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# SPECIAL EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

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## Staff Member of the Month

Louisa Footman- Social Worker



This is Ms. Footman's second year at SEED. Her background as a clinical social worker is in Juvenile Services, Education, Substance Abuse Treatment, and Community-Based Mental Health. She was fortunate to attend boarding school in California, where she was raised, and practicing social work at SEED feels like a full circle accomplishment and a tremendous use of my

skills and experience. In 2016 she completed a dissertation about gang involved females and their journeys to leave gangs, "based on which I received a doctorate in Human Services with an emphasis on counseling. I'm always here and happy to be of service to students, staff, and our community"!

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## Accommodation of the Month: Human Reader: Selected Sections

#### In the classroom:

- Read any passages that the student asks to be read.
- Allow student to find text on YouTube if possible and listen to the passages on headphones.
- Offer to read anything they need discretely at least once a week so they feel comfortable asking.
- Understand they may not need/want anything read to them and that's ok.

#### In the dorms:

- Allow students to use an audio book or internet reading of the book
- Offer to read anything the student needs read in homework or other activities.

\*\*These students often won't request anything to be read and that is ok. They have selected sections to promote independence in reading.

## Strategy of the Month: Utilizing Multiple Modalities

Often when walking into a classroom you'll find the teacher at the board giving direct instruction and hopefully the students are paying attention and taking notes. However this method, while useful, only really helps students who are mostly verbal learners. It is crucial to plan with all three modalities in mind. Some students may learn best through verbal instruction but others need visuals, or even hands-on activities.

Some fun ways to incorporate other modalities into your classroom include utilizing movies, creating movement signals, and getting the students to guide more of their learning. For example, if you are about to teach a unit on the civil war, have the students' research important battles. After they've collected information on the battles they can work in groups to create movies about the battles that can then be uploaded to a Google drive for the other students to view and study from. This takes some of the presenting of information off your plate and allows the students to learn from each other.

Other ways to incorporate multiple modalities can be allowing the students to develop a movement, song, rap, or visual to help remember important concepts. For example, have the students practice using their arms to show positive and negative slopes or parallel and perpendicular lines. It may seem silly at the time but I guarantee on the test you'll see at least one kid referring back to those motions.

While a consistent routine is crucial to a classroom's success, it is also important to think outside the box and find activities that the students can take ownership of. You'd be amazed at how excited over your content students can be when they are given a chance to be creative. As an added bonus these activities can often be student lead so they continue even if you need a day off. Try some of these strategies in a lesson this month or ask your special educators for more ideas!

By: Kristi Fausel

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## Grit and Growth: What Not to Say to Struggling Learners

In the course of working with a struggling student, many a teacher or adults have sometimes found themselves using certain expressions that demean or undermine the self-worth of the learner. This derails the relationship with such a student hence limiting chances of any constructive academic engagement. The student is already struggling academically; please exercise self-restraint and find constructive ways to boost the student's confidence and craft a congenial relationship in the process. This article, the first in the series of "**What not to**" will point out some phrases and words that adults should desist from using in reference to students, in general.

1. **"Special Ed or IEP"**. Adults have been known to use these words when a student is weak in a subject. Be aware that learners, generally, associate negative connotations with these terms.
2. **"You're wrong"**. Please, offer feedback in a way that doesn't injure the student's ego. A phrase like "It's great that you turned in your class work right away. However, I would like you to spend an extra 15 minutes checking your work before turning it in. You've been working really hard lately. Let us to look over your work again.
3. **"Just try harder."** Telling a struggling learner to "just try harder" or "this is easy" or "you'll have to learn it on your own" is cynical and contemptuous. These phrases might imply that the student is just being lazy—when it's likely he's actually working very hard. Guide, teach or remind the student about a strategy he's successfully used in the past.
4. **"Slow, un-teachable, cannot learn."** Avoid words like "impaired" and "slow." Such terms are not only offensive but also gives the impression that the student's difficulties are more severe than they really are. Focus plenty of attention on the areas where the student experiences success. Use the strengths to overcome the needs.
5. **"Disabled"**. Adults need to choose words that are more positive than "disabled" or "handicapped". Even if the student has been identified as having a disability, the word "disabled" may send the wrong message. Instead, use words such as "struggling in reading" "need a little help in two-step equations" etc. Refer to specific abilities, strengths or needs rather than "who" the person is. The use of such words hurts the learning environment because the student begins to resent any connection with the adult who uses such phrases to refer to them.

Let us recall that education is a social business, and we connect with people who elicit positive "vibes" within us.

By: Francis Lando, Ed. D



## Director's Corner



Students need to feel safe, secure and supported at schools in order to learn; as adults who care deeply about our students and their learning, we actively work to create this reality each day. Nevertheless, there are times when we fall short. Nothing undermines student trust faster than continued bullying in the face of adults who don't take the necessary steps to intervene and put a stop to it. Beyond being absolutely critical in creating the kind of community and school culture that nurtures students and adults alike, there can be real, legal ramifications for schools and teachers if bullying continues unchecked by adults. Read on to learn more!

In the case of *Motta v. Eldred Central School District*, parents of a child who was the victim of on-going bullying sued the school district for negligence. According to the student, he was bullied and harassed by several classmates during two years at his junior-senior high school. The student said that classmates called him names, urinated on him, took or damaged his belongings and fought with him. School officials received several reports of bullying from the student. According to the student, the school took minimal action against the involved students. Furthermore, he claimed that as a result of the continuous bullying and harassment, his overall academic performance was negatively impacted; therefore, he had to repeat the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. His parents filed a negligence suit because they believed that the bullying was a result of direct supervision of school officials. Motta's parents also felt that although he was victimized, he was also penalized often for his response to the acts of bullying. Once all of the testimony and documentation was submitted to the courts. It was determined that Motta did not report all of the incidents of bullying and harassment to school officials, although he was told to do otherwise. In the end, the court denied the motion of judgment because of the conflicting information from all parties involved.

This incident is just one of many examples where students are victims of escalating bullying in large part because of the inaction of school personnel. Sometimes, we may want to minimize the situation because we aren't sure what to do. I implore you to act anyway, even if that means asking for help. Other times, we want to give students the benefit of the doubt, and hope the situation away; document anyway and follow up. If the situation resolves itself on its own, that is wonderful; however, if it doesn't, you will have taken the necessary steps to ensure that the incident is addressed in an appropriate and timely manner. There may be times when it seems tedious to document all reports of bullying; however, we absolutely must document these reports. Additionally, we must have students document each incident of bullying that occurs, and we must ensure that students receive appropriate consequences for acts of bullying in an effort to discourage the future behavior while equipping students with skills that will reduce the likelihood of repeat incidents.

It may appear to us that students with special needs may be more aggressive and have more incidents of being the aggressor in incidents of bullying; however, a closer look at research reveals a surprising pattern. Research shows that students who are viewed as different or who have learning disabilities are at a higher-risk of being victims of bullying ("Who is at Risk", 2017). School needs to be a safe place for students and unchecked bullying leads to depression, suicide, violent retaliation and eventually possible criminal convictions (stopbullying.gov). To complicate matters even more, bullying has gotten a 21<sup>st</sup> century makeover; therefore, it should come as no surprise that social media has increased the frequency, severity and seeming ubiquity of bullying as well. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 71.9% of students in grades 6 through 12 experience incidents of cyberbullying once or twice per school year ("What is Bullying", 2017). In contrast, only 25 % of the students who are cyberbullied report the incident if it ends in a face-to face confrontation. Without a face-to-face confrontation, only 4% of students report incidents when someone has posted a hurtful profile picture, and only 3% of students report when they receive a nasty email from another student (Zweig, Dank, Lachman & Yahner. 2013). Social media gives students more access and opportunities to attack and hurt others in a seemingly anonymous way, which can ultimately have a higher negative impact on the victim ("Cyberbullying and Social Media", 2017). Being aware of student discussions and references to peer conflict that is occurring in 'real time' and across various social media is critical for teachers and staff who can then report the incidents to the proper channels. Ben Franklin once said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and this timeless wisdom cannot be any truer when it comes to being proactive in our efforts to eradicate bullying. To learn more about the effects of bullying, please check out the following sites:

Case: [http://www.nycourts.gov/reporter/3dseries/2016/2016\\_05424.htm](http://www.nycourts.gov/reporter/3dseries/2016/2016_05424.htm)

Bullying: <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/>

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

<http://www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org/kab/>

### References

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The rate of cyber dating abuse among teens and how it relates to other forms of teen dating violence. (n.d.). Retrieved January 15, 2017, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23412689>

Cyberbullying and Social Media. (n.d.). Retrieved January 15, 2017, from <http://www.meganmeierfoundation.org/cyberbullying-social-media.html>

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By: Patricia Richardson

# Footman's Footnotes

## Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism was classified as a clinical disorder in 1980 by the APA. 2013 revisions led to the reorganization of Autism into Autism Spectrum Disorder. Criteria for diagnosis of ASD: to display a spectrum of behavioral characteristics, which result in varying degrees of functional limitations. **ASD is a developmental disability characterized by social and communication impairments, restricted interests, and repetitive behaviors.** In evaluating a child, clinicians rely on behavioral characteristics to make a diagnosis. Some of the characteristic behaviors of ASD may be apparent in the first few months of a child's life, or they may appear at any time during the early years. **For diagnosis, problems in at least one of the areas of communication, socialization, or restricted behavior must be present before the age of 3.**

Current statistics: 1 in 68 children are diagnosed with ASD. It is more commonly seen in boys: 1 out of every 42 boys and 1 out of every 189 girls. Research has not proven that Black or Hispanic children have a lower risk than white children to develop ASD, however, data has shown that Black and Hispanic children were less likely to be identified with ASD. It is possible that these children face socioeconomic or other barriers resulting in a lack of or delayed access to evaluation, diagnosis, and services, making teacher/school staff attention much more significant in this population. Here are things to watch for:

### Signs/Symptoms of ASD in School-Aged Children:

- Appears disinterested or unaware of other people or what's going on around him
- Doesn't know how to connect with others, play, or make friends
- Prefers not to be touched/ held
- Doesn't play "pretend" games, engage in group games, imitate others, or use toys in creative ways
- Has trouble understanding or talking about feelings
- Doesn't seem to hear when others talk to him

By: Dr. Louisa Footman

## Psychologist Corner

It is important that we focus upon those things and experience that we are grateful for daily. Acknowledging our Gratitude helps us all remain in our "happy place" and allows us to function effectively in the various roles we play... Utilizing a Gratitude Journal is one way to help you remain in that "happy place" and will ultimately keep you aligned with your overall wellbeing.

Print as many gratitude journal sheets as you want. You can decide whether you want to write in your journal daily (my recommendation), weekly, or whenever you feel like it.

<http://sagegrayson.com/free-printable-gratitude-journal/>

By: Ryan Brown

## OUR TEAM

[Sarah Strycula](#)- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Case Manager

[Linda Still](#)- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Case Manager

[Steven Douglas](#)- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Case Manager

[Toni Gonzales](#)- 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Case Manager

[Francis Lando](#)- 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Case Manager  
and 504 Coordinator

[Kristi Fausel](#)- 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Case  
Manager and Special Education Coordinator

[Brian Fausel](#)- Pull-Out Specialist

[Patricia Richardson](#)- Director of Special  
Education

[Ryan Brown](#)- School Psychologist

[Louisa Footman](#)- Social Worker