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### www.sess.ie

The development and expansion of our website is ongoing. It is envisaged that www.sess.ie will become the established portal site for special education in Ireland. The number of visits has increased significantly from 61 in the month of January 2004 to 10,473 in the month of January 2007.



## WELCOME

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to **CABHAIR**, the Special Education Support Service (SESS) newsletter, to all primary and post-primary schools.

I am very conscious of the challenges which face teachers of students with special educational needs. The SESS, since its establishment, has been to the forefront in providing resources and services for schools with teachers of children with special educational needs.

The field of special education is constantly evolving and I know that it is extremely important that teachers be provided with the knowledge and support they need. This newsletter will serve as another building block in the process of professional development.

As this first issue of **CABHAIR** is being distributed, it is important to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of all those who have contributed to bringing the SESS from concept to reality. I would also like to commend all of the work completed by the SESS since 2003 and to wish the SESS every success in the future.

I would encourage all teachers and school leaders to read the contents of this newsletter and familiarise themselves with the SESS and the services it provides to teachers and schools. I look forward to the continued publication of this extremely valuable resource.

Mary Hanafin, TD, Minister for Education and Science

## INTRODUCTION

Dear Colleagues,  
The Teacher Education Section (TES) of the Department of Education and Science (DES), formerly the In-Career Development Unit, is responsible for initiating and managing ongoing programmes of in-service training and professional development for teachers and other stakeholders in education.

The Special Education Support Service (SESS) was established by TES in 2003. The aim of this nationwide service is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning with particular reference to special education provision. The SESS aims to provide a quality service that is inclusive, promotes collaboration and co-operation and provides for equality of access. SESS is hosted by Cork Education Support Centre. There has been significant expansion of the SESS in the past year, now with a co-ordinating team of 14 full-time, seconded teachers and several specialised teams of associates

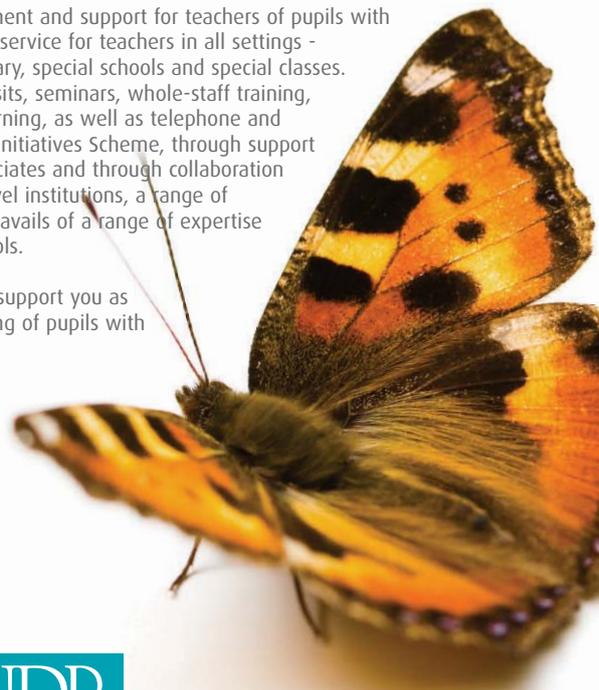
SESS provides professional development and support for teachers of pupils with special educational needs. SESS is a service for teachers in all settings - mainstream, primary and post-primary, special schools and special classes. Various models are used - school visits, seminars, whole-staff training, project development and online learning, as well as telephone and website support. Through the Local Initiatives Scheme, through support provision by the SESS teams of associates and through collaboration with existing organisations, third-level institutions, a range of agencies and support services, SESS avails of a range of expertise in order to support teachers in schools.

SESS looks forward to continuing to support you as teachers, in the teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs.

Best wishes,

*Joan Crowley O'Sullivan*

Joan Crowley O'Sullivan  
National Co-ordinator





# I'M A TEACHER, GET ME OUT OF HERE!

## Techniques to Maintain Peace in Your Classroom

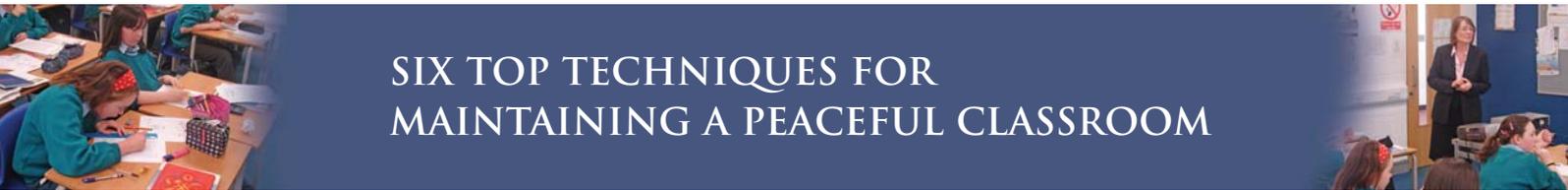
Johanna Fitzgerald, Assistant National Co-ordinator, SESS. Johanna is seconded from Castletroy College in Limerick.

Imagine the scenario: it is Friday afternoon. I have been teaching all day. Double geography with fifth years is next. Need I say more! I really want the lesson to pass without incident but last Friday I ended up shouting at John because he kept swinging from his chair and tapping his pen. "Why are you always picking on me? Sinead is tapping her pen too and you never give out to her!" he grumbled. I know I shouldn't enter into an argument with John, after all he is the child and I am the adult, but my tolerance has abandoned me and my energy is dwindling. "Well I wouldn't have to pick on you if you just sat properly on your chair. Is it any wonder you never get your work finished?" I know I haven't handled the situation well and only served to escalate the angst in the classroom. As the day ends, I reflect on the class and know that I probably argue too much with John. But what else can I do?

We, as teachers, have all had experiences like this at some stage in our careers. There are times when even our best plans and intentions are thwarted by the misbehaviour of our students as well as our own tiredness and depleted energy reserves.

We can try promoting peace in our classrooms by employing techniques that will avoid confrontation and help to diffuse potentially challenging behaviours.

We will all continue to have off days - we are human after all - but try some of the techniques below and you should start to feel serenity seeping into your classroom.



## SIX TOP TECHNIQUES FOR MAINTAINING A PEACEFUL CLASSROOM

### Non-verbal Signals Reduce Intrusion into the Lesson

Develop hand signals such as: Stop/No/Come/Go/Quiet/Sit down/Sit properly on the chair/Sit here/Sit there/Listen.

1

### Focus on Pupils Making Choices

Pupils are more likely to co-operate if they feel that they have some control over themselves and their choices. If we present two choices that are both acceptable to us, then pupils are less likely to make a different and unacceptable choice. "Deirdre, come on in. You can sit here, or there."

2

### Pause for Emphasis

Directions to pupils can appear vague or jumbled unless their attention is focused. Use a pause and a look to ensure pupils are concentrating on what you are saying.

3

### Direction and Delay

Pupils may not feel able to comply with teacher instructions because of peer pressure. There are times when giving the pupil thinking time after the teacher has disengaged eye contact and possibly moved away helps the pupil to comply and not lose face with their peers.

4

### Label the Behaviour, not the Pupil

When directly confronting inappropriate behaviour pupil self-esteem is vulnerable. Express disapproval of behaviour, not of pupils themselves. Use I statements for example: "I feel annoyed when you are interrupting me, listen quietly, thanks" ("I" messages). "You are always interrupting my class!" ("You" messages, can be confrontational).

5

### Rules to Provide Distance

Correcting pupils with direct reference to rules shifts possible resentment away from teachers. Pupils are encouraged to remember agreements they made to keep the class rules. For example "Martha, what's our rule on talking to the group?"

6

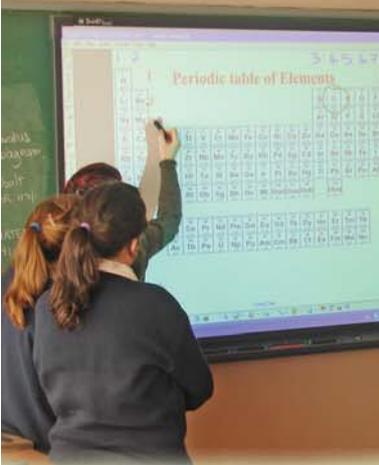
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Allen, T. (1998) *Promoting Positive Behaviour*, London: David Fulton Publishers.

Rogers, B. (2006) *Classroom Behaviour*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Rogers, B. (1995) *Behaviour Management*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Behavioural Improvement Programme Toolkit (2004) [Available online at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourimprovement/toolkit/index.cfm>]



## INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARDS: A QUIET REVOLUTION IN THE CLASSROOM

*Liz McLafferty, St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls, Cabra, Dublin.*

In St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls we have been using an interactive whiteboard (IWB) for the past year. We got our IWB when we joined the Cláir Bhána Idirghníomhacha (CBI) project ([www.cbiproject.net](http://www.cbiproject.net)). This project was set up to evaluate the use of whiteboards in education in Ireland and to produce resources that could be shared. We became involved in the project through our local ICT Advisor, David Kearney. We have two teachers involved in the project at the moment - Liz McLafferty, teaching Junior Certificate Science and Margaret Owens teaching Junior Certificate Mathematics.

An IWB is a large, touch-sensitive screen that connects to a digital projector and a computer using SMART Notebook software. It displays the information on the computer screen for the whole class to see. The information is saved in files using this software, which makes it easy to retrieve when required. The material is easy to adapt according to the needs of different student groups, or individuals.

The IWB was installed in the science room. All the science teachers were "thrown in at the deep end" and had to learn how to use this new technology very quickly as the blackboard was removed. The science teachers have shared the files they have created for the classroom with each other which has led to a large bank of science resources being available.

Initially, we were a little daunted by the new technology. However, after a few weeks of training, the IWB has become an integral part of our teaching. While the preparation work can be time-consuming the benefits are significant.

With an internet connection on the computer, a huge bank of interactive, online resources, suited to use with the IWB have become available. Every lesson we prepare has some level, be it small or more comprehensive, of interactivity built in (through touching and manipulating text or graphics). The variety of resources and activities are impressive. These include online multiple-choice quizzes, downloaded video clips, labelling the diagram exercises etc. This more interactive style of learning has been embraced enthusiastically by the students and has enhanced their learning experience.

In practical terms, the IWB allows one to hold the attention of all students at the same time. When textbooks or worksheets are used in teaching deaf students, they have to look down to read the text and it is very time consuming to get the attention of the students again. The IWB greatly reduces this problem. We can read information from the board and sign at the same time. This increases the opportunities for communication between teachers and students.

The lessons flow at a much faster rate as the teacher can move back and forth through the pre-prepared pages with the touch of a finger. The students no longer spend time writing notes from the board in class. The teacher can print the information together with relevant annotations and give the printouts to the students to study at home.

The IWB is of great benefit to our students. Being connected to a computer and the internet, the lesson becomes more interesting, more interactive and more visually stimulating. The variety and quality of visual material available is of particular relevance to deaf students. Abstract concepts in mathematics and science can be made more accessible through the use of the 3D graphics and modelling. These facilities offer such an improvement in the classroom that we could not do without them now.

Greater participation in the lesson has many benefits. In particular, we notice that the students have become more confident in class and are much quicker to volunteer answers to questions.

*"I like the whiteboard because it is colourful and the images or animations help me to remember the lesson more."*

Student



# eARTh

## A SCHOOL PROJECT WITH A DIFFERENCE

*Ann Whitty, St. Caimin's Community School, Shannon, Co. Clare and Sean O'Leary, Assistant National Co-ordinator, SESS. Sean is seconded from St. Caimin's Community School in Shannon.*

Can art change the world? Well, the students and teachers of St. Caimin's Community School in Shannon believe it can. They hosted an art exhibition, called **eARTh** to express the vital energy of nature.

The students worked around the clock to create art for the event and the exhibition also included art generously donated by artists from around Ireland.

The staff at St. Caimin's believe that preparing for this important exhibition created opportunities for all of their students to work together for the good of their community. Although the theme of the exhibition was art and the environment, its core ethos was inclusion.



*"My experience of the eARTh exhibition was a really good one. I really enjoyed working on my piece and then seeing it framed. It was really cool... I think that the exhibition brought all the school together."*

Student



*"The eARTh exhibition created a format of acceptance and inclusion unparalleled to date. All participants were valued, all work was given equal status, professional artists' work hung in the galleries beside students' work, and pride in involvement was paramount.*

*Educational achievement is all too often measured using objective, impersonal state exams. eARTh reflected all that is inclusive. It was an ambassador for equality and teamwork and elevated acceptance to an unprecedented level within our community. All efforts were valued equally, all were invited to get involved and all people who did so worked side by side, equal partners in a rewarding enterprise."*

*Siobhan McSweeney, Learning Support Teacher*



The school would like to gratefully acknowledge financial support from Clare County Council and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals. They have set up a website to promote **eARTh** amongst other schools. For more information, visit [www.earthlearn.ie](http://www.earthlearn.ie) or contact Ann Whitty, St. Caimin's Community School, Shannon, Co. Clare.



## A POST-PRIMARY PERSPECTIVE ON TEAM TEACHING

*Katherine Bates, St. Paul's Community College, Waterford.*

A considerable proportion of students with special educational needs are placed in mainstream educational settings. All students like to be part of a group, it is a natural place in which to learn, and there is plenty of evidence that self-esteem is raised through group involvement and participation. There is also evidence to suggest that working together enhances student learning.

The task for principals and others engaged in organising classes at post-primary level is to ensure that students with special educational needs are part of a recognised group and that they are given opportunities to learn within that group.

Current research into the provision of special education at post-primary level promotes in-class and socially supported approaches to learning. The curriculum documents published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) on the provision of special education at post-primary recommend the provision of support within the regular classroom.

Increasingly, "setting" of subjects has become a popular way of organising junior cycle classes. Using this approach, teachers of students with special educational needs can be timetabled concurrently with their colleagues for teaching key curriculum areas, e.g. mathematics, english, irish, science. This provides opportunities for team teaching for mainstream colleagues and creates an effective structure for supporting students with special educational needs in key curricular areas.

Team teaching as a model of intervention at post-primary has been shown to increase collegiality and promote shared responsibility among teachers. There is also evidence of improved student academic and social progress due to a combination of professional strengths, broadening of instructional goals and changed views among teachers about the potential of students.

Current restructuring of schools within the framework of school development planning promotes this concept of teachers of students with special educational needs and mainstream teachers working closely together and learning from each other.

*"Team teaching as a model of intervention at post-primary has been shown to increase collegiality and promote shared responsibility among teachers."*





# ACROSS THE SPECTRUM: ENABLING TEACHERS, ENABLING PUPILS

SESS Conference for Teachers Working with Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

Mary McKenna Larkin, Scoil Mhuire, Ballyboden, Dublin 16.

Once I saw that Rita Jordan was the keynote speaker, I knew I had to get to this conference. The luxury of getting away from work and home for two days with overnight accommodation meant a chance to totally immerse myself in the subject matter. It also gave me the chance to network with colleagues from similar settings to my own (autism units) around the country.

Rita Jordan did not disappoint. Her ability to inform us of current research in a conversational style translated into a relaxed and seemingly effortless learning session. She set the standard for the rest of the speakers and they followed suit impressively. In fact, the whole tone of the conference, while professional and inspirational, was friendly and informal throughout. Teachers, speakers, SESS personnel and inspectors intermingled without any sense of exclusivity.

The conference gave me food for thought and the opportunity to reflect on my own practice, e.g. do I put enough detail into my Individual Education Plans (IEPs)? Would my practice stand up to scrutiny if John Hunter evaluated it? The stories related at the conference filled me with hope regarding the potential for meaningful inclusion of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in mainstream settings. It also confirmed my personal conviction that inclusion is down to attitude and willingness to think outside the box. Mary Mullally’s presentation on sensory integration emphasised the importance of combining sensory, motor and relationship perspectives. One colleague said to me, “I’m definitely going to do more sensory activities when I go back!”

Most of all, I took away an absolute “lorry load” of positivism. The feeling that I am part of a large group of like-minded professionals supported by the SESS stays with me and should serve to reduce any future feelings of isolation that may sneak up on me in moments of self-doubt. Predominantly, it was a conference packed with common sense (and we all know there’s nothing common about sense!) delivered by people who truly are experts in their fields and who embody the message of real inclusion in education. Thank you SESS!

*“It was a conference packed with common sense...  
delivered by people who truly are experts in their fields”*

(from left to right): Joan Crowley O’Sullivan, Prof. Rita Jordan, Emer Ring and Dr. John Hunter

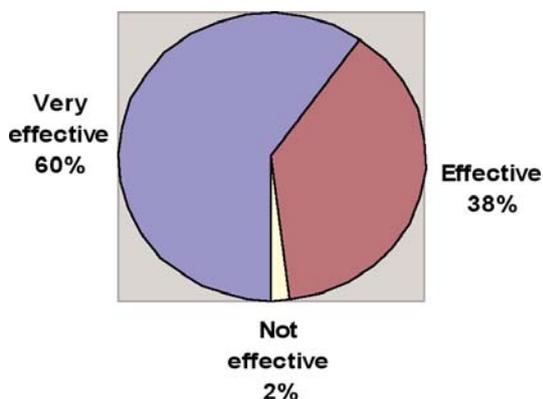


## INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM

A Whole-staff Seminar for Second-level Schools

This 3½ hour seminar outlines the changing Irish landscape for teachers working with students with special educational needs, as well as offering practical approaches for differentiating curricula across all subject areas.

School principals may apply for this whole-staff seminar by writing to SESS, Cork Education Support Service, Western Road, Cork.



*“The best staff development day yet”*

*“Thoughtful and reflective”*

Participant evaluations



## THE IRISH SPECIAL SCHOOLS SPORTS COUNCIL (ISSSC)

*Ita Teegan, SESS Project Manager for the project 'The development of the special school as a resource'. Ita is seconded from Scoil Bernadette, Cork.*

The ISSSC is a voluntary organisation, established in 1985, to develop sporting and cultural activities for students with mild general learning disabilities, within and between schools. The Council operates at local, regional, national and, in some cases, international level. There are thirty schools currently involved in active participation, catering for approximately 3,500 students.

### Activities of the ISSSC include:

- Soccer: inter-school leagues, regional finals and national finals
- International soccer: *(under the auspices of the Football Association of Ireland, trials take place every year for soccer internationals involving Northern Ireland, England and Republic of Ireland teams)*
- Swimming galas - held regionally
- Athletics
- Irish dancing
- Sports jamborees
- Bowling
- Cross-country running
- Quiz – regionally and nationally
- Basketball tournaments - held regionally and nationally
- Indoor soccer tournaments

The educational value of pupils' participation in these activities is enormous. For a pupil with mild general learning disabilities, independent living skills are an intrinsic part of the curriculum. Sporting events provide a valuable "hands on" opportunity to acquire these skills. Let's imagine that you are a pupil from Cork participating in a basketball tournament in Tralee. The night before there is much organising to be done, gear folded and put into the sports bag and, of course, the ubiquitous packed lunch...not to mention a good night's sleep. The next morning, it's off on the bus.

It might be your first time in Co. Kerry.....the journey is marked on a map, registration plates are watched to see who can spot the first KY car. When to eat lunch.....before or after playing? Important decisions have to be made! Then you've arrived and it's straight onto the court to play. The etiquette of the basketball court has to be observed. You might have time to chat to participants from other schools and socialise in the schoolyard.

Then it's back to the bus and a stop on the way home for something to eat, and on to the shop to buy a treat for the journey home. You arrive at school after everybody's gone home. The excitement of it! You are collected and go home probably exhausted, but very pleased with the "great day" in Tralee. You learned about many things throughout the day, looking after your property, budgeting, teamwork, friendships, getting the right change and ordering food in a restaurant among others. That warm glow of achievement, not around coming first or second, but to do with the day itself will stay with you for a long time to come.

*Since 1985 the ISSSC has provided many such days for students all over Ireland.*

*"That warm glow of achievement, not around coming first or second, but to do with the day itself will stay with you for a long time to come."*





# I'VE A VERY BRIGHT CHILD IN MY CLASS. **HELP!**

*Eamonn Costello, Assistant National Co-ordinator, SESS.  
Eamonn is seconded from Castlecomer Community School, Co. Kilkenny.*

Most of the students in the class are getting on with the task. A few are struggling and already Tom is finished the task. Does this sound familiar?

Tom is keen, alert and has an outstanding memory but he blurts out answers and dominates class discussion. He prefers to work alone but he is demanding, so demanding that the teacher struggles to "keep him occupied". Increasingly, Tom is becoming sloppy and even careless with his own work, is frustrated with the pace of the class and is prone to asking awkward questions. He is inclined to "daydream", is poorly disciplined and can be bored and distracted.

Tom is a gifted student and may be in danger of underachieving in school.

*The problems associated with the underachieving gifted student can cause extreme anxiety to student, parents and teachers.*



## **Who are these students?**

Opinions vary as to the percentage of students that fall within the gifted and talented category - falling between the top 5%-10% of the population academically. If you think of high-ability students as those that fall within the top 5% of the population, then there are over 20,000 students currently in the education system that fall into the category in this country.

## **So what do these students need?**

Firstly, these students need to be challenged at a pace and level appropriate to their ability. Differentiating the curriculum basically involves extending and enriching the curriculum in a way that provides consistent challenges for the child. Extension allows gifted students to work quickly through the set curriculum in order to move ahead on to new work. It should not involve more of the same work. It is important to vary the teaching style to match individual learning styles of the students. Dependent and passive learning should be replaced with independent and active learning.

## **Compacting: A differentiation strategy**

*Compacting is the term given to a common differentiation strategy used in teaching gifted students.*

## **Five steps to successful compacting**

1. Identify the learning objectives all students must reach in the lesson.
2. Offer a pre-test opportunity to volunteers who can learn the required material in less time than their classmates.
3. Move students who passed the pre-test or mastered the material straight on to the pre-prepared curriculum extensions.
4. Eliminate drills, repetitive practice or similar activities for students who have already mastered the content and skills of the lesson.
5. Maintain accurate records of students' compacting activities.

The student is encouraged to work independently, but must also feel that they have access to the teacher's support, when needed.

## **Developing further approaches**

The above in-class strategy can be supported by such organisational strategies as mentoring programmes, special classes, competitions or clubs. Additionally, the Irish Centre for Talented Youth (CTYI) at Dublin City University (DCU) provides challenging coursework and exciting opportunities to enable high ability students achieve their potential. The courses that students can take at CTYI are different from those that children would normally take at school. These classes include forensic science, aeronautical engineering, astronomy, creative writing, psychology, computer applications and many more. They are taught by experts in the particular area so that students can ask as many interesting questions around the topic as they like.

**CTYI can be contacted at (01) 7005634 or by email at [ctyi@dcu.ie](mailto:ctyi@dcu.ie) for information and resources.**

## **References**

- ICEP Europe online course (2006) *Teaching Gifted and Talented Students: Responding to their Special Educational Needs*.  
Winebrenner, S. (2001) *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom*, Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing.



# IS SCIENCE FOR EVERYONE?

*Sean O'Leary, Assistant National Co-ordinator, SESS.*

*Sean is seconded from St. Caimin's Community School in Shannon.*

What is the purpose of learning science in school? Is the answer to this question important? It is, if we want to create equal opportunities for all. Education is not only about mastering subject knowledge and passing exams, it is also about giving everyone the opportunity to access, participate in and benefit from the learning opportunities provided in our schools.

All students can benefit from an education in science. Not only do they learn about the world around them, they also learn about themselves.

The report of the Task Force on the Physical Sciences (2002) expresses the concern that a significant number of students do not study science at Junior Certificate level and supports the argument that science should be made a core component in the education of all students. Although few people could disagree with the goal of achieving scientific literacy for all students, taking the practical steps to implement a scientific education for the diversity of learners can be a complex and challenging task.

Science education is in a strong position to meet the needs of students with special educational needs because curricular adaptations can be made part of the regular variation in teaching and learning within the classroom.

Active learning, co-operative groups and whole-class discussion, which figure prominently in the research literature on effective science teaching, also provide opportunities for meeting the learning and teaching needs of diverse learners.

Learning is about engaging positively with students, providing a variety of stimulating activities that students can learn from and appealing to the multiple intelligences that exist in the classroom. We can differentiate lessons by adjusting the content being learned by students, changing the way students access the material and by coming up with different ways in which students can show what they have learned.

When we differentiate learning activities to meet the needs and abilities of students, we are making learning more personal and relevant. This personalised approach provides every student with opportunities to reach their potential, whatever their ability level or need. Therefore, it does not lower standards; it raises them for all students.

Science is for everyone and inclusion is possible in the science classroom. Any resources and methodologies developed to include students with diverse needs in the science classroom can benefit everyone and may even go some way towards increasing the popularity of science. Teachers require access to strategies and resources to help them to meet the needs of their students. At second-level, we also need examinations that cater for the diversity of learners that exist in our schools.

The increased diversity of students enrolling in mainstream schools poses new challenges for teachers. It necessitates the personal and professional development of every teacher. Therefore, the quality of inclusion that takes place in our schools is linked inextricably to the quality of education provided for teachers as well as for students. We, in the SESS, are committed to providing support for teachers in meeting these challenges.

## References

Task Force on the Physical Sciences: Report and Recommendations (2002).

[Available online at [http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/physical\\_sciences\\_report.pdf](http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/physical_sciences_report.pdf)]

*"Science is for everyone and inclusion is possible in the science classroom."*

*"When we differentiate learning activities to meet the needs and abilities of students, we are making learning more personal and relevant."*



## WHAT IS THE LOCAL INITIATIVES SCHEME?

Schools and/or individual teachers identify their own professional development needs in relation to special education and apply to SESS for support, which may be financial, professional and/or advisory. Support is mainly provided through the co-ordinating team and teams of associates. An associate is a teacher with expertise in a specialised area, who is released from school, for 25-35 days per school year, to work with the SESS. Currently, SESS associates work in the following areas: Autism, Dyslexia, Challenging Behaviour and Inclusion at Second Level. Application forms and additional information are available on [www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie)

## MY WORK AS AN SESS ASSOCIATE

*Siobhán Kingston, St. Gabriel's School, Bishopstown, Cork*

I was appointed an associate member of the SESS in 2006 and from the onset it has been a remarkable journey. I work in the area of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and I am motivated to deliver and share my enthusiasm with other teachers and schools.

To date, I have delivered many seminars on ASD in education centres around the country. These seminars attracted large numbers of teachers and I am very pleased with the response. There is a need for information and guidance in the whole area of ASD and appropriate educational programmes.

I have also visited numerous schools in response to Local Initiative requests. Meeting teachers from various backgrounds and experiences has enriched my own practice. For me, it has emphasised the need to always focus on the pupil.

When I visit a school, I can see how overwhelmed staff can be by implementing an educational programme for a pupil with ASD. The principal, class teacher, resource teacher, and special needs assistant are all trying to deal with a situation for which they have limited or no training. As an SESS associate I feel I am playing a vital role by helping schools to identify and clarify issues pertaining to the education of their pupil(s).

Joining the SESS has helped me define and refine my own expertise. The ongoing professional development is enormously valuable and being involved in advanced training with Division TEACH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children) as a shadow trainer has been a high point.

Absence from school to carry out my SESS work requires huge commitment and goodwill on the part of my school. I'm very fortunate and grateful to my school who continue to fully support my SESS work. A recent Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) course in my school was very well received and shows how SESS can benefit and support the base school of its associates.

On a personal level, being an associate also necessitates frequent absences from home and having to "live out of the suitcase" syndrome. While this can be enjoyable, the downside is travelling long distances and missing home life. It requires organisation and planning on many levels.

I feel that the ASD seminars are reaching a great number of schools through the attendance of class teachers and/or resource teachers. However, the individual school visit dealing with the practical aspects relating to the particular circumstances for that school are a vital and much valued part of the SESS support. Teachers need more guidance to put theory into practice, to set up their own structures and to get programmes started. More is needed. Teachers are hungry for information and the means to get systems underway. This is an ongoing need, with more and more pupils with ASD entering the school system every year.

After such a brief exposure to the supports offered by SESS, I am in awe of the enormity of the demand for such support, but am enjoying my involvement in its delivery.



*"As an SESS associate, I feel I am playing a vital role by helping schools to identify and clarify issues pertaining to the education of their pupils."*



# SPOTLIGHT

## SESS Seminars

SESS in collaboration with education centres provides the following seminars:

- **Dyslexia: 'Dyslexia in School: A Seminar on Planning and Intervention for Class Teachers':** *A two-hour session for whole-school staffs.*
- **Autism: 'An Introduction to Autism':** *A one-day seminar for class teachers who currently have a child with autism in their classes.*
- **Managing Challenging Behaviour in the Special School Setting:** *A 1½ day seminar for whole-staffs of schools for pupils with mild and moderate general learning difficulties.*

## Summer Course Programme

Special schools who deal with serious and persistent challenging behaviour on a day-to-day basis requiring specific interventions, have sought specific continuous professional development (CPD) on the use of such interventions at whole-staff and whole-team level. SESS has invited special schools to avail of funding for this specialised training as part of the summer course programme.

## International Speakers

SESS continues with its international programme. In 2006 guest speakers included Bill Rogers ('Managing the Hard Class'), Dr. Steve Chinn ('Trouble with Maths'), Professor Barrie Bennett ('Instructional Intelligence') and Lindy Petersen ('Stop, Think and Do – Social Skills Training'). **Dr. Steve Chinn** returns in May and will speak in Mayo, Donegal and Carrick-on-Shannon Education Centres. **Amanda Kirby** will speak on dyspraxia, in West Cork Education Centre and Cork Education Support Centre.

## Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education (IATSE) Conference

Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education (IATSE) annual conference 'Focus on the Student in the Midst of Policy and Paper' will take place on June 7th, 8th and 9th in St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

## Across the Spectrum: SESS Autism Conference

Following the January conference for teachers working with pupils in autism classes/units in primary, post-primary and special schools, SESS is hosting a conference on April 30th/May 1st for principals of these schools. The keynote address will be given by Professor Rita Jordan, University of Birmingham.

## Institute of Child Education and Psychology (ICEP) Europe

ICEP Europe provides online courses designed to help teachers meet the challenges of educating children in the 21st century. The courses are part-funded by the Special Education Support Service and the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Science under the National Development Plan. For further information, phone (045) 982628, e-mail [info@icepe.eu](mailto:info@icepe.eu) or look at [www.icepe.eu](http://www.icepe.eu)

## New Accredited Special Education Course for Mainstream Teachers

The Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, recently announced a new course which addresses the needs of mainstream teachers in meeting the challenges posed by recent legislative changes, an increasingly diverse student population and the inclusion of students with significant special educational needs in mainstream schools. For more information, contact St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra ([www.spd.dcu.ie](http://www.spd.dcu.ie)) or ICEP Europe ([www.icepe.eu](http://www.icepe.eu)).

## SESS Office – Call save 1850 200884

The SESS office is hosted in the Cork Education Support Centre, The Rectory, Western Road, Cork. Maura Buckley is the Administrator, assisted by Eiméar Long and Deirdre O'Connell.

## CABHAIR Supports Teachers

We welcome articles from teachers as well as suggestions about future content.

**Editor:** [soleary@sess.ie](mailto:soleary@sess.ie)

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**Post:** Editor, CABHAIR, SESS, Cork Education Support Centre, Western Road, Cork.

## In the Next Issue

1. The development of the special school as a resource
2. Update on a special education collaboration between teachers North and South
3. Information on the post-primary guidelines for the inclusion of students with special educational needs

# THE LETTER 'A': TERMINOLOGY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

*Deirdre Kelleher, Assistant National Co-ordinator, SESS. Deirdre is seconded from Scoil Naomh Laichtin, Donoughmore, Co. Cork.*

## **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Accommodations or reasonable accommodations in certified examinations (RACE) refer to modifications in how a test is administered while not altering what the test measures. Accommodations may include changes to presentation format, response format, test setting or test timing.

## **ACTIVE LEARNING**

Active learning occurs when students are actively engaged in the learning process and may include co-operative learning and engagement in hands-on activities.

## **APPLIED BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS (ABA)**

ABA is a theory of learning based on an understanding of a behaviour or set of behaviours, the breaking down of the components of the tasks involved in learning, and the application of consequences to either reduce/weaken or increase/strengthen a particular behaviour or set of behaviours.

## **ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR**

The student's ability to act appropriately in social situations.

## **ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER (ADD)**

ADD is described as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder without the hyperactivity and is characterised by excessive daydreaming, frequent staring, cognitive sluggishness, lethargy, confusion, memory problems and social reticence. Students often blurt out answers before questions have been completed, have problems awaiting their turn and may unwittingly interrupt or intrude on others on a frequent basis.

## **ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER**

The behaviour of students with ADHD is characterised by poor sustained attention, impaired impulse control, an inability to delay gratification and excessive task irrelevant activity. Students with ADHD find it difficult to plan and control their behaviour. Students are often reluctant to engage in activities that require sustained effort, are easily distracted by extraneous stimuli and often lose things necessary for participating in learning tasks.

## **ADVANCE ORGANISERS**

A summary of the lesson objectives is presented by the teacher at the start of the lesson in order to assist the students in organising and interpreting new information. The lesson objectives can be presented in visual format using concept mapping.

## **AGE APPROPRIATE**

Commensurate with the student's chronological age.

## **AMBULATORY**

The ability to walk/move about without assistive devices.

## **AMPLIFIER**

Part of a hearing aid that increases the intensity and/or loudness of sound.

## **ANXIETY**

Feelings of nervousness, worry, apprehension, fretfulness and panic which may cause palpitations, sweating and an increased pulse rate.

## **ANTI-CONVULSANTS**

Medication to help manage seizures.

## **APRAXIA**

A motor disorder characterised by a difficulty controlling voluntary muscular movements in spite of the fact that there is no actual muscle weakness.

## **ARTICULATION DIFFICULTIES**

Difficulty with the production of speech sounds.

## **ASPERGER'S SYNDROME (AS)**

AS is thought to fall within the spectrum of autistic spectrum disorders, with enough distinct features to warrant its own label. It is characterised by subtle impairments in three areas of development (a) social communication (b) social interaction and (c) social imagination. There is no clinically significant delay in cognitive development or in language acquisition.

## **ASSESSMENT**

In educational terms, assessment refers to the collection and interpretation of information that relates to students learning abilities, attainments, strengths and needs.

## **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

Any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities, e.g. mouse alternatives, touch screens, adapted keyboards.

## **ATAXIA**

A poor sense of balance characterised by unsteady movements due to poor co-ordination of fine muscle movements.

## **ATTENTION SPAN**

The amount of time a student can remain at an activity without being distracted or without losing interest.

## **ATHETOSIS**

A condition characterised by involuntary, slow, repetitive movements of the fingers, toes, hands and feet.

## **AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION**

The ability to perceive differences in sounds.

## **AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION (AC)**

Specialist aids that are used to support language learning and communication. AC aids include the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), the LÁMH manual signing system, Big Mac, and more sophisticated voice output communication aids

## **AUTISM/AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS (ASDs)**

Students with ASDs are described as sharing a triad of impairments that affects their ability to (a) understand and use non-verbal and verbal communication, (b) understand social behaviour-which affects their ability to interact with other students and adults, and (c) think and behave flexibly - which may be shown in restricted, obsessional or repetitive activities.

## **AUTOMATICITY**

When a skill becomes automatic and a student can operate in a manner that requires no conscious effort on their own part or assistance from others.

## **AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES**

When a student makes deliberate attempts to avoid completing or attempting activities. Such strategies may include feigning of illness, attempts not to seek help even if required and the withdrawal of effort. Avoidance strategies are often used to deflect attention away from the student's inability to complete a task independently.

*This newsletter has been printed on a totally chlorine-free paper which is environmentally friendly.*