



Special Ed Times at JSD

October '26 Newsletter

October Events

- 1: Elementary Parent Conferences
- 2: Elementary No School - Teacher Comp Day
- 2: Secondary No School - Teacher PD Day
- 5: HS Team Leader Meeting
- 9: MS Team Leader Meeting
- 9: HS/MS SCSC Singletons
- 9: District SEB PLC
- 12: SLP/Audiologist Training
- 16: Last Day of Q1
- 19: No School - Grade Transmittal Day
- 20-23: No School - Fall Recess

FROM THE LEADERSHIP TRAIL

A message from Assistant Special Education Director- Maddie Karanevich

Fall is a season of change. It's a time when the landscape around us transforms, reminding us that change can bring new growth, new possibilities, and unexpected beauty. In many ways, this season reflects our journey in Special Education this year. We have experienced a great deal of change within our department, with new faces, new ideas, and some new ways of doing things. Change can bring challenges and uncertainty, but it can also create opportunities to learn, grow, and build something even stronger together.

Through all of these changes, one thing has remained constant: the incredible dedication of our educators and staff. Each day, you show up with compassion, patience, creativity, and a commitment to making a difference in the lives of our students. Your work is not always easy, and the impact you make is not always immediately visible, but it matters deeply. Like the changing leaves of fall, each of us contributes something unique to the landscape of our department, and together, we create a community that supports students in finding their own path and reaching their potential.

As we move through this season of change, we are grateful for your flexibility, your willingness to embrace new possibilities, and the care you bring to your work every day. We are looking forward to seeing where these changes take us and the growth, learning, and opportunities that lie ahead. Thank you for being such an important part of our Special Education community and for everything you do for our students, families, and one another.

PEAK OF THE MONTH

Assistive Technology: A Quick Guide

Assistive technology (AT) is any device, software, or tool that increases, maintains, or improves the functional capabilities of students with disabilities. It can be as simple as a pencil grip or as sophisticated as an eye-gaze communication system. Importantly, AT is not a replacement for instruction—it's a bridge that gives students access to learning they might otherwise miss.

Consider AT when a student's performance is limited by *access*, not *ability*. For example, when writing output lags far behind ideas, when speech is unclear to unfamiliar listeners, or when physical demands of a task overshadow the learning goal. The right question isn't "Is this student ready for AT?" but "Is this task accessible without it?"

Literacy supports include text-to-speech with synchronized highlighting for reading access, speech-to-text dictation for writing, and word prediction that suggests completions as students type.

Communication supports include single-message speech-generating buttons for students learning intentional communication, static-display speech-generating devices for students learning that different symbols carry different messages, and dynamic display devices with voice output that grow with a student's vocabulary and language skills.

Motor supports include alternative keyboards, switch access for controlling computers and toys, and adaptive pointing devices that let students interact with technology even if they can't use their hands the way their peers do. Remember: AT should be matched to the student and task, tried out in real settings, and revisited as skills grow. The best AT is often the simplest tool a student will actually use. When in doubt, bring your question to the next IEP meeting—consideration is where it all begins.

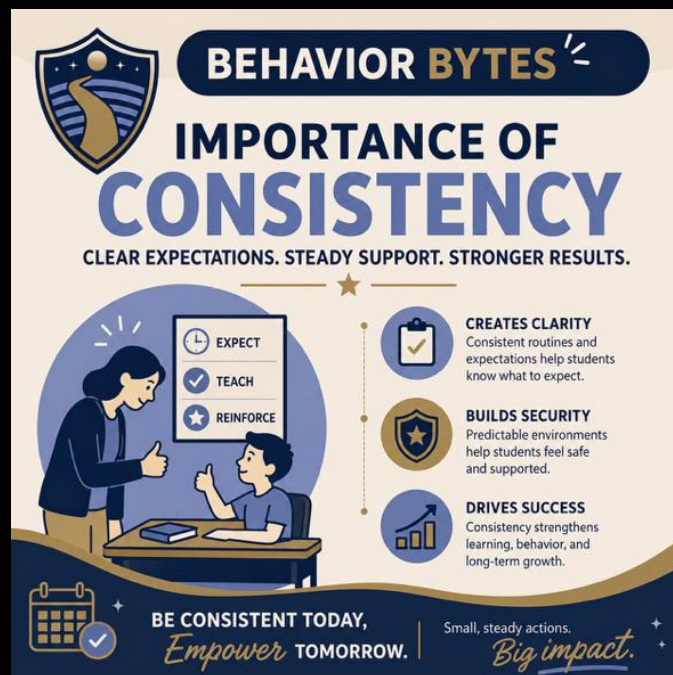
JSD Resources:

- The JSD UAT team has developed a tool to simplify and expedite the AT consideration process. You can find it, along with the UATT referral form, on the JSD Special Education Website on the [Jordan UATT page](#).
- Supporting someone learning to use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) can feel overwhelming, and we're here to help. **Stepping into AAC** is a free, self-guided instructional program that focuses on evidence-based strategies for supporting AAC learners. We've packaged the course in Canvas with modules with videos, companion handouts, and approachable hands-on activities to practice. Find the link on the JSD UATT page. Jordan employees can receive continuing education credit for each completed module.

ON YOUR RADAR

- **Progress reports** are due within one week after the Grade Transmittal Day, October 19, 2026. Please have these completed and sent to parents by November 02, 2026.
- ASPEN training will continue to be required during the 2026–2027 school year for the staff who do not have a current Mandt certification. Please see [Memo for additional information](#)
- There has been updates to our [Medical History Guidance form](#). Please review it with your teams

Behavior Byte



TOOLS FOR THE CLIMB

Compliance • Instruction • Practice

TEACHING AT NEW HEIGHTS

I found this article over the summer, and it sparked my love of using AI to help struggling readers. The subsection on Leveraging AI to Produce Leveled Texts was awesome. I have enjoyed playing more with AI. Please take a look at the article, "[An Approach to Structured Literacy for Older Struggling Readers](#)."

Jo Boaler, author of Mathematical Mindset, has put out some free videos out to share with your students to help with their mathematical mindset. Check them out here: <https://mailchi.mp/youcubed/wim2026-4739613?e=9a0e35717a>.

- Renee Sass

COMPLIANCE CHECKPOINT

Email Etiquette

Email is a Permanent Record: Assume that nearly every email you write can be viewed by parents or attorneys. Under FERPA and IDEA, emails that directly identify and discuss a student are frequently ruled by courts to be part of the official education record. When using student names and sensitive information in emails for special education students, the primary concern is protecting Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and maintaining compliance with federal laws like the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Parents have a legal right to request and inspect these records. Write every email with the mindset that a judge or a parent will read it aloud in a hearing.

- Use student numbers when communicating internally with team members or others. Do not include student names.
- Context Can Still Identify a Student: Be aware that redacting a name is not always enough. Be very careful not to discuss difficult situations and events. You could still effectively disclose the student's identity through contextual clues.
- Keep Content Professional and Objective: Never write anything emotional, sarcastic, or speculative about a student or family.
- Protect the Record and Call Instead: Use email strictly for administrative tasks like scheduling meetings. Do not use email to debate behavioral interventions, vent, or discuss disagreements. Under IDEA, these threads become part of the official student record and are discoverable during due process hearings. For problem-solving, work your team during meetings.
- Do Not Use Personal Email Accounts: Conducting school business or discussing a special education student on a personal Gmail or text message thread does not protect the data. In legal proceedings, those personal accounts can still be subpoenaed and searched.



ELEVATING EXCELLENCE

McKENZIE SULLIVAN

**SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER-
JORDAN CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

The Jordan Child Development Center would like to recognize McKenzie Sullivan. She's been a special education teacher in Early Intervention since 2017. McKenzie works with families through home visits and teaches in our toddler classes. She brings so much warmth and kindness to her work, and her families know how much she genuinely cares about them and their children. She puts a lot of thought into how she can best support each family and is always willing to work alongside her EI teammates to make sure families get the support they need. We're so glad to have McKenzie on our team!

AVERY BEESON

JBAT – BEHAVIOR SPECIALIST

Avery joined JBAT this year as a Behavior Specialist. She comes to Jordan with a background in Early Childhood Special Education and ABA therapy, along with a naturally positive and encouraging approach. She has a calm, steady presence that helps bring a sense of comfort and regulation to even the most challenging situations. We are so excited to have her on our team and know she will be an incredible support to our students and staff!

CHRISTINA MACNEIL

RESOURCE TEACHER – SOUTH JORDAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Chris is an exceptional educator driven by a deep passion for her students. She excels at helping them recognize and realize their true potential. She routinely goes above and beyond, pairing high academic and behavioral expectations with the dedicated support students need to exceed them. Her strong work ethic, integrity, and professionalism set an exemplary benchmark for both students and colleagues.

GABE PARKIN

RESOURCE TEACHER - HAYDEN PEAK ELEMENTARY

Gabe Parkin, Resource Teacher at Hayden Peak Elementary, has a natural talent for connecting with students. He brings a calm, positive energy to everything he does and always has a “we can do that!” attitude. Gabe is a true team player who is willing to jump in, help out, and find solutions. His positive attitude and dedication to students make him a great addition to the Hayden Peak team!

JEFF MORRIS

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST- DISTRICT WIDE

Jeff is a valued resource and support for our entire special education department. His extensive knowledge and willingness to help make him a great asset to our district. Jeff approaches every situation with a focus on finding solutions and doing what is best for our students. He is always calm, cool, and collected, even in the toughest situations. His steady presence and genuine desire to help staff and students make him someone we can always count on. His funny and sarcastic sense of humor keeps things entertaining and are just another part of what makes him such a great person to work with. We are grateful for all he does to support our teams and the students we serve!

EMMA HEINZ

**SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST-
ELK RIDGE/COPPER CANYON**

Emma is conscientious and dedicated Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) who consistently goes above and beyond to support her students. She quietly and thoroughly works to deliver services to students, complete her required paperwork, and meet the demands of a varied and diverse caseload. She is positive, never complains, and is unfazed by changes that may come her way. We truly value her and want to recognize that her work is noticed and appreciated!