

Winter Updates 2024-2025

Presented by:

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

SESA Board Chair

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Welcome



**THE KEY TO SUCCESS FOR ALASKAN
EDUCATORS SERVING STUDENTS WITH
LOW INCIDENCE DISABILITIES**

www.sesa.org

Agenda

Goal 1:

SESA Mission & History

Goal 2:

SESA Activities

Goal 3:

Feedback for SESA

Goal 4:

SESA Upcoming Events

Goal 5:

Questions



Fiscal Year 2025 SESA Staff Photo: Fourth/Back Row Left to Right: Claire Agni, Robert Sinclair, Brian Babcock, Brandie Clark; Third Row Left to Right: Christine Collier, Kelly Maki, Jennifer Schroeder, Amy Topmiller, Lyon Johnson; Second Row Left to Right: John Barrowman, Erin Land, Meriah Cory, Olivia Yancey, Angel Black, M'Lissa Parker, Yuya Hisada; Front Row Left to Right: Katie Groller, Autumn Holt, Samantha Weiland, Abby Steer, James Batin

Mission

SESA provides consultation and training to support the unique educational needs of individuals and the Alaskan communities that serve them.





About Us

SESA is an educational service agency comprised of a low incidence disability service inclusive of a statewide lending library. Low incidence disabilities include [autism](#), [deaf and hard of hearing \(DHOH\)](#), [vision impairment](#), [emotional disabilities](#) and [multiple disabilities](#).

In addition, SESA operates three grants:

Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC)

Alaska Deaf-Blind Project

Alaska Center for Accessible Materials (AKCAM)

Meet the SESA Board

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus, **Board President**

Anna Attla, **Treasurer**

Shelly Vendetti Vucovitch, **Secretary**

Elizabeth Joseph

Richard Saville, **Ex Officio**

Donald Enoch

Dr. Madeline Aguiard

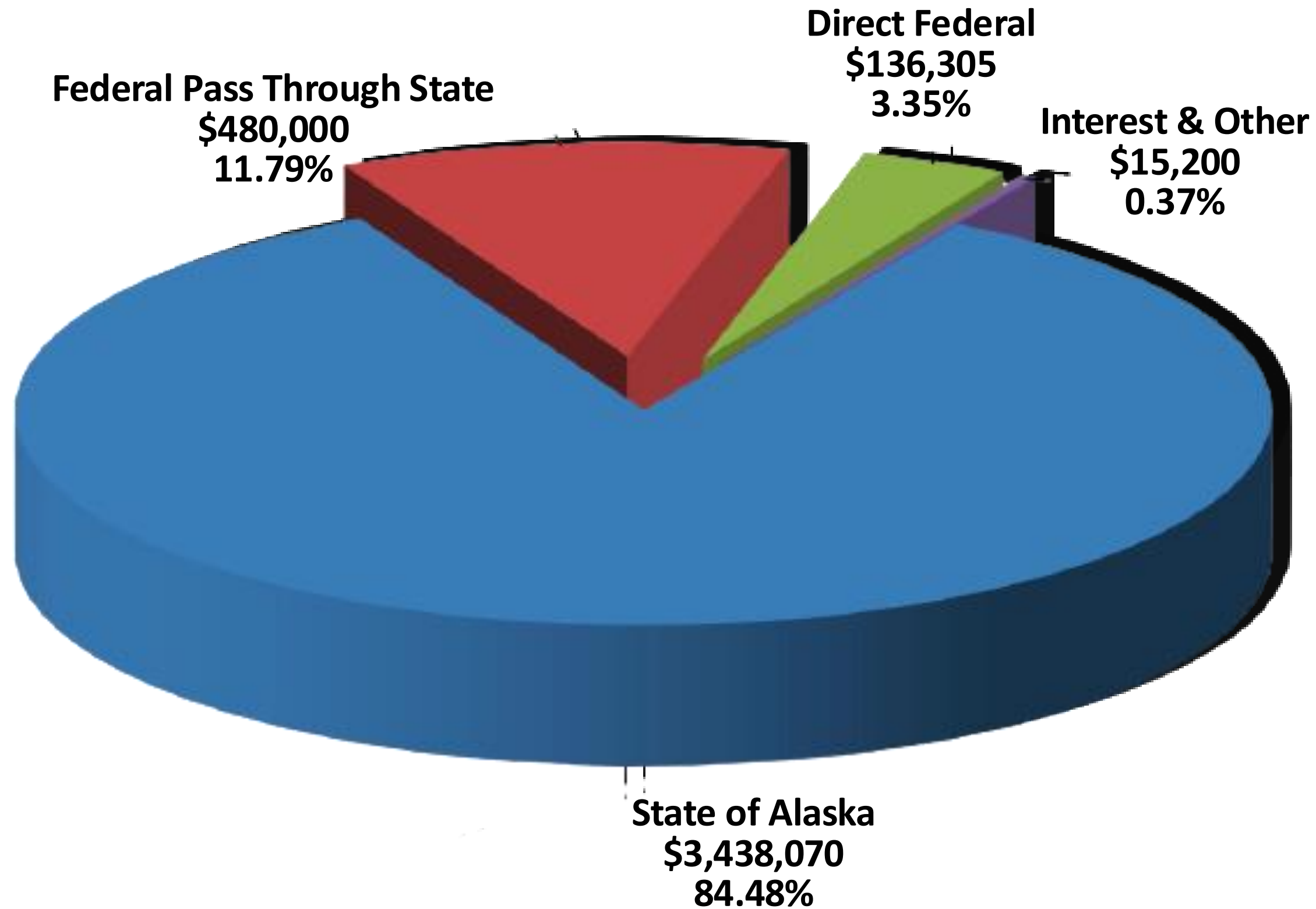
Michaela Kolerok

Heather Wheeler, **Vice President**



Funding for SESA

Revenues by Source FY 2025 Budget



Since August 2024

SESA has provided technical assistance to over **13,274** Alaskans.

SESA programs have offered over **77** site-based, district, and state-wide trainings for Alaskans on evidence based or best practices related to the educational program of students with low incidence disabilities. Over **47%** of these trainings were conducted via distance delivery (e.g., Zoom).

SESA Low Incidence Disability Programs have offered and provided support to **502** students and their school teams.

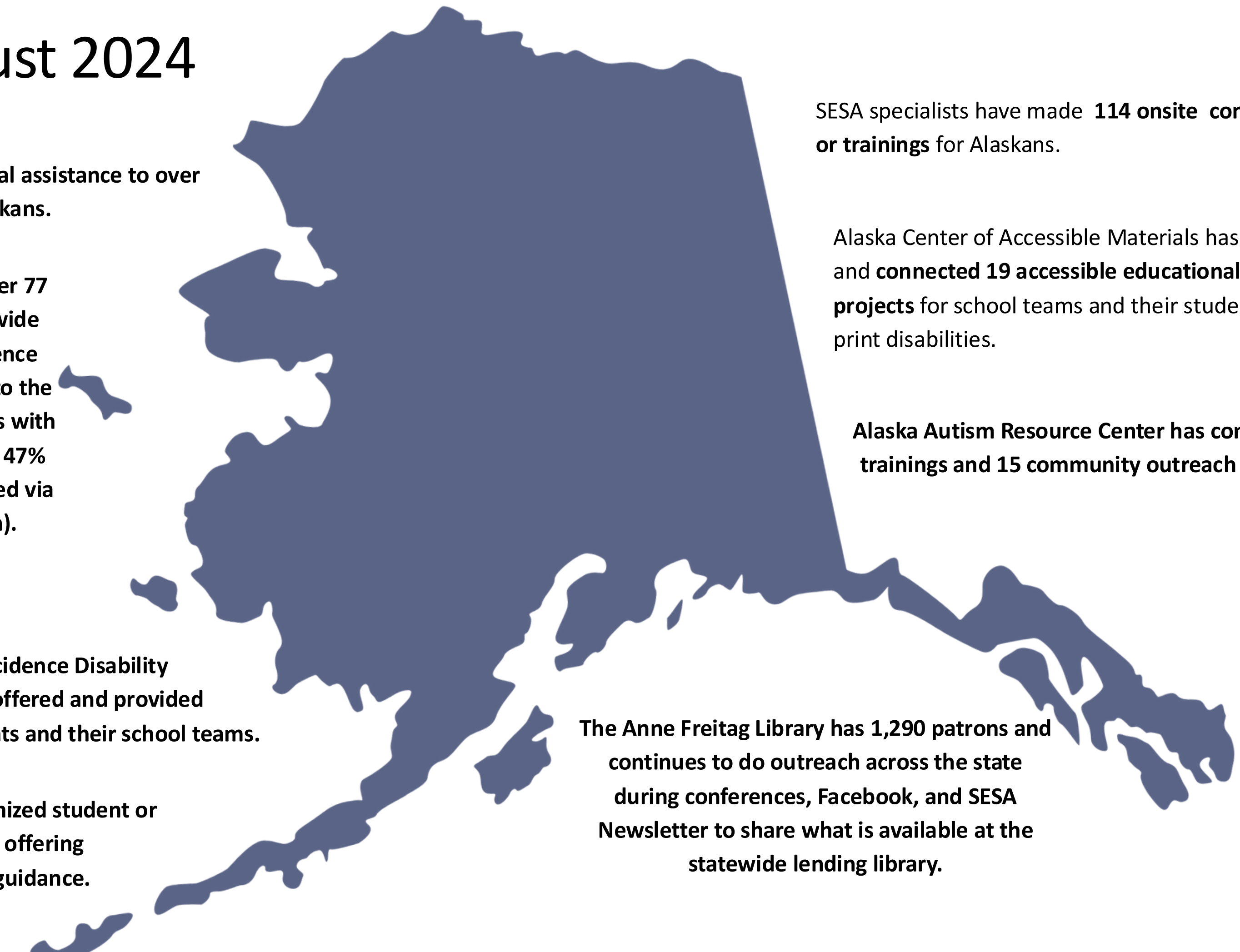
SESA has produced **322** customized student or patron focused reports offering recommendations and guidance.

SESA specialists have made **114 onsite consultations or trainings** for Alaskans.

Alaska Center of Accessible Materials has created and **connected 19 accessible educational materials projects** for school teams and their students with print disabilities.

Alaska Autism Resource Center has conducted **20** trainings and **15** community outreach activities.

The Anne Freitag Library has **1,290** patrons and continues to do outreach across the state during conferences, Facebook, and SESA Newsletter to share what is available at the statewide lending library.



Since August 2025

Meriah answered my questions and offered tips on how to help my student for the remainder of the school year. I hope she is able to come out to observe again and work more with the students and the PCA. FY25 Site Visit Survey

(Autumn) I was given a very engaging presentation that helped me see autism and neurodivergence in a spectrum, and a different light than I had before. Very useful and helpful. Thank you for the handouts, brain breaks, and treats! FY25 AARC Training Feedback Survey

Over my 20+ year career in Alaska, I have never had a poor experience with anyone from SESA. Jennifer is a wealth of knowledge and her delivery of information is very user friendly. FY25 Site Visit Survey

Lyon did a wonderful job while he was here in our school. He is very knowledgeable and cares about students and staff. Lyon is easy to talk to and professional.

FY25 Site Visit Survey

(Angel) AB balances a delicate personal touch with a knowledgeable professional approach, ensuring my son's access to his education. We feel like she is my son's strongest advocate, and lately is helping us focus on what we are doing now to prepare him for college and beyond.

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FY25 Site Visit Survey

Meriah and Samantha had some great, easy to use strategies to try with this student.

FY25 AKCAM Distance Delivery



Katie Groller
Executive Assistant

Yuya Hisada
Education Technologist



James Batin
Technology Assistant



Kathryn Miljure
Program Assistant



Harrison Godsby
Program Assistant



Christine Collier
Sr. Program Assistant



Olivia Yancey
Executive Director



Claire Agni
Librarian

Support Staff



Kelly Maki
Autism Specialist



Robert Sinclair
Autism Specialist



John Barrowman
Lead Autism Specialist



Brian Babcock
Autism Specialist



Erin Land
Autism Specialist

Autism

LID Autism Program Goal:
Provide distance and on-site technical assistance to support the educational and training needs of individuals with autism, their school district teams, and the Alaskan communities that serve them.



Emotional Disabilities

LID Emotional Disabilities Program Goal: Collaborate and consult with rural teams regarding the program and student needs. Provide face-to-face, distance synchronous and asynchronous training on various topics affecting students with emotional/behavioral disorders.

Assist team with on-site visits and distance delivery to create, maintain, and enhance specific programs that meet the needs of students with emotional behavioral disorders



Lyon Johnson
ED Specialist



M'Lissa Parker
ED Specialist





Angel Black
VI Specialist



Abby Steer
DHOH Specialist

Visual Impairment

LID Visual Impairment Program: Provide distance and on-site technical assistance to support the educational and training needs of individuals with vision loss, their school district teams, and the Alaskan communities that serve them.



Deaf & Hard of Hearing

LID Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program Goal: Provide distance and on-site technical assistance to support the educational and training needs of individuals with hearing loss, their school district teams, and the Alaskan communities that serve them.





Amy Topmiller
Lead MD Specialist



Jennifer Schroeder
MD Specialist



Samantha Weiland
MD Specialist



Meriah Cory
MD Specialist

Multiple Disabilities

LID Multiple Disabilities Program Goal: Collaborate and consult with rural teams regarding the program and student needs. Provide small and large group training on various topics affecting students with multiple disabilities. Assist teams in person through distance deliver to create, maintain, and enhance specific programs that meet the needs of students with multiple disabilities.



LID Participants Across Districts FY25*



Total Number of Participants Served: **3168**
 Total Number of Districts Served: **46**

*Data from activities dated 7/1/2024 to 1/31/2025



Autumn Holt
Resource Specialist



Kelly Maki
Resource Specialist



John Barrowman
Grant Coordinator



Alaska Autism Resource Center's mission....serves the needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorders, their families, caregivers, and service providers throughout the state of Alaska. We provide information, referral, training, and consultation via on-site and distance delivery....



In-Person Services by Location FY25*

Trainings & Resource Consultations



Total Number of
Participants Served: **266**



*Data from activities dated 7/1/2024 to 1/31/2025



Angel Black
Project Co-Director

Alaska Deafblind Project

Alaska DeafBlind Project Mission:...serves any individual from premature birth to age 22 with hearing and vision loss... Specialists serve those in urban as well as remote areas as well as individuals not enrolled in school and those in secondary school.





Meriah Cory
Grant Coordinator



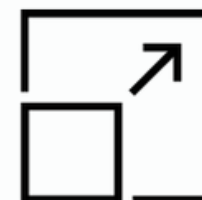
Samantha Weiland
AKCAM Specialist

Alaska Center for Accessible Materials

Alaska Center for Accessible Materials (AKCAM) Mission...collaborate with school districts to provide accessible educational materials (AEM) throughout the state of Alaska. SESA continues to be an authorized user of the NIMAC as well as an alternative materials producer to provide education to districts regarding the use of the NIMAS/NIMAC system to meet the needs of students who need AEM.



Alaska Center for Accessible Materials

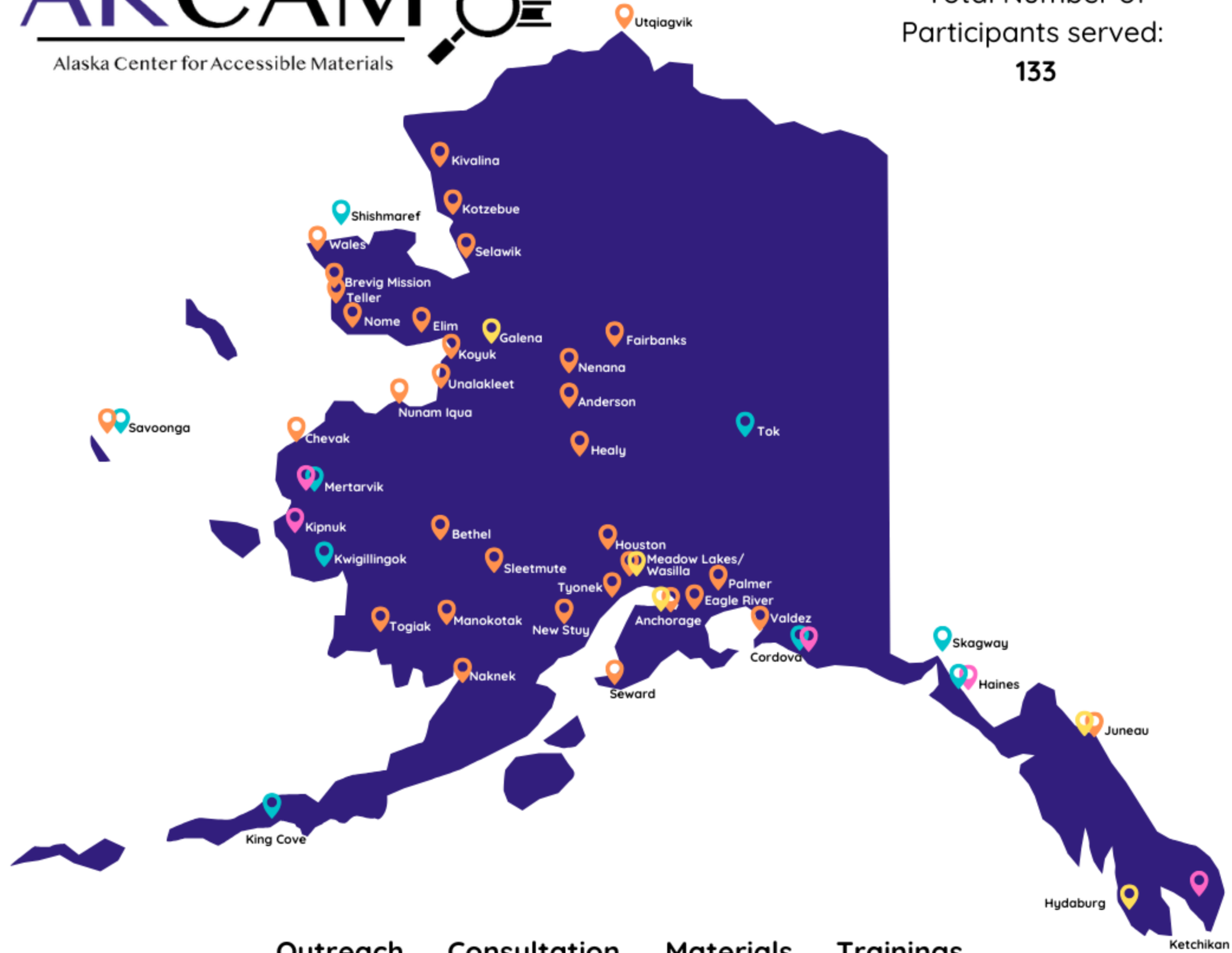


Participants Served by Location Trainings



Total Number of
Participants Served:
267*

*Includes 176 out of state training participants



Outreach



Consultation



Materials



Trainings



Celebrating Success

At SESA we believe in honoring the accomplishments of our students, no matter how big or small. We would like to tell you about a couple of students we have had the pleasure of working with.

The SESA tech department and the LID Multiple Disabilities team was able to help secure a VersaEye, a program giving access to all iPad features to users who can't use direct touch. Asked the question "Can you get the balloon?" this student was able to use it to accomplish the task.

The SESA MD and DHOH programs have been working with this student for the last 5 years. Recently while on site a specialist observed and helped him and his team use his communication device to form complete sentences and talk about events happening in his life.



Image description: Young girl with long dark hair sits in front of an iPad with a blue sky and green balloon on it.



Image description: Young boy with long dark hair watches as a woman with glasses writes on a paper on a desk in front of him.

The Alaska Deafblind Project

The AKDBP works with students and thier teams across Alaska. This student is using a tactile communication board to decide what to have for lunch.



Image description: AKDBP student with long dark hair uses a TACS, while an AKDBP Specialist looks on.

At the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference (ASSEC) this year, AKDBP was able to connect with educators in person and show off everything the program has to offer.



Image description: A woman with curly long hair stands in front of a table with an orange table cloth speaking to an AKDBP specialist in a black vest and light blue shirt.

AKDBP is dedicated to helping Alaskan educators increase their knowledge bases. This is from a 3 day Webinar on Assisive Technology featuring nationally known speakers.



Image description: Three women appear in boxes on a TV screen during a ZOOM Webinar. Closed captioning shows what they are saying.

The Alaska Center For Accessible Materials

AKCAM can help find the right resources for students with print disabilities. This is a math book that was enlarged to 24 font for a student with vision challenges.

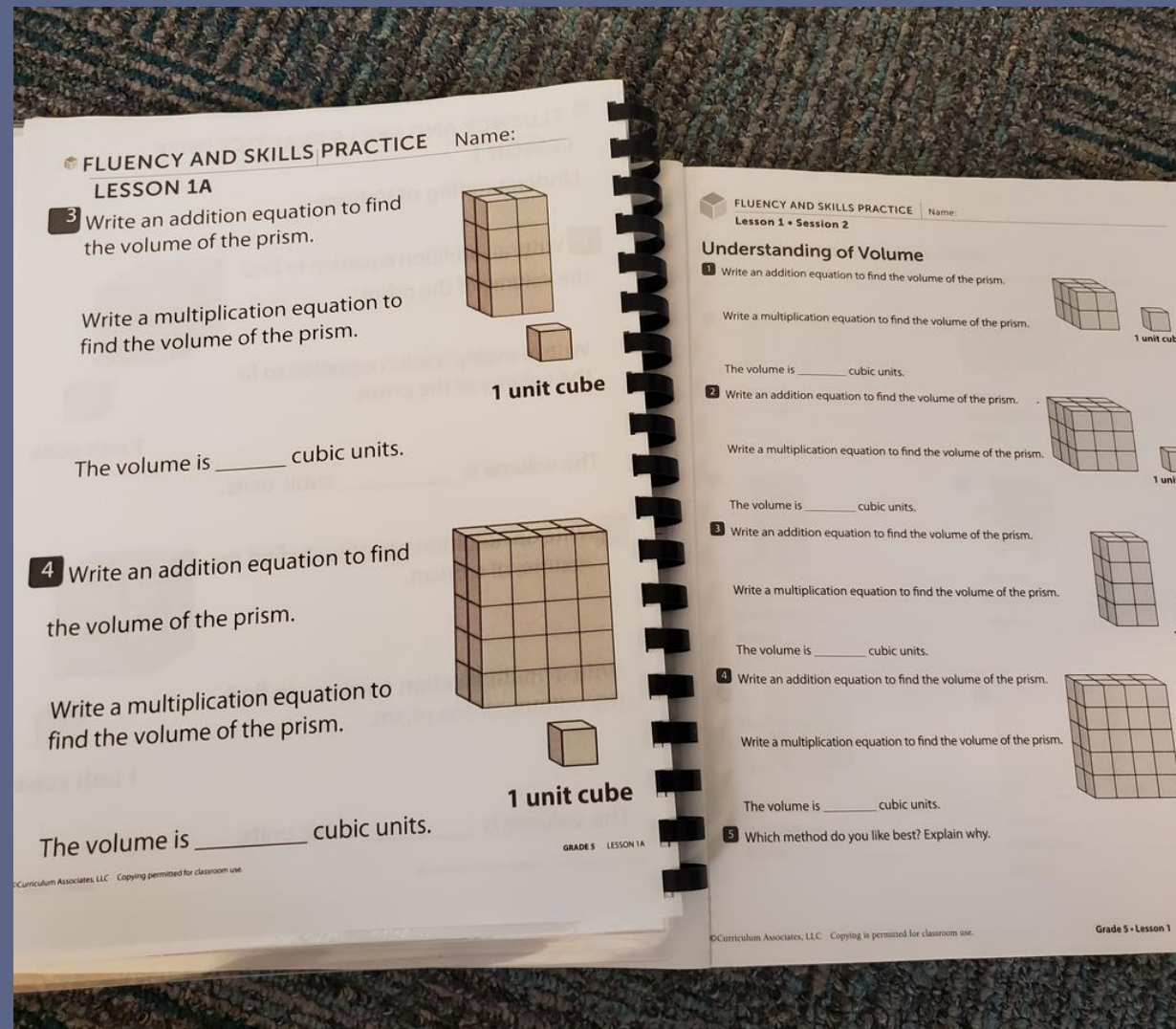


Image description: A page from math book enlarged to 24 font sits on the left. The same page at the original size sits on the right.

The AKCAM team was all smiles at ASSEC. Visitors to the booth were able to walkaway with booklists and reading guides. They were also able to test out accessible materials like C-pens.



Image description: 2 Women stand behind a table covered with materials and a AKCAM table cloth.

Education about print disabilities is one of the goals of AKCAM. Hosting tables like this allows the team to connect and share the resources available for students.



Image description: A woman with long dark hair stands in front of a table, where a computer sits open. She holds a piece of paper while she talks to a female AKCAM specialist in a black jacket.

The Alaska Autism Resource Center

Trunk or Treat! Family friendly events are a great place to connect with communities in Alaska.



Image description: A woman in a white sweater and red tutu stand next to a woman in a yellow tutu in front of a table with water bottles and flyers on it.

At ASSEC the AARC presented Strategies for Teaching Social Emotional Learning to Autistic Individuals. They were available afterwards to answer any questions attendees might have.



Image description: Two women stand behind a table covered with information and resources from the AARC.

Planning is underway for the annual Autism Awareness and Acceptance Walk. This year, a Walk-a-thon will be held at the same time so more people can participate statewide.

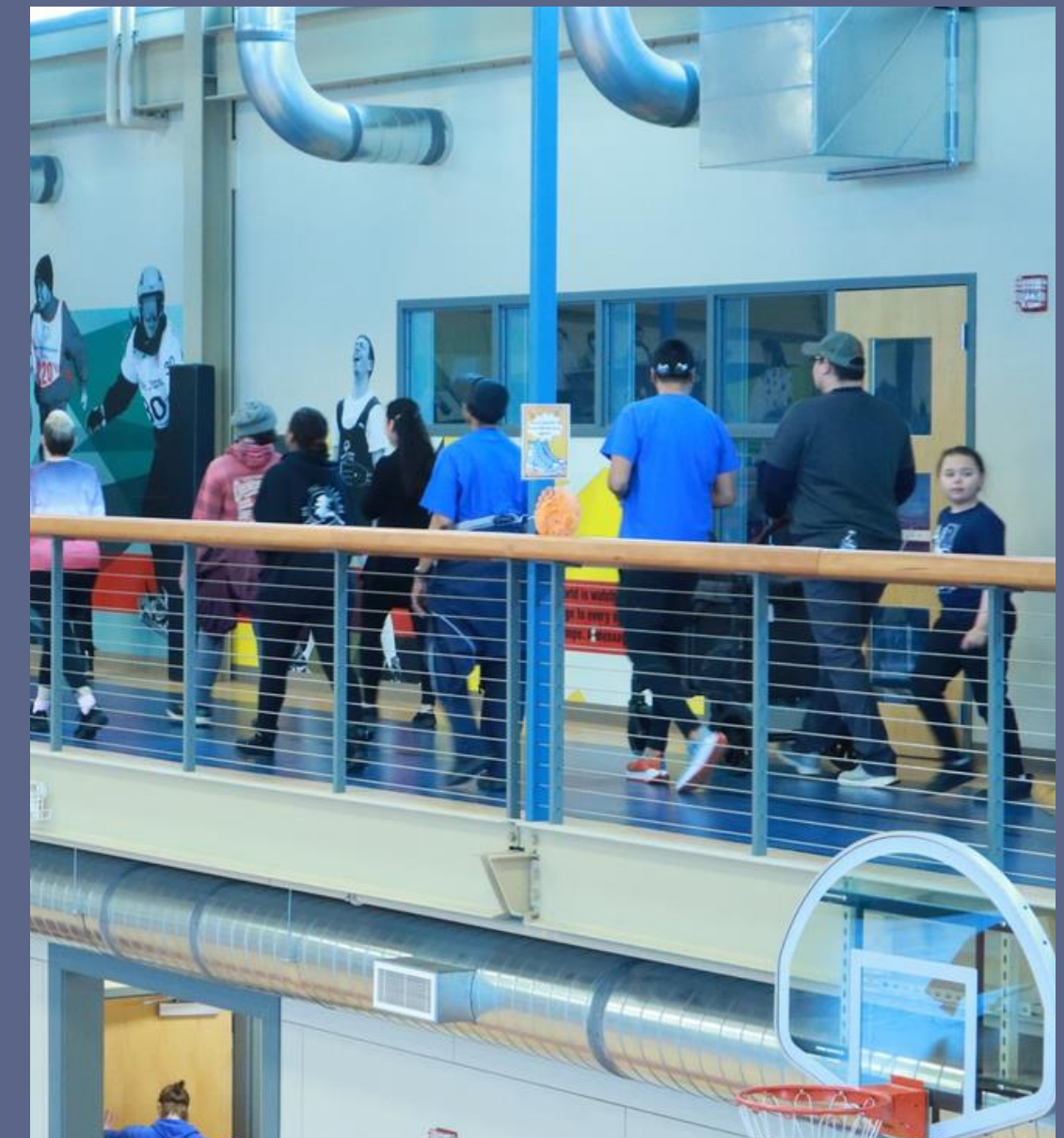
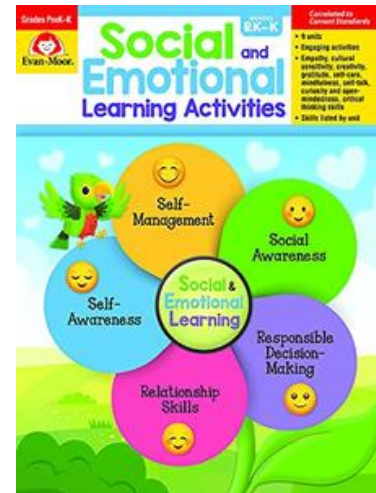


Image description: A group of people walks the track at Special Olympics during the 2024 Autism Awareness and Acceptance Walk.

The Anne Freitag Library



Books



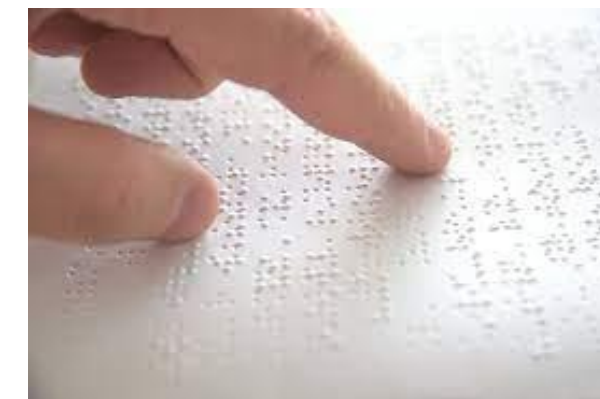
Sensory Materials



Toys & Games



Accessible Reading Materials



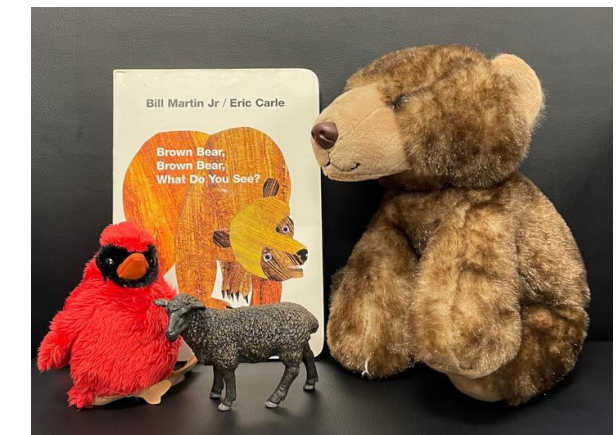
The Anne Freitag Library

sesa.org/library



Collections

- Autism
- Deafblind
- Braille
- Multiple Disabilities
- Low-Incidence Disabilities
- Journals
- Juvenile Fiction
- Juvenile Non-Fiction
- Large Print
- Foreign Language
- Audio/Visual
- Assessments
- Curriculum Kits
- Equipment (including white canes, brailers, switches, magnifiers, and much more)
- Games and Toys



The Anne Freitag Library

Booklists

Interested in a certain subject? Take a booklist!

Topics include, but not limited to:

Autism

- Activities for children with autism
- Autism and aging adults
- Employment for adults with autism

Communication

- Characters who are non-verbal
- Deafblind Communication
- Consent and body autonomy for children

Behavior

- Children feeling angry
- Children with big feelings
- Managing meltdowns
- Positive Behavior Support

Social Emotional

- Children and grieving
- Children experiencing depression



Online Booklist Collection

THE ANNE FREITAG LIBRARY
Recommended Reading
WHAT IS AUTISM?
For Adults

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS: CHARACTERISTICS, CAUSES AND PRACTICAL ISSUES BY JILL BOUCHER
From historical information to methods of assessment, and from intervention to education and support, this informative and accessible text explores theories at the psychological, neurobiological and 'first cause' levels.

WORLDS OF AUTISM: ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF NEUROLOGICAL DIFFERENCE EDITED BY JOYCE DAVIDSON AND MICHAEL ORSINI
This book features a range of perspectives on autistic subjectivities and the politics of cognitive difference, confronting society's assumptions about those with autism and the characterization of autism as a disability.

IN A DIFFERENT KEY: THE STORY OF AUTISM BY JOHN DONVAN & CAREN ZUCKER
Nearly seventy-five years ago, Donald Triplett of Forest, Mississippi became the first child diagnosed with autism. Beginning with his family's odyssey, In a Different Key tells the extraordinary story of this often misunderstood condition, and of the civil rights battles waged by the families of those who have it.

THE LITTLE BOOK OF AUTISM FAQs BY DAVIDA HARTMAN
Empowering and practical, this guide is the perfect companion for parents who are finding it difficult to tell their children about their autism diagnosis. It provides a realistic yet uplifting approach to autism, treating it not as a disability but as a difference.

IS THIS AUTISM?: A GUIDE FOR CLINICIANS AND EVERYONE ELSE BY DONNA HENDERSON
Though our understanding of autism has greatly expanded, many autistic individuals are still missed or misdiagnosed. This highly-readable book clarifies the many ways that autism can present, particularly in people who camouflage in order to hide their autistic traits.

THE ADULT AUTISM ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK: A NEURODIVERSITY-AFFIRMATIVE APPROACH BY DAVIDA HARTMAN, ET. AL
This accessible and comprehensive handbook covers the most up to date research and test practice around adult autism assessment, centering the person's internal experiences and sense-making in clinical assessment.

2600 Denali Street, Suite 200 Anchorage, AK 99501
907-343-1301 | cagni@sesa.org | sesa.org/library

THE ANNE FREITAG LIBRARY
Recommended Reading
CHILDREN WITH BIG FEELINGS

I'M HAPPY-SAD TODAY BY LORY BRITAIN
This friendly picture book helps young children make sense of mixed-up emotions. Happy, and also sad. Excited, but nervous too. Feeling friendly, with a little shyness mixed in. Mixed feelings are natural, but they can be confusing.

SOAR BY HILLARY DAECHEER
Ramone, a shy hummingbird, is about to leave the nest for the first time. But his anxiety and fear keep him from taking off. Full of kind words and encouragement, Ramone's mother gives him room to work through his emotions, building his confidence and letting him set his own pace.

MONSTER EMOTIONS BY KAREN NILPATRICK
When Monster accidentally steps in a mess, he sparks a series of events that cause him to feel a lot of different emotions. But Monster keeps swallowing these emotions, making him sick. Will Monster learn to express his feelings?

THE BOY WITH BIG, BIG FEELINGS BY BRITNEY WINN LEE
Meet a boy with a heart so big, his feelings glow from his cheeks, spill out of his eyes, and jump up and down on his chest.

AN EMOTIONAL MENAGERIE: FEELINGS FROM A-Z BY THE SCHOOL OF LIFE
Children experience all sorts of emotions: sometimes going through several very different ones before breakfast. Yet they can struggle to put these feelings into words. An Emotional Menagerie is an emotional glossary for children.

THE BIG FEELINGS BOOK FOR CHILDREN BY SHARON SELEY
It's normal for kids to experience feelings so big that they're hard to manage! This book is filled with engaging exercises that show kids how to use mindfulness to work through tough emotions and feel happier fast.

2600 Denali Street, Suite 200 Anchorage, AK 99501
907-343-1301 | cagni@sesa.org | sesa.org/library

Upcoming Events

March 20, 2025: The Alaska Autism Resource Center hosts a FREE Webinar “Water Safety with Ms. Dayna”. The presenter, Dayna Harvey has more than 20 years of experience teaching children with autism.

March 26, 2025: The Alaska Center for Accessible Materials presents a FREE Webinar “Tear Down Reading Barriers with Bookshare”. Participants will learn to navigate Bookshare, a free accessible ebook library for students with certain reading barriers.

April 26, 2025: Annual Autism Awareness and Acceptance Walk at the Special Olympics in Anchorage. This year the Alaska Autism Resource Center is also hosting a statewide virtual Walk-a-thon. During the month of April, people from all over the state can sign-up and track how far they walk.

Registration Coming Soon

How to Make a Referral

SESA ONLINE REFERRAL:

With the online referral, you can save your progress and resume later. On the referral website, you will need to click the "Save Work to Resume Later" button above the menu to get an access code to resume a referral later.

SESA PAPER REFERRAL:

Printable forms are available on our website. You may complete and send them via:

Email: referrals@sesa.org | Fax: (206)330-0306

Mail To:

Special Education Service Agency

2600 Denali Street, Suite 200

Anchorage, Alaska 99503

The requesting Alaskan school district completes the SESA forms, obtains parental signature(s), provides the required documents, and sends the referral to SESA.

SESA Mutual Exchange of Information (MEI)

District Referral Agreement

Medical or school reports documenting the child's diagnosis

Current, signed Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Current, signed Evaluation Summary and Eligibility Report (ESER)

Contact information



Connect With Us

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**Special Education
Service Agency -
Alaska**

Sign up for our quarterly newsletter to stay up to date on all of our SESA adventures, including new library materials, special events, newsletters, and much more!

