



Director's Desk

You made it! We are officially past the 100th day of school! My own children always love sharing this part of the school year with me. And honestly - I love hearing about it too! We are so fortunate to be part of a profession that allows us time to reflect on different stages throughout the year. The school year essentially has its own "life cycle" that we go through. That is pretty awesome. Don't get me wrong - this time of the year could be called "rollercoaster" season! Haha. Keep going! You are doing the most important job and doing amazing things to support your students!

Teaching and learning are what we love to do! Our NLSEC team hosted Paraprofessional Day in January and we were grateful for the nearly 100 participants and 20 presenters that were able to join us. Sessions focused on student experience, imprinting, self-care, functional literacy, and self-advocacy. Be sure to ask your team about sessions they were able to attend and what strategies they are trying out in classrooms.

The Master Teacher... for Paraprofessionals

This year our NLSEC member districts supported a license purchase of The Master Teacher for all paraprofessional staff. The program has over 150 training modules on a variety of topics and also allows for the paraprofessional highly qualified assessment to be taken online. One of the intent for the program was to have a variety of options for any snow/e-learning days - which has not been an issue so far this year. As we learn more about what this program has to offer, we will work to expand that guidance out to your teams. As a reminder we also still have [Infinitec](#) as a great training resource for your entire building team!

Featured Teachers - Brenda Taray & Rachel Gydesen



[Read Brenda's full article here](#)

Brenda was nominated by a colleague because she is a dedicated teacher that goes above and beyond to individualize her instruction for each student to meet their needs. Brenda has been teaching 18 years in the special education field; this is her tenth year at Churchill School in Cloquet.



[Read Rachel's full article here](#)

Rachel is a Special Education Teacher in Cloquet Middle School and was nominated by a colleague because she is a forward thinker and incorporates a wide variety of programming for student participation and achievement.

Paraprofessional Training



The Paraprofessional training held on January 15th had nearly a 100 participants and 20 presenters!

Infinitec

FEATURES

LIVE
WEBINAR

MYTHS AND FACTS
SURROUNDING
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY
DEVICES AND
SERVICES



March Webinar
Trainings

AT UPDATES

Region 3 Assistive Technology Newsletter - Recreation and Leisure

Featured articles:

- AT Office Hours - Rec/Leisure and Gym Activities
- Two Minute Tech - All Turn it Spinner
- More Ways to Support Active Participation for Students with Complex Bodies (lesson plans)

[Click here to view the February issue!](#)



The Early Childhood Vision Observation and Interview Protocol



The Early Childhood Vision Observation and Interview Protocol is a valuable tool used by Early Childhood Special Education Teachers (ECSE) to identify and gather information about the visual functioning and needs of children from birth to 3 years of age. It aids in identifying children with visual impairments to ensure that they receive the necessary interventions and adaptations they need to support their motor, cognitive, and social-emotional development during this critical period of early childhood. Below, you will find a link to the form through the Minnesota Department of Education. If you have questions or concerns about your student's visual development, please contact your vision teachers, Zandra Bail-LaLonde zbail@nlsec.org and Haley Chopp hchopp@northlandsped.org.

[Early Childhood Vision Observation and Interview Protocol](#)

HOW CAN AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST HELP A STUDENT?

- In the schools, OT's address the needs of students who qualify for special education who are experiencing delays, disabilities, or health challenges through therapeutic intervention to promote skill advancement, the use of compensatory strategies, adaptations to the child's equipment and environment, and/or modifying the curriculum or activity. Occupational therapists collaborate with teachers, parents, and other staff to identify and modify barriers that restrict a child's success and model strategies for others to use that will extend the benefits of direct intervention.
- Occupational therapists typically provide additional support as a related service in the school setting in the areas of; fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, visual motor skills, visual perceptual skills, sensory functioning, self-cares, functional routines, strength and/or range of motion, and social skills.

For more information, visit [ToolsToGrowOT.com](https://www.toolsforgrowot.com) or contact a NLSEC OT.

CARING FOR YOUR BODY AT WORK



Image by Freepik

BODY MECHANICS

- Bend from your knees (do not bend forward from your back)
- Keep load close to your body
- Place feet apart for stability (wide base of support)
- Move feet to turn (do not twist body)
- Tighten core muscles when lifting

OTOACOUSTIC EMISSIONS (OAE) SCREENING



Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) screening is one of the most appropriate methods for identifying young children at risk for permanent hearing loss.

OAEs are produced by outer hair cells in the cochlea (important sensory cells located in the inner ear/organ of hearing). During the OAE screening, a small earphone (or "probe") is placed in the ear. The screening equipment presents a sound and the outer hair cells produce a response in return. A PASS means that the child's outer hair cells are working; it does not mean that the child's hearing is normal. While present OAEs usually correlate with normal to near-normal hearing, an OAE screening can sometimes miss a minimal/slight hearing loss and other conditions such as Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder (ANSO).

OAE screening is the most appropriate method to identify young children at risk for permanent hearing loss because:

- It's accurate and does not require a behavioral response from a child (this allows us to screen children under 3 years of age as well as students who are older but may not be able to follow instructions to complete an audiometric screening (i.e. raise hand or perform a certain task when they hear a sound))
- It's quick and easy (most children can be screened in just a minute or two)
- It's a flexible tool that can be used in a variety of environments
- It can be helpful in drawing attention to a broader range of hearing health conditions that may need further medical attention (such as middle ear fluid/infection)

Even if a child passes an OAE screening, referral to a clinical/medical audiologist should still be considered if:

- Caretakers, teachers or other service providers still have concerns about a child's hearing
- The child's speech-language is not developing as expected
- The child has a history of several ear infections

For more information, contact Kari Paynter Spaete, AuD, CCC-A at the NLSEC office 218.655.5018 ext. 7034 kspaete@nlsec.org or visit the [Deaf/Hard of Hearing website](#) for resources.

Remembering Abbie Pannkuk



In December 2023, the Hermantown Schools and the Esko community lost an important member. Abbie Pannkuk, Speech and Language Pathologist for the Hermantown Schools, passed away unexpectedly. Abbie was a speech and language pathologist for many years, most recently in the Hermantown Early Childhood programs. Her presence in the programs she served will be missed greatly and the loss felt is immeasurable by colleagues, students and their families both past and present. Abbie's compassion and commitment to her profession and her families was second to none.