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CES MEMBER NEWSLETTER

May 2026

A Homegrown Partnership for New Mexico Schools and Districts: CES LEAP’s 8th Cohort Launches July 16th

Strengthening New Mexico’s Schools

At CES, we understand that the foundation of strong schools lies in effective partnerships. Districts throughout New Mexico are actively engaged in the day-to-day work of supporting educators, staffing classrooms, and addressing the diverse needs of students. These efforts continue despite ongoing staffing challenges and dynamic educational environments.

Launching the 8th CES LEAP Cohort

This July, CES LEAP proudly launches its 8th alternatively licensed cohort, reinforcing our dedication to cultivating and retaining educators grown here in New Mexico. As the largest state-accredited alternative licensure program approved by the New Mexico Public Education Department, LEAP is offered everywhere, serving over 65 districts and encompassing a variety of school types—including public, private, charter, and diocesan sites. LEAP is specifically designed for access by full-time teachers of record earning or adding on licensure, enabling districts to staff classrooms while educators receive salary, benefits, and accrue a year toward retirement. The comprehensive 11-month licensure pathway spans July to June, each year.

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

Innovative Support and Professional Development

What distinguishes CES LEAP is its supportive approach. Candidates benefit from individualized, job-embedded coaching provided by experienced New Mexico educators. Cohort-based professional learning fosters connection, skill development, and confidence. To ensure accessibility and strengthen community, monthly in-person sessions are held in three regional locations—Albuquerque, Artesia, and Las Cruces. Dual-licensure options in elementary, secondary, and special education offer districts flexibility and sustainable staffing solutions that are cultivated locally.

Enhancing Special Education Through the SPEC Pathway

For districts seeking to strengthen their special education systems with locally developed talent, the Special Education Capacity Pathway (SPEC) serves as a strategic and valuable resource. SPEC is

designed to empower qualified Level 2 and Level 3 teachers by allowing them to obtain Special Education PK-12 licensure while continuing to work within their current schools. This approach firmly anchors educators who come to LEAP with teaching experience in their communities, promoting the development of leadership and the efficacy needed to navigate the complex challenges of today's special education landscape. The SPEC pathway offers a differentiated learning experience tailored to individual needs and school contexts. Participants engage in action research, applying their learning directly to real-world situations. Coaching is aligned with site-specific requirements to ensure that support is relevant and impactful. Rather than submitting traditional licensure portfolios, candidates work on developing an Action Research Project. This innovative process guarantees that the work undertaken leads to immediate and meaningful outcomes for both students and educational teams at each site.

A Partnership Rooted in Trust and Shared Responsibility

CES LEAP is more than an alt-prep program; LEAP centers partnership founded on trust, care, and shared

responsibility. This commitment extends to educators, districts, and students throughout New Mexico.

Invitation to Join the July 8th Cohort

Applications are now open for the July (8th) cohort which kicks off July 16th! Districts are encouraged to identify educators who are prepared to advance their careers and participate in building a stable, well-supported, and authentically New Mexican educator workforce. In some cases, districts may cover tuition, books, and travel expenses for candidates and are invited to establish systems that provide embedded LEAP candidate workdays at central locations or offer support for exemption from new teacher requirements within the district, as well. LEAP will ensure that all candidates meet the recently legislated criteria for Literacy and Numeracy and are fully prepared for the tasks ahead!

JOIN US!

Apply Today: www.cesleap.org

Questions? Misty Wade, LEAP Administrative Assistant (mwade@ces.org)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 5/5 TAP- Mindfulness-Based Practices to Support Social Emotional Learning as the End of the School Approaches
- 5/6 TAP- Effective Data Collection in the Special Education Classroom: End of Year Focus
- 5/7 TAP- Sensory Self-Regulation Strategies and Supports
- 5/10 Mothers Day

5/25 Memorial Day

May						
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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	29	30
31						

PURCHASING NEWS

1) Contract Expirations: None

2) Contract Extensions:

- The Vigil Group 6/23/27
- Fire Tech 2/18/27
- Amergis 4/12/27
- ASB Acquisition Inc dba Game One 5/1/27

3) Name Changes/Change of Ownership:

- APIC Solutions INC. now APIC Solutions LLC
- Civic Tech Solutions now Civic Tech LLC.
- Game One, formally Cardinal Sports now ASB Acquisition Inc dba Game One

4) New Contract Awards:

RFP	Awardee	Contract Number
2026-13 – E-Rate (form 470)	Cypress Communication Systems	2026-13-C101-ALL
	Network Cabling, Inc	2026-13-C102-ALL
	CamNet, Inc.	2026-13-C103-ALL
	ConvergeOne, Inc.	2026-13-C104-ALL
	Rising Sun Technologies Electrical LLC	2026-13-C105-ALL
	Valcom, Salt Lake City	2026-13-C106-ALL
	PVT Networks Inc	2026-13-C107-6,7
	Advanced Network Management, Inc	2026-13-C108-ALL
	NM Fiber Network, LLC	2026-13-C109-1,2,3,4,5,8
	Converged Networks	2026-13-C110-ALL
	Systems MD, LLC	2026-13-C111-ALL
	365 Technologies LLC	2026-13-C112-ALL
	Ardham Technologies, Inc.	2026-13-C113-ALL
	Netsync Network Solutions	2026-13-C114-ALL

5) 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
2026-05 (ID & UT)	<i>Electric Charging Stations, Batteries & Related</i>	4/06/26	6/5/26	6/23/26



2026-06 (ID & UT)	<i>Material Handling Equipment, Parts, Accessories, Supplies, Rentals, Leasing and Related</i>	4/06/26	6/5/26	6/23/26
2026-07 (ID & UT)	<i>IT and Business Project Management, Program Management, Process Development, and Related Professional Consulting Services</i>	4/06/26	6/5/26	6/23/26
2026-10 (2020-30 exp 6/29/26)	<i>Student (K-12) Food Program</i>	4/10/26	5/8/26	5/26/26
2026-11 (2020-30 exp 6/29/26)	<i>Food Program for NM Agencies</i>	4/10/26.	5/8/26	5/26/26
2026-12 (2022-06 exp 5/30/26)	<i>Electric Charging Stations, Batteries & Related</i>	3/20/26	4/17/26	5/5/26
2026-16 (2022-14 exp 5/16/2026)	<i>IT and Business Project Management, Program Management, Process Development, and Related Professional Consulting Services</i>	3/20/26	4/17/26	5/5/26
2026-15 (2022-11 exp 6/19/26)	<i>Material Handling Equipment, Parts, Accessories, Supplies, Rentals, Leasing and Related</i>	3/20/26	4/17/26	5/5/26
2026-09 (PaaS)	<i>21 Century Comm. Learning Centers (for LEAs)</i>	3/30/26	4/1/26	6/4/26
2026-14 (PaaS)	<i>HB-2 Out-of-School Time Programs (CBOs)</i>	4/20/26	4/1/26	6/4/26
2026-10 (2020-30 exp 6/29/26)	<i>Student (K-12) Food Program</i>	4/10/26	5/8/26	5/26/26
2026-11 (2020-30 exp 6/29/26)	<i>Food Program for NM Agencies</i>	4/10/26	5/8/26	5/26/26
2026-17 (2022-09 exp 7/5/26)	<i>Fuel-Gasoline, E85, Diesel, Biodiesel, & Related</i>	4/17/26	5/15/26	6/2/26
2026-18 (2022-15 exp 7/5/26)	<i>Above Ground Fuel Storage Tanks, Fuel Dispensing Pumps, Sales, Installation, Maintenance, Repair, and Related</i>	4/17/26	5/15/26	6/2/26
2026-19 (2021-33 exp 7/4/26)	<i>JOC Program Consulting Services</i>	Tentative 4/24/26	5/22/26	6/9/26

* RFPs are subject to change.

ORDER CORNER

Just a reminder that the deadline to redeem your Member Service Credit is **June 15, 2026**.

A situation that keeps arising is uncertainty about whether to pay CES or the vendor. Your certainty can come from having selected the correct party for your PO, based upon the submission button in

the Bluebook for the contract being used.

- Traditional POs are made to CES, so payment will be to CES.
- Direct Purchase POs are made to the vendor, so payment will be to the vendor.

Be assured, CES personnel are ready to answer questions you may have. Just call or email us.

CONSTRUCTION CORNER

CES Procurement Partners Recognized at 2026 AGC Best Buildings Awards

Cooperative Educational Services is proud to recognize several of our valued Procurement Partners who were honored at the 2026 Associated General Contractors (AGC) Best Buildings Awards—New Mexico’s premier celebration of excellence in commercial construction. These awards highlight outstanding achievement in project delivery, craftsmanship, innovation, and impact across the industry.

Please join us in congratulating the following CES-contracted vendors for their exceptional work:

- Jaynes Corporation – Category Winner: \$20 Million and Over Carlsbad High School Performing Arts Center (General Contractor)
- B&D Industries, Inc. – Category Winner: \$5 Million to \$10 Million SNL Building 872 W. SCIF Upgrades (Contractor/Nominator)
- B&D Industries, Inc. – Category Winner: Design Build

Sunzia HVDC Converter Station – East (Contractor/Nominator)

- Franken Construction Company – Category Winner: Under \$2.5 Million

ABQ BioPark Snapping Turtle Exhibit (General Contractor)

- Bradbury Stamm Construction, Inc. – Category Winner: Community Impact

City of Albuquerque Gateway Center (General Contractor)

- Bradbury Stamm Construction, Inc. – Category Winner: Environmental Enhancement

Arrive Albuquerque Renovation (General Contractor)

- HB Construction – Category Winner: Customer Service Award LCPS Columbia Elementary School (General Contractor)

- Jaynes Corporation – Category Winner: Construction Management/CMAR Southwest Public Safety Center (General Contractor)

- Villalobos Builders, LLC – Honorable Mention: Federal & Heavy

State of New Mexico, Harold Runnels buildings lab renovations (General Contractor)

- Spear D (TLC Company, Inc.) - Category Winner: Municipal & Utilities
SJCWTP Settled Water Storage Basins, Sediment Removal (General Contractor)

In addition, we extend recognition to the many CES-contracted architecture, engineering, and specialty partners who contributed to award-winning and high-impact projects across the state. Your expertise and collaboration continue to

elevate the quality and success of public projects throughout New Mexico.

These recognitions reflect not only technical excellence, but also a shared commitment to delivering high-quality, compliant, and impactful projects for CES members. We are proud to partner with organizations that consistently demonstrate leadership in construction and design.

Congratulations to all recognized vendors for representing the very best of New Mexico's construction community!

And a Big THANK YOU!

We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all of our CES Members in the State of New Mexico. We appreciate the relationships we have developed! These relationships are built on trust and focus on bringing value to your organization. By choosing to design, construct, and maintain your facilities with our CES design and construction firms you not only enjoy excellent facilities you also support the professional development of thousands of educators who inspire, encourage, and love our NM Children.

Please contact one of our Regional Service Representatives or Construction Analysts listed below for assistance with your next project. Together we will ensure you have quality facilities! We appreciate you!!

Northern Regional Manager

Paul Benoit (575) 760-9002 paul@ces.org

Southern Regional Manager

Jim Barentine (602) 689-0652 jim@ces.org

Construction Analysts

John King (505) 344-5470 Ext. 150 jking@ces.org

Thad Phipps (575) 308-3193 thad@ces.org

EDUCATION ARTICLES

CES LEAP Program Earns Strong Recommendation for Continued State Approval and Accreditation

Cooperative Educational Services (CES) proudly announces that its Leading Educators through Alternative Pathways (LEAP) program has received a strong recommendation for continued state approval and accreditation following a

comprehensive site review conducted by the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED).

The review team commended CES LEAP for its thoughtful preparation, strong stakeholder engagement, and commitment to continuous improvement. The program was recognized for delivering a high-quality alternative licensure pathway that supports Day One teacher readiness through targeted curriculum, professional learning, and individualized coaching. Candidates benefit from structured observation opportunities and meaningful feedback from experienced mentors, exceeding baseline expectations.

State reviewers highlighted the program's responsiveness to stakeholder feedback, ongoing refinement of curriculum and data practices, and its alignment with statewide educator needs. The report also

emphasized the dedication of CES LEAP leadership, coaches, and staff to candidate success, noting the program's robust support structures and innovative use of tools such as virtual observation platforms.

NMPED expressed appreciation for the leadership of CES LEAP Director Alexis Esslinger, CES Executive Director David Chavez, and CES Chief Operating Officer Teresa Salazar, recognizing their collective efforts in advancing high-quality educator preparation.

The CES LEAP program continues to play a vital role in addressing teacher shortages, supporting diverse and culturally responsive teaching practices, and strengthening educator retention across New Mexico.

For more information about CES LEAP and its programs, please contact CES.

Compliance Corner May2026

**By Cindy Soo Hoo, TAP
Consultant**

So, Please Tell Us: What is the Key for Avoiding a Complaint Filed with the NM PED?

(Part 2 of 2)

In the April edition of Compliance Corner, we discussed avenues a parent or other interested parties may pursue to address concerns involving the special education services for one or more students. One avenue mentioned is the filing

of a State Complaint. These complaints may address various issues such as evaluations of students, missed services, lack of specificity and clarity in documents and not including parents in the decision-making process. So, let's explore some of the more common targeted areas included in complaints this current school year.

Meaningful Participation:

The involvement of parents in their child's education is essential. Parental involvement will undoubtedly increase educational performance than if parents are not involved. Involving parents extends to more

than just their physical presence in meetings, etc. It includes the solicitation of their input when it pertains to decision making about their child's educational programming.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) contains requirements for involving parents in their child's education whether it is seeking consent for an evaluation, notifying them of an upcoming Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting, or involving them in the development of their child's educational services during an IEP meeting. Several of the complaints filed this year involved school districts not involving parents in the educational decision-making process.

Prior Written Notice (PWN):

School staff must provide parents with a prior written notice before they agree or refuse to identify, evaluate, provide a free appropriate public education, or change the educational placement of their child. A PWN must be specific as to the action that is agreed to or refused and based on an evaluation procedure, assessment, record, and/or report to justify their decisions. Many of the complaints filed this year lacked specificity in terms of what served as the basis for the decisions.

Progress Toward Goals:

Determining whether a student is making adequate progress is important in determining if the services, setting, and supports are effective. It assists in determining if the student is on the right track or if changes need to be made to the child's educational program. It helps drive instruction and provides parents and others with information as to the amount of progress or lack thereof a student is making. Many of the complaints this year centered around the absence of progress toward goals or the lack of specificity as to the amount of progress a student was making.

IEP Implementation with Fidelity:

When IEP Teams develop an IEP for a student, they determine the necessary services, supports and setting(s) the student requires to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education or FAPE. These decisions are a commitment of resources from the district regarding the frequency, duration, and location of the services. Recording the delivery of services is a systematic way of providing evidence that such services were delivered that comply with the child's IEP. It allows parents and others the opportunity to examine the records and use that information to participate meaningfully in the development or revision of the child's

educational programming. Recording services can be used to analyze the instruction based on progress, mastery, or lack of progress. It also provides an accounting of services should the question of compensatory services be raised. Many of the complaints this year lacked evidence of services being rendered.

Accommodations/Modifications:

IEP Teams are required to determine the supplemental aids and services a child may require to be able to participate in the general education curriculum or with their non-disabled peers. These supplemental aids and services may include accommodations or modifications that may be necessary for the student to have access to the same opportunities as non-disabled students. Accommodations and modifications should be considered carefully and determined based on the individual needs of the student. It can sometimes be tempting to select accommodations that are not necessary for the student but instead made with the philosophy that the student may benefit from the accommodation. This may result in a large number of accommodations committed making it next to impossible to be implemented.

Those responsible for the implementation of the student's IEP should be aware of these

supports and be able to implement them with fidelity. A high number of complaints centered around accommodations not being delivered.

Child Find:

This year, concerns have centered around the failure to identify students suspected of having a disability. School districts have an affirmative responsibility to locate, identify, and evaluate students between the ages of 3-21 for whom a suspicion of a disability exists. In addition to the requirements under the IDEA, the New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) provides requirements as to the timelines in which a school district must respond to a parent-initiated or district-initiated request. Citations consisted of school districts not adhering to the timelines delineated in the New Mexico Administrative Code.

Connection of IEP Components: PLAAFP to Goals to LRE:

Components of the IEP are meant to be linked together to describe the unique needs of a student. The Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance section provides a baseline of where the student is currently functioning and how their disability impacts access to the general education curriculum and instruction in the regular education

classroom. Goals are identified from the present levels section of the IEP and identify what skills the student needs to address. Other supports are identified as well as the type of setting or the least restrictive environment where the student should receive those services. Many of the complaints this year lacked linkage from one section of the IEP to the other.

Discipline/Behavior:

Disruptive behavior resulting in the need to impose disciplinary consequences has been on the rise for many years now. Schools are expected to be proactive in addressing behaviors that impede the learning of a child or the learning of others. Disciplinary consequences exist to hold students accountable for their actions and to keep school campuses safe and conducive to learning. Both the federal

regulations and state rules describe the processes school districts must follow when addressing behaviors and imposing disciplinary consequences. These regulations and rules also define when services are required to be provided following a suspension or an expulsion, what constitutes a change of placement as well as the timelines and processes to follow when conducting a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR). Several of the complaints this year have transpired due to Local Education Agencies not adhering to these requirements.

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.



DEAR MS. M

Gifted Education Questions Answered

Dear Ms. M,

What does the new Gifted Budget Code for New Mexico mean for schools?

In March 2025, New Mexico introduced a new rule that changes how schools handle funding for gifted education. The gifted budget code is the fulfillment of the 2023 Gifted Rule update, a big step forward in ensuring that gifted students get the support they need. I interviewed Christopher Vian, the Gifted Specialist at the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED), to find out more about the new code and how it will affect schools across the state.

Q: What was the new gifted budget code rule that passed earlier this week?

The new rule, called Code 4050, is a pretty exciting change for gifted education in New Mexico. For the first time ever, gifted education funds will be tracked separately. This means that every dollar spent on gifted students will be accounted for, making sure that funds are actually going to support those students. The goal is to make it clear how districts are using these funds to support gifted programs, and schools will now report these expenses in their Gifted LEA Plan. It is all about creating a system that is more focused and transparent.

Q: What does this mean for New Mexico's school districts and charter schools?

For districts and charter schools, this rule is a game changer. Now, they will have specific funds just for gifted education, making it much easier to ensure that gifted students get the resources they need. Christopher Vian mentioned that it is a great opportunity for schools to be more intentional with their gifted programs. However, he also expects there might be some bumps along the way, especially since this is the first time a budget code like this has been put in place. But overall, it is a move that will improve the quality of education for gifted students.

Q: What does this mean for budget allocation?

With this new code, districts will need to allocate a specific amount of their budget to gifted education. Every gifted student generates funds, which are detailed in the New Mexico's Technical Assistance Manual (TAM), available on page 8. This will help schools better understand how much funding they will receive based on

the number of gifted students they have. The key is working with the district's budget office to make sure those funds are reported correctly. If a district has not identified any gifted students, they will not get any funds until they do, so it is important for schools to start identifying students to ensure they are receiving the right resources.

Q: What if a school district has never had a gifted budget? Who do they need to talk to, and what do they need to do?

If a district has never had a gifted budget before, the first step is to reach out to the NMPED. The team there can guide schools through the process of setting up their gifted education budget. The district will need to start identifying gifted students because that is what drives the funding. Vian stresses that it is crucial for schools to identify gifted students according to state guidelines to ensure they can receive the funding.

Q: How are the reporting and tracking going to be done?

Tracking and reporting for gifted education will follow the same procedures as the rest of the school budget. However, Vian will be specifically looking at gifted education expenditures and offering support to schools throughout the process. Schools will need to keep detailed records of how the gifted funds are being spent, whether it is on teachers, materials, or enrichment programs. The goal is to ensure that the money is being used effectively and transparently.

Q: How can we use these gifted funds?

The gifted funds can be spent in a variety of ways. For personnel, schools can use the funds to support gifted teachers, subject matter experts, instructional assistants,

and even social workers if they are working with gifted students. The funds can also cover substitutes for professional development or for teachers taking time off.

When it comes to supplies, the funds can be used for everything from textbooks, software, and technology to classroom materials and student travel for enrichment opportunities. There are a lot of options for how the funds can be spent, as long as they directly benefit gifted students.

Q: Can it be used for professional development?

Yes, absolutely! The gifted funds can be used to provide professional development for teachers, which is a big deal. Educators will have the opportunity to attend workshops, training sessions, and conferences that help them learn more about how to best support gifted students. This could include training on differentiated instruction or understanding the social and emotional needs of gifted kids. The goal is to ensure that teachers have the tools they need to make a real difference for gifted students.

Q: Can it be used for gifted teachers?

Yes, the new budget code can definitely be used to support gifted teachers. Schools can use the funds to pay gifted teachers,

provide stipends, or even hire new staff specifically focused on gifted education. This is a great way to make sure that gifted students have educators who are well-equipped to support their unique needs. Additionally, schools can use these funds to hire coordinators or specialists to oversee gifted programs. The new gifted budget code is a huge step in improving how New Mexico supports gifted students. By ensuring that funds are tracked, allocated correctly, and used intentionally, the state is creating a system that is more focused on meeting the needs of these students.

While there may be some growing pains as schools adjust, the hope is that this new system will lead to more effective and targeted resources for gifted education.

Kate Morris, MEd Gifted Education

Kate Morris is CES's Gifted TAP Consultant. She has been in gifted education for 10 years as a gifted educator and gifted instructional coach. She works for Central Consolidated School District in northwest New Mexico serving gifted and talented students in CCSD's Gifted, Talented, and Creative Program. Kate is the president-elect of the New Mexico Association for the Gifted.



Doin' OK? Mental Health Help Monthly Newsletter

By Gina Langley, PhD

School Psychologist

[*glangley@ces.org*](mailto:glangley@ces.org)

May 2026

Reflections

- When faced with someone dealing with some tough **Trauma**, did you learn about some of your own triggers or strengths? Did it remind you of a tough time in your past? Did you offer a type of comfort or uplift that you can use in your own self-care?
- Did something cause you to **Envy** someone? What's missing in your life that might have sparked that jealousy? Is there an empty spot you need to soothe by doing something good, or a weakness you might swap for a strength? Name the cavity and list some things that might help fill, negate, or replace it.
- Think of a time you felt **Overwhelmed**. List the things that were pressuring you. Prioritize those that you can act upon. Remember to keep things in perspective. What healthy self-care tactics can you use to reduce anxiety and also help yourself focus on the one-step-at-a-time and only-what-I-can-handle work-throughs?
- Is there something you **Regret**? Does it make you nervous about putting yourself out there (or not doing so) in the future? Forgive yourself. What might you do to help yourself not be disappointed by such a thing again?
- Was there a time when you just plain **Goofed** up? Take a mental snapshot of that learning moment to help you avoid going there again. Look at it objectively and be realistic but kind to yourself about what happened. Is there someone who would benefit from hearing you admit your goof? Would they prefer a note with a flower, a moment over coffee, or maybe a coupon offering your time and help in a future situation?
- Did you find yourself **Unprepared** for something? Would it help to pre-pack some little kit or checklist you could grab if this sort of thing happened again? Jot down what you should include in that pre-pack. While you're at it, is there another pre-pack you'd like to have on hand whenever you might need it? List your kits and their contents.
- And now, list your **Accomplishments**. What went well? What do you hope to do again? Who do you feel good about helping? When did you see eyes light up because of you? Where did you feel like everything was just right? Which lesson went especially smoothly? Who did you help to be a better person? How many "certain tasks"

did you finish? What new skills did you master? What good character traits did you build? What did you just completely enjoy? When did you share a warm moment? What are you grateful for? What else?

Summertime, summertime, sum sum summerti i ime! We're just about there! Another year of experience and expertise is just about behind us. How's it feeling? Great, I hope!

So what lessons have you learned this past school year? When you have some time to reflect, consider using this article as a worksheet to help you consider various situations ...

Finally, list how you'd like to treat yourself *well* during a well-earned break! Use the back of the page and make a checklist! And keep on *doin'* OK!

"Teaching Tips . . . for the Classroom"

by Barbara Piper, M.A.

Giving Directions so they are Understood!

Recently, I read this quote, "If you don't understand, ask questions. If you're uncomfortable about asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions and then ask anyway." (C.N. Adichie / ASCD newsletter March 2026). If it could only be that simple!! Although students are physically present in class, they may not always "get" the directions or instructions you have given regarding an assignment, a learning activity, group work, etc.

AND students may not feel comfortable asking questions in front of their peers. How can you deliver instructions and directions to best support student understanding... and decrease the occurrence of student responses such as, "What are we supposed to do?" Here are some strategies you might try:

- One strategy generally taught in teacher training programs is **wait time**. After giving verbal directions, pause for several seconds to give students time to process what you told them. This can be especially important for students with auditory processing difficulties and English language learners. During wait

time, look around your classroom to see if any of your students exhibit **facial expressions** that may indicate confusion.

- Have a student be a **paraphraser**. Once you have shared the directions, ask a student to repeat the directions. Depending on how complete the paraphrase is, you will get feedback on how well students understood what you told them. If the paraphraser gives an incomplete response, you can ask for a **paraphraser partner** to add to what the paraphraser shared. This terminology is appropriate for the elementary level. At secondary, you might just ask, "Could you share what you heard me say to make sure I explained it clearly?" That way the focus is on the teacher being clear and not on the student being correct, so there is no embarrassment to the student.
- Replace the teacher comments "Do you understand?" and "What questions do you have?" with "**What questions can I answer?**" Using this

approach repeatedly can create an atmosphere of inviting students' questions, rather than students being embarrassed or ashamed to ask when they don't understand.

- Ask students to **write down a few of the steps of multi-step directions**. Share those in class before starting the activity. This is a bit like paraphrasing but in a different way.
 - When giving directions to a project, provide students with sequenced written directions. Then as students complete different steps, have them **highlight each step**. Highlighting, as opposed to crossing out, gives a visual reinforcement that the student has accomplished something and succeeded. And remember...success is what fosters motivation!

These are just a few suggestions that can help all students better understand directions and instructions. For students with special needs in any of the disability categories that affect executive functions, providing supports to organize, clarify and reinforce memory

and understanding are beneficial to their success. Feeling successful at the end of the school day is good for students, and for teachers and staff too!

REFERENCES

Quote by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: "If you don't ... - Goodreads.
[https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/919029-if-you-don-t-understand-ask-questions-if-you-re-uncomfortable-about.](https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/919029-if-you-don-t-understand-ask-questions-if-you-re-uncomfortable-about)

TEACHER TOOLBOX



Teacher Toolbox - May 2026

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

Fidgets... Tool or Toys?



Have you ever found yourself absentmindedly

clicking a ballpoint pen, twirling a lock of hair around your finger, or fiddling with a rubber band while concentrating on a task? That's called fidgeting and we have all done it, usually without ever noticing this socially acceptable behavior. Ironically, Dictionary.com's definition of the verb "fidget" is *"to play with something in a restless or nervous way; fiddle. Example: 'The boy kept fidgeting with the toy instead of paying attention.'"* This example highlights the commonly held notion that fidgeting is a negative behavior that distracts students and should be strictly avoided in the classroom. The word "fidget" (used as a noun,

meaning an object held and manipulated in the hands) is the controversial subject at hand (*pun intended*) and is debated frequently among educational staff.

Educators' opinions regarding tolerating (or encouraging) the use of fidgets vary almost as much as the research itself on this subject. Studies have shown that using fidgets can increase focus and attention and work as a stress management tool. Fidgets are especially useful in helping children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) with self-regulation. Hand fidgets can help manage anxiety, improve attention/ability to focus, or even help children calm down when dealing with a surge of emotions such as extreme anger or frustration. Other research suggests "fidget spinners negatively influence young children with ADHD's attentional functioning.", which makes sense since part of the attraction of fidget spinners is watching it spin and waiting as it slows down

so that you can spin it again. Fidgets that demand visual attention or those with a game component that requires matching, unlocking, or solving something are poor choices for boosting on-task behavior.

Educators have long since identified how movement is a critical intervention for many students, especially with those who have significant attention and task endurance challenges. Studies that have looked at a variety of movement interventions have found that providing exercise and movement opportunities positively impact learning and behavior. Although frequent movement breaks are helpful, it is not always possible for teachers to provide them during certain times in the school day. In these situations, a fidget becomes a viable intervention tool.

Some students may exhibit behaviors such as chewing on shirts, twirling hair, picking at scabs, or tearing papers. They will turn anything they can get their hands on into a fidget, even a

ball of lint. Providing quiet, non-distracting items for these students to tactilely explore can decrease impulsive and destructive behaviors and increase their ability to stay on task. For individuals with anxiety, tactile items can improve self-regulated behavior by providing a place for nervous energy to go.

Stress balls can help slow down the body and mind. Fidget tools are excellent additions to calm-down corners. Students who finish their work early and need to wait for their classmates to catch up may become disruptive due to boredom. Small fidget items that can be manipulated in their hands can help alleviate this waiting period.

For a fidget to be a useful tool instead of a distracting toy, we need to understand how they work and how they may help (or hinder) the ability to focus in different contexts. Introducing a fidget properly is necessary for the success of this intervention strategy. For many students, fidgets are toys and toys are meant to be played with. We must teach students that classroom

fidgets are tools to help learning. One way to introduce fidgets to the classroom is through a discussion regarding how areas of strength and areas of need are unique to each student.

Consider starting by sharing that everyone needs different "tools" for them to function effectively. It may be helpful to start with a commonly used (but critical) "tool" such as eyeglasses. For example, *"We are all looking at the white board right now, but if I wasn't using my eyeglasses, I would not be able to read the words on the board like you can. So, I use eyeglasses as a tool, so I can see better. For some of you, paying attention is hard and a fidget can help you focus better. Just like not everyone needs eyeglasses to see, not all of you will need a fidget to focus, and some of you will only need a fidget sometimes (just like I only need to wear my glasses sometimes)."*

Create, teach, and reinforce some simple fidget rules for your students to follow. One way to do this is through a simple social story. Social Stories (Carol

Gray, 1990) are written from the student's perspective and describe and direct their behavior when something new or challenging is introduced. Here is an example of a very brief social story designed to teach a student how to use a fidget as a tool:

Fidgets are tools that can help me focus. Sometimes I use a fidget on my pencil to help me pay attention, so it becomes a focus tool. I can spin the head and stretch the rubber band on my pencil to listen actively during whole group instruction, to help me understand and remember what I hear. When it is time for written work, my pencil becomes a writing tool again. Fidgets are tools (not toys)! I will choose to use them as a tool, but I will put them away if I use them as a toy, so everyone can focus and learn.



A fidget contract is another method that provides direction regarding how to use a fidget in an expected manner. It sets expectations about what the fidget is for and

provides guidance so you and your student may agree on when, where, and how the fidget can be used. A fidget contract is another method that provides direction regarding how to use a fidget in an expected manner. It sets expectations about what the fidget is for and provides guidance so you and your student may agree on when, where, and how the fidget can be used. You can download a sample of a fidget contract here: <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/download-sample-fidget-contract>. Review the contract with your student on a regular basis to make sure it's working. You can also share it with all members of the student's IEP team (and even include it in the IEP documentation), to make sure everyone is on board and using this intervention with fidelity.

As you gather items that may make effective fidgets for your sensory box, consider the following:

- Is it small enough to be held in one hand?
- Can it be moved or bent (e.g., rubber bands, binder clips, paper clips, twist ties, pipe cleaners, etc.)?
- Is it sturdy and does not have pieces that can easily be broken off (and put in the mouth)?

- Do I have objects of various textures (e.g., soft, stretchy, squishy, bumpy, etc.)?

Remember that building your sensory box does not have to break the bank. “Freebies” from education conferences that you attend like stress balls make great fidgets. Rummage through your “junk drawers” at home for small objects that fit the above criteria. Don’t forget that common everyday objects like rubber bands and binder clips can be great fidgets too. Teach students how to use fidget tools, model the correct use of fidgets, and provide genuine praise when used in an expected manner to reinforce the desired behavior. Encourage students to be selective when finding the right fidget for a given context by asking themselves, “Which fidget will help me to focus without distracting myself or others right now?” As with any other intervention, consistency is key. Let us acknowledge “the fidget” as the potentially valuable tool in our toolbox that it is, when used properly!



Check out the TAP Hot Topics Webinar Library at <https://www.cestap.org> to watch previously recorded topics, such as Visual Supports Parts 1 and 2 for more visual strategies and tools to support your students’ communication, behavior, and task completion!

References

- <https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/fidget-toys-to-relieve-stress-anxiety>
- <https://nationalautismresources.com/fidgets-in-the-classroom/>
- <https://ot4adhd.com/2023/05/19/fidgets-and-adhd-a-focus-tool-or-a-toy/>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/download-sample-fidget-contract>



**The Reading Room:
Tips and Tricks
Semantics
May 2026**

This month in the Reading Room, we will be focusing on semantics, which is the branch of linguistics concerned with how meaning is constructed and communicated in written or spoken language. Vocabulary development requires students' knowledge of the meaning of individual words and other aspects of semantics such as synonyms (words with the same or almost the same meaning), antonyms (words with opposite meanings), and polysemous words (words with multiple meanings). Semantics also includes the ability to understand the meaning of words in different contexts in addition to the knowledge of the meaning of relationships between words.

Many words have very similar meanings, and it is important to be able to distinguish

subtle differences between them. For example, 'hot' and 'fiery' are similar in meaning (synonyms) but 'fiery' implies a stronger human reaction to a situation than 'hot.' It is also important for students to know the opposite meanings of words (antonyms). For example, 'hot' and 'cold' would be considered opposite in meaning. Words that have more than one meaning (homonyms) can also be confusing. For example, 'watch' could mean observing (a verb) or could refer to a timepiece worn on the wrist (a noun).

It is important that children are able to make subtle distinctions between the meanings of words and their use in various contexts. Working on understanding the meanings of words will help a child in their general schooling and improve their reading, spelling and comprehension. If they cannot retain an understanding of the learning of new vocabulary, they will have difficulty understanding new concepts and ideas. This will also affect their ability to express their own ideas.

Children with difficulties with semantic details may exhibit

- difficulty with word classification
- difficulty developing more than a literal understanding of a text
- a poor short-term auditory memory
- a need to be given time to process information

- kinesthetic strengths, learning better through using concrete materials and practical experiences
- visual strengths, enjoying learning through using visual materials (charts, maps, videos, demonstrations)

The following are activities that could be used with your students.

- Comparative questions - (Example: 'Is the red ball bigger than the blue ball?')
- Opposites - using everyday objects (Example: thin/fat pencils, old/new shoes)
- Sorting - both real and pictorial items into simple given categories (Example: items we can eat, items we use for writing and drawing).
- Classification - ask pupils to sort both real and pictorial items into groups, using their own criteria.
- Bingo - simple pictorial categories (establish that each student understands the category on their bingo board before they begin the game)
- Odd one out - ask the pupils to identify the items that should not be in a specific category and give reasons why.
- Which room? - ask the students to match pictures of objects to specific rooms in the house and give reasons for their choice of rooms
- Where am I? - one student chooses a place in the classroom to stand or sit and asks, 'Where am I?' The other pupils have to use a range of prepositions to describe the pupil's position - (Example: 'You are in front of the teacher's desk.', 'You are next to the whiteboard.')
- Comparisons - activities in math (finding objects that are shorter than, longer than).
- Concept opposites - introduce concept vocabulary within different areas of the curriculum, using visual/concrete materials (Example: hard/soft, full/empty, heavy/light, sweet/sour, rough/smooth).
- Homophone pairs - using pictures and words (Example: see/sea, meet/meat).
- Compound word dominoes - (Example: bed//room, to//day, for//get, pan//cake)
- Compound picture pairs - match pictures that form a compound word (Example: foot/ball, butter/fly)
- Word families - collect words that belong to the

same category
(Example:
vegetables, fruit,
clothing)

(Taken from **A-Z of
Special Needs for Every
Teacher** by Jacquie
Buttriss and Ann
Callander)

The following are resources that
could be used with your students.

Semantic Feature Analysis from
Reading Rockets
<https://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/semantic-feature-analysis#:~:text=The%20semantic%20feature%20analysis%20strategy,enhances%20comprehension%20and%20vocabulary%20skills>.

Connecting Word Meanings
Through Semantic Mapping
from Reading Rockets

<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/connecting-word-meanings-through-semantic-mapping>

Teacher Ideas to Help a
Child with Semantic
Language Difficulties from
Classroom
<https://www.theclassroom.com/oral-language-development-reading-6395103.html>

How to Use Semantic
Maps for Teaching
Vocabulary from
Vocabulary Luau
<https://vocabularyluau.com/how-to-use-semantic-maps-for-teaching-vocabulary/>

Semantics in the
Classroom from
Linguistics for Teachers
of ELLs
<https://linguisticsforteachersofells.weebly.com/semantics-in-the-classroom.html>

*Activities to Develop Semantic
Knowledge - Teaching Expertise,*
<https://www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/activities-to-develop-semantic-knowledge/>. For questions, please
contact:

Chris Fox - cfox@ces.org. Jessica Powell
- jpowell@ces.org



JOB OPPORTUNITIES AT CES

Ancillary Openings:

- Ancillary Teacher – Region 1
- Behavior Management Specialist – Region 4
- Diagnostician – Region 3
- Occupational Therapist – Regions 1, 2, 3, 4
- Physical Therapist – Regions 2, 3, 4
- Recreational Therapist – Region 4
- 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, 7, 8

Other CES Openings:

- Purchasing Specialist
- LEAP Math Coach
- Professional Services Staff



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

BULLETIN BOARD

Now Charging at CES!

CES has added ChargePoint EV chargers for our members. While visiting or attending meetings, you can charge your electric vehicle for up to 4 hours free. Just stop by the reception desk to request an RFID card and plug in while you're here. We're happy to help keep you charged!

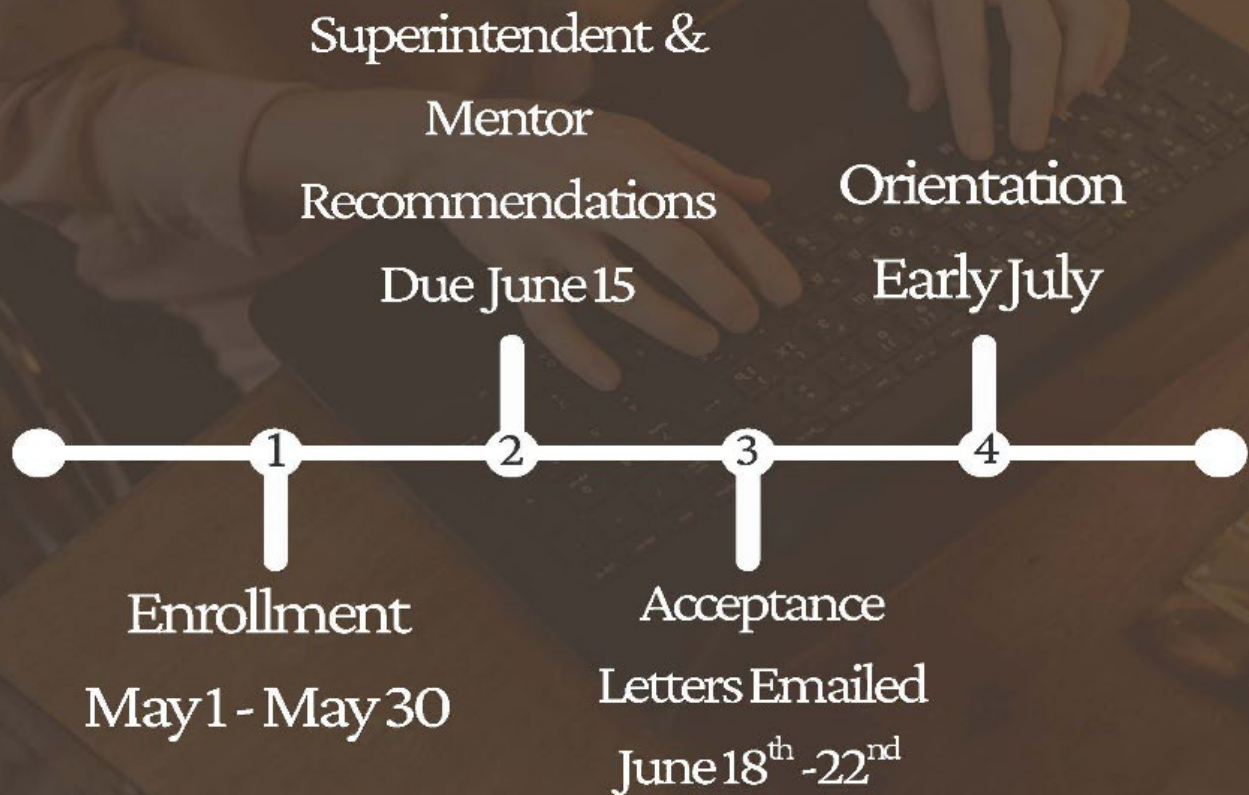


Fall 2026 Enrollment - ALD Program

Enrollment opens May 1st! The application link will go live on this date. Please keep an eye on our website at www.ces.org/leadership-development for updates and access to the application.

CES+ LEDR

NEW Enrollment Timeline for Fall 2026 - CESALD Program
CES ALD (Administrative Leadership Development) Program
has announced its enrollment timeline for Fall 2025:



Learn more by visiting our website at:
www.ces.org/leadership-development



SPECIAL EDUCATION CAPACITY PATHWAY

DISTRICT NEED

Amid persistent Special Education (SPED) staffing shortages districts are working to strengthen building-level expertise, elevate instructional quality, and develop sustainable leadership capacity.

CES LEAP SOLUTION

LEAP offers a sustainable solution by leveraging experienced educators already serving within district schools onto teams needing support and leadership and by driving change around Special Education licensure in our schools. Providing a differentiated pathway that allows districts to support current Level 2 and Level 3 licensed teachers in adding Special Education PK-12 NM licensure.

HOW DISTRICTS IMPLEMENT THE PATHWAY

Districts hand-select effective general educators with a Level 2 or 3 license to participate in our LEAP C8 cohort. Participants transition into Special Education site-based roles at the year start remaining anchored in district schools to further grow and support a pathway of district GYO.

DISTRICT IMPACT

CES LEAP develops building-level SPED expertise and instructional leadership within districts, strengthening and stabilizing SPED teams. The pathway refreshes the skills and instructional toolboxes of experienced educators while building internal capacity and improving continuity of services for students with disabilities.

A strategic approach for districts to enable experienced Level 2 and 3 licensed educators to obtain Special Education NM licensure.

What sets CES LEAP SpEC apart?

- Differentiated to recognize and capitalize on educator experience
- Action Research Plan replaces traditional licensure portfolio and aligns to site-based needs
**Candidates must pass Praxis*
- Coaching and coursework are calibrated to build and connect special education experience and knowledge with an educators prior expertise.

FOR DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP DISCUSSIONS, CONTACT: ALEXIS ESSLINGER | ALEXIS@CES.ORG



LED R

Session

Administrator Bootcamp

With Attorney Tony Ortiz

05/14/2026
3:30pm-5:30pm

[Register Here!](#)

CES+
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2026 School Law Conference

June 4-6, [2026](#)

Albuquerque, NM



The New Mexico School Boards Association and the Cuddy and McCarthy Law Firm will host the 47th Annual School Law Conference for school board members, superintendents and school personnel. The conference features presentations on the latest legal issues facing public education and includes numerous breakout sessions to assist new and veteran school board members, administrators and educators.

For those interested in exhibitor or sponsorship opportunities, please contact Carolyn Mole, Finance Director, cmole@nmsba.org. For those interested in presenting information or workshops please contact Elizabeth Egelhoff, Program Director, elizab@nmsba.org.

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