



Simplify procurement.
Maximize results.

CES MEMBER NEWSLETTER

February 2026

Celebrating CES: Expanding Cooperative Purchasing Across the West

Since its founding in 1979 by six New Mexico school districts, CES has remained focused on a simple but powerful mission: helping public entities achieve better value through cooperative purchasing. What began as a small collaboration has grown into one of the most comprehensive cooperative purchasing organizations in the region, serving virtually all public-school districts and charter schools in New Mexico, along with every public postsecondary institution and many Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools through a Joint Powers Agreement administered by CES.

Beyond its core education membership, CES also supports nearly every municipality and county in New Mexico as Participating Entities, along with numerous other local public bodies, state agencies, and qualifying nonprofit organizations. In recent years, CES has expanded its reach well beyond state lines, welcoming Participating Entities from across the country—from California to Florida and from Ohio to Texas. A major milestone came in 2025, when CES opened full-time offices in Utah and Idaho, partnering with those states' Counties Associations to establish strong cooperative purchasing programs where limited local options previously existed.

- Feature Article
- Calendar of Events
- Purchasing News
- Order Corner
- Construction Corner
- Education Articles
- CES Job Opportunities
- Bulletin Board
- CES Contacts

Vendors interested in using their CES contracts outside New Mexico—or those seeking to establish new contracts—are encouraged to work directly with Angela Valadez, CES Procurement Assistant, who provides guidance and support for navigating CES opportunities. Similarly, CES Members and Participating Entities can access personalized assistance through dedicated Regional Managers, ensuring that every inquiry is routed quickly to the right expert.

While CES offers procurement and business office services nationwide, its New Mexico education members also benefit from a broad suite of additional services, including ancillary staffing, educator recruitment, and professional development. Across all services, CES maintains some of the lowest contract administrative fees in the western United States—fees that are paid by vendors and embedded in cooperative pricing, meaning members should never see them as separate line items.

Rather than bidding individual projects by default, CES focuses on awarding Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contracts for defined term periods, creating efficiency, consistency, and compliance. Only when a member specifically requests Procurement As A Service (PAAS) does CES conduct a project-specific bid.

Whether your goal is to save time, control costs, or ensure procurement compliance, CES stands ready as a trusted partner—offering decades of experience, expanding regional support, and a proven cooperative purchasing model designed to help public entities succeed.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2/3 TAP: Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports Series Part 2: Positive Interventions
2/4 TAP: Implementing Behavior Strategies In the Early Childhood Classroom
2/5 TAP: Autism Toolbox Series: Visual Supports Across ALL Settings
2/5-7 NMSBA Board Member Institute
2/9 CES: Playground Risk Management: Limiting Your Liability workshop
2/10 TAP: Spotlight on Gifted IEP: From Data to Deep Impact
2/11 TAP: Attention Deficit Disorders & Other Attention Issues
2/12 TAP: AI Tips and Tools for Educators
2/14 Valentines Day
2/16 Presidents Day – CES Offices Closed
2/18 TAP: Special Education Discipline Rules & Behavioral Interventions to Prevent the Need for Discipline

2/18-20 NMASBO Winter Conference
2/19 TAP: Sensory Supports for Behavior Management
2/20 TAP: Overview of the IEP From the PLAAFP to the PWN
2/24 TAP: Prompting: Evidence Based Instructional Practice for Special Educators
2/25 LEDR Keeping Students in School ...
2/26 TAP: More Than Paperwork Supporting Parents Through Evaluation, IEP Meetings, and Meaningful Participation
2/26 LEDR Legislative Primer

February						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

PURCHASING NEWS

1) Name Changes/Change of Ownership:

Construction Survey Technologies, Inc now, Surveying and Mapping LLC.

Mascot Holdings dba Fielder's Choice

Total Productions now Total Rock IT

LAV Construction now LAVCO

J3 Systems now J3 Systems, A Tecta America Company, LLC

TLC Company, Spear Construction

2) New Contract Awards:

The new contract awards are being presented as a supplement to the Newsletter, entitled "Construction Contracts Awarded Dec 2025," to be stored on the same webpage as the Newsletter.

3) Current & Upcoming Solicitations:

RFP #	RFP Description	Release	Due	Award
2026-01 (ID & UT only)	<i>Vehicles - Car, SUV, Van, Trucks, Police Car and Related</i>	1/23/26	2/23/26	3/10/26
2026-02 (ID & UT only)	<i>Medium & Heavy-Duty Trucks</i>	1/23/26	2/23/26	3/10/26
2026-03 (ID & UT only)	<i>Truck Bodies</i>	1/23/26	2/23/26	3/10/26
2026-04 (ID & UT only)	<i>Trailers</i>	1/23/26	2/23/26	3/10/26
2026-13	<i>eRate (Form 470)</i>	1/26/26	2/24/26	3/12/26

*Out-of-state RFPs are subject to change

ORDER CORNER

CES is deeply committed to ensuring compliance with quotes and purchase orders (POs) for our members. Our goal is to maintain a spotless record, helping members achieve clean audits when they rely on CES contracts.

To support this, we establish clear contractual requirements for our Procurement Partners. While these requirements can sometimes be misunderstood, your understanding and

support as a member are essential—and will ultimately benefit you.

With the recent award of about 700 contracts for construction and trades, we anticipate facing a period of learning by our newly awarded Procurement Partner vendors. While we have seen continuous improvement, there may be a blip of challenges during which your assistance in ensuring that vendors provide correctly formatted quotes with all necessary content will be crucial.

When ordering construction services under a “Gordian” or “RS Means” contract, it’s important to expect quotes in the proper format. If a vendor submits a “letterhead quote,” processing will be delayed. Our vendors are aware of these

requirements, and you can help streamline the process by setting this expectation upfront with them. Together, we can ensure smooth transactions and quicker results.

SAMPLE JOC-CORE (RS MEANS) QUOTE

GORDIAN Job Order Contracting One

Price Proposal - Cooperative Educational Services - JOC General Contract 2021

This proposal was prepared exclusively for Cooperative Educational Services

Job Number: 0102
 Job Name:
 Contractor:
 Date Created: 01/12/2022
 User Name:
 Proposal Value: \$14,855.51
 Construction Payment Coding: Year 2022 Quarter 2 - L&S CRUCES, NM

Summary By Division

Division	Line Total
01 General Requirements	\$915.61
10 Specifications	\$2,812.50
31 Earthwork	\$2,217.50
32 Exterior Improvements	\$4,750.88

Non-Proprietary Items

Item Name	Division	QTY	Unit Price	Factor	Line Total
Tax	01 General Requirements	1.000000	\$915.61	1.0000	\$915.61
Derivation of Livestock Corals	10 Specifications	72.000000	\$37.80	1.2075	\$3,476.25
Installation of Livestock Corals	10 Specifications	72.000000	\$35.88	1.2075	\$3,336.27

Detailed Price Proposal

Div #	Division	Line Item #	Unit	UCOM	Description	Line Total
1	General Requirements	Non-Proprietary	EA	Tax		\$915.61
			QTY	Unit Price	Factor	Total
			1.000000	\$915.61	1.0000	\$915.61
2	Specifications	Non-Proprietary	EA	Derivation of Livestock Corals		\$3,476.25

SAMPLE GORDIAN QUOTE

CES **GORDIAN®**

Job Order Contract
Price Proposal Summary - CSI

Date: June 27, 2022
 Contract Number: 2020-11N-G100-06
 Job Order Number: 220622-2-00
 Job Order Title:
 Contractor:
 Proposal Value: \$431,761.12
 Proposal Name:
 Detailed Scope: Will be cleaning surface "existing hot mix", applying seal coat on top of existing surface some striping as well.

Category - 01 - General Requirements: \$27,537.72
Category - 32 - Exterior Improvements: \$404,223.40
Proposal Total: \$431,761.12

This proposal total represents the correct total for the proposal. Any discrepancy between line totals, sub-totals and the proposal total is due to rounding of the line totals and sub-totals.

The Percent of NPP on this Proposal: 8.00%

Job Order Contract
Price Proposal Detail - CSI

Date: June 27, 2022
 Contract Number: 2020-11N-G100-06
 Job Order Number: 220622-2-00
 Job Order Title:
 Contractor:
 Proposal Value: \$431,761.12
 Proposal Name:
 Adjustment Factor(s) Used: 1.0000 No Adjustment, 1.2750-NMWH Reg State Wage Rates (Outside Tribal Land) > \$60,000

Div#	CSI Number	Unit	UCOM	Description	Line Total	
1	01 - 22 - 16 - 01-0004	EA		New Mexico Gross Receipts Tax - Varies by County	\$27,537.72	
		Installation	Quantity	Unit Price	Factor	Total
			27,537.72	\$1.00	1.0000	\$27,537.72
Subtotal for CSI - 01 - General Requirements: \$27,537.72						
2	32 - 01 - 13 - 01-0018	SY		+0.0000 EV, Type B Sturdy Seal Asphalt Coating, Per CostSP Book, 25 to 30 lbs/sy	\$367,896.12	
		Installation	Quantity	Unit Price	Factor	Total
			86,968.00	\$4.22	1.2750	\$367,896.12
3	32 - 17 - 23 - 13-0006	LF		Singles 4" Wide Solid Line, Precast Placement Striping For Parking Areas	\$16,627.28	
		Installation	Quantity	Unit Price	Factor	Total
			18,900.00	\$0.88	1.2750	\$16,627.28
Subtotal for CSI - 32 - Exterior Improvements: \$404,223.40						
Proposal Total \$431,761.12						

CONSTRUCTION CORNER

Avoid Payment Delays Double-Check Before You Submit!

Most construction payment delays occur because of small inaccuracies in the Application for Payment. Once submitted, any needed corrections must cycle back through the approval process—costing valuable time.

To help you get it right the first time, we encourage you to review our brief demonstration video, *Applying for Payment with CES*, at <https://youtu.be/7zuqe8aQ-aE>. A few extra minutes of review can make all the difference!

WAGE DECISIONS REMINDER

This is a reminder that any Public Works project in the State of New Mexico (costing \$60,000 or more) requires a wage rate decision.

For more information, refer to the link below from the Department of Workforce Solutions website:
<https://www.dws.state.nm.us/Portals/o/DM/LaborRelations/ProjectRequirementsDoc2019.pdf>

Should you need assistance or additional training on this process, please contact the Department of Workforce Solutions at (505) 841-4400 or via email at public.works@state.nm.us.

You may also contact your CES team with questions.

EDUCATION ARTICLES

Compliance Corner

February 2026

By Cindy Soo Hoo, TAP Consultant

Considering a Shortened Day? Is that the Only Way?

The IEP Team is tasked,
With ensuring the provision of FAPE.
If you're meeting the unique needs of students,
You're definitely in good shape!

A shortened day was considered,
By the Team as a proposal.
But are there other options,
At your disposal?

Whether it's direct instruction,
Or the provision of a BIP.
We need to address the behaviors,
On this, we can all agree.

Replacement behaviors are taught,
Is there a plan for the student to return?
If not making this a consideration,
It's definitely a concern.

How can the eligible student,
Be expected to follow the rules?
If he/she is not given the chance,
To attend a full day of school?

Ultimately, it's left to the Team,
To make the final decision.
Just weigh all the information and data,
To make it with precision.

There is no doubt that concerning behaviors have been on the increase in public schools across the country for quite some time now. Classroom teachers have expressed concerns that these behaviors

interfere with their instruction on a regular basis.

According to the Education Week Research Center, nearly half of teachers, school leaders, and district leaders (48 percent) said in a survey that students' behavior was a lot worse during the fall of 2024 when compared to their pre-pandemic behavior. The nationally represented survey of 990 educators (134 district leaders, 97 school leaders, and 759 teachers) was conducted from Dec. 12-19, 2024.

When concerning behaviors involve a student who is eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), educators have additional responsibilities in ensuring a student's rights are being protected. The case of *Andrew F. v. Douglas County School District* resulted in school districts being required to follow all procedural requirements and to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that is reasonably calculated in light of the child's circumstances.

Determining whether a student's IEP is reasonably calculated involves a careful analysis of all the student's information and data. Those who know the student utilize that data and are involved in making the appropriate decisions as to the services, supports and settings the student needs. Whether it is the requirement to conduct an IEP meeting to address any concerns or the requirement to conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and develop a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) when the child's behaviors interferes with his learning or the learning of others, IEP Teams must determine what's necessary in order for the student

to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education or FAPE.

At times, IEP Teams determine a student may require a shortened instructional day. Often, students who have medical conditions have difficulty enduring an entire day of instruction. These students often display a lack of stamina and may need frequent breaks or a reduction of time in school altogether. However, IEP Teams often determine a shortened day is necessary for students with concerning behaviors citing the student's inability to "handle" a full instructional day. By reducing the amount of hours the student attends school, IEP Team members are hopeful the student's concerning behaviors will diminish commensurate with the amount of time the student is in school.

However, IEP Teams must consider whether shortening a child's school day may result in a denial of a Free Appropriate Public Education. With reduced hours in school, students would be receiving less instructional time possibly resulting in a decline in the student's academic and functional performance. In addition, there are fewer opportunities for providing appropriate instruction and supports in teaching the student appropriate replacement behaviors. Just as a student who has difficulty learning to read would not be sent home when reading instruction is to commence, a student whose behaviors are impeding their learning, or the learning of others would need the same consideration. It is important to remember that shortening a student's instructional day needs to be utilized sparingly, be temporary and never be used for disciplinary reasons. Should the student require disciplinary procedures due to a violation of the student code of conduct,

districts must follow and adhere to the regulations delineated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

When determining if a student requires a shortened day in order to receive a FAPE, IEP Team members should identify the circumstances that are preventing the student from successfully experiencing a full day. Once identified, it is incumbent on the IEP Team to determine what the circumstances would be for the student to return to a full day of instruction. Coinciding with that determination is the responsibility of school personnel to take whatever data is necessary to assist in the decision to bring the student back. That data should be analyzed on a regular and frequent basis and involve those who are responsible for instructing the student.

While the decision to shorten a student's instructional day lies solely with the IEP Team, it is crucial the decision is based on quantitative data and not the atmosphere surrounding the disruptive behaviors. IEP Team members should weigh their decision on whether the shortened day would result in the IEP being reasonably calculated in light of the child's circumstances, thus meeting the unique needs of the student.

References

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (p. 2): Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-446, 118 Stat. 2647 (2004).
- *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*:
 - *Case Citation*: *Endrew F. ex rel. Joseph F. v. Douglas Cty. Sch. Dist. RE-1*, 137 S. Ct. 988 (2017).

- *Opinion Document:* Supreme Court of the United States. (2017, March 22). 15-827 *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School Dist. Re-1* (Opinion of the Court). https://www.supreme.court.gov/opinions/16pdf/15-827_opm1.pdf
- Education Week Research Center Survey: Education Week Research Center. (2024, December). *Student behavior survey*.

CES+
TAP



Doin' OK?

Mental Health Help

Monthly Newsletter

By Gina Langley, Ph.D., School Psychologist
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FEBRUARY 2026

R U OK?

Wishing you many Happy Hearts Days this month. You Doin' OK?

I had originally wanted to call this monthly article "R U OK?," until I learned that this is a registered phrase,

The information included herein is not intended to provide legal advice. Should you need legal advice or guidance on any issue involving special education, please contact the appropriate person for your district.

with its own allotted day – September 26 this year!

It's an Australian suicide prevention charity campaign that offers lots of wonderful free resources, with a mission "to inspire and empower everyone to meaningfully connect with those in their world and lend support when they are struggling with life." Check it out: ruok.org.au

Their ads say, "whenever you have the time to really listen to the answers, ask R U OK?, Any Day, because a conversation could change a life." So very true. And what a great idea. Not just the whole campaign concept, but how great it is to teach, and to truly learn, how to sincerely check in with each other, and to legitimately seek the time to do so, and to support others in doing so. The founder reminds folks to "love yourselves, and each other."

This month, make sure you *are* loving yourself. If you don't, you prohibit yourself from loving others, and you block their love from impacting you. If

you tell yourself you're not loveable, you send out an awful vibe, and you just make things hard on yourself and others. Start by considering what your best traits are and devote some time to realizing how those traits have served yourself and others.

Also, open yourselves up to sharing some love with those around you. Make tiny gestures, like giving someone a little smile, a nod, or leaving something in a room that might bring a smile. Find opportunities to actually make contact. Be OK! (The rest of this article is taken directly from the RUOK website, because that group has already done a superb job of educating, developing, and spreading the word that we need connection. Below is Page 17+ from the *10 Year Perspective*, published February 2020. The last three pages are an actual "Print and Go Template for your classroom," "to be used as a teaching stimulus.")

Long-term behaviour change needs young people, and schools have been paramount to the relevance of *R U OK?* across the country. Not only do students engage with the message, but teachers and principals are creating a whole school *R U OK?* culture and checking in on one another as colleagues. Children share their *R U OK?* Day efforts with parents, grandparents, etc. and the ripple effect continues into communities.

Another feature of *R U OK?* success has been the engagement with workplaces.

Purposefully, *R U OK?* Day always falls on the second Thursday of every September to

extend and amplify World Suicide Prevention Day efforts on 10 September. Being a weekday, this has enabled the campaign to be brought into the workplace through staff gatherings, communications profiling workplace support services (HR, EAP, mental health benefits) and merchandise aimed at starting a conversation to remind staff of the importance of meaningful conversations. Importantly, the day provides the opportunity for leaders to share their lived experiences and/or profile professional support in a genuine manner.

Gavin Larkin's early words have reinforced the ability of workplaces to be places of helpful conversation: "In the time it takes to have a cuppa, you could change a life."

- The late Gavin Larkin,
R U OK? Founder.

R U OK? is a health promotion, not any service provider. It does not provide *R* direct support services to people. No counsellors, no support phone line, no treatments or therapy. The strength of *R U OK?* has been its ability to encourage more Australians to have conversations with each other – something that is free to do. The challenge is that some people do not want to have such conversations; they might feel uncomfortable or might be fearful of what to do if someone replies, "No, I'm not OK." It was never the intention of *R U OK?* to be the sole answer to that statement. From the outset, the focus was to help people navigate a conversation through its

4 Step Conversation model, and to signpost to existing support services. The model enables help-givers to encourage help-seekers to approach those services. *RU OK?* wanted to get the person in the community to hold

the hand of the person calling and using those services....

We are an inclusive organization and respect people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.

Conversation Bingo

Help your group practice their conversation skills by encouraging them to ask open-ended questions using this bingo activity.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Give each participant a 'Conversation Bingo' card and pen/pencil.
- In an open space, encourage participants to mingle, and use the conversation starters on the card to have conversations with others.
- Participants put the name of the person they used each conversation starter within the corresponding box.
- The first person to fill in four boxes across or down yells "Conversation Bingo!". If time allows you can extend this to two rows, or the whole grid.
- Ask participants to share how they feel after getting to know one another better, and using the conversation starters.
- Emphasise that when we get to know each other, we build trust and have meaningful conversations that help others open about life's ups and downs, big and small. Remind everyone that it's important to keep the conversations going and make asking 'are you OK?' a part of their everyday.

For more resources
visit ruok.org.au

RU OK?™ at school 

Conversation Bingo

<p>What do you think of the weather today?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What do you do to relax?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>How are you going today?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What's the most interesting thing you've read lately?</p> <p>Name:</p>
<p>Where is your favourite place in the world?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What qualities do you think make someone a good friend?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>How do you stay connected to others?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What is the best gift you've ever received?</p> <p>Name:</p>
<p>If you could have any superpower what would it be?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What's your favourite conversation starter?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What was the last movie or show you watched?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What made you smile today?</p> <p>Name:</p>
<p>What makes you laugh out loud?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What's your favourite thing to eat?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What was your favourite thing to do when you were younger?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>Who is someone you can talk to about anything?</p> <p>Name:</p>

Tick off your completed conversation starters on your Conversation Bingo. Write down the name of who you asked.

Tell us when you have filled in 4 boxes across or down by saying, 'Conversation Bingo'.

Conversation Bingo

<p>What was the last movie or show you watched?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What was your favourite thing to do when you were younger?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>If you could have any superpower what would it be?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>How are you going today?</p> <p>Name:</p>
<p>How do you stay connected to others?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What do you do to relax?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What's your favourite conversation starter?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What's your favourite thing to eat?</p> <p>Name:</p>
<p>Who is someone you can talk to about anything?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>Where is your favourite place in the world?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What do you think of the weather today?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What qualities do you think make someone a good friend?</p> <p>Name:</p>
<p>What's the most interesting thing you've read lately?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What makes you laugh out loud?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What made you smile today?</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>What is the best gift you've ever received?</p> <p>Name:</p>

Tick off your completed conversation starters on your Conversation Bingo.
Write down the name of who you asked.

Tell us when you've filled in 4 boxes across or down by saying,

References:

- R U OK?. (n.d.). *About us*. <https://www.ruok.org.au>
- Woodward, A. (2020, February 7). *R U OK? - A 10 year perspective*. R U OK?
- Larkin, G. (as cited in Woodward, 2020). "In the time it takes to have a cuppa, you could change a life."



The Reading Room: Amira: The AI Reading Tutor & ChatGPT: As a Writing Tool February 2026

Sometime ago I was listening to National Public Radio while having my coffee in the morning. Something I heard caught my attention, so I went online to listen to the entire segment. As a reading tutor myself, I was particularly interested in this segment. It was about Amira.

AMIRA

Amira is an AI (artificial intelligence) reading tutor. This particular broadcast was about the use of Amira in schools in Louisiana. In fact, approximately 100,000 students are using Amira as a supplement to direct instruction in the Science of Reading. Teachers and administrators are

very excited to have this tool. They caution that this is not a substitute for a human teacher but can provide additional individualized support for each student. Many of the students in Louisiana are ELL students so Amira can also tutor in Spanish. Amira can analyze where a particular student is struggling and deliver appropriate research-based practices and strategies to help develop that student's reading skills. One administrator commented, "I'm old-school. I still believe in people, especially with reading for little kids - that's where it's at. But this, to supplement good science of reading instruction in the classroom? This is great." We know that many parents can't afford private tutoring, so an AI tutor can be very effective.

As I started my research for this article, it became very clear that there are now many AI reading tutors to choose from. Amira is only one of them. The school-based cost for Amira is \$20.00/year per student, which seems quite reasonable.

"The cost of Amira Learning depends on the version and how it's used:

School version: \$20 per student per year, with no cost to the student. This version includes a parent report with information on student progress, vocabulary, and reading age. Teachers also receive training on how to use Amira.

Direct-to-parents version: \$7.99 per month, or \$72 per year with a 25% discount

Amira Assessment: \$8.00 per student per year

Amira was developed to use with students, K-3. I think a good use of an AI tutor would be to use it as a station if you have to rotate students through centers. My main concern about using AI tutors would be that some teachers might just use the tutor and not deliver direct instruction.

The preliminary data shows that AI tutors can really help improve students' reading skills. It will be interesting to see the data from Louisiana's two-year pilot at the end of this school year. Amira has an assessment associated with it based on the TPRI (Texas Primary Reading Inventory) Amira has a very favorable report from the Stanford SCALE Initiative Accelerator for Learning. See link below.

These AI tutors show very promising results. Please remember they should NEVER replace human direct instruction in the Science of Reading!

ChatGPT & WRITING

This next section is about a study done to find out how ChatGPT affected the brain activity of students writing a quick 20-minute essay. The study essentially showed that using AI to write an essay for them resulted in experiencing negative cognitive effects. This study and others were presented on the NPR program "On Point", hosted by Meghna

Chakrabarti. The researchers were Nataliya Kos-Myna from the MIT Media Lab, Barry Gordon from Johns Hopkins' cognitive neurology/neuropsychology division and Audrey van der Meer, professor in the department of psychology at Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

The study followed three groups of 56 students who were asked to write an essay in 20 minutes. The given topics did not require expert knowledge of a subject but were rather broad topics such as what is happiness or what is the perfect society. Group 1 was only allowed to use ChatGPT, Group 2 was only allowed to use a search engine, specifically Google and Group 3 was only allowed to use their own brains. The scientists then measured their brain activity and connectivity while they were writing. The essays were then graded by two English teachers who had no knowledge of the students or the research conditions.

The scientists found that the brain only group had the most wide-spread brain connectivity, and it was happening all over the brain. The Google group came in next with less brain activity, but a lot of activity related to having to open lots of tabs and solidify information from different sources. That activity was taking place in the occipital or visual cortex. The ChatGPT group showed the least amount of brain connectivity. To summarize based on additional research, it appears that the

increased activity in Group 3, the brain only group, correlated with increased creative thinking, critical thinking, episodic memory and language development. There is existing research to demonstrate that writing down information, taking lecture notes for example, very much helps increase the likelihood that you will remember and recall that information and that writing by hand can help in recalling places and experiences that are unique to the writing situation.

In addition to finding that the brain only group had much more brain connectivity, the teachers who graded the essays found that the ones written by the ChatGPT group were generally very homogenous and used similar vocabulary which made them wonder if these students were sitting next to one another and copying from their neighbors. (they were not) I was talking to some HS English teacher friends of mine who said they could tell immediately if a student used ChatGPT to write something. Retention of information by the ChatGPT group was seriously impaired compared to the brain only group or the Google search engine group.

The researchers suggest that perhaps it is important to write your initial draft using the brain only technique and then perhaps use ChatGPT as an editor of sorts to fact check, grammar check and enhance the initial draft by suggesting new vocabulary or additional sentence structures. AI,

when used judiciously can be an asset but this research study showed that the brain was working and connectivity was increased when AI was not initially used.

Resources:

AMIRA

Some of the other tutors available are:

Readability Tutor - <https://read.readabilitytutor.com/>
\$19.99/per month

Luca Tutor - <https://luca.ai/> \$27.00
<https://www.hmhco.com/programs/amira>

[Amira Learning | National Student Support Accelerator](#)

ChatGPT for Writing

“Does using AI dumb you down?”
NPR/On Point/Meghna Chakrabarti, 1/01/26

“Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant For Essay Writing Task.”

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Teacher Toolbox



Teacher Toolbox – February 2026

By Margaret Wood, Speech-Language Pathologist and TAP Consultant
mwood@ces.org

Executive Functioning Tools: The secret to task completion!



“I have so much on my ‘to do’ list... but I don’t even know where to start!” Have you ever felt so overwhelmed that you froze to a complete standstill and did absolutely nothing? Although we can all probably relate to this occasional struggle, many individuals with brain differences such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit disorders (ADD/ADHD), specific learning disabilities (SLD), and traumatic brain injuries (TBI) are debilitated by challenges with what we have come to know as “executive functioning deficits”. These individuals tend to experience these difficulties much more severely and frequently than the “average person”, and often struggle academically, socially, and professionally as a result.

Executive functioning (EF) skills are often referred to as “the air traffic control center” of the brain, since this set of skills help us to manage everything that we think, say, and do. These include skills like paying attention, organizing, planning, and prioritizing, starting tasks and staying focused on them to completion, understanding different points of view, regulating emotions, and self-monitoring (keeping track of what you’re doing), just to name a few. Basically, executive functions comprise the mental management system that allow us to set goals, plan, and get things done. Although we are not born with executive functioning skills, the roots are established as young as 12-18 months of age and continue throughout the years, until approximately age 25, when our pre-frontal cortex has fully matured.

Adults support is instrumental in helping children of all ages develop their executive functioning skills, which will benefit them throughout their lifespan. The “explicit teaching” model sets students up for success and provides ample opportunity for teachers to monitor students' needs for necessary supports and accommodations. It also provides explicit and immediate, corrective feedback as students move towards independent application. Scaffolded instruction (AKA the gradual release model) is broadly recognized as a successful approach for moving classroom instruction from teacher-centered, whole group delivery to student-centered collaboration and independent practice. Sometimes referred to as “I do it, we do it, you do it,” this model includes demonstration, prompt, and practice (Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey 2007). These evidence-based teaching methods are also effective in teaching the critical

executive functioning skills that students need to succeed.



Kris, a special educator and creator of www.pathway2success.com, describes how each EF skill “plays an important role in helping to accomplish both daily responsibilities and long-term goals and they often work together in different ways”, including the following:

- **Planning** is developing a well-thought-out strategy before starting a task. This involves thinking about what is needed before beginning something and creating a list of steps to help accomplish that goal in an effective way. Strong planning skills can help learners best use their time and complete tasks well, without needing to go back and revise work later.
- **Organization** is using strategies to stay neat and tidy. Being organized includes having a place for everything, developing a plan to keep materials orderly, and cleaning up as we go. Learners with strong organizational skills are better able to find what they need when they need it.
- **Task initiation** means starting right away. That includes not procrastinating, even when it is a less-desired task (like starting homework). Skills with task

initiation are critical because they are one of the initial steps in actually getting up and starting a job.

- **Time management** is using time well to complete tasks. This helps us estimate how long tasks will take, prioritize tasks, and use time wisely. Strong time management allows learners to do their most focused work on jobs while also completing assignments on time.
- **Attention** allows us to focus on a person or task for a period of time, ignore distractors, and refocus when needed. Strong attention skills can help to make sure learners hear and understand instructions, focus well during conversations, and concentrate on longer tasks.
- **Metacognition** is thinking about our thinking. Considering what we know and what we don't know about a topic as we learn can be a critical skill when studying for assessments, completing challenging assignments, and even just comprehending new learning material.
- **Working memory** is keeping information in our heads while we use it. We use working memory when we solve complex math problems and juggle numbers in our head, remembering critical details in a story or just thinking back to the directions just given.
- **Self-control** is stopping and thinking to make a more positive choice in the moment. That involves learning how to "hit the

pause button," calm down when emotions run high, think through a situation, and make a good choice for now and the future (e.g., short term - raising their hand before asking a question in class; long term - choosing to stay home to finish an assignment instead of going out with friends).

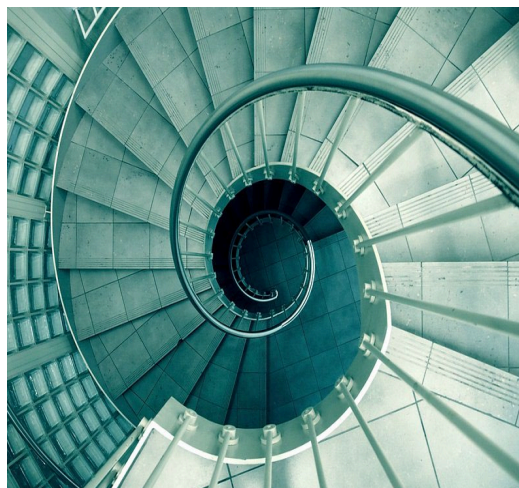
- **Flexibility** is effectively coping with change. This means being open-minded, testing out new approaches, and going with the flow when things do not go as planned. Being a flexible thinker also means being able to see a situation in more than one way, which is critical for problem-solving and perspective-taking.
- **Perseverance** is working through challenges and roadblocks that come up along the way. This means being able to try new strategies, continue working when a task is difficult, and even asking for help when needed. Strong perseverance skills are necessary for success in all areas of life, as challenges are bound to come up here and there.

Strategies for Supporting Executive Functioning Needs

- ✓ Explicitly teach executive functioning and study skills.
- ✓ Provide clear guidance for routines - directly teach and practice expectations.
- ✓ Post the most used procedures/routines - refer to them often during necessary activities.

- ✓ Provide visual and auditory directions.
- ✓ Ask the student to verbalize their process prior to executing the steps.
- ✓ Break down large tasks into manageable pieces.
- ✓ Utilize memory devices (e.g., mnemonics, songs) for complex concepts.
- ✓ Write homework down in the same spot every day.
- ✓ Give an extra 3-5 minutes to organize before transitions.
- ✓ Schedule a weekly organization time (and a daily check-in for individual students).
- ✓ Incorporate movement during instruction.
- ✓ Create an end-of-the-day checklist to remember materials.
- ✓ Provide brain breaks during and after instruction.
- ✓ Clearly explain academic and social expectations (verbally AND visually).
- ✓ Use countdowns and time checks during work periods (check out <https://www.online-stopwatch.com/>).
- ✓ Set up and guide students with the use of a homework agenda and homework binders.
- ✓ Provide visual supports, such as a daily schedule. Posting clear and consistent routines and procedures offers structure to students and decreases anxiety.
- ✓ Maintain a clean and visually organized class environment.
- ✓ Minimize clutter and create clearly defined areas in the classroom.
- ✓ Help kids become aware of their personal distractors and help reduce those distractions.

- ✓ Provide differentiated seating options (e.g., away from windows, standing space, etc.).
- ✓ Teach ways to identify/focus on important information, such as color coding, highlighting, starring, or underlining information, or adding a sound prior to a key idea.
- ✓ Show multiple ways of solving a problem.
- ✓ Model your thought process during direct instruction, have students do this with each other for guided practice.
- ✓ Encourage a growth mindset vs. a fixed mindset as a classroom practice.
- ✓ Prime students for changes in routines or upcoming projects.
- ✓ Set whole-class and individual goals and periodically check-in for progress and reflection.
- ✓ Incorporate creative thinking problems and games.
- ✓ ***REMEMBER: Consistent and genuine positive reinforcement is the fuel that keeps the fire burning long enough to achieve any change that you desire!***



✓

Remember that Mark Twain once said, “The secret to getting ahead is getting started.” True! However, I would like to add the following:

“The secret to getting started is breaking tasks down into smaller steps and then focus on the step in front of you – not the whole staircase.”

Explicitly teaching students sound *executive functioning* tools via modeling, practice, and patience, will significantly improve their ability to function more effectively and independently, setting them up for lifelong academic, personal, and social success. Let’s help each other take that first step, and then the next, and the next...

Visit the TAP Hot Topics Webinar Library at <https://www.cestap.org/> and watch the full webinar recorded on 1/8/26 to receive many more Executive Functioning tools to support YOU and your students!

“Teaching Tips”... for the Classroom -

by Barbara Piper, M.A.

TASK ANALYSIS...not just for teaching life skills!!

I am writing this article in early January, the beginning of a new year and the return from winter break for many students. Hopefully, everyone had a good winter break and now are ready to tackle the second half of the school year. As students get back into the “swing of things” in the classroom (ie. classroom routines, you may find there are some students who do not retain certain skills you taught prior to winter break, and

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you need to reteach those skills. And you think, “Do I really need to start from scratch?” Maybe not!! Consider doing a **task analysis** of the skill to guide you in your teaching or reteaching. procedures, curriculum, assignments, etc.),

What is a task analysis and how do I do it? A task analysis is simply breaking down a skill or task into its component parts, i.e. steps. By doing this, you create both a mini curriculum for that task or skill, and an instructional sequence to teach the skill. Sometimes task analysis is thought to be an approach just for planning instruction of life skills (such as making a sandwich, brushing one’s teeth, etc.) for students with more severe special needs, such as intellectual disabilities or multiple disabilities.

HOWEVER, it is also as important and effective approach for ANY instruction, whether it be academic, social, or behavioral. That includes general education curriculum too. Here are a couple of examples of social and academic skill task analysis :

Social Skill: Listening

Step 1: Look at the person who is talking (face the person/establish eye contact as culturally appropriate)

Step 2: Think about what is being said. (Show this by nodding your head.)

Step 3: Wait your turn. (Don't fidget or shuffle your feet.)

Step 4: Say what you want to say (ask questions / express feelings / express your ideas)

Academic Skill: Writing a Descriptive Paragraph

Step 1 : Decide on the topic.

Step 2 : Think about what you want to say.

Step 3 : List some descriptive adjectives that you could use to describe the topic.

Step 4 : Write a topic sentence.

Step 5 : Write 3 more sentences that describe the topic in detail.

Step 6 : Proofread for spelling and grammar accuracy.

Step 7 : Submit your paragraph to your teacher.

When observing a student performing the skill, you can observe and assess at what point does the student “leave the path of learning,” i.e. stop doing a skill step accurately. Sometimes referred to as the “point of breakdown.” It is at that point /step that you need to reteach the skill. And often it is effective to start the skill a step or 2 prior to the point of breakdown, so the student has some success first to support confidence and motivation.

So...use task analysis in your lesson planning, teaching and reteaching. Tasks analysis is one of the MOST important and effective skills a teacher can have!

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- → Physical Therapist --- Regions 2, 3, 4
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- → Registered Nurse --- Regions 1, 2, 4
- → Rehabilitation Counselor --- Region 4
- → School Psychologist --- Regions 2, 3, 4
- → Social Worker --- Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 8
- → Speech/Language Pathologist --- Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 8



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Watch for CES job postings on: www.indeed.com.



BULLETIN BOARD



Playground Risk Management: Limiting Your Liability

Come join nationally recognized Butch DeFillippo, of *PlaySafe*, LLC as he discusses proven methods to reduce injuries and limit liability on your playgrounds. *PlaySafe*, LLC will cover the safety guidelines, playground Risk Management, owner responsibility, ADA, supervision and much more.

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Course Location: CES
Address: 10601 Research Rd SE
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Course Time: 9:30 – 12:30

Pre-Registration is Required
Cost: No Cost to CES Members
Register By: February 6th, 2026



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"Congrats ALD Cohort 16 for completing their ALD Journey!"

They completed all in-person classes, online LEDR and SPED sessions, and have completed their final presentations. They will now be able to receive their ALD Certificate and move forward in their Administrative Journey!

The ALD program is a year-long PED-approved opportunity for current outstanding NM educators to acquire their 3B Administrative License. Focused learning designed for building leadership, instructional knowledge, communication skills, and other significant skills prepare participants to become strong and valued district educational leaders.



2026 Board Member Institute

February 5-7, 2026

Santa Fe, NM

The New Mexico School Boards Association will conduct the 2026 Board Institute during the Annual Legislative Session in Santa Fe which will allow board members an opportunity to advocate for education priorities with State Legislators. The Board Institute features informative general sessions and a variety of workshops on school governance and public education topics.

[2026 NMSBA Board Institute Agenda, Breakout Sessions & Descriptions](#)

[2026 NMSBA Board Institute Registration Form](#)

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