

**CESA 5 Speech and Language Institute**  
**Tuesday, March 3, 2026**  
**Breakout Session Schedule**

**Breakout Session 1**

**8:30 am - 10:00 am**

**Less Paperwork, More Progress: Rethinking & Mastering Data Collection for School-Based SLPs**

**Courtney Seidel, M.S., CCC-SLP**

Ready to level up your data practices? This high-impact session is designed for SLPs who want to collect data more intentionally, monitor progress more meaningfully, and streamline their workflow. Participants will solidify the difference between their data collection and progress monitoring methods as well as explore the role of probes in capturing true growth. You'll experiment with a range of practical data collection methods, discover how to turn everyday therapy materials into efficient data tools, and evaluate innovative approaches like intermittent monitoring and reduced-trial data collection. Whether you're new to the schools or a seasoned clinician, you'll leave with clear strategies, fresh insights, and renewed confidence in your data-driven decision-making.

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**Executive Functioning: What's the Support?**

**Katie Berg**

Participants will learn about how the brain works and how we can adjust to meet students where they are. Executive functioning is the ability to organize cognitive processes. This includes the ability to plan, prioritize, stop, and start activities, shift from one activity to another activity, and monitor one's behavior. It affects everything we do, so when a student has differences in these processes, it can cause a barrier to their access, engagement, and progress in their education. During this learning event, we will focus on how to support versus "fix" these differences to support students being the best they can be.

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**Visual Access and AAC: Considerations for SLPs Supporting Students with CVI**

**Ashley Caves, Charisa Cheek, Shannon Sheffer**

This interdisciplinary session focuses on supporting students with Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and assistive technology in school settings. Presented by a Vision Teacher/Special Education Director, Speech Language Pathologist, and an Occupational Therapist/Assistive Technology Coordinator, the session highlights collaborative strategies to improve access, participation, and functional communication. Attendees will gain practical tools for aligning vision, motor, and communication supports to create inclusive, meaningful learning experiences for students with complex needs.

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**Leveraging AI to Support School-Based SLP Practice: Assessment, Intervention, and Workload Management**

**Dawn Merth-Johnson**

Curious about AI but unsure how it fits into school-based speech-language pathology practice? This session is designed for SLPs who want practical examples of how artificial intelligence can be utilized as a support tool across assessment, intervention, and workload management. Participants will learn how AI can assist

with evaluation tasks such as developing a framework for collaborative assessment, completing dynamic assessment, or even language sample support. Examples of how AI can be used to help create therapy materials and individualize intervention will be provided. In addition, this session will explore how AI can support evidence-based decision-making and reduce time spent on tasks impacting workloads outside of direct student services. Attendees will leave with actionable ideas, clear guardrails for responsible use of AI, and increased confidence in leveraging AI as a supportive tool, not a replacement for clinical judgement.

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## **Breakout Session 2**

**10:15 am - 11:45 am**

### **Tips and Tricks for Academic Engagement with Complex Communicators: Leveraging AI and Other Tools to Maximize Meaningful Participation.**

**Tessa Heckel, AT/AAC Consultant**

This session will provide inspiration on how to utilize various tools (from low, mid, to high-tech) to ultimately maximize participation within academic contexts for our students with complex communication and learning needs. We often inadvertently find ourselves pausing engagement until students increase access and/or language skills...but let's provide imaginative linguistic, writing, and academic/behavioral experiences now (while still meeting kids where their skills are at) using creative tools to help us work smarter, not harder. Let's explore, brainstorm, and share ideas together!

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### **Beyond the Data: Collaborative Goals from Language Samples**

**John Heilman & Alyssa Wojtyna**

This session will explore practical strategies for interpreting and applying language samples to engage teams to create collaborative goals that are consistent, data-driven, and actionable. Participants will leave with strategies to connect assessment and intervention in a way that promotes collective responsibility through a variety of service delivery models.

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### **Ethical Decision-Making for School-Based SLPs: Navigating Overwhelm and Burnout**

**Dawn-Merth Johnson, M.A., CCC-SLP**

School-based SLPs are carrying increasingly complex caseloads, juggling heavy workloads, and navigating constant system demands. These pressures can quickly lead to overwhelm, ethical gray areas, and burnout that impact both professional judgment and student outcomes. This 1.5-hour session will explore how the ASHA Code of Ethics applies to real-world challenges such as unrealistic caseload expectations, limited resources, and competing responsibilities. Participants will examine how stress and overload can influence ethical decision-making, discuss strategies to maintain boundaries and protect professional integrity, and learn practical approaches for advocating ethically within school systems. Through case examples and reflective discussion, SLPs will leave with tools to recognize early signs of ethical risk, support their own well-being, and uphold ethical practice even in high-demand environments.

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### **Strategies for Effective Assessment and Therapy for Neurodivergent Students**

**Shelley Kaschinske and Annette LaVia**

This presentation explores practical, evidence-based strategies for assessing and supporting neurodivergent students in educational and therapeutic settings. It

emphasizes strengths-based, individualized approaches that honor diverse ways of thinking, learning, and communicating. Participants will gain tools for selecting appropriate assessments, designing inclusive interventions, and fostering collaboration among educators, therapists, and families. The goal is to promote equitable outcomes while empowering neurodivergent students to thrive.

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## **Breakout Session 3**

### **12:30 pm - 2:00 pm**

#### **Neuroaffirming Approaches for Middle School, High School, and Beyond**

**Christine Carey MS, CCC-SLP**

Participants will define terminology related to neurodiversity, compare and contrast neuroaffirming and traditional approaches to therapy and education, identify neuroaffirming alternatives to common practices used when treating adolescents, and learn ways to help their adolescent students take charge of their transition from high school to post-secondary education or employment.

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#### **Writing Functional Goals for Neurodivergent Students**

**Shelley Kaschinske and Annette LaVia**

This presentation guides service providers in writing neurodiversity-affirming, functional IEP goals that prioritize real-world communication, autonomy, and meaningful participation across settings. Using a multidisciplinary lens, it emphasizes strengths-based practices that honor each student's authentic communication style and support independence in daily life.

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#### **Hot Topics: DPI Speech and Language Updates**

**Dawn Merth Johnson, Education Consultant Speech-Language and Assistive Technology | Special Education Team / Division for Learning Support, DPI**

Stay informed and empowered to support student success with timely updates on key issues impacting school-based speech-language practice. This session will highlight current "hot topics" from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), including recent guidance documents and resources relevant to assessment, service delivery, compliance, and documentation. Examples will be shared to help clinicians navigate common challenges, ensure alignment with state expectations, and make informed decisions in daily practice. Whether you are new to the field or an experienced practitioner, this session will provide valuable insights to strengthen your confidence and consistency in supporting students across educational environments.

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