



# The Director

Volume 39, Number 4 - May 2019

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THE DIRECTOR is published by the Missouri Council of Administrators of Special Education (MO-CASE)

3550 Amazonas Drive  
Jefferson City, MO 65109  
Website: [www.mo-case.org](http://www.mo-case.org)

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Communication Chair  
Director of Special Education

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Vicki McNamara, MO-CASE President

MO-CASE is dedicated to the professional development and support of administrators of special education within Missouri's educational settings.

It is hard to believe that May is here and we are quickly approaching the end of the school year and my first year as President of MO-CASE. What an exciting year it has been!

I hope you had the opportunity to attend both of our conferences this year: the annual MO-CASE Special Education Administrator's Conference held at Tan-Tar-A in September and the MO-CASE Law Conference/Distinguished Speaker Series held in conjunction with the 3rd Collaborative Conference in Columbia during March. Both were amazing learning opportunities. Each year the Professional Development Committee works hard to identify keynote speakers who bring excitement and knowledge to our attendees. This year, the keynote speakers were outstanding and the sessions were great! Registration is now open for the 42nd Annual MO-CASE Special Education Administrator's Conference held in Osage Beach at the new Margaritaville Lake Resort formerly known as Tan-Tar-A. We have had the opportunity to tour the new facilities and I know the renovations will impress you. Please register soon.

As you read about in the March issue of the The Director, our committees are working hard to implement the goals of the organization. If you are interested in becoming involved in the work of MO-CASE, reach out to the committee chairs; many are still accepting new committee members.

One of the action steps on our Strategic Plan was to conduct one Business Meeting virtually. By now, you should have received an invitation to review current information regarding our financial status and to vote for a chair for the Membership Committee. As a MO-CASE member, it is incumbent upon you to be active in your professional organization; participation and voting is one vehicle to demonstrate active membership. Thank you in advance for your participation in our first virtual Business Meeting.

I wish you a strong end of the school year and productive planning for next year. The MO-CASE Board of Directors are meeting in early June to plan for our organization's next year. I am excited about what the Board of Directors will be bringing to our membership and the collaboration efforts we have in place with other organizations.

As always, I appreciate the opportunity to serve as President of MO-CASE and to work with dedicated professionals across the state. The work our members do for students with disabilities makes me proud to be an educator. If you are interested in becoming active in MO-CASE, please feel free to reach out any of the Board of Directors or me. We are happy to find ways for you to participate.

See you in September in the beautiful Lake of the Ozarks for our 43rd Annual MO-CASE Special Education Administrator Conference!

Vicki McNamara, EdD.  
MO-CASE President  
Director Special Education, Camdenton R-III School District

# Advocacy Committee

## Policy & Legislation Update

By Steven Beldin,  
Director of Innovation & Learning

### Current Legislative Issues

The Missouri legislative session concludes on May 17th. During these final weeks there will be lots of deal making. Bills which appeared to be on track to pass will go nowhere and others which were presumed dead will come back to life. Take the time to read the School Administrators Coalition (SAC) Bulletin which comes out every Friday afternoon, and make a point to contact the State Senator or Representative for your school district and for where you live regarding legislative issues of concern; it makes a difference.

The following bills impact special education or relate to students with special needs:

**HB 957 (Pike) and SB 272 (Emerson)** Excludes any money reimbursed to school districts for the costs of special education from the calculation of average daily attendance in determining expenditures eligible for reimbursement from the High Needs Fund. This is beneficial to school districts. SB 272 has been voted to pass out of committee and is on the formal calendar of the Senate for perfection (amendments).

**HB 1023 (Mackey)** This bill addresses definitions for seclusion and restraint, reporting requirements, and parent rights for review and complaint. A revised version with significant input and revision from MO-CASE has been voted to pass out of the House Elementary and Secondary Education committee and referred to the Rules committee. While it seems unlikely that this bill will make it to the finish line on its own it may be attached to other bills which are moving as an amendment. Regardless of what happens with HB 1023, it is important to note that Seclusion and Restraint has reemerged as a major issue nationally. Be sure to review your district policy with all staff regularly, including school resource officers, and monitor to be sure that seclusion or restraint are only used as a last resort to prevent physical injury, not for student compliance. Promptly inform parents of any incidents.

### **SB 249 (Koenig) Alternative Disabilities Act, now known as the Collaborative Special Services Act**

#### Bill Summary:

*SCS/SB 249 - This act creates the Collaborative Special Services Agreement Act. The act allows a parent, guardian, student who has reached the age of majority, or a public school to initiate the request for an agreement that special education services or supplementary aids be provided by a privately contracted, appropriately state certified provider.*

*The public school is prohibited from discouraging or prohibiting a parent, guardian, or student who has reached the age of majority to negotiate or consent to such an agreement. Costs related to the services or supplemental aids shall not be discussed as a part of the negotiation of such an agreement, and any contract for services or*

*materials related to such agreements must be approved by the school board. Services or supplementary aids be provided by a privately contracted, appropriately state certified provider.*

*The public school is prohibited from discouraging or prohibiting a parent, guardian, or student who has reached the age of majority to negotiate or consent to such an agreement. Costs related to the services or supplemental aids shall not be discussed as a part of the negotiation of such an agreement, and any contract for services or materials related to such agreements must be approved by the school board.*

*The terms of such an agreement may include provisions for partial or full enrollment of the student in the public school, and the services and supplementary aids the public school will provide. Such agreement may continue until the end of the student's annual Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Services Plan (ISP) cycle, and may be extended or modified with agreement from the parent, guardian, or student who has reached the age of majority, and the public school.*

*An agreement may be initiated when a student may not have advanced appropriately toward attaining the annual IEP goals, when the IEP or ISP accommodations or modifications have not been provided, or when special education and related services may not have been available from licensed or appropriately state certified personnel through the public school.*

*The education of students with disabilities shall, to the maximum extent appropriate, be with students who do not have disabilities, and shall attend regular class, except in the case of a disability resulting in violent behavior which causes substantial likelihood of injury to the students or others.*

*The public school must provide to parents, guardians, or students who have reached the age of majority information regarding where special education services, related services and supplementary aids may be obtained, the public school's criteria for such services, and the public school's criteria under which the services and supplementary aids are obtained.*

As noted in the last issue of The Director, the IDEA and related Missouri law and regulations already provide parents with recourse for lack of progress or inadequate IEPs, and hopefully district staff already negotiate in good faith during the IEP process. Districts already can and do contract for services as needed. There is no need for this legislation. While this bill does not require that districts agree to alternative services it creates the impression of rights that do not exist, and would most likely lead to confusion, conflict and perhaps increased use of private services, rather than expansion and improvement of public services.

SB 249 has been voted out of committee but has not proceeded further in the process as of this date. MO-CASE is strongly opposed to this bill and will alert membership if there is any action with it.

Steven Beldin is the Director of Innovation and Learning for the Missouri Council of Administrators of Special Education (MO-CASE).



## Professional Development Committee

### New Directors Academy 2019: A Game Plan for a Winning Season

By Marlena Walley, Professional Development Chair

The Office of Special Education will be hosting a New Directors Academy for anyone who will be serving as the director of special education for the first or second time during the 2019-2020 school year. The academy will focus on the duties a new director will complete during their first few months.

Superintendents, Special Education Directors, Process Coordinators, and Special Education Teachers are all invited to attend the event at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City.

The finance portion of the New Directors Academy will be offered July 23-24, 2019. It is recommended that bookkeepers attend with the new directors. Finance Academy enrollment will open May 1st. The instructions for enrollment will be sent in a separate SELs message. Topics will include:

- ePeGs
- coding and tracking expenditures
- cash management
- time and effort documentation

The compliance and data portion of the Academy will be held on July 25-26, 2019. Topics will include:

- compliance
- special education data collection and reporting
- discipline and dispute resolution options
- monitoring of special education programs

Be sure to stop by the CASE Booth! Our Executive Director, Phyllis Wolfram, will be on-hand to share information about MO-CASE and the mentoring program if you are in need of a mentor. She will also have some great prizes to give away, so be sure to stop by and say hello!

The New Director Academy information and enrollment instructions can be found at <https://dese.mo.gov/special-education/effective-practices/2019-special-education-new-directors-academy>.

Marlena Walley serves as the Chair of the MO-CASE Professional Development Committee. She is the Director of Special Education with Raymore-Peculiar School District.

*A BIG Thanks to our Sponsors!*

A BIG THANK YOU to Renaissance, ReThinkED, and SpedTrack for sponsoring our 2019 Collaborative Conference and their continued support of MO-CASE!



Our recent Collaborative Conference would not have been possible without the support of our dedicated volunteers who go above and beyond to help MO-CASE!



A heartfelt thanks to all of you who attended our 2019 Collaborative Conference on Evidence Based and High Leverage Practices! We enjoyed connecting with you!

## LASE Spotlight

### Retirement Congratulations!

By Liz Smith, LASE Coordinator

Congratulations to our fellow LASE colleagues across the state who are retiring! We wish you all the best! May you enjoy all the new opportunities and time to do the things that bring you joy!

- Lynn Crader, Sikeston School District
- Janet Earl, Joplin School District
- Mary Jo Jenson, Fredericktown R-I School District
- Amy Phipps, Barton Dade Jasper County Cooperative
- Terri Porter, Marshall School District
- Lori Sallee, School of the Osage
- Tammy Wadlow, Central R-III School District
- Sherry Wymore, Clinton School District
- Tammy Wadlow, Central R-III School District
- Tammy Gunter, Clever School District

For information on a regional LASE group in your area, please check out the LASE tab from the MO-CASE website - [www.mo-case.org](http://www.mo-case.org), or feel free to contact, Liz Smith at [esmith@wolves.k12.mo.us](mailto:esmith@wolves.k12.mo.us)



Liz Smith serves as the LASE Coordinator on the MO-CASE Board of Directors, and is the Director of Special Services for Reeds Spring School District

### ***CALL FOR PROPOSALS!***

**We are accepting presentation proposals for our upcoming 42nd Annual Special Education Administrators' Conference**

**September 22-24, 2019**

**Margaritaville Lake Resort, Osage Beach MO**

***Deadline: May 31, 2019***





## Membership Committee

### MO-CASE Membership! Be A Member! JOIN TODAY!

#### *TOP TEN REASONS TO JOIN MO-CASE/CASE:*

10. Keep up-to-date on special education issues, significant research, practical help, and trends.
9. Network with colleagues near and far.
8. Weekly targeted electronic communications.
7. Increase your professional involvement; share, publish, volunteer - BE ACTIVE!
6. Add to your expertise - conferences, webinars, and hands-on.
5. Get the resources and CASE endorsed products you need at prices you can afford - CASE/CEC catalogs.
4. Develop your skills - leading edge information on how to be a better leader.
3. Make a difference with policy makers - local, state, and national levels.
2. Influence our education profession - Individuals gain influence when they join hands with like-minded individuals. "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful and committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever does." - Margaret Mead
1. Improve the educational success of all students.



To learn more and join, please visit:  
<http://www.casecec.org/membership/>

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## UDL & MTSS: Questions, Concerns, Potential Steps

### Universal Design for Learning and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: Current Questions, Concerns, and Potential Steps Forward from the Field of Special Education

By Rachel Juergensen and Lizzie Tipton

When considering implementation of Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) what role does Universal Design for Learning (UDL) play? We know that both initiatives are important, but how do we integrate these important frameworks? The purpose of this article is to discuss UDL within a MTSS and explore questions and concerns educators and researchers in the field of special education currently have about UDL. In addition, we will suggest future steps to move the field forward and begin to address issues related to UDL.

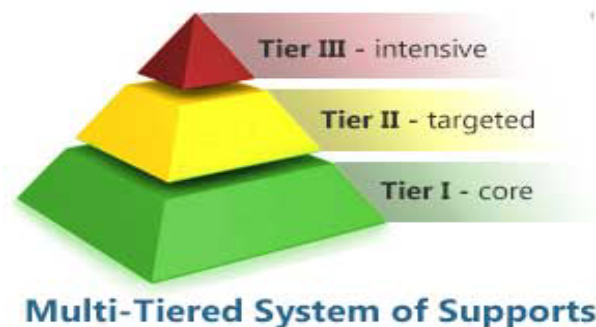
#### What is UDL?

The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) first defined UDL in the 1990's. UDL is an instructional framework that aims to decrease barriers and increase engagement and access to the curriculum for all learners in any content area. In UDL, curriculum is defined by the 4 curriculum components. These include: learning goals (what students are expected to learn), instructional materials (the media and tools used to teach content), instructional methods (how the content is taught), and assessments (how student learning is measured). By proactively and intentionally designing the curriculum with barriers in mind, educators are better able to design learning environments and learning engagements that support all students in becoming expert learners. Within the curriculum components, UDL proponents suggest 3 guidelines to increase efforts in universally designing learning for all students. The guidelines include providing multiple means of engagement (providing options for recruiting interest, sustaining effort and persistence, and self-regulation), providing multiple means of representation (providing options for perception, language and symbols, and comprehension), and providing multiple means of action and expression (providing options for physical action, expression and communication, and executive functions) (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014).

#### Why Discuss UDL?

Today, teachers are facing classrooms with a wider range of diverse learners than ever before, including students with disabilities. Implementing UDL is one way to address the challenge this range of diverse learners presents. One of the key ways to implement UDL is to utilize the 3 guidelines (multiple means of engagement, representation, action and expression) within the 4 curriculum components (learning goals, instructional materials, instructional methods, and assessment) and design instruction for the widest range of learners. Cook and Rao (2018) discuss ways UDL can be used as an “instructional design framework that can be applied to the design of specific interventions (p. 181).” Much like RtI, interventions that are chosen and designed utilizing the UDL framework need to be evidence-based and show positive outcomes for the target population: students with disabilities. Once an evidence-based intervention is chosen, and a student outcome has been targeted, the UDL guidelines can be applied to the intervention to meet the student’s individual learning needs.

This is relevant because, as a field, we can rely on heavily researched evidenced based practices and adapt them using UDL to target or individualize instruction. This is similar to the practice of intensifying instruction that is advocated for by the National Center for Intensive Intervention ([intensiveintervention.org](http://intensiveintervention.org)). With the decrease in barriers and increase in engagement and access, implementing UDL within an RtI framework may increase student achievement. Tiered instruction is designed to support evidence-based practices and effective instruction, thus providing a greater likelihood for positive outcomes (Basham, Israel, Graden, Poth, & Winston, 2010). Because the crossroads of UDL within an RtI framework is not one that has been heavily researched, it is important to begin discussions within the field about the potential impact this research could have for students with disabilities. To begin this discussion, we looked at questions and concerns from the field and added our own thoughts.



## UDL & MTSS (*Continued*)

### Questions and Concerns from the Field of Special Education

We will highlight four main concerns and questions about UDL from educators and researchers in the field of education. These include:

1. Question: How can universal screening accommodate UDL principles?
2. Concern: UDL has not been scientifically validated through research and cannot be substantiated.
3. Question: How can RtI and UDL work in tandem?
4. Concern: Equality vs Equity in UDL and RTI

How can universal screening accommodate UDL principles such as multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement? Perhaps universal screening could be adapted to allow for various forms of providing responses as appropriate (verbal and written). A variety of resources and materials could be made available to students during screening so they can take in information in a modality that works for them. If we were to allow for multiple means of expression, is it possible to norm those measures? The potential pitfalls of making changes to universal screening measures begs the question: Does it need to accommodate the UDL guidelines? Should universal screening be uniform to equally measure all students?

How can we address multiple means of engagement, representation, action and expression within universal screening? Universal screening assessments need to be designed in such a way that students who cannot access the assessment in the traditional sense would be able to access it (Basham et al., 2010). This could include utilizing technology when implementing universal screeners. For example, if the screener is not based on academic questions, the screening questions could be in a digital format allowing students to choose to have the text read aloud to them or enlarge the text if needed. Allowing for this flexibility within the text will aid in decreasing barriers for some students. Basham et al. (2010) state that there are still questions as to how applying UDL principles to universal screeners would work when it comes to academic based screeners.

UDL has not been scientifically validated through research and cannot be substantiated (Edyburn, 2010). In response to this concern, one might ask, does Edyburn suggest this claim is not substantiated because there is just not enough evidence at this time or because the existing studies do not support UDL's validation? Is the issue in research on UDL that it is hard to measure, or that the definition and understanding of it is varied? Considering it is a framework with varied implementation, we

need more research based on individual practices that can be utilized. How can we address the concern that UDL has not been scientifically validated through research and cannot be substantiated? As a field, the first step would be to construct an operational definition of the construct of UDL. What do we mean when we say we are "doing UDL?" If an administrator walks into a classroom, how will they know the curriculum has been universally designed? Additionally, we need to find ways to define and measure UDL implementation. Professional development with key stakeholders must also occur so skills can be learned and refined. Finally, the focus needs to be moved away from offering students options to measuring how these options are impacting student outcomes (Edyburn, 2010).

How can RtI and UDL work in tandem? RtI seeks to prevent problems related to barriers while UDL seeks to remove the barrier entirely. The description of the respective goals of RtI and UDL, may be apt explanation, but concern could be raised about the separation. Can they work together? Removing barriers to academic success is what we as educators strive for, this description implies that UDL can accomplish that. On the other hand, even with curriculum that increases learner's access to content, there will always be students who struggle and need tiered support through RtI. How could we think about the respective and collective goals of UDL and RTI when training teachers? Perhaps a refocus of mindsets - rather than "teaching to the middle," the learning of all students is all our responsibility.

How can we address RtI and UDL working in tandem? Schools implementing RtI should consider ways to integrate UDL principles within their MTSS. At Tier 1, being proactive when designing learning goals, instructional materials, instructional methods, and assessments and integrating the use of modern technology can help educators meet the needs of the widest range of learners from the beginning.

For example, educators should consider barriers to learning and plan to address those barriers when planning instruction. There will be students who will require targeted or intensive support. Within Tiers 2 and 3, integrating UDL principles into targeted or intensive intervention becomes the foundation for designing this support for students (Basham et al., 2010). For example, utilizing assistive technology specific to student needs when planning small group or individual interventions.



## UDL & MTSS (*Continued*)

Equality vs Equity in UDL and RTI. Why is the “extra effort”, (individualized instruction) only afforded to students who have a perceived learning disability and not to all our students? Is it fair if we allow some students to use a tool and not others? These commonly posed questions raised the issue of equity vs equality - should all students receive individualization? Is it fair if they do not? If fair is not always equal, we would not provide additional supports to students who do not need them. In the same vein, if a student has a need, regardless of disability, it should be addressed. From a practical standpoint, schools have limited resources that must be considered when planning supports. Only the most pressing needs and cost effective solutions can sometimes be addressed.

How can we address issues of equity in UDL and RTI? UDL and RtI allow for the addressing of academic needs outside of the scope of special services and the process of eligibility. Edyburn (2010) states, “To meet the needs of some, UDL is committed to giving the tools to everyone (p. 39). The key to keep in mind here is choice. As educators, when we allow students to choose how they best access information and how they best express what they know, we empower them as learners. Said another way, by offering UDL through multiple modes of engagement, representation, action and expression to all students, we are empowering students to take responsibility for who they are as learners and how they learn. As educators we should put this responsibility on our students to allow them to become expert learners.

## Conclusion

In summary, UDL is an instructional framework that provides multiple access points for students with the potential to remove barriers to learning for students with and without disabilities. Addressed here are just some of the questions and concerns raised among educators and researchers in the field of special education. However, that there are questions and concerns should not be discouraging, these conversations push the field forward toward better access and outcomes for all students. UDL holds great promise in improving MTSS for the range of diverse learners in classrooms today. We encourage you as leaders in the field, to engage in these conversations as well. How does UDL benefit students with and without disabilities? How does it work within an MTSS? How can I integrate the components into existing curriculum?

## Helpful Resources

*Learn more about UDL:*

<http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html#.XL-qqJNKjGI>

*Explore the UDL Guidelines:*

<http://udlguidelines.cast.org/>

*UDL online module:*

<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/udl/>

*UDL within a MTSS:*

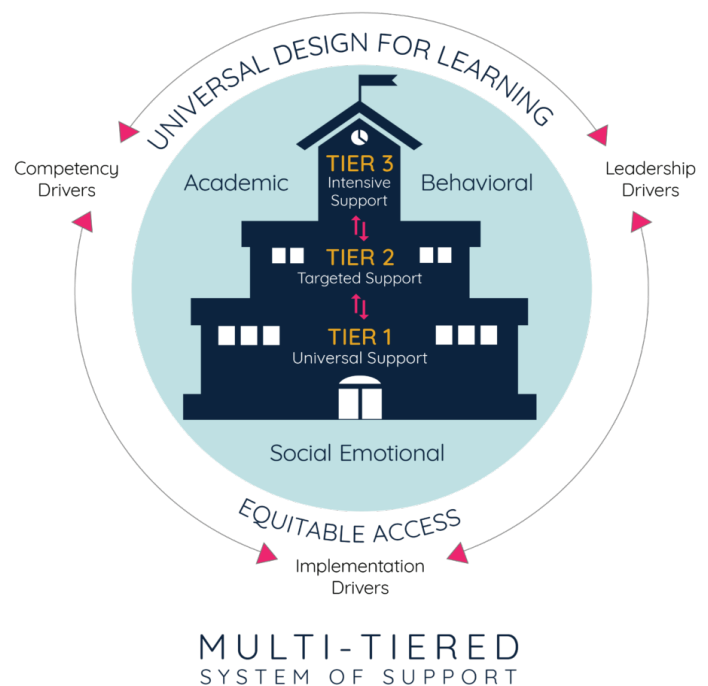
<https://www.novakeducation.com/mtss-vs-rti-what-is-the-difference/>

*UDL implementation rubric:*

<https://www.novakeducation.com/udl-implementation-rubric/>

*UDL flowchart:*

<https://www.novakeducation.com/udl-flowchart-moving-beyond-choice/>



<https://www.novakeducation.com/mtss-vs-rti-what-is-the-difference/>

Rachel Juergensen and Lizzie Tipton are Special Education Doctorate Students and Graduate Research Assistants with the University of Missouri.

# Trials & Tribulations of Data Collection

By Dr. Reesha Adamson, Dr. Felicity Post, and Dr. Jessica Nelson

All too often while teaching we would look back at our list of items to accomplish for the week and reflect on our “best laid plans” which were often overshadowed by unexpected and pressing crises. Many times, we would continue lesson plans to the next week and shuffle individualized assessments and data collection in order to complete the timeliest tasks first. This philosophy and organizational structure was what we assumed was a reality of the classroom. There was always more to accomplish, and we found ourselves consistently prioritizing and rearranging. However, we discovered that this scenario could play out in alternate ways. And, does not have to take place in the way we were allowing it to.

With some mindful reorganization and planning on our part, we set up our classrooms using an organized process that we revisited and revised at the beginning of each year, quarter, month, and sometimes week. These adjustments created a systematic structure for data collection that allowed us to be efficient, timely and share responsibility with all of the other adults with access to our classrooms and students. In turn, this allowed students to take ownership of their own learning and progress and provided opportunities for self-monitoring. Data was the cornerstone for us as teachers to make informed decisions about student progress. Below are some of the strategies that we incorporated across our classrooms to ensure efficient and succinct data collection that accurately captured the progress and growth of every child in our classrooms.

## Training

Jumping into data collection with necessary knowledge and know how is all too often an assumption of someone in our profession. In reality, the knowledge base required for effective data collection requires careful and well thought out considerations for purposeful implementation. Data collection training and basic familiarity is a first step for every adult that is going to be in a classroom in order to ensure shared responsibility of the process. The most basic forms of direct data collection often used for monitoring of academic and social behaviors include frequency, duration, and latency. However, these are not often the best tools for use in the classroom. More complex systems can allow for efficient data collection include using an interval recording system. This type of recording

allows measurement across multiple individuals and gives a more accurate snapshot of observed behavior. Another way to complete efficient data collection is through indirect data collection, such as permanent products of academic behaviors. This can be a valuable tool for monitoring academic progress as it allows the adults to monitor student performance with a produced product, such as a completed worksheet or even a computer-based tool which records performance. Expecting that all adults in a classroom have knowledge of these systems allows for each individual to be able to efficiently understand what data they are collecting as well as the specific planning and process for measurement.

Having a simple series of morning meetings or planning sessions with paraeducators and other staff allow for individuals to disseminate this knowledge and create a unified plan for implementation. Other important considerations to stress to all individuals involved is that data collection should just be a quick snapshot of behavior. Typically a 10-15 minute direct observation of student behavior is sufficient. This allows for a quick glimpse of the child to be observed in their natural environment. Such observations may be an over-representation of problem behaviors on some days and an underrepresentation on others, but, with enough observations, a fine balance can be attained. Another consideration and common pitfall are long lengthy written notes for data collection. Not only are these time consuming in their conception, but take a significant amount of time to analyze and understand whether or not a change is occurring in the behavior being observed. Finally, it is critical for special education teams to consider data collection during IEP team meetings. Creating goals and objectives for monitoring student academics and behavior that are measurable is the first step, but they also should be created with efficient and effective data collection in mind. As you are planning goals and objectives, a progress management plan for a student should also be created with mindfulness on how data will be collected and documented and what specific individuals will help implement this plan.



## **Trials & Tribulations of Data Collection (*Continued*)**

### **Materials**

This seems like a basic process, but having easy access to a stopwatch, timer, clipboard, schedule (discussed later) and even possibly an interval alert system can create consistency of data collection. Typically, in our classrooms we had tasked an individual with organization of all materials for data collection and had created “data stations”. These stations included all materials for the adults, but also included student self-monitoring and recording sheets for students. This allowed for shared ownership of the process and for students to be accountable for their progress along with adults. Having tools printed, devices charged, and items organized increased the likelihood that the process went smoothly. We also graphed our data weekly to ensure that we were implementing interventions that were showing positive results. Since some of our data was paper data, we also had binders organized by student names to ensure that all of the data was organized and kept in the same spot so all members of the IEP team had access to it.

### **Schedule**

Another basic process but one that is probably the most critical is the creation of an efficient schedule. Thinking about all of your students’ goals and objectives and any other criteria that you would like to record and creating a succinct system for data collection is critical for success. We suggest planning data collection first by thinking about which goals and objectives need to be measured independently such as a specific replacement behavior, and which goals could be measured in a group format such as reading fluency. Typically your classroom schedule for instruction is already grouped across instructional goals, so the organization of your data collection schedule should parallel (e.g. Lee, Vostel, Lylo, Hua, 2011). Then create a grid and assign specific days and times for each goal.

Make sure that your materials match the format that is selected, and be sure to assign an adult to oversee each data collection period.

Match your data collection specifically with the criterion of performance that you stated within your goals and objectives (e.g. 3 out of 5 days, 70% of the time). This ensures parallel construction of your collection with your IEP process and allows for streamlined measurement systems. Creating a schedule also allows you to be systematic about what dates and times you are collecting data to build it into your instructional planning and create a system where multiple data collection processes can be occurring simultaneously (e.g. permanent product of academic written work, momentary time sampling of student academic performance, and direct observation of the frequency of replacement behaviors).

### **Responsibilities**

Data collection should never fall on just one individual within a classroom or school setting. The most effective classrooms have multiple individuals who are all tasked with data collection responsibilities to ensure that in one’s absence another individual can seamlessly pick up and seamlessly continue collection. It also shares responsibility and accountability across student performance. All adults are vested in seeing student improvement and gives shared understanding of student growth and development across accountability systems. Having adequately trained individuals for data collection also allows for easier collection when maintenance or generalization data collection occurs outside of the context. It also allows for specific probes of the performance of skills outside of the context by having individuals that can monitor performance in varied settings. This allows for more mindful planning of goal modifications and additional performance criteria for mastery of academic and social skills and behaviors.

### **Problem Solving and Celebrations**

An important step in the data collection process is understanding that problems will arise! Even those “best laid plans” can at times be thrown a curve ball. This is typical when you are working in settings where multiple individuals are involved and multiple systems are in place. Some of the most common issues to develop a plan for are: individual absences of both adults and students, unexpected disruptions in the schedules like assemblies and activities that remove students from the classroom, and problems with the collection itself including training and organization.

Pre-planning what to do when a problem arises and thinking about potential obstacles helps to create a clear process where no one is surprised or frustrated about anything that may come up to disrupt data collection. Having a change in the schedule may also be an opportunity for data collection that we had not thought of. Would times thinking outside of the box for data collection may give you another look in a setting you had not thought of. Just as important as problem solving is creating a time for celebrating accomplishments. These celebrations shouldn’t just be on student performance gains but should also focus on the success of efficiency, reliable data, the creation of a manageable schedule and succinct data collection and recording that doesn’t effect instructional time periods. Planning celebrations and problem solving any issues and potential issues again helps with consistency across individuals and understanding of a system for success.

### **Recording, Synthesizing, Analyzing, and Evaluating**

Finally, data collection is not something that is done within isolation. It is critical to have a system where data is organized and evaluated for instructional planning and considerations. It is crucial that this process is just as efficient as the data collection process itself. Planning responsibility of input and



## **Trials & Tribulations of Data Collection (*Continued*)**

ensures that instruction towards goals and objectives are efficient and can be used to make considerations for modifications and adaptations in instruction to ensure performance criteria are met and that progress towards the goal is being made. Creating trend lines for data measures and goal performance lines gives all individuals, including the student and other educational decision makers, a specific guide for progress. It allows for mindful planning for lessons and creates a standard of performance that can be replicated. The most successful classrooms know where a student has come from, where they are currently performing, where they are going, have a specific plan on how to get there, and know how long it will take. In essence, this is our job as special educators and how we best impact our student performance and our classroom expectations.

Revisiting data on a consistent basis with all adults within a context and reporting on progress and instructional plans allows for shared ownership and responsibility in student growth. It also allows to have conversations across adults about trends and patterns within data and helps everyone to stay up to date on progress and the impact of supports and accommodations. It may be helpful at times to have multiple adults collect data to ensure all are staying consistent on data collection or to troubleshoot any issues which may arise. Having strong collaborative discussions and focus creates a data-driven culture within a classroom that can be easily replicated across environments, and in other settings and environments. This data-driven mindset and organization helps create systems where students and adults each know their role in the process and shares a community of support. Powerful outcomes can come from mindful planning and the structure of cohesion.

## **Final Thoughts**

Looking back on all that you and your students have accomplished throughout the school year can be quite a rewarding experience. However, this cause for celebration can be overshadowed if a consistent system of progress monitoring is not documented consistently or effectively to see your student growth. With some of these simple considerations and processes, a culture based around growth can be developed. The celebrations and understanding of student gain and the instructional planning around student struggles allow all adults to know how to help students achieve and gives specific influence to all individuals involved and invested with a student to see attainment of success. These approximations towards the performance criteria can at times become lost in the struggles. Efficient systems help to document for all stakeholders critical growth and the plan for success.

## **References**

Lee, D. Vostal, B., Lylo, B., Hua, Y. (2011). Collecting behavioral data in general education settings: A primer for behavioral data collection, *Beyond Behavior*, Winter, 22-30.

Dr. Reesha Adamson is a Higher Education Representative on the MO-CASE Board of Directors and an Assistant Professor at Missouri State University; Dr. Felicity Post is an Assistant Professor at Peru State College; and Dr. Jessica Nelson is an Assistant Professor at Missouri State University.

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# Mindfulness for Families

## Part 1

By Melanie Fitzgerald, Ed.D

### *Part 1 of a 2 part series*

The 21st century has advanced beyond our wildest dreams. With these advances, our lives are more comfortable in many ways, and yet these advances add to the never-ending distractions that can pull us away from the importance of human connection.

Parents, particularly those of children with disabilities, juggle a variety of responsibilities and may experience stress that impacts their home life and ability to enjoy everyday moments with their families.

Children need a good pilot to navigate the present and future. A calm, relaxed parent can guide the child to be as independent as possible. Parents and other family members can cultivate these qualities by using self-care strategies such as a secular mindfulness practice.

Although secular mindfulness is the current buzzword, it has been around for 29 years in some of the best medical facilities to assist patients with stress reduction.

**Mindfulness: What is it?**

Mindfulness is the intentional use of attention. The father of modern mindfulness, Jon Kabat-Zinn, defines mindfulness as "Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" "Bringing one's complete attention to the present experience on a moment-to-moment basis." To parent nonjudgmentally and give ourselves a break as we learn and grow with our children could be a stress reducer in and of itself.

### **Why use it?**

Research supports mindful activities to reduce stress in adults and children. The daily practice can reduce stress, increase presence, and connection between the parent and child.

Most people have 50,000 thoughts in one day. That is mostly repetitive thoughts that interfere with people's ability to focus. This increases stress as we continually think of the past or the future rarely being present. Mindfulness can offer a time in our day to give our overworked overstressed brains a break.

### *How to begin?*

#### *The Basics of Mindfulness Practice*

Mindfulness helps us put some space between ourselves and our reactions, breaking down our conditioned responses.

Here's how to tune into mindfulness throughout the day:

1. Set aside some time. You don't need a meditation cushion or bench, or any sort of special equipment to access your mindfulness skills—but you do need to set aside some time and space.
2. Observe the present moment as it is. The aim of mindfulness is not quieting the mind or attempting to achieve a state of eternal calm. The goal is simple: we're aiming to pay attention to the present moment, without judgment. Easier said than done, we know.
3. Let your judgments roll by. When we notice judgments arise during our practice, we can make a mental note of them, and let them pass.
4. Return to observing the present moment as it is. Our minds often get carried away in thought. That's why mindfulness is the practice of returning, again and again, to the present moment.
5. Be kind to your wandering mind. Don't judge yourself for whatever thoughts crop up, just practice recognizing when your mind has wandered off, and gently bring it back. That's the practice. It's often been said that it's very simple, but it's not necessarily easy. The work is just to keep doing it. Results will accrue.

#### *A Simple Meditation Practice*

1. Sit comfortably. Find a spot that gives you a stable comfortable seat.
2. Notice what your legs are doing. If on a cushion, cross your legs comfortably in front of you. If on a chair, rest the bottoms of your feet on the floor.

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## Mindfulness for Families (*Continued*)

3. Straighten your upper body—but don't stiffen. Your spine has natural curvature. Let it be there.
4. Notice what your arms are doing. Situate your upper arms parallel to your upper body. Rest the palms of your hands on your legs wherever it feels most natural.
5. Soften your gaze. Drop your chin a little and let your gaze fall gently downward. It's not necessary to close your eyes. You can simply let what appears before your eyes be there without focusing on it.
6. Feel your breath. Bring your attention to the physical sensation of breathing: the air moving through your nose or mouth, the rising and falling of your belly, or your chest.
7. Notice when your mind wanders from your breath. Inevitably, your attention will leave the breath and wander to other places. Don't worry. There's no need to block or eliminate thinking. When you notice your mind wander gently return your attention to the breath.
8. Be kind about your wandering mind. You may find your mind continually wandering—that's normal, too. Instead of wrestling with your thoughts, practice observing them without reacting. Just sit and pay attention. As hard as it is to maintain, that's all there is. Come back to your breath over and over again, without judgment or expectation.
9. When you're ready, gently lift your gaze (if your eyes are closed, open them). Take a moment and notice any sounds in the environment. Notice how your body feels right now. Notice your thoughts and emotions.

Formal Mindfulness Practice: <https://www.mindful.org/-meditation/mindfulness-getting-started/>

### *Informal Mindfulness Practice:*

Mindfulness is not just quiet still time. There are many ways to bring mindfulness to your daily life. It is called the ART of being present by bringing the intention to pay attention to daily life

Activities: bring moments of mindfulness to your favorite activity you already do such as running, walking, gardening, cooking, etc...

Routines: choose one of your daily routines and bring mindfulness to it such as doing the dishes, folding laundry, vacuuming, eating, etc....

Triggers: We all have incidents that can set us off: snarky remarks, annoying family members, ill-received emails, etc.... Choose one and replace an annoyance or anger with a moment of mindful breathing and being present.

Excerpt taken from: <https://www.mindful.org/practice-art-being-present/>

### *Mindfulness Every Day*

As you begin a mindfulness practice, you might find a space between action and reaction in which you share a more mindful response. The daily practice of mindfulness slowly impacts your life as you feel calmer, kinder, and more patient. It can aid you in having a more playful attitude with your child and enjoy your time together.

### **Adult Mindful resources and Apps:**

Headspace: <https://www.headspace.com/> -Meditation made simple. Brilliant things happen in calm minds.

Insight Timer: <https://insighttimer.com/> -Home to more than 5,000,000 meditators, Insight Timer is rated as the top free meditation app.

Chill: <https://www.chill-app.com/> -Daily mindfulness quotes & reminders

Stop, Breathe, Think: <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/> -Check in with how you're feeling and try short activities tuned to your emotions.

Calm: <https://www.calm.com/> -Discover Calm: The App for Meditation and Sleep

Omm: <http://onemomentcompany.com/app/> -Breathe. Let go. Be still.

Stay tuned for next entry mindfulness activities for children and teens, which will be presented in the next quarterly issue of **The Director**.

Melanie Fitzgerald, Ed.D, is the Effective Practice Specialist ECSE with the Special School District of St. Louis County.



May 2019

## Upcoming Events

### MIDWEST EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

June 24-26, 2019

Mountain Thunder Lodge  
50 Mountain Thunder Drive  
Breckenridge, CO 80424



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### MO-CASE 2019 FALL ADMINISTRATORS' CONFERENCE

September 22-24, 2019

Margaritaville Lake Resort  
Osage Beach, MO 65065



Visit <http://www.mo-case.org/Conferences-Events> to register.

## Save the Date

### 2019

#### EVENT:

#### DATE/LOCATION:

MO-CASE Board Meeting  
CEC Leadership Meeting  
Annual CASE/CEC Legislative Summit  
CASE Executive Committee Meeting  
MO-CASE Board Meeting  
MO-CASE Fall Administrator's Conference  
CASE Executive Committee Meeting  
2019 CASE Fall Board of Directors Meeting  
Joint CASE/NASDSE

June 3-4, 2019 - Osage Beach, MO/Tan-Tar-A Resort  
July 6-7, 2019 - Washington DC/Marriott Gateway Crystal City  
July 7-10, 2019 - Washington DC/Marriott Gateway Crystal City  
July 10-11, 2019 - Washington DC/Marriott Gateway Crystal City  
September 21, 2019 - Osage Beach, MO/Tan-Tar-A Resort  
September 22-24, 2019 - Osage Beach, MO/ Margaritaville Lake Resort  
October 25, 2019 - Louisville, KY/Galt House  
October 26-27, 2019 - Louisville, KY/Galt House  
October 27-29, 2019 - Louisville, KY/Galt House

### 2020

#### EVENT:

#### DATE/LOCATION:

CASE Executive Committee Meeting  
CASE Member/BOD Meeting  
CEC 2020  
CASE Night  
MO-CASE Law Conference  
4th Annual Collaborative Conference  
MO-CASE Board Meeting  
MO-CASE Fall Administrators Conference

February 4, 2020/TBD  
February 5, 2020/TBD  
February 5-8, 2020/Portland, OR/TBD  
February 6, 2020/TBA  
March 3,, 2020 - Columbia, MO/Holiday Inn Executive Center  
March 4-5, 2020 - Columbia, MO/Holiday Inn Executive Center  
September 19, 2020 - Osage Beach, MO/Tan-Tar-A Resort  
September 20-22, 2020 - Osage Beach, MO/Tan-Tar-A Resort

### FUTURE DATES

#### EVENT:

#### DATE/LOCATION:

CEC 2021  
MO-CASE Law Conference  
5th Annual Collaborative Conference  
MO-CASE Board Meeting  
MO-CASE Fall Administrators Conference  
CEC 2022 (100th Anniversary)

February 10-13, 2021 - Baltimore, MD/TBD  
March 2, 2021 - Columbia, MO/Holiday Inn Executive Center  
March 3-4, 2021 - Columbia, MO/Holiday Inn Executive Center  
September 25, 2021 - Osage Beach, MO/Tan-Tar-A Resort  
September 26-28, 2021 - Osage Beach, MO/Tan-Tar-A Resort  
January 15-19, 2022 - Orlando, FL/TBD

**SAVE THE DATE**

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