

# Autism Classroom Parent-Student Handbook 2021-2022

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**SOUTH EASTERN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

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Students participating in the SESE Autism program continue to be governed by their individual resident district policies. **This handbook merely serves as a supplement to each student's resident district handbook.** Each student is expected to also receive a copy of the resident district handbook.

## **Introduction**

The Autism Classrooms are full-day programs that follow a bell-to-bell schedule. The focus of the Autism Classroom program is to teach and reinforce skills within the five developmental areas: academic, communication, motor (fine and gross), independent functioning, and social.

The Autism Classrooms are structured classrooms utilizing a wide variety of methodologies and strategies. Some of those methodologies include TEACCH, ABA, Differential Reinforcement of behavior, naturalistic teaching, modeling, prompting, redirection, scripting, social skills training, social narratives, task analysis, video modeling, visual supports, This structure is utilized to reduce prompt dependency and increase independence across a variety of skills. Visual supports are emphasized to reduce the need for additional cues and prompts after the original direction has been given. Verbal cues and excess verbal are kept to a minimum to prevent distractions, overstimulation, and dependence.

A typical day in the Autism Classroom at the elementary and junior high level includes the following: academic instruction using research based curriculum (implemented during small-group, large group, and individual instruction); large groups (meeting time, social skills, math, reading/language arts, science, social studies, calming time), scheduled and student-initiated sensory breaks, P.E., recess, breakfast, lunch, music, independent functioning skills. At the high school level, the above are included except for music. In addition, functional skills, such as cooking, community-based instruction, life, and vocational skills are emphasized.

Technology is utilized throughout the day at all three levels (elementary, junior high, and high school). Each classroom has a touch-screen projection system as well as access to iPads that are provided based on individual needs of students.

The Autism Classroom teacher works closely with primary and related service providers, such as the speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist and psychologist. Many IEP goals and objectives are co-implemented between and among service providers.

## **Annual Review/Meetings**

Each child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be reviewed at least yearly to determine progress on the current IEP as well as to develop a proposed Individual Education Plan (IEP). The newly developed Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be in effect for one year from the day after the date of the annual review. The parent is an active member of the IEP and plays an important role in your child's educational progress.

## **Assessments**

### **Universal Screener/Classroom**

The Autism Classroom Teacher administers The Assessment of Functional Living Skills which assesses progress within individual student developmental areas. It is updated yearly.

### **Progress Monitoring**

Students are progress monitored monthly through the curriculum based assessments linked to the Unique Learning System. A pre- and post-test are administered monthly.

### **IEP Tracking**

IEP goals and objectives are tracked according to the schedule designated on the IEP (daily, weekly, quarterly, or monthly). The classroom teachers maintain tracking sheets on which progress is documented. Data from IEP tracking is then reported through quarterly progress reports that are sent home according to the attending district's schedule for sending home report cards. For co-implemented goals, the involved service providers will track progress.

## **Attendance**

The Autism classroom teacher/staff reports attendance of the students to the attending district daily as well as to South Eastern Special Education.

Classroom teachers will keep the SESE Classroom Supervisor informed of individual student attendance concerns. If students are absent 3 consecutive days or a total of 10 days per school year, then the Autism Classroom teacher will notify the Classroom Supervisor as well as the District Special Education Coordinator. The District Special Education Coordinator is encouraged to contact the parents/guardian in order to determine the cause of the absences. The SESE Classroom Supervisor will then inform the Resident District Special Education Coordinator of attendance/truancy issues. The Resident District Truancy policy will then be followed.

## **Crisis Procedures**

Due to the nature and severity of the behavior and crisis situations of individual students with autism, classroom and individual student crisis plans have been/or will be developed by the SESE administration and staff. Staff are trained in the use of Safety-Care which is designed to assist in de-escalation of aggressive behaviors and to assist in maintaining safety for all students and staff within the classroom environment.

## **Discipline**

### **Classroom**

Students attending the Autism programs will be required to follow all disciplinary procedures for the district that their classroom is housed in. Exceptions include students with IEP's containing an individualized behavior management plan.

Proactive behavioral supports and behavior management strategies are implemented within the daily routine of the classroom. Individual classrooms have a classroom behavior management plan as well as reinforcement system.

### **Individual Behavior Plans**

A Behavior Intervention Plan must be developed for all students who have behaviors which interfere with their learning or the learning of others, for example, those students who require the use of a restrictive intervention on more than one occasion in a thirty-day period. The behavior plan will contain criteria for when a cooling off period should be initiated by student or staff.

For those students who do not respond to the classroom-wide behavior management plan as well as reinforcement system and who display more intense and frequent behaviors that are interfering with his/her learning and the learning of others, data will be taken for 10 consecutive days.

A functional assessment of behavior can be completed with parental consent. Once the data is taken, the data will be analyzed and used to develop a behavior management plan. A separate meeting will be scheduled in order to develop the behavior management plan. Both of these forms will be attached to the current IEP. The Behavior Plan is in effect for one year.

For some students, data will be taken but it will be taken to develop an informal plan that will not be attached to the IEP.

### **In- School suspension**

This is not utilized with students within the autism classroom.

### **Out-of-School suspension**

Out-of-school suspension has not been found to be effective with most students with autism. Behaviors may be reinforced by out-of-school suspension, therefore, out-of-school suspension is selectively and rarely used. Because suspension is a restrictive intervention it should be treated very seriously. Only a SESE administrator may suspend a student that attends a SESE classroom.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to keep an accurate record of the number of suspensions for each student. After a student has served a total of 10 days, including bus suspensions the program supervisor must be notified and a Manifestation Determination must be scheduled.

If a suspension is appropriate, the notice will be sent to parents and resident district. This notice will contain the previous behavioral and disciplinary interventions exhausted and will indicate any additional services if required.

### **Lunch delay**

Lunch delay is not practiced within the Autism Classrooms. If a behavior is occurring during the lunch or breakfast times, breakfast and lunch are always offered once the student is calm and it is safe.

### **Exclusion of non-academics**

Only in the case of extreme safety issues (running from playground, building, bus, etc.), would recess, lunch, and other general education times be discussed for removal from the IEP.

Proactive supports are discussed and put into place in order to ensure safety within all educational settings.

## **Emergency Services**

### **CARES Hotline**

When a student exhibits at risk behavior for intent to harm themselves or others, classroom teachers may need to call the CARES hotline to begin a risk assessment. When the contacted agency arrives to complete the risk assessment, they will use a confidential area to meet with the student, teacher, and parent.

### **DCFS**

All SESE staff are mandated reporters and are required to follow the procedures outlined in the SESE Staff Handbook.

## **Home School Communication**

Communication between home and school is vital to your student's success! Your teacher will invite you to join the Remind app to facilitate private communication between the two of you as well as to send group communications. Another way to communicate with your student's teacher is to send an email. Email addresses are found on the [www.sese.org](http://www.sese.org) webpage as well as teachers will share it at the beginning of the year.

Make sure to go on the SESE website and look at your child's classroom page. There are pictures of your student participating in activities as well as information of activities for you to do at home. Important information about classroom events and activities are also posted here. The website is [www.sese.org](http://www.sese.org). Then click on CURRENT NEW & EVENTS the top left hand corner. About half way down the page is a section titled **CURRENT NEWS**. Click on [autism classrooms](#). Then click on your student's classroom teacher name.

## **Homework**

Homework is not assigned within the Autism Classrooms. Additional materials, work tasks, suggestions may be sent home during the school year and summer for individual students by the classroom teacher, speech-language pathologist, etc. Students may be given access to their Vizzle or Unique accounts for additional work at home.

## **Mainstreaming Procedures**

### **Mainstream Classes**

The integration of students with autism into classes with same-aged peers is an integral part of the Autism program. The program strives to find appropriate supports and get those firmly in place before integrating students into mainstream classes. The goal is to make sure the students are successful in their mainstream classes. The 23 Illinois Administrative Code S.226.50 (e) states: "The district shall provide nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities in a manner necessary to afford children with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in these services and activities." In accordance with the Code, SESE students will mainstream into PE and other nonacademic courses as each child is able to do so. At times, those nonacademic classes are overwhelming for the student with autism due to noise level and number of students involved.

### **IEP Documentation**

All general education time is documented on the student's IEP.

## **Parental Pick-up**

All parents should report to the main office of the school. When the parent arrives to pick up his/her child, the teacher is called to send the child to the office rather than that parent coming to the classroom. The autism classroom teacher or the classroom program assistant will then walk that student to the office. This is for both the students and staff protection.

## **Physical Aggression**

### **Guidelines of Physical Restraint:**

Physical restraint is only to be used when a student is an immediate danger to him/herself or others.

All restraints are to be achieved by using the Safety Care methodology. This is a one, two, or three person procedure.

***Classroom staff always try to defuse confrontation and be proactive.***

## **Research Based Curriculum**

### **Reading**

Reading is taught and reinforced through the following contexts (one-on-one direct instruction, small group instruction, independent work, use of technology). Research-based reading curriculum is utilized for each student and determined based upon the individual student's current skills and individual learning styles. Unique curriculum is the instructional curriculum utilized.

### **Math**

Math is taught and reinforced through the following contexts (one-on-one direct instruction, small group instruction, independent work, use of technology). Research-based math curriculum is utilized for each student and determined based upon the individual student's current skills and individual learning styles. Unique curriculum is the instructional curriculum utilized.

### **Science/Health**

Research-based curriculum is implemented to teach science concepts. Manipulatives and hands-on activities are utilized to teach and to reinforce science concepts. Unique curriculum is the instructional curriculum utilized.

### **Social Studies**

Social Studies instruction incorporates concepts that are relevant and functional to the students within the program. Research-based curriculum is implemented to teach social studies concepts. Unique curriculum is the instructional curriculum utilized.

## **Social/Emotional**

Social stories, video modeling, and direct instruction in social skills is used to teach following the rules and social skills. The Incredible Five Point Scale and other research-based methods and curriculums are utilized to teach and to reinforce social skills.

A Social Story™ describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses in a specifically defined style and format. The goal of a Social Story™ is to share accurate social information in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood by its audience. Half of all Social Stories™ developed should affirm something that an individual does well. Although the goal of a Story™ should never be to change the individual's behavior, that individual's improved understanding of events and expectations may lead to more effective responses.

The Incredible Five Point Scale is a 1-5 scale system that is applicable for a variety of behaviors and responses to behaviors, including feelings of anxiety, obsessions, concepts of personal space and feelings of anger. The book includes stories suitable to be read to a child, visual scales and tips on how to implement the particular scale. The purpose of using this method for calming and self-modulation is to teach students what emotions/observable behaviors are at each level and also how to deescalate using a variety of individualized applicable strategies.

Video modelling of peers and adults engaged in positive behavior is used to teach and reinforce positive social skills and interactions.

## **Independent Functioning**

### **Self-Care**

Toileting skills, including hand-washing, are visually shown and reinforced during scheduled bathroom breaks. Brushing teeth is integrated into the daily schedule. Other self-care skills are taught and reinforced at naturally-occurring, in-context times.

### **Communication**

Students may be verbal or nonverbal. Many students use voice output devices, which they may own or may be provided by SESE. Communication opportunities are integrated throughout the daily routine. Receptive (understanding), expressive (verbal), and pragmatic (social) communication skills are taught and reinforced throughout the daily routine and activities.

### **Adaptive Functioning**

Organization and planning skills are integrated within the routine of the classroom. Students are encouraged to be as independent as possible through

the use of visuals and task-analysis of skills.

## **Searches**

If a student is suspected of possessing a weapon or illegal drugs local law enforcement will be contacted. **There must be adequate evidence of reasonable suspicion.**

## **Student Run Businesses**

High school students run businesses to learn a wide variety of functional and vocational skills. The programs at Clay City and Hutsonville both run coffee carts and serve a wide variety of hot and cold beverages to staff within the buildings. They are involved in the shopping, supply gathering, preparing the drinks, taking orders, counting money, etc.

Bark Bites is a student run business that creates homemade dog treats. Students are involved in all aspects of the business. Our businesses do not make a profit. It is simply charging enough money to support the business and continue to purchase the necessary supplies. To place an order for Bark Bites or learn more about the business, go to [www.sese.org](http://www.sese.org) and click on **CLASSROOM VOCATIONAL BUSINESSES**. You will then find Bark Bites order form that you may click on to order. Anyone interested in supporting the businesses may order! Feel free to share!

Unique Like Me is a student run business that creates handcrafted soaps and sugar scrubs. These make great gifts! Students are involved in all aspects of the business. Our businesses do not make a profit. It is simply charging enough money to support the business and continue to purchase the necessary supplies. To place an order for Unique Like Me or learn more about the business, go to [www.sese.org](http://www.sese.org) and click on **CLASSROOM VOCATIONAL BUSINESSES**. You will then find the Unique Like Me order form that you may click on to order. Anyone interested in supporting the businesses may order! Feel free to share!

## **Technology**

### **Hardware**

All technology and hardware in use in the SESE classroom is purchased by South Eastern Special Education. Technology is an integral part of the Autism classrooms. Each classroom has an interactive whiteboard as well as a netbook/laptop for use with the Starboard. Computers or iPads are also available for student use.

### **Software**

Research-based software is utilized during group and individual instruction.

## **Transportation**

Transportation is provided by and documented by the District Special Education Coordinator on the student's IEP. Classroom times are set to follow district timelines.

## **Visitors Policy**

Per policy, parents/guardians as well as those who would like to observe the classroom for educational purposes (college observations, etc.), the SESE website contains a form which requires the Classroom Supervisor's signature. Often the Classroom Supervisor will schedule to be present in the classroom the day/time of the observation in order to answer questions so that there are minimal distractions to the routine. The form must be completed and submitted at least 24 hours in advance. All visitors should report to the school office to obtain a visitor's badge. Observation periods are to be scheduled for no more than for 50 minutes of duration.

## **Volunteer Policy**

SESE has a Volunteer Handbook. Volunteers must contact South Eastern Special Education in order to request to volunteer or talk with the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher is to contact the classroom supervisor. The classroom supervisor will review the handbook as well as required volunteer form with the prospective volunteer. The volunteer will complete the required forms.

## **Website**

South Eastern Special Education hosts a website [www.sese.org](http://www.sese.org) that provides information about your child's classroom as well as resources you may utilize to assist your child. Staff email addresses are also located on this website to assist you in contacting the service providers who work with your child.