategy to another direct instruction method.

In research completed by Knaak et al. (2021), the effects of a multicomponent intervention consisting of storytelling, flashcards, and a reward procedure was evaluated. They combined visual, verbal, and gestural support to assist in learning along with group motivational components. This method uses a combination of established English Language Learner (ELL) and Students with Disabilities (SWD) instructional strategies. Merging visual, verbal, and gestural support allows learners the opportunity to absorb information in a variety of ways. The use of a graphic organizers provides students a more structured note taking approach. This multifaceted approach supports both types of students being discussed.

Sanabria et al. (2022) researched the effectiveness of a reading comprehension intervention called EMBRACE. Of all of the methods I researched, this one had the poorest results and the narrowest target audience. While the idea of the program would be a fun activity for students to practice retelling stories, it does not appear to be an adequate intervention for either ELLs or SWDs. Future research with this program might include a leveling component which would place students at their appropriate reading level and adjust instruction accordingly.

Bishara (2024) looked at the correlation between diglossic reading skills and reading comprehension in students with and without learning disabilities. Diglossia refers to a variation in languages which is used under different circumstances. In this study, it compared colloquial Arabic to literary Arabic. Arabic speakers learn that each language variety serves different communication purposes. The research aimed to prove that differences in reading levels (comprehension, accuracy, and fluency) are diglossia dependent. His conclusion included a statement that I feel is sometimes lacking in schools. After a team has meticulously researched to find an appropriate intervention, implemented the intervention, and tracked progress, we either move toward evaluation or discontinue the intervention. His conclusion recommends that students who have been discontinued need to have post-intervention monitoring. We do this at my school, but based on data coming in from other school sites, most schools do not.

The effectiveness of the TWA strategy was researched by Firat (2019). This strategy is based on Self-Regulation Strategy Development (SRSD) wherein students rehearse asking themselves questions as they read a text to monitor their own understanding. The goal is for the student to be able to use the strategy independently. The research was conducted on a very small sample of students (3) all of whom had diagnosed learning disabilities. This strategy is not as teacher friendly as some, as there is a heavy scaffolding process and a lot of teacher talk at the beginning of the process. However, this strategy works well with students who are willing to accept responsibility for their own learning and want to improve their reading abilities.

Okur and Aksoy (2025) delved into a cognitive intervention focusing on increasing students' verbal working memory (VWM). In their efforts to strengthen cognitive capacity for linguistic processing, the researchers taught specific memory techniques with an increasing level of difficulty every week of the four week intervention. Many students with a specific learning

disability have a deficit in VWM. The researchers wanted to target their intervention at the root of the problem. I like the idea of treating the “illness not the symptoms.” Often, as special educators, we see low scores on initial evaluations, but I have never thought to try and target those areas to improve student performance. I am curious about replicating this intervention at my school site.

In conclusion, the need to support second language learners and students with disabilities in the area of reading proficiency is widely known. There are many different methods and approaches to supporting these students. In this literature review, we looked at instructional methods with a focus on cognate instruction, inference generation through direct instruction, a multicomponent story telling method, a computer program (EMBRACE), the impact of diglossic learners, the effectiveness of the TWA strategy, and the effect of an intervention targeting verbal working memory. Each investigation revealed strengths and weaknesses within the literacy instructional approach. More research is required for each of these approaches, however, I believe that there are a few methods which show promise for both second language learners and students with disabilities. Among them are the inference generation through direct instruction approach and the multicomponent story telling method. Both of these methods use teacher modeling and prompting to guide students in their thinking. They also use multiple methods to share information including visual, verbal, and gestural. The use of graphic organizers and visual aids also support multiple levels of English acquisition and intellectual ability. I believe that both of these approaches would support the learning needs of second language learners and students with learning disabilities. Future research could combine these methods and compare them to a control group being provided a more classic, stand and deliver type instruction. I would also like to incorporate the cognitive strategy of strengthening students’ verbal working memory skills.

Improving a core component of the cognitive process would support student learning across content areas.

### **References**

Bishara, S. (2024). Predicting reading comprehension by reading level and diglossia: a comparison between diglossic first grade students with and without learning disabilities. *Online Submission*, 3(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.17613/6xgy-me56>

Firat, T. (2019). Effects of the TWA strategy instruction on reading comprehension of students with learning disabilities. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 43(2), 24–54. <http://erquarterly.org/>

Hall, C., Vaughn, S., Barnes, M. A., Stewart, A. A., Austin, C. R., & Roberts, G. (2020). The effects of inference instruction on the reading comprehension of English learners with reading comprehension difficulties. *Remedial and special education*, 41(5), 259-270. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932518824983>

Knaak, T., Grünke, M., & Barwasser, A. (2021). Enhancing vocabulary recognition in English foreign language learners with and without learning disabilities: effects of a multi component storytelling intervention approach. *Learning disabilities: a contemporary journal*, 19(1), 69-85. <http://www.ldw-ldcj.org/>

Okur, M., & Aksoy, V. (2025). The effect of verbal working memory intervention on the reading performance of students with specific learning disabilities. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(3), 356. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15030356>

Sanabria, A. A., Restrepo, M. A., Walker, E., & Glenberg, A. (2022). A reading comprehension intervention for dual language learners with weak language and reading skills. *Journal of speech, language, and hearing research*, 65( 2), 738-759. [https://doi.org/10.1044/2021\\_JSLHR-21-00266](https://doi.org/10.1044/2021_JSLHR-21-00266)

Tribushinina, E., Niemann, G., & Meuwissen, J. (2023). Explicit cognate instruction facilitates vocabulary learning by foreign language learners with developmental language disorder. *Child language teaching and therapy*, 39(3), 248-265. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02656590231202177>

## General Education Teachers in the Inclusive Classroom: How Prepared are they?

*By Benja Short-Lindros*

### **Introduction:**

Are teachers coming out of educational programs ready to teach in the inclusive classroom? Research has shown that general education teachers are often not prepared for the demands of teaching in an inclusive classroom setting. This may be due to their lack of prior training, or just the teacher's perception that they are not prepared. Teachers who received training in a higher academic education program that includes practical experience in an internship center felt more prepared than those who received training in a university classroom (Garcia-Vallès et al., 2024). Training for the inclusive classroom has many ideas they need to instill in the new teachers, such as how to differentiate instruction, how to include all students in the classroom, and how to manage behavior. New teachers are unable to learn the previous skills mentioned in a classroom reading from a book, they need to have hands on training. Another problem general education teachers face is lack of adequate support in an inclusive classroom. This support can affect the learning environment and how teachers may include students with disabilities (SWD). What can be taught in higher education teacher programs to better prepare teachers for the needs of an inclusion classroom? How can the school community support the general education teacher? What is needed to have a successful inclusive setting?

### **Training in the Universities**

Higher education institutions need to take the lead in training teachers who come prepared for teaching in the inclusive classroom. These training courses need to encompass the

skills the new teacher will need to be successful in meeting the needs of all students. It has been shown that educational programs do not have adequate coursework in special education or the inclusion classroom. Often training to prepare teachers is woven into other coursework or taught in individual courses. Research has shown that educational programs should incorporate practicum experiences to help the student teacher explore and develop their beliefs while learning effective strategies to meet the diverse needs in the classroom (Jordan et al. 2009). Having teachers complete an extensive practicum is not only beneficial for the novice teacher, but also for the school where the practicum is being conducted. It helps teachers in developing classroom management skills, that aren't effectively learned through lectures or textbooks. Student teachers also provide extra support in the classroom in which they complete their educational training. This practicum also provides the opportunity for the soon to be teacher to practice and learn about collaborating. It has been found that collaboration between a general education teacher and special education teacher is needed to have a successful inclusive classroom (Harvey et al. 2010). It seems the best way to ensure new teachers are prepared would be to concentrate on initial teacher education which will help schools implement inclusive policies and practices (Marin 2014). Ninety-one percent of teachers in the Marin (2014) study agree that a specific set of skills should be taught to create a classroom environment that respects the needs and diversity of every student. If teachers are required to provide SWD specialized instruction, then they should be provided the training to support and understand pedagogical methods to meet the learning objectives of the students. Natural views surfaced in the study conducted by Harvey et al. (2010) which suggested educational programs needed to include time to create collaborative initiatives and courses across different disciplines and majors. The educational programs also need to implement team teaching or co-teaching lessons into their

trainings as the general education teacher and special education teacher will often have to work together in the same classroom.

Studies inquired if a teacher's belief can affect what or how things are being taught in the inclusive classroom and if it would help to change how a teacher feels about their roles and responsibilities to raise the effectiveness of teaching practices (Jordan et al. 2009). Not only do we need to have effective training in higher education institutions, but training also needs to continue for the experienced teacher through professional development. This professional development needs to include up to date practices to ensure teachers are learning and improving how they teach and interact with all students in their classrooms, not just SWD.

### **Support in the classroom**

Not only do new teachers need to have effective training to be successful in the inclusive classroom, but they also need support from the whole school community. Without extra assistance from support staff, administration, other teachers, and the parents, the inclusive classroom and the teacher at the front of the room will not be successful. The expectations which the principal sets regarding inclusion, along with individual teachers' beliefs about their roles and responsibilities in including SWD, influence teaching methods and this in turn affects student outcomes (Jordan et al. 2009). Without this support the teacher feels unable to meet the needs of all the students in the classroom. Monsen et al. (2013) states that teachers who feel unsupported in their classrooms by support staff are most likely to have negative attitudes when it comes to including SWD. These negative attitudes leads to poor learning outcomes for the students. The school community, including parents, need to work together to ensure students have the best outcomes in an inclusive setting.

### **Conclusion**

More research and questions need to be addressed before a perfect education program can be created to ensure teachers can be fully prepared to teach in the inclusive classroom. The studies all indicate the need for training that includes specific courses for special education alongside training in general education not just embedded in a curriculum (Harvey et al. 2010). To help teachers have a successful inclusive classroom where students perform well and feel safe, higher academic institutions need to ensure teachers are prepared to differentiate instruction and include all students in the classroom. Teachers also need a practicum to gain skills on how to manage behavior of all students.

### **References**

- Garcia-Vallès, X., Martín, M. B., Gavaldà, J. M.S., & Romero, A.P. (2024). Students' perceptions of teacher training for inclusive and sustainable education: From university classrooms to school practices. *Sustainability*, 16(10), Article 4037.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su16104037>
- Harvey, M.W., Yssel, N., Bauserman, A.D., Merbler, J.B. (2010). Preservice teacher preparation for inclusion an exploration of higher education teacher-training institutions. *Remedial and Special Education*, 31(1), 24-33. <http://rase.sagepub.com>
- Horne, P. E., & Timmons, V. (2009). Making it work: Teachers' perspectives on inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 13(3), 273–286.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110701433964>
- Jordan, A., Schwartz, E., McGhie-Richmond, D. (2009). Preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms. *Teacher and Teacher Education*, 25, 535-542.  
<https://doi:10.1016/j.tate.2009.02.010>

Marin, E., (2014). Are today's general education teachers prepared to face inclusion in the classroom? *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 142, 702 – 707.

<https://doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.601>

Monsen, J. J., Ewing, D. L., & Kwoka, M. (2013). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, perceived adequacy of support and classroom learning environment. *Learning*

*Environments Research*, 17(1), 113–126. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-013-9144-8>

## **Screen Time and ADHD: Implications For Families Raising Children With Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder**

*By Raena Lee Whittingham Thelwell Eccles*

### **Introduction**

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a commonly diagnosed neurodevelopmental disorder affecting children worldwide, with symptoms that include inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity. As digital technology has become deeply integrated into modern family life, researchers have increasingly examined the relationship between screen exposure and ADHD symptoms and family functioning. Such screen exposure encompasses television, smartphones, tablets, gaming, and more. Screen time presents both opportunities and risks for children with ADHD, influencing not only behavior and attention but also parent-child relationships, routines, and the ways families navigate disability. For families raising children with ADHD, the management of screen time has become an emerging challenge that blends cultural, behavioral, and psychological considerations. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing evidence-based, family-centered interventions that promote healthy child development while maintaining realistic expectations in a digitally driven society.

### **Literature Review**

Research consistently suggests a relationship between increased screen exposure and elevated ADHD-related symptoms, though causality remains complex. Screen exposure has proven to affect the brain. In an analysis of screen time and neurodevelopment, Shou et al. (2025) identified differences in children's brain structures with high screen exposure, suggesting that specific patterns of media use may influence neural pathways underlying attentional

regulation. Their findings support the hypothesis that screen time may exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities in children predisposed to ADHD.

Along with the brain itself, screen time affects the development of the child. Wu et al. (2025) examined screen habits among children ages 1–3 and found that both the amount and type of content were associated with ADHD risks. Children who viewed fast-paced or overstimulating content demonstrated significantly higher rates of inattention and impulsivity. These higher rates may indicate that screen quality may be as critical as quantity. Tamana et al. (2019) found that preschoolers who exceeded recommended daily screen limits showed an increased likelihood of inattention problems. Notably, the study emphasized that family routines (such as sleep schedules and co-viewing practices) moderated these effects, demonstrating the significance of family engagement and structure. In an extensive longitudinal study, Murray et al. (2025) found that greater daily hours of television and video viewing during early childhood were associated with higher ADHD symptoms later in development. The authors employed counterfactual modeling to mitigate confounding effects, thereby strengthening the finding that early screen exposure may play a significant role in attentional outcomes.

Past early childhood, excessive screen usage also impacts those encountering adolescence. Research has examined the social and educational implications for adolescents. Paulich et al. (2021) analyzed data from the U.S. Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study, showing that increased recreational screen time in early adolescence was associated with lower academic performance, reduced social well-being, and raised mental health concerns. These outcomes suggest broader developmental impacts beyond symptom severity. Likewise, Wallace et al. (2023) demonstrated that excessive screen time predicted higher impulsivity and growth in ADHD symptoms from early to late adolescence. The authors

argued that screen-induced overstimulation could reinforce rapid reward-seeking behaviors while complicating emotional regulation.

### **Family And Disability Framework**

When considering ADHD within a family and disability framework, it becomes evident that the condition affects the entire family system. Parents, siblings, and caregivers must adapt daily routines, disciplinary practices, and communication strategies in relation to the child's attentional and behavioral patterns. Families raising children with ADHD often navigate the dual challenge of supporting learning needs while managing behavioral regulation, thus causing tasks to become more complex in an environment saturated with digital distractions. Screen use can both ease and strain family interactions. It may provide short-term relief or shared entertainment, but prolonged or unregulated exposure can heighten dysregulation and reduce opportunities for social bonding.

Moreover, family responses to screen time may stem from cultural norms and access to resources. For instance, families from collectivist or high-expectation educational cultures may interpret screen use as either a developmental threat or an academic tool, influencing their management strategies. In contrast, families emphasizing independence may permit greater screen autonomy, unintentionally reinforcing ADHD-related impulsivity. Therefore, culturally responsive approaches must consider family beliefs about education, discipline, and technology while offering practical guidance tailored to their realities.

## **Personal Perspectives Grounded In Research**

Grounded in the reviewed literature, my perspective aligns with the growing consensus that screen time does not cause ADHD but can exacerbate its manifestations and interfere with treatment and family cohesion. Excessive exposure to rapid, overstimulating media appears to amplify difficulties with attention and emotion regulation (which are core features of ADHD) while eroding consistent routines that are essential for symptom management. I also believe the research underscores the importance of balance rather than prohibition: structured, co-engaged screen use that integrates parental involvement can foster positive experiences and teach self-regulation.

Families may need guidance in establishing predictable routines, clarifying screen limits, and sharing digital activities. Furthermore, educators and clinicians must acknowledge parental stress by offering strategies that are feasible and non-judgmental. Families with fewer resources or greater work demands should receive tailored recommendations, such as short and structured breaks rather than unrealistic screen bans.

## **Recommendations And Best Practices**

Based on the collective findings from the reviewed literature, several evidence-based recommendations can emerge:

1. *Parental Co-Engagement*: Parents should actively participate in their child(ren)'s screen activities, discussing content and modeling balanced technology use.
2. *Predictable Routines*: Consistent schedules with designated screen times can help children with ADHD anticipate transitions and reduce behavioral outbursts.
3. *Behavioral Parent Training (BPT)*: Integrating BPT modules that include technology management can empower families to reinforce positive behaviors.

4. *Culturally Responsive Guidance*: Interventions should respect diverse family values and access to technology while promoting healthy digital habits.
5. *Collaborative Support Systems*: Schools, clinicians, and community organizations could partner with families to provide consistent expectations across settings.

## **Conclusion**

The intersection of ADHD, family life, and screen exposure presents a multifaceted challenge that requires a systems-oriented, culturally sensitive approach. Families raising children with ADHD navigate unique pressures in regulating both behavior and technology, often balancing clinical recommendations with real-world demands. As research continues to evolve, one message remains clear: empowering families with practical, empathetic, and evidence-based guidance is essential for supporting the well-being of children in an increasingly digital age.

## **References**

- Murray, A., Casey, H., Wright, H., Zhu, X., Yang, Y., Li, X., Xiao, Z., King, J., Kostyrka-Allchorne, K., & Sonuga-Barke, E. (2025). The effects of tv/video viewing hours on later ADHD symptoms: a counterfactual analysis in longitudinal population-representative data. *BMC Pediatrics*, 25(1), 673. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12887-025-05973-2>
- Paulich, K. N., Ross, J. M., Lessem, J. M., & Hewitt, J. K. (2021). Screen time and early adolescent mental health, academic, and social outcomes in 9- and 10- year old children: Utilizing the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development <sup>SM</sup> (ABCD) Study. *PLoS One*, 16(9). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256591>

- Shou, Q., Yamashita, M., & Mizuno, Y. (2025). Association of screen time with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder symptoms and their development: the mediating role of brain structure. *Translational Psychiatry*, *15*(1), 447. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41398-025-03672-1>
- Tamana, S. K., Ezeugwu, V., Chikuma, J., Lefebvre, D. L., Azad, M. B., Moraes, T. J., Subbarao, P., Becker, A. B., Turvey, S. E., Sears, M. R., Dick, B. D., Carson, V., Rasmussen, C., Pei, J., & Mandhane, P. J. (2019). Screen-time is associated with inattention problems in preschoolers: Results from the CHILD birth cohort study. *PloS One*, *14*(4) <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0213995>
- Wallace, J., Boers, E., Ouellet, J., Afzali, M. H., & Conrod, P. (2023). Screen time, impulsivity, neuropsychological functions and their relationship to growth in adolescent attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder symptoms. *Scientific Reports*, *13*(1), 18108. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-44105-7>
- Wu, J., Yang, Y., Zhou, Q., Li, J., Yang, W., Yin, X., Qiu, S., Zhang, J., Meng, M., Guo, Y., Chen, J., & Chen, Z. (2025). The relationship between screen time, screen content for children aged 1-3, and the risk of ADHD in preschools. *PloS One*, *20*(4). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0312654>

## Acknowledgements

Portions of this or previous month's *NASET's Special Educator e-Journal* were excerpted from:

- Center for Parent Information and Resources
- Committee on Education and the Workforce
- FirstGov.gov-The Official U.S. Government Web Portal
- Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals (JAASEP)
- National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth
- National Institute of Health
- National Organization on Disability
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Education-The Achiever
- U.S. Department of Education-The Education Innovator
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Department of Labor
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- U.S. Office of Special Education

The **National Association of Special Education Teachers** (NASET) thanks all of the above for the information provided for this or prior editions of the Special Educator e-Journal

Sarah S. Ayala, LSU | Associate Editor, NASET e-Journal