

# SPED NEWS

Parent and Staff  
Edition



March 2006  
Sandy Enloe, Director  
Special Education  
Sevier County Schools  
[www.slc.sevier.org](http://www.slc.sevier.org)

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## Helping Students Avoid Boredom

by Dr. Cecil Blankenship, ETSU

How often have you as a parent or teacher heard a student say, "I am bored?" Probably more times than you would like to recall. Even as adults we encounter many tasks in life such as household chores that could become routine and boring. Students on the other hand tend to view school work and other assigned tasks as boring. The average attention span for adults is about twenty minutes and probably less for children so it no wonder that tasks and chores that exceed that timeframe have the potential to become boring. It is difficult for children to have the same sustained

*continued on page 2 Helping Students*

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## Directors MEMO Transitions

I would like to thank everyone for their support as the special education department has gone through so many recent changes. The first was the relocation of our offices to 320 Cedar Street. We are comfortably settled in and find our new location works very well. We are grateful to all those who helped with the move and worked so hard to give us such a pleasant place work.

Our next big change occurred when our director, John, assumed a new position as the Director of Pupil Personnel Services. I then stepped into the role of director in December. For those of you I haven't met, I would like to introduce myself. I am a lifelong resident of Sevier County. My husband and I have four children. The oldest three children have already graduated from Sevier County schools, with the youngest still in middle school. I began teaching in Sevier County in 1975. My first teaching assignment was at Wearwood Elementary School, the same school I attended as a child. Over the years, I have served in many teaching roles, both in special education and general education. I have watched the school system evolve as a student, parent and educator and feel that we have made tremendous progress over the past several years. It is wonderful to see how the school system is successfully meeting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The transition into my new role has been relatively easy, as the department and programs are effective and well established. This is primarily due to the fact that the previous director maintained a progressive approach to programming for our special education students and always maintained the best interest of the students as the focus of the department. His efforts over the last eight years have yielded wonderful results.

Another reason that special education in Sevier County is so successful is due to the quality educators and support personnel. We are very fortunate that those individuals who work with students are not only skilled and dedicated, but also very caring. They are making a difference in the lives of children and providing them the skills they need to be successful. They are greatly appreciated, as are the numerous others who work so hard to keep everything running smoothly and efficiently, and make it possible for services to be effectively delivered to our students.

I welcome your suggestions and recommendations. I want us to continue to strive toward improvement and progress and feel that can best be achieved through our combined efforts.

Now, let me share some additional information with you, as we begin the challenge of educating students in this dynamic technical age. Special Education and Assistive Technology are important components of any school's over-

*continued on page 2 Memo*



**Flexible In-service  
Special Education  
from the Parent's  
Perspective**  
panel  
May 1, 2006  
3:45 to 5:45pm  
SCHS library

## Helping Students *continued*

attention to a task that adults have.

Fortunately there are strategies that parents and teachers can employ that might reduce the possibility of a task becoming boring for children. Variety, physical activity and time intervals when used properly can help to alleviate the possibility of boredom.

Everyone likes a change in environment sometimes. Whether this means changing the furniture at home or rearranging the desks at school. Sometimes people benefit by simply working at a different location. For example a child at home who normally does her/his homework in his/her room might be more inclined to work if allowed to sit uninterrupted with an adult who is working at a desk or kitchen table. The social companionship of the adult might also encourage the child by showing the child the work is also important to the adult. It is important for the adult not to interrupt the child's work or allow the child to engage the adult in conversation that is unrelated to the assigned task. Teachers might allow one student to exchange seats with another student in order to complete his/her work. The teacher might also exchange classrooms with another teacher for a single class period or an entire day. Be sure the principal is aware of and gives her/his permission for this arrangement. Children might benefit from being allowed to work at the board instead of his/her seat at times. This also allows the student to have some physical activity in addition to the changed environment.

Another effective method of coping with boredom is active participation. It is difficult to become bored while one is actively engaged in a task. Whenever possible allow children an opportunity to actively and physically participate in a learning situation. Standing while reading or spelling a word or writing an answer on the chalkboard are all methods that allow active participation in the learning event. Planned stress breaks after sustained periods of focused work are also useful in alleviating boredom. Parents might allow the child to get a snack after an appropriate time interval of intensive work.

The time interval for sustained concentration is also an effective method of increasing focus time without boredom. The time interval for each child will vary with the age, maturity level and physical activity needs of the child. Parents and teachers should determine an appropriate expected attention period and gradually increase focused attention until the target time is reached. An egg timer works well for this. In the beginning the child may only be able to focus 3-5 minutes, but by gradually increasing expected focus time the child should be able reach 20-30 minutes of focused time.

The next time your child says, "I am bored" try to provide some variety, encourage active and physical participation and establish a reasonable time interval for focused attention. Ω

## Director's Memo *continued*

all education program. One thing that is quite surprising, considering the links available through the department's web site at <http://www.slc.sevier.org> is how many quality sites have appeared over the last two years. The WWW is a work in progress! Here's a sampling of the best that's out there.

### Autism-PDD Resources Network

<http://www.autism-pdd.net>

This up-to-date and informative site on the diagnosis and treatment of the range of autistic disorders; covers testing, treatment, the law, IEPs, related services, respite care and a parent guide. Check out their special education and autism state by state database.

### Disability Accommodations

<http://www.as.wvu.edu/~scidis/combine2.html>

Here's a site that offers specific teaching strategies for varied disabilities, including speech, hearing, behavior, ADHD and learning disabilities. Each section offers tips and tricks on general courtesy, teaching strategies, group interaction and discussion ideas, and more. Great for a teacher accommodating a child with a disability for the first time.

### Hoagies Gifted Education Page

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org>

This searchable site is devoted strictly to gifted education and is divided up for parents, teachers and kids. Topics covered include Internet investigations, counseling the gifted, curriculum, grouping and gifted children in the middle school setting.

### Jillene's Disabilities Resource Page

<http://members.aol.com/jylbear>

Jillene Hass is a special education teacher in Wisconsin who offers this hotlist to other teachers looking for support in working with children with disabilities. The page has a nice clean format that is easy to reference. It's a great starting point for finding sites on a specific topic.

### KidSource: Disabilities

<http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/pages/dis.physical.html>

Here's a site that not only lists and annotates disabilities-related online resources, it rates them and ranks them accordingly. There's A Guide to Children's Literature and Disability and NICHCY: Assessing Children For The Presence Of A Disability, to name a couple. All links are KidSource titles but are of high quality.

**LD Online** - <http://www.ldonline.org> This is a definitive LD site, with offerings for kids parents and teachers on an array of LD topics, updated weekly! Includes an online newsletter, bulletin boards, an Ask an Expert service and support on where to find help for your specific needs.

**Director's Memo** *continued***Marc Sheehan's Special Education/Exceptionality Page**

- <http://www.halcyon.com/marcs/sped.html> Marc has spruced up his site so that it now offers an alphabetical hotlist of some of the best websites on special education. This site is a testament to what teachers are doing for each other online through their own experiences! Be sure to see his lesson plans page and educational resources page while you're there.

**NCIP** - <http://www2.edc.org/NCIP> The National Center to Improve Practice in Special Education through Technology, Media and Materials site consisting of discussions, guided online tours, the art and writing connection, an online library, video profiles, links and a mailing list.

**Resources for Early Childhood Special Education** - <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/pep/pz.html>

There's lots of lesson ideas, well-developed activity suggestions, and even Boardmaker files and Intellipic games brought to you by the Preschool Zone, with links to the companies authoring these technologies as well. The site hasn't been updated in a while but the materials here are worthwhile enough to recommend.

**SERI** - <http://seriweb.com> Special Education Resources on the Internet is an intensive collection of hotlists on all kinds of special education topics, including Inclusion Resources, Disability Products and Commercial Sites and Transition Resources. Each list is annotated to help you save time and effort.

**Special Education Website** - <http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/curry/dept/cise/ose> University of Virginia's hotlist to Special Education Information, Resources on the Internet, Categorical Information, Links, Special Education Professionals and Parent Links. What set this apart is the professional format and the usefulness of the resources for educators.

**Special Needs Opportunity Windows** - <http://snow.utoronto.ca> This University of Toronto page offers online professional development, curriculum resources, educator support, technical assistance, web resources, teacher discussion and a kids' section. The Best Practices section offers ideas by disability.

**Suessville**- <http://www.seussville.com/seussville>

This one is just for fun. It is a site for children, but adults like it too! Ω

**Special Education from the Parents' Perspective**

by Jeff Romanczuk, [jeffromanczuk@sevier.org](mailto:jeffromanczuk@sevier.org)

This section of the newsletter will focus on the learning that happens when our students *aren't* at school. I'll be the editor, but that doesn't mean I'll always be the writer. We want to have you the parents contribute articles, especially when your family has just gone through (or is going through) events other families could learn from. This could be anything from getting through the initial diagnosis process to applying to legally represent your child once she or he has turned eighteen. Call or e-mail me with ideas for future editions.

I hope it isn't news to you that Sevier County has a Special Ed Parent Advisory Committee (SpEd PAC). We started meeting in February of 2003 and are always ready to listen to new ideas and work on new projects. The next meeting of the SpEd PAC is March 9, 6 to 7 pm at the SpEd Department, 320 Cedar Street, Sevierville (across Gary Wade Blvd from the Police Station).

The final meeting of the year for the SpEd PAC will be the evening of May 1st, 6 to 7 pm at Sevier County High School library. Just before this meeting, from 3:45 to 5:45, a panel of parents of special education students will talk about special education from their perspective. This parent panel session is an after-school inservice that we do every few years because the teachers always get a lot out of it. However, parents can learn a lot from it, too, and are encouraged to attend. I expect to get some ideas for future "parent perspective" columns from that session.

***Humor at School***

from the Speech Language website of  
American Guidance Service

I have a 5-year old who is working on a "me" for I substitution. He was sent to the office and had to sit in time out with his head down on the desk. I was walking into the office and heard him crying and moaning "What was me thinkin'?...What was me thinkin'? . He heard me come in and turned to see me standing there. He turned back around, put his head down on the table and began to moan "what was I! thinkin'?"

Submitted by Tammy Houchens, SLP,  
Brandenburg, KY

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# THE MONITOR aka COMPLIANCE ISSUES

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*Improve*  
*def: To make better to bring*  
*nearer to some standard*

This will be a new feature from the Department of Special Education. As a result of our recent monitoring we decided that some things need to be emphasized regarding case management and the attendant paperwork.

Periodically a MONITOR Flyer will go out and it is suggested that you keep these for future reference. If you have a question that needs an answer. Please send it to Nancy Wohl at the SPED Dept. [nancywohl@sevier.org] for inclusion in a future issue of *THE MONITOR*.

*All in all our recent monitoring went well!!*

*We were better than the state average on percent of youth's with an IEP graduating high school with a regular diploma. So we got a pat on the back for that...more pluses will follow in future issues.*

*Areas for Improvement---*

- 1) Be sure that IEP's and reevaluations are completed before the due date. The census will drop the kids that are out of date even by one day!!!
- 2) INVITATION TO A MEETING form has changed slightly. Download the new one and print it out. Begin using it immediately. First we added a sentence at the bottom for a 10 day notice waiver. Be sure you get the parent to sign this if they agreed to meet in less that 10 days from invitation. Another change is the addition of student to the possible invitees.
- 3) Leave NO blank spaces!!!! Use N/A if necessary or add a comment to indicate that thee was discussion. REPEAT Leave NO blank spaces!!
- 4) Have all the required people present for every meeting and make sure that the teachers who did not attend sign the IEP in the appropriate place.
- 5) Transition Plans - Address transitions on page 2 the Present Levels of Performance [PLOP] page. Fill in all four years of the transition plan. Seek out any possible agencies that might be involved in transition planning. On the Invitation to a Meeting be sure to check "To consider the need to develop or revise the student's transition plan" and be sure the student and other agencies are invited.

More to follow...We suggest you file this where you can easily retrieve it or hole punch and keep in a notebook. If you have a question send it to nancywohl@sevier.org...I'll try to get an answer for you. Ω