

Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast, the podcast for special educators who are looking for personal and professional development.

Christine Reeve: I'm your host, Dr. Christine Reeve. For more than 20 years, I've worn lots of hats in special education but my real love is helping special educators like you. This podcast will give you tips and ways to implement research-based practices in a practical way in your classroom to make your job easier and more effective.

Welcome back to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast. Hello. I am Christine Reeve. I am so glad to see you and excited that you are back for another episode this week. If you were listening to this at the time it's released, I hope you are having an amazing summer vacation and getting tons of rest and relaxation.

Today I want to start with a story. When I was working as a consultant to schools, most of it was before the internet was really as accessible as it is now. When I started, I think we might have had dial-up. For those of you who are younger, I won't bother to explain. You don't know what it was and you don't want to know. It was awful.

What that meant was that everyone was really so much more isolated than we are today. We relied on state and national conferences to share information more and books were even more critical. But books were even harder to really access because they were hard copies, they were expensive, and frankly, there weren't as many out there for the kinds of classrooms that we all work in, in part, because the buyer pool just wasn't that large so publishers didn't publish them that much.

One of the things that I realized was that often, I would work with one person in a small rural district who was the autism teacher or the teacher for kids with severe profound disabilities. Maybe he or she knew the teacher in the neighboring county or maybe they sent their kids to her and there wasn't even a program there, maybe they sent their kids out of their county. I developed really strong relationships with the people serving these roles in part because they just didn't have anyone else in their district who understood what they did all day.

Even in the larger districts where there were small groups of these teachers, there often was a coach who didn't have anyone at their level to network with. There was always someone who was feeling like they lived and worked on an island to some degree. Because of that, one of my biggest dreams has always been to create a place where special educators could come together to learn together and to learn from each other.

While you might say that Facebook provides that, it certainly does provide some level of connection far beyond what we used to have, but I wanted more. I wanted to be able to provide the training that I used to provide to school districts to teachers whose school districts weren't investing in the kind of training that our students staff needs.

You know those districts where teachers are required to sit through every district training but not a single one actually teaches anything about the students with significant special ed needs like the ones that we teach. I wanted to reach those educators in a way that they could have that training and that connection.

That is how the Special Educator Academy was born. I found the membership model that allowed me to offer training at what I think is a low enough cost to educators that even if their district wouldn't fund it, they could probably afford it on a monthly basis. I can share the same trainings I created for school districts in an online virtual format there. We have an online community so that all of those educators get to meet and network with each other at the same time.

Today, I want to share with you specifically what the Special Educator Academy offers to educators like you and how you can make use of it even if you think you don't have the time. Because remarkably, it doesn't take much time to get your money's worth from it. Let's get started and I'll share some secrets and some answers to some commonly asked questions about the academy. Plus, I'll let you know how you can get the most for your money in just 10 or 15 minutes, two or three times a week. Let's get started.

You can tell that I'm pretty passionate about the academy. It is truly a work of love and I'm always working to make it better. SEA began in 2017, and since that time, we've grown to have 6 full courses, more than 55-hour long workshops, 75 quick wins that are 15 minutes or less with tools that you get to use in your classroom the next day, 23 5-minute lightning training videos with a quick zap of information that are a huge challenge for me to keep them at that length, a social story bank and an IEP goal bank.

Plus, there's a weekly private podcast that downloads directly to your phone after your free trial is done plus access to all of the back episodes. All of that content is growing with more added every week, and it's all being curated over time into our SEA pathways because all of that content presents a challenge with how to organize it all.

Our pathways are a way to help you navigate all of that content. There's a way for you to ask a question or identify a problem and find the answer. If I work with students who have really basic skills like they need to learn to sit and attend and they can't work independently, there's a path for that. It has solutions for "I need a quick fix", and later I can come back and get more in-depth answers from that pathway.

Another example is the path for a teacher who's new or newer to an autism classroom or caseload. That pathway takes you through understanding the students with ASD and then leads you through the resources on the site to help you set up a classroom and use strategies to address the specific needs of those students as well as strategies that overlap with other populations.

If you have students who are oppositional or defiant or have emotional behavior disorders, we have a pathway for that. You can choose whether you want to deep dive into a workshop or a quick way to help you get started, and it will walk you through the resources with preventive strategies that you can implement in the classroom, tutorials on how to teach common replacement behaviors, methods for effectively responding when challenging behaviors occur, and strategies for how to take data including the tools to do it in your classroom.

Turning to another area that I know is always of need: how to train staff. This is an area that's always a big discussion for us. To address it, we developed a few different resources. We've got workshops about how we train staff, strategies for how to create opportunities for training staff when you have no meeting time with them, and training on working and building successful teams and leadership in the classroom.

But in addition, many of our quick wins for specific strategies like teaching students to use independent work systems or how to take ABC data, for example, are downloadable so you can download them to use to train your staff on your time outside of the academy. In addition, when you join the academy, you earn SEA points in your wallet to make purchases from the SEA treasure chest. Every time you renew, you earn more points.

You can use your points to download videos to keep forever to use for your own training or training your staff. You can also use them to download small printable resources from my store, like token boards or punch cards or file folders. Oh, and after you've been with us for a couple months, you also get a discount in my store, and an even bigger discount, like for 45% off when there's a sale. There's that too.

Obviously, there are tons of stuff inside the academy. In addition to the stuff though, we have an on-site community for networking and also for our study groups where we go through our courses live on a regular basis. That gives us a chance to really dive into the topics, have live questions and answers, and discussions around the course materials with the questions that the members bring.

We also have a free private face group. It started during the pandemic because we needed to have things where people were. We still use our on-site community too because it's just a whole lot easier to organize and it's a little bit private, more private and safe, and you choose what works for you.

I know that one of the concerns and the questions that I hear a lot is people feeling that they don't have time to make use of the academy, but really, it doesn't take a lot of time to make it work for you. It's all designed to be used in very small doses and it doesn't take a lot to make it worth it.

An annual membership costs about the same as attending one professional conference and that's for access to everything that you get for an entire 12 months. It doesn't take much time to use what we have. You can hop on the site to download a video on how to teach independent work systems to show to a new aid to train them in how to run your work centers on Wednesday.

On Thursday, you might grab a quick win printout that has work tasks with materials and directions to make tasks for the aid to make when a student is absent. Then on Monday, you can listen to a podcast that came out on Saturday on your way to work, and maybe that led you to go download a check-in checkout form that you could use in your classroom.

On Tuesday, you hopped on the site to look for ideas for a communication goal in the IEP goal bank for one of your students. Next weekend, you wanted to know more about how to teach

communication so you set aside an hour to watch two of the modules of the building communication in the classroom course on Saturday for a deeper dive.

Looking for ways to make your days go more smoothly and spend less time teaching and less time prepping? We got you covered there too. We have tons of tools to help make your classroom run more efficiently with less time, and lots of encouraging podcasts and ideas about why that can help your students.

For instance, grab a quick win on how checklists can help your classroom run more smoothly and start to implement them with the example from independent work this week. Once that's going well, check out a quick win on creating a classroom vision with your staff. Work on that one over the next couple weeks and see if that helps your staff work together more harmoniously.

Then tweak your zoning plan with help of the zoning sheets and the cheat sheets from the setting up classrooms manual and the course and feedback in the community to work and get more of the classroom load carried by your aides so it's not just you who's following through on everything. It really doesn't take much time to make use of the academy as a tool to help you feel more confident, to have tools at your fingertips to be better prepared for your job, and to even save you time in your job.

If you can't find something that you need or that you're looking for, hop in the community or the Facebook group and ask because we're always here to help. Those are just some of the ways that the academy can help you feel more confident in your job, feel more connected with the professionals who understand what you do, and develop a professional development community for learning and growing in your field. It can all be done in short periods of time that will allow you to spend less time on your job rather than more.

All of our training is developed by me and is exactly the training that I provide to school districts across the country designed specifically for an online format. Who knew that developing and teaching online courses with graduate students for 10 years, in addition to my classroom consultation, would be a skill that would come in really handy for this? We're always innovating and developing within the academy to make it what the members want it and need it to be.

In addition to the training being meaningful, it's critical to me that it's relevant and meaningful in your classroom. I've been in your classrooms. I know what they are like, and the training I develop is designed to meet the needs of your students in a practical way. If it's not, I want the members to tell me and we'll figure out a way to make it work. That's why you aren't on your own when you join, I'm here in the community for support.

I am also committed to you having the tools to implement the training when you complete it, so typically if there are tools that are needed to complete it, like forms or data sheets, they're included in the training itself. Many people join thinking that SEA is an extension of my TPT store, and there is some overlap.

Sometimes I offer printables for free as a bonus to see they are going into my store. Usually they're ones that I developed as part of a training, but the academy is not intended to be a

printable type of membership, it's primarily a training and community site with some printables to support the implementation of what you're learning through the training.

Finally, when you take a workshop or a course, you can download a certificate of completion with the objectives and my credentials to take to your district. I can't guarantee that they will give you CEUs, but it is the same information that I give to districts when I do professional development for them.

Those are just some of the exciting things that are going on in the academy. Right now we're in the midst of our study groups and it's an exciting time to come on board. You can come give SEA a try with a free seven-day trial at specialeducatoracademy.com. That will get you almost everything we have to offer. Some printables aren't available until after your trial is complete and you won't have the private podcast download until after the trial, but you can listen on the site. The store discount won't kick in until you've been with us for a couple months.

If you're interested in other ways of funding a membership, we have had members who got funding through a DonorsChoose grant, we've had a number of members whose district purchased them a membership, and districts that are wishing to purchase multiple memberships are welcome to contact me and we can help them get that set up at a discount.

I'll make sure I put our district sales page in the show notes and anyone is always welcome to email me at chris@specialeducatoracademy.com with questions or purchase orders. I hope you'll consider if a SEA membership is something that can help you this coming year. I think it's helped a number of teachers in these last few years, including as we pivoted sharply when COVID started and we started a whole section of training on remote learning overnight.

I love what one member said about the academy, "Join, it's good for the soul." Thanks so much for joining me this week. I will be back next week with another new episode and I hope to see you then. Until then, have an amazing week.