Special Ed Times at JSD

November '26 Newsletter

November Events

- 4: SCRAM Due
- 10: Pre-ACT & HS College Prep 1/2 Day - No School for 11th Grade
- 13: No School - Teacher PD Day
- 25-27: No School - Thanksgiving Recess

FROM THE LEADERSHIP TRAIL

A message from Elementary Special Education Consultant, Katie Mintiloglitis

As we head into November and the season of gratitude, I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself and share how excited and grateful I am for this opportunity. My journey in education started as a resource teacher, and over the years, I have had the opportunity to serve as a teacher specialist, behavior specialist, and most recently, assistant principal at River's Edge. Each of these experiences has taught me something different and helped prepare me for this next step.

One of the things I have always appreciated about special education is the people who make it happen. When I think about what makes this department special, I think about the countless ways you show up for students and one another every day. I know firsthand how much time, energy, patience, and heart go into this work. So much of what you do happens behind the scenes, in the small moments that may go unnoticed but make a lasting difference. I hope you know how much those efforts are appreciated. I am grateful for your dedication, your willingness to show up even on the hard days, and the care you bring to the students and families we serve.

As I step into this role, I am looking forward to getting to know each of you, learning from you, and finding ways to support you. I know there is so much knowledge, experience, and passion within this department, and I feel lucky to be part of it. As we move through this season of gratitude, I hope we can all take a little time to recognize the people around us, celebrate the small victories, and remember that the work we do matters. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to work alongside each of you and look forward to what we will accomplish together.

Thank you for all that you do for our students, families, and one another.

PEAK OF THE MONTH — Seeing the Student, Not Just the Classification

An autism classification offers useful context, but it doesn't show the whole picture. Viewing students solely through a label risks missing their unique strengths, personalities, and potential. When we view a student solely through a label, we risk missing their unique personality, strengths, humor, and potential. As educators, our best work happens when we teach the person, not just the paperwork.

Start with Presuming Competence. This means assuming every student brings innate ability, strengths, and capacity to learn to every task, regardless of how they express themselves. When we presume competence, students experience greater inclusion and success. This is especially vital for students with limited spoken language—spoken output does not equal cognitive ability, and many minimally verbal students understand far more than they can say.

Seeing the whole student also means recognizing that behavior is communication and context matters. A student's support needs fluctuate across environments, sensory conditions, and energy levels. For instance, a student who becomes dysregulated during group work may not be refusing to participate, but rather feeling overwhelmed by auditory input or unclear expectations. Identifying environmental triggers allows us to adapt our support proactively rather than reacting to the behavior itself.

Key Takeaways for Classroom Practice

- **Behavior is communication:** Look beyond the surface behavior to understand underlying sensory needs, energy levels, or environmental triggers.
- **Mind your language:** Describe "communication differences" rather than "deficits," and talk about "traits" rather than "symptoms" to build an inclusive culture.
- **Presume competence**: Don't assume that a student cannot do something simply because they cannot communicate in the way you expect them to.

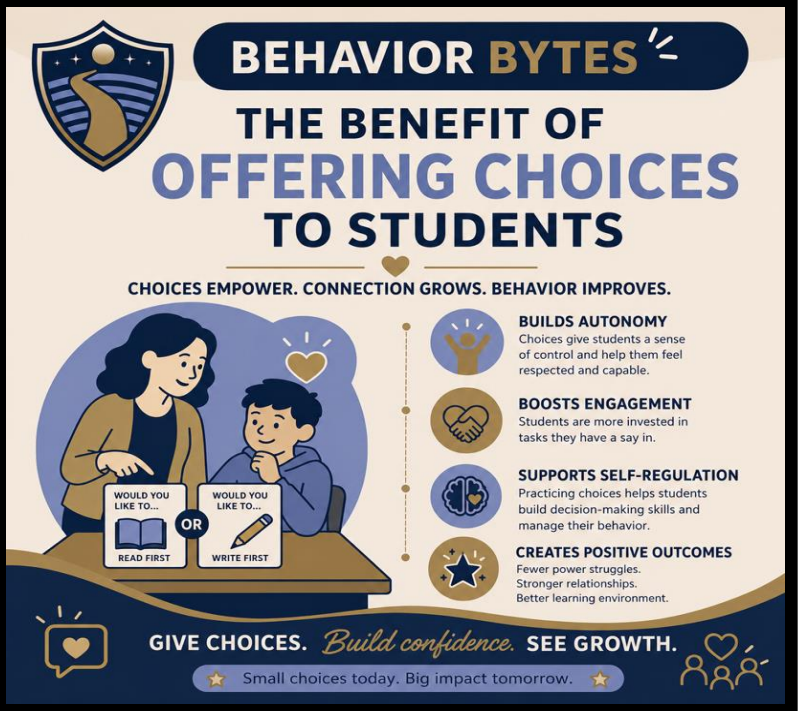
A classification opens doors to support—it should never close them to possibility. When we see the full student, we teach the person, not the paperwork.

ON YOUR RADAR

- **ASPEN & Mandt Trainings**
  We know many of you are keeping an eye out for upcoming training opportunities! For the latest schedules, locations, and registration details for upcoming ASPEN and Mandt courses, please check out the official training page here:
  JBAT Training Page

- SCRAM Reports with correction are due no later Wednesday, November 4, 2026. Please work together as a team and only return ONE copy of the report with all corrections for each school.

Behavior Byte



TOOLS FOR THE CLIMB

Compliance • Instruction • Practice

TEACHING AT NEW HEIGHTS

The Utah State Board of Education has approved the draft of the P-12 Utah Core Mathematics Standards. This draft includes the P-12 Introduction, Mathematical Practices, and Shifts in the Standards.

Comparing the Practices

Take some time to read through and compare the two versions.

- Current Mathematical Practices
- Newly Adopted Mathematical Practices

Questions as We Move Forward

- What will you need to consider as you adopt these new practices?
- What implications will the new Mathematical Practices have for you as an educator?
- What implications will the new Practices have for your students?
- What questions do you have moving forward?

Green: Highlight components of the practices that stayed the same.

Yellow: Highlight components of the practices that are new.

Pink: Highlight components of the practices that have been removed or changed.

COMPLIANCE CHECKPOINT

IEP Service Changes: Quick Reference Guide

When making changes to a student's IEP services, remember that **all additions and removals trigger an Eligibility Review**. Follow these pathways depending on your student's needs:

- **Adding Services to an Existing IEP:** Review student data, collaborate with your PLC/RTI team to implement and graph interventions, and complete a full re-evaluation if required.
- **Adding Services to Guidance or Speech-Only:** Collect intervention data, obtain parental consent to evaluate, conduct assessments, and update the specific Eligibility Classification form.
- **Removing Services:** Complete a data review and full re-evaluation (with specific rules based on whether previous testing is older or newer than 1.5 years), hold the IEP meeting, and update the SCRAM document.

For every change, always ensure you document the adjustments in the IEP, share the updated documents with the parent/guardian, and update the SCRAM document when applicable.

☞ **Click Here to View the Full IEP Service Changes Flowchart**

ELEVATING EXCELLENCE

AMANDA GILLMORE

PHYSICAL THERAPIST- DISTRICT WIDE

Amanda joined the Motor Development Team last school year. After many years in Early Intervention, Amanda has done an amazing job transitioning into the school setting. Amanda does a great job building rapport with each of her students and finds new and exciting activities to motivate and keep them engaged. She has great communication with parents and school teams to ensure her students' needs are being met. Amanda recently jumped in to help cover additional schools while another therapist was out on medical leave. No matter how busy her days are, Amanda has a positive attitude and a smile on her face. Amanda has been a great addition to the Motor Development Team and the district as a whole. We are so lucky to have her!

DUSTIN FULLMORE

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST- SOUTH HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Dustin is the school psychologist at South Hills Middle School. Previously, he served as one of the school psychologists at Copper Hills High School. Dustin has really stepped up this year by transitioning to South Hills to support a school in need. The school team and administration have praised him for the excellent job he is doing. He is always responsive to students, staff, and parents and goes out of his way to ensure students receive the support they need. In addition to his work at South Hills, Dustin teaches a class at the Jordan Family Education Center (JFEC) to help adolescent boys build self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-worth. We are lucky to have Dustin as a member of our team!

MINDI REIMANN

SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST – COLUMBIA ELEMENTARY

Mindi has served as the full-time SLP at Columbia for several years and she has consistently worked to meet the needs of that population. She is organized, efficient, and is a support to the whole team. She asks good questions, and her driving force is to make sure she is advocating for the needs of the students she is working with.

GRACIE YOUNG

SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOM TEACHER – COPPER HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

Gracie Young has done an outstanding job stepping into the role of leading the autism unit at Copper Hills High School. From day one, Gracie has cultivated a calm, caring, positive, and consistent classroom environment where her students can truly thrive. She has dedicated herself to building strong, meaningful relationships with each student while ensuring they develop the essential skills and tools needed to succeed both inside her classroom and out in the broader community. As a first-year teacher, Gracie brings a dedication, energy, and vision that make her a wonderful addition to Copper Hills!

MARCY EVANS

SEB TEAM LEAD- ELK MEADOWS ELEMENTARY

Marcy comes to JSD with a wealth of experience and knowledge and has been a major asset from day 1! She leads and supports her team with knowledge and compassion. She meets students where they are and supports and believes in them to get them to the next level. She is willing to think outside of the box and do things that are challenging to give students what they need and help them grow. Marcy is an amazing educator and we are very lucky to have her!

JANEL VAN DYKE

Adaptive Physical Education Teacher – Kauri Sue Hamilton

Janel consistently goes above and beyond to ensure every student can participate and succeed. She thoughtfully adapts activities so even our most complex learners have meaningful access to P.E. For example, she recently introduced adapted goalball—a Paralympic sport—enabling students with diverse needs to fully engage and collaborate. Janel keeps families informed about what sports their children are learning, fostering a strong school-home connection. She's also created innovative communication supports in swimming, such as waterproof symbol cards and visual cues, so every student can express themselves and join in.

Her creativity and dedication embody the best of inclusive education, and her impact is felt by students, families, and colleagues alike. We are incredibly fortunate to have her on our team.