

# Exceptional Programs for Exceptional Learners Monthly Newsletter

## Diagnosis 101—Is that like Law and Order SVU?

### Teacher goal for this month:

***Problem solve to come up with innovative ideas to achieve student success***

### Best Practice

George Noble is one of our teachers at SEK Academy and teaches math, science and social studies. George has figured out how to tailor a social studies or science unit into self-paced “Project Learning” units. George organizes units for each semester around topics of interest going on during that time. The students utilize all the resources available to them to become experts in the topic they are learning about. No one student is at the same place or even learning about the same things during any given time. Units that were very in depth this year include “Olympics” and “Presidents”. It is so satisfying to hear a student explain the President’s Cabinet—and they actually were the ones to do the research and enjoyed learning about it! Nice job George!

So what now? We have been focusing on Progress Monitoring for the last 2 years and teachers are really understanding the purpose and see the connection it has to MTSS.

Although we are working a little backwards, it is time to focus on the Diagnostic Assessment or tools that can help us actually decide what gaps a student has and where instruction needs to begin.

We no longer can “guess” where a student is, or even just begin where everyone else is. The use of a Diagnostic Assessment is to provide in depth information about skills in a particular area. For example, in reading, how do you know where to start instruction

when you know a student has difficulty decoding words—just wherever you want to? *No* A teacher needs a tool to help follow a continuum of skills and see the *specific* area (s) of need for a student. So rather than just saying a student has trouble decoding words and using phonetic skills, the use of a diagnostic tool will allow the teacher to know that a student has difficulty reading words with long vowels such as –ee– and –ea-. Knowing this information guides instruction immediately to this particular skill. **What power a teacher can have with such tools!**



Coffeyville has a continuum that the entire district uses now and a process of continuous diagnostic assessment and progress monitoring. At his time, Independence and Caney do not but that doesn’t mean we can’t use what research is out there and available to make our own.

Based on many different programs and research, I have created an informal Reading Diagnostic that can help guide instruction and help fill in all those gaps. [See the recording form here.](#) If you would like a copy of this Reading Diagnostic based on a phonemic awareness and phonics continuum, then just give me a call at 332-4553 and I will bring you one!

## Para Evaluations

Paras can be a teacher’s best friend... teachers and paras often spend so much time together, day in and day out, during some of the most difficult struggles that it is inevitable that a strong bond and relationship may occur between the two.

Teachers also have a vested interest in their paras because of the time and energy it takes to train a para to do work just as the teacher wants them to do it.

This close relationship and vested interest very often makes it difficult for teachers to provide the most honest and constructive criticism to their paraprofessionals.

Paraprofessionals receive at least one evaluation per year. Although not always the most pleasant experience for friends to go through with each other, use the para evaluation as a “professional development tool”

or as a stepping stool “for ways to be even greater”.

Honest and thorough evaluations are very important for you as a teacher, for your paras development and for the Interlocal. Keep this in mind as you complete the rest of your para evaluations for the school year. If you need support, call your coordinator.

