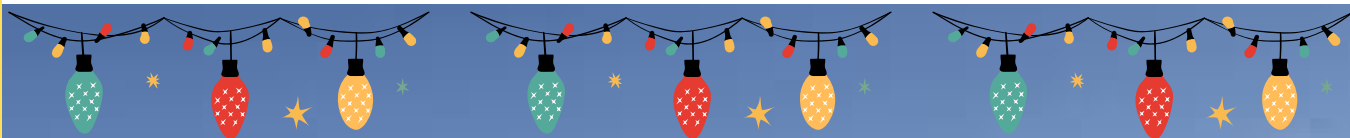


STUDENT SERVICES NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND PUPIL SERVICES



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 **HAPPY** 
 **HOLIDAYS** 

MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

As we wrap up another busy and rewarding year, we want to extend our warmest wishes to all students, families, faculty, and staff.

This season is a time to reflect on our accomplishments, celebrate our growth, and appreciate the strong sense of community that makes our school so special.

May your holidays be filled with rest, joy, and moments of connection with the people who matter most. We look forward to welcoming everyone back in the new year, refreshed and ready for the opportunities ahead.

From our school community to yours—Happy Holidays and best wishes for a bright, healthy, and successful New Year!



What Can the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) offer Our Special Education Students?

If your student is in high school now... OVR is the next step to help students' meet their current or future job goals!

OVR's Pre-employment Transition Services are for students with disabilities.

- No application needed!
- OVR can attend IEP meetings.
- OVR can help with the transition from high school to your next steps.
- OVR can develop an Individualized Plan for Employment with you to help you meet your job goals.
- OVR can help you become independent.
- OVR can help you try out different jobs in different work environments.
- OVR can provide paid work experiences.
- OVR can set you up with a benefits counselor to learn how you can work without affecting your benefits.
- OVR can help you learn about how you can work without affecting your benefits.

Types of OVR Services

OVR offers various services to those who qualify. Some tackle disabilities, while others focus on career preparation. Your services are tailored to your needs. Not everyone needs all services.

Key services include:

- Diagnostic Services: Check-ups to understand your disability and service needs.
- Vocational Evaluation: Identifies your job potential through tests and work experience.
- Counseling: Guides you in setting and adjusting vocational goals. Also, helps build work skills.
- Training: Offers education for various jobs, including life skills and personal adjustment.
- Restoration Services: Provides medical services and devices to support employment.
- Placement Assistance: Aids in job search and interviews. Also, connects you with employers.
- Assistive Technology: Offers devices to aid in employment and daily tasks.
- Support Services: Additional help for employment. Could cover living, transportation, or job site changes. Also, provides communication aids and specialized training for the blind.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is a useful support for our students with disabilities as they step into the workforce and focus on their future career goals. OVR can play a pinnacle role for our students with schooling, training, and goal setting as they move toward joining the workforce and explore future career plans.

Additional questions - Parents can access resources and information about OVR services through the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry and other local resources.

5 Strategies for Encouraging Classroom Focus

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**STUDENT SERVICES NEWSLETTER
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These visual and audio cues can help all teachers quickly get students back on track. For many new teachers, classroom management can be one of the biggest obstacles to achieving success.

Without a toolbox of strategies to get students' attention, raising your voice may feel like the only option when students are engaged in a loud activity or simply not meeting expectations. To avoid creating a negative classroom culture, which ultimately impedes learning, new teachers, or educators facing circumstances this school year, can try these attention-getters.

For each of these focus strategies shared below, it's important to explicitly teach students what your expectations are for how they should respond. For older students, it will likely take only a few minutes for you to demonstrate the attention-getter and share your expectations—voices are off, eyes are on the board, etc.

5 EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO DRAW STUDENTS' FOCUS OR ATTENTION

1. The Clap-In (or Snap-In):

The clap-in is a classic attention-getter for good reason! While many teachers resort to raising their voices when the classroom gets too loud, clapping provides an equally noticeable but far more positive way to get students' attention. To use a clap-in, simply pick a pattern to clap and have students repeat it back. As more students join in, the clap gets spread across the room until all students are participating in the clap and ending their conversations.

There are a few ways to make this more interesting for students. One option is starting with a clap and switching to snaps. This requires students to be even quieter to be able to hear the pattern you snap and then repeat it. You can also select a student to lead the clap-in or snap-in to build further investment in the attention-getter. Finally, rather than making up your own pattern, you can work with your students to design a unique clap-in or snap-in pattern for your class.

2. Give Me Five:

This is a great option that not only helps bring students' attention back to the teacher but also provides an opportunity for them to work together to get everyone back on track. For this attention-getter, raise your hand high so that students can see you. As each student sees the signal, they will also raise their hand. This will continue to spread until all students are silently raising their hands and looking to the teacher for further directions.

To make this more exciting or enticing, time the students to see how long it takes for everyone to raise their hand and then challenge them to beat their time. This has been a very efficient way to get the attention of all students without even using one's voice at all.

3. Call-and-Response:

Using a call-and-response is another easy way to get students' attention, as they will have to not only listen to join in but also stop any side conversations in order to provide the accurate response. This attention-getter provides lots of room for creativity that both teachers and students can use to make the calls-and-responses best suited for them.

It's beneficial to involve students in the process of creating these calls-and-responses and then practice how they sound and what students are expected to do when they hear them—similar to the Clap/Snap-In.

5 EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO DRAW STUDENTS' FOCUS OR ATTENTION CONTINUED.....

4. **Timer/Song:**

This strategy uses other sounds rather than a teacher's voice to get attention and relies on a specific timed activity.

Teachers use this strategy with students in a group or partner task to complete for a specific amount of time. When they start, begin the timer or song (instrumental works best!), and by the time the timer or song goes off, students are expected to end their conversations and return their attention to the instructor. The timer works best for potentially louder group activities, while the song is a great option for a slightly quieter partner activity.

5. **Hit the Lights:**

This strategy brings student attention immediately back up front to the instructor. A quick flash of the lights can alert students that something is about to happen. It is important to explicitly explain to students that a quick flash of the lights means that they need to turn off their voices and track the teacher.



The holidays are upon us — a wonderful and exciting season for many of our learners. However, for some of our Special Education students who rely on routines, structure, and predictability, this time of year can also bring heightened stress and anxiety. Changes in schedules, special events, sensory overload, and the general hustle and bustle of the season can make it difficult for these students to feel regulated and secure.

It is important that we all take a moment to recognize these challenges and be intentional in how we support our learners both in the classroom and beyond. Even small adjustments can make a meaningful difference.

Additional Information

Here are some helpful suggestions to promote comfort, consistency, and success during the holiday season:

Maintain Predictability When Possible

- Keep daily routines as consistent as you can.
- Provide visual schedules, reminders of upcoming changes, and countdowns to special events.
- Alert students ahead of time about assemblies, holiday activities, or altered class times.

Use Clear, Calming Communication

- Offer reassurance and explain changes in simple, direct terms.
- Provide processing time and check in frequently with students who may appear overwhelmed.
- Use social stories or visual supports to help students understand what to expect.

Create Sensory-Friendly Options

- Be mindful that decorations, lights, and noise can be overstimulating.
- Identify quiet spaces or “cool-down areas” where students can take a break when needed.
- Consider offering sensory tools such as noise-canceling headphones, fidgets, or weighted items.

Provide Choices and Flexibility

- Allow students to opt out or participate in modified ways during festivities.
- Offer choices in activities to give students a sense of control during a less predictable time.
- Avoid forcing participation in high-energy events if a student is visibly anxious or stressed.

Focus on Connection and Comfort

- Build in extra opportunities for positive reinforcement and one-on-one check-ins.
- Maintain a calm, supportive tone — a steady adult presence can help students feel grounded.
- Collaborate closely with families, who may be experiencing similar challenges at home.

Encourage Self-Advocacy and Coping Skills

- Teach and model calming strategies such as deep breathing, stretching, or asking for a break.
- Reinforce students’ efforts to express their needs, even in small ways.
- Celebrate resilience, progress, and the unique strengths each learner brings to your classroom.

As we move through the holiday season, let’s continue to work together to create a welcoming, supportive environment for all students. With patience, empathy, and thoughtful planning, we can help our learners navigate the excitement — and the challenges — with confidence and comfort.



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scheduled**



**“WORKING TOGETHER TO
ACHIEVE STUDENT SUCCESS”**