

Testimony of Allison Sutton, February 27, 2019

Classrooms in Crisis: Examining the Inappropriate Use of Seclusion and Restraint

Chairman Sablan and Ranking Member Allen – thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning regarding the critical issue of restraint and seclusion in our classrooms. My name is Allison Sutton and I am a teacher in Wichita, Kansas.

I graduated with my undergraduate degree in 2013 and began teaching that August. I was assigned thirteen middle schoolers with autism. Today, it's hard for me to think back and recall the how exhausting and brutal that first year was. I was unprepared, I didn't have sufficient resources, and support was limited at best. I was hired to start a program for students with autism at my school. As a result, the expectations were not widely understood among school staff nor were staff able to offer tangible solutions to help me with behavioral situations I encountered in the classroom. During that first year I was using restraints at a high rate without the necessary training to do so. School security was also called on a regular basis for issues in my classroom and one time they handcuffed one of my students. Additionally, I got a concussion from one of my students. It's important to remember I just had graduated from undergrad when this school year started. I had received little to no behavior management training in general nor any tailored to the specific population I was teaching.

After extreme behaviors were occurring with regularity in my classroom, I was told that I was supposed to be Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) certified. I attended my first CPI training in October of 2013. "The CPI Crisis Development Model represents a series of recognizable behavior levels that an individual may experience during a crisis moment and the corresponding staff attitudes/ approaches used to de-escalate challenging behaviors." This refresher workbook is ten units and the first seven of them focus on preventative and de-escalation means while the last couple units focus on the physical interventions. On the first page of the CPI refresher workbook it breaks down the integrated experience looking at it from the student and the staff behavior levels and approaches. This is one of the most valuable components, being able to identify how I, as the staff, am responding and approaching the situation and the impact I am having on the student.

While this training is a good resource, only attending an initial full day training and then half a day refresher training in the following years is not sufficient. When I have attended these trainings I typically only see special education and para professionals in attendance. In my opinion, it would be beneficial to have all staff on the same page when working with a student and trying to de-escalate varying circumstances. These tools would be useful in all settings and for all staff in a school. This shouldn't be the

only training that school personnel receive, in addition to CPI, staff should receive training on behavior management, de-escalation techniques, conducting functional behavioral assessments, and writing behavior plans.

Beyond CPI, there was very little training on seclusion and restraint, best practices, parental notification and documentation. In my classroom I have sought out answers to my questions, and received the answers that I need. I would, however encourage clear dissemination of all relevant information and protocols to all school staff. There should be training on positive behavioral interventions and supports, behavior data collection methods, how to identify functions of behavior, how to interpret the data collected, and what interventions to implement based on interpretations of data collection.

It quickly became abundantly clear to me that if I wanted my students to be successful, I needed more strategies and tools such as positive behavioral interventions and supports, visual supports, prompting hierarchies, how to identify reinforcement, behavior data collection, what to do with the behavior data after it is collected, and tools for identifying interventions to implement based on individual behaviors and needs. Once I started acquiring this knowledge and implementing it in my classroom, I've seen a drastic decrease in seclusion and restraint.

In order to get the support and training I needed for my students to be successful in the classroom, I actively sought out opportunities to gain those tools and strategies described above. I first attended a conference centered on individuals with autism. This proved to be very helpful and I was able to gain insight into my students, and also able to build critical connections in the community.

Three years into teaching I decided to get my Masters in Low Incidence Special Education. This again helped me to gather strategies to immediately start implementing in my classroom. In my master's program I was able to gain both teaching and behavioral tools, but my biggest take away has been the need to build relationships with all stakeholders for each individual child. While this may look differently for each student, the necessity for honest, consistent and valuable communication holds true for every stakeholder. In my program I was also able to network with other professionals who had similar jobs to mine and this has time and time again proved invaluable. In my school building I wasn't able to build connections with staff who understood my world, through my master's classes I was able to build community based on a shared understanding. Through my program and my final project I was able to seek out opportunities I wouldn't have done otherwise.

Also, I recently attended and presented at the Council for Exceptional Children conference. This conference allowed me the chance to attend multiple sessions based on my own experiences and interests and learn from others and take ideas back to my class. It is vital for me to build relationships with others who understand my day to day, who can offer advice, feedback and even praise based on their own knowledge and understanding. This conference enabled me to do just that.

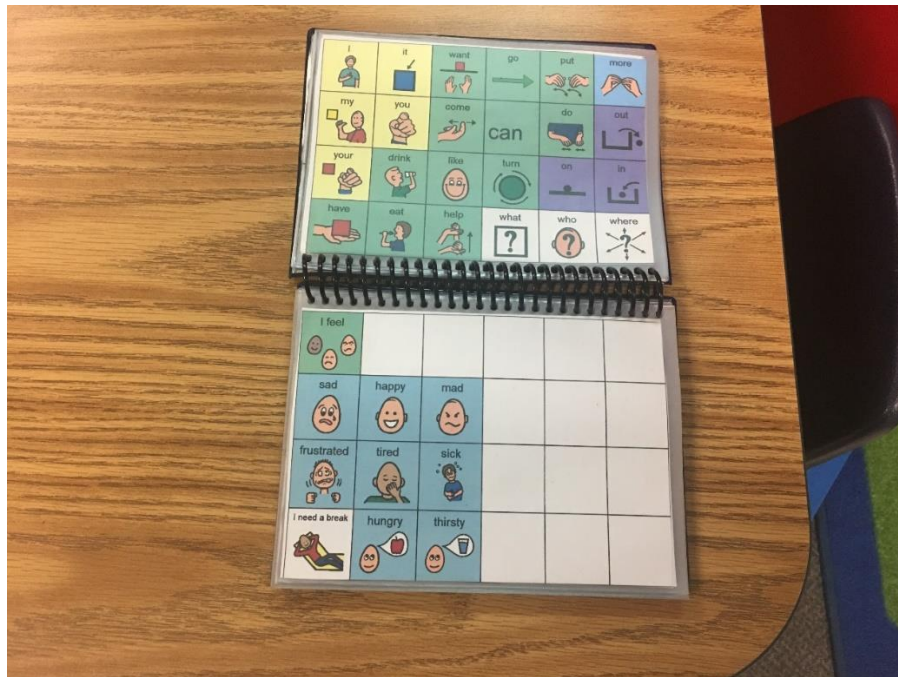
I do want to mention, The Kansas Seclusion and Restraint Law (K.A.R. 91-42-2) called Emergency Safety Intervention (ESI) was initially rolled out in 2015, the early stages of when I started teaching. I remember specifically when I had questions regarding documentation of restraint and seeking out one of the district teaching specialists to assist me. Each year during the back to school in-service special education teachers and staff receive an overview of the ESI. According to ESI, "An emergency safety intervention shall be used only used when a student presents a reasonable and immediate danger of physical harm to the student or others with the present ability to effect such a physical harm. Less restrictive alternatives to emergency safety interventions, including positive behavior interventions support, shall be deemed inappropriate or ineffective under the circumstances by the school employee witnessing the student's behavior before the use of any emergency safety interventions." This is typically a PowerPoint presentation that is presented to us by our Department of Due Process. Throughout the presentation specific situations are discussed and staff are reminded of what is permitted and what is prohibited.

Now six years in, I don't consider myself a veteran teacher but rather a teacher who will find ways to assist every student in becoming successful based on their own individual needs. I've learned over the years how to identify when behaviors are likely to occur and allow for preventative measures and work through de-escalation techniques with my students to decrease the likelihood of extreme behaviors. While many restraints occurred in my classroom my first year, I am proud to say there has been one this year. My classroom is one in which expectations are clear, consistent and tailored to meet the needs of each student.

I'm now consciously aware of what will work for one student will not work necessarily work for another. Throughout my entire day from 7:45 to 3:15 I am hyper aware of my environment in hopes of preventing and/or de-escalating behaviors. This is evident in the way I position my body, my tone of voice, how loud our smart board is, and the physical structure of my classroom. I focus on finding ways to motivate each individual student. For one student his reinforcement is taking a walk, another student likes to build with legos, while another one likes to write. I have to know these things to motivate my students, build relationships with them and to reinforce the positives throughout each day. After I know what my students are motivated by I need to implement reinforcement schedules. Again, this is based on individual needs and it could look different every day. One day I might reinforce positive behaviors every 30 minutes, but the next I might need to offer reinforcement every 5 minutes. A component to all of this is ensuring that each student has the opportunity to communicate in a way that makes sense to them. This could be verbally, through gestures, or through alternate/assistive communication devices. It's my job to find ways to meet each child where they are at. To be clear, consistent support, training and resources are fundamental to giving teachers the ability to create safe environments for all students in which they are able to thrive and learn.

Thank you for having me here today. It is an honor to hopefully be a part of reducing restraints.

Appendix



A picture inside a communication book. This helps for this particular child to identify how he is feeling, especially in moments of escalation. Once he identifies “I feel mad” we are able to turn to other pages and ask why, and what he wants.

Date: _____ Name of Person Observed: _____ ABC Analysis Observer: _____
Behavior(s): _____

Date	Time	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	Possible Function

I'm currently using A-B-C data (antecedent, behavior and consequence) data for a student who will reach these points of refusal and will last extended periods of time. This helps to me identify what is happening, before, during and after behaviors.



This has been my ticket to gathering accurate data. I've put clickers on lanyards and each color represents a child and or a behavior for that child. I write down the totals each day and every week I graph the data.

1/28	• 13	• 17P • 18E	• 7	• 8P • 16E	•
1/29	• 10	• 8P (1) • 11Pittsburgh	• 9	• 8P (1) • 11P • 10E	•
1/30	• 8	P • 15 E • 30	• 7	P • 0 E • 2	•
1/31	• 14	P • 7 E • 26	• 13	P • 11 E • 9	•
2/1	• 8	P • 7 E • 25	• 7	Absent	•
2/4	• 8	Absent	• 2	• 0	•
2/5	• B (100) 100 (100)	Absent	• 7	• 1P • 9E	•
2/6	• 1	• 10P • 9E	• 3	• 4P • 5E	•
2/7 (Sun)	• 10	• 10P • 28E	• 13	• 9P • 20E	•
2/8	• 19	• 20P • 17E	• 4	• 20P • 14E	•
2/11	Absent	Absent	• 4	• 2P • 4E	•
2/13	• 41	• 5P • 25E	• 10	• 12P • 13E	•
2/14 (half)	• 12	Absent • 11:15	• 3	• 1P • 0E	•
2/15 (half)	• 28	P • 22 E • 16	• 4	• 6P • 8E	•
	•	•	•	•	•

Clicker data. This is what I use to graph.

What work was completed? / How was behavior? / How much prompting was needed?

Date	Morning- AM	Morning- MG	Morning- AS	Morning- Sub

This data sheet is at each student's desk and staff is able to write down how their rotation went which helps the next staff member who will work with that child to see how much work was completed. If the student needed more prompts today. It could also say the student is working hard so it offers a place to compile data on specific times of day, subject matter, and staff to student dynamics.



Each student has an "I'm working for card" and they are able to choose what they are working for- a fidget toy, swing, legos, cars, etc. Some students need to earn four stars until their break while some need to earn 2 stars. It's based on their individual needs.