

# Technical Assistance to Alaskans

Olivia Yancey, Executive Director

John Barrowman, Autism Education Specialist

Lyon Johnson, Emotional Disabilities Education Specialist

Meriah Cory, Multiple Disabilities Education Specialist



*Welcome*



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

[www.sesa.org](http://www.sesa.org)



# Agenda

## Goal 1:

SESA Mission & Overview

## Goal 2:

SESA Programs

## Goal 3:

Observations & Impact

## Goal 4:

Feedback for SESA

## Goal 5:

Library, Events, 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, vision impairment, emotional disabilities and multiple disabilities. (Alaska Statute 14.30.600)

In addition, SESA operates three grants:

**Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC)**

**Alaska Deafblind 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

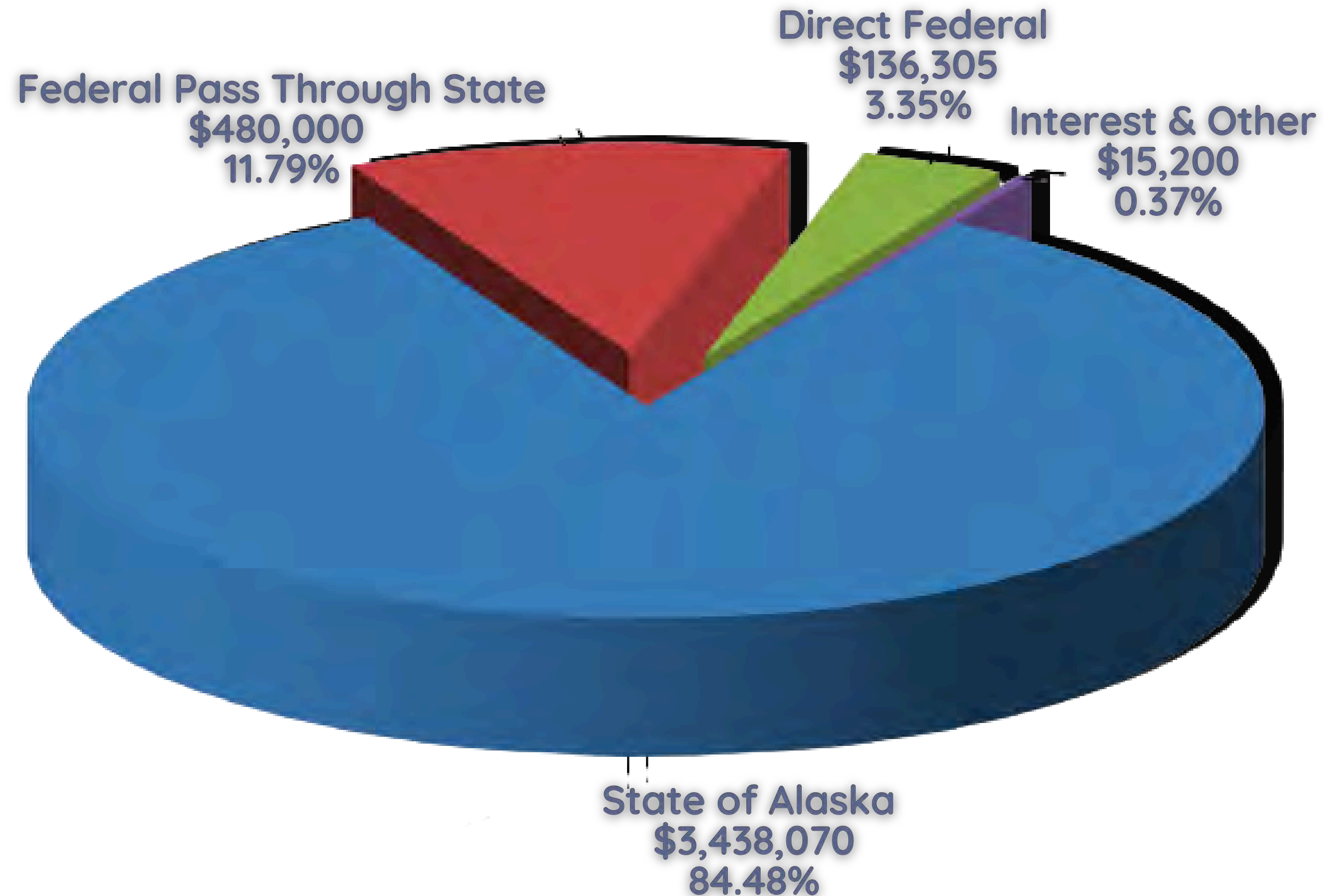
Michaela Kolerok

Heather Wheeler, **Vice President**



# Funding for SESA

Revenues by Source FY 2025 Budget



# Since August 2024

SESA has provided technical assistance to over **19,016 Alaskans**.

SESA programs have offered over **66 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 **67%** of these trainings were conducted via distance delivery (e.g., Zoom).

SESA Low Incidence Disability Programs have offered and provided support to **516 students** and their school teams.

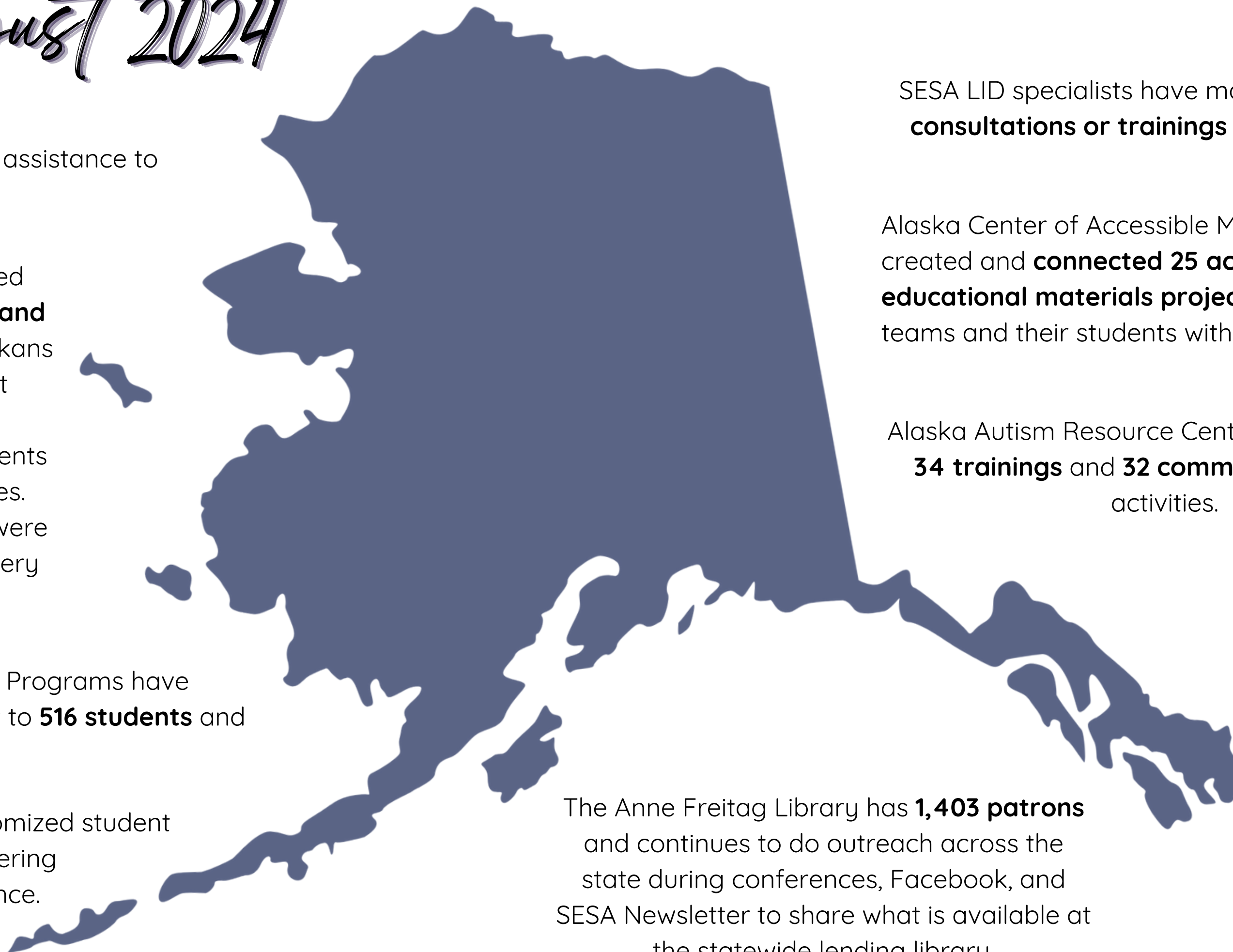
SESA has produced **334** customized student or patron focused reports offering recommendations and guidance.

SESA LID specialists have made **392 onsite consultations or trainings** for Alaskans.

Alaska Center of Accessible Materials has created and **connected 25 accessible educational materials projects** for school teams and their students with print disabilities.

Alaska Autism Resource Center has conducted **34 trainings** and **32 community outreach** activities.

The Anne Freitag Library has **1,403 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.



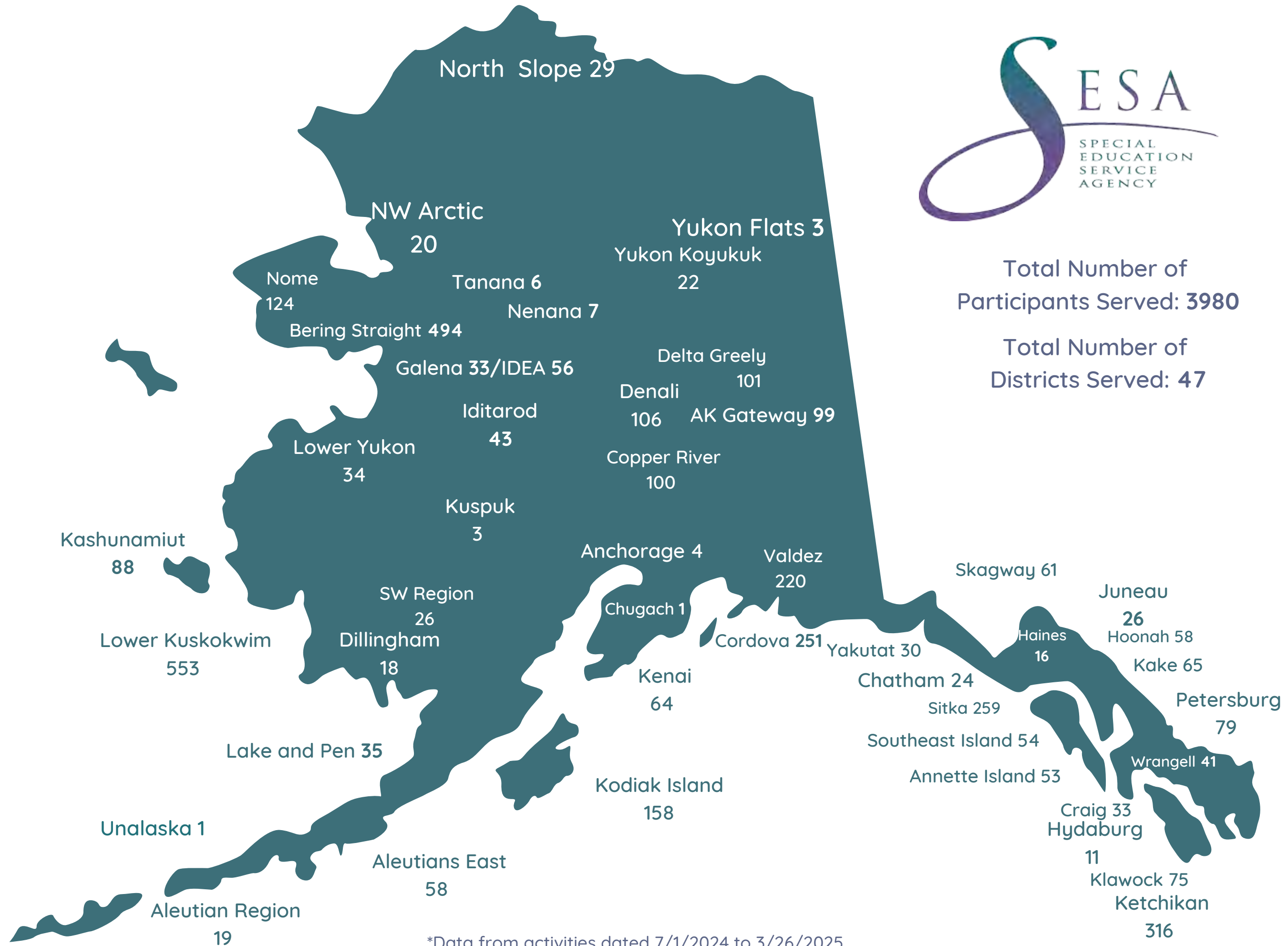


# LID Participants Across Districts FY25\*



Total Number of  
Participants Served: **3980**

Total Number of  
Districts Served: **47**



\*Data from activities dated 7/1/2024 to 3/26/2025





**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.





# Feedback - LID Autism Program

## Observations

- Need for more staff/experienced staff
- Turnover making it hard to build internal capacity
- Teachers pulled to cover other tasks reducing supervision of paraprofessionals
- Increasing Autism Rates



## Training

- Behavior Strategies
- Communication Tools/AAC
- Visual Supports
- IEP Development
- Reducing Self-Injury



## Impact

- Teams with less turnover can buy-in to intervention and see progress
- Specialists are ready to support upon request





# 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





# Feedback - LID Emotional Disabilities Program

## Observations

- Fewer certified special education teachers
- Less retention of certified special education staff
- Less capacity for schools to provide support to paraprofessionals
- Pandemic-era carry-over effects--students struggling in school (academic, social skills, and self-regulation deficits)



## Training

- Teaching Students Emotional Regulation Skills.
- Function-Aligned Strategies: What are the choices out there?
- Teaching Young Learners Emotional Regulation Skills.
- Developing and Implementing Functional Behavioral Assessments and Function-based Behavior Intervention Plans



## Impact

- Training nearly 300 educators in supporting and teaching self-regulation strategies, classroom-based positive behavior supports, and developing function-based behavior interventions.
- Developed instructed training on function-based behavior assessments and interventions, resulting in a 1-hour college credit course for 26 certificated staff and 14 hours of NASW continuing education hours for five school social workers.







**Angel Black**  
VI/O&M Specialist



**Abby Steer**  
DHH 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.





# Feedback - LID Vision Impairment Program

## Observations

- Lack of special education staffing
- Paraprofessionals often leading student's educational programming (including Braille and O&M)
- A misunderstanding of Orientation and Mobility and the importance it plays in the life of individuals with vision loss.



## Training

- Classroom environmental changes necessary for students with low vision
- Using hand-under-hand vs. hand-over-hand techniques
- The importance of directional and positional cues for O&M students
- Braille instruction
- Expanded Core Curriculum
- Low Vision 101



## Impact

- SESA specialists provide the consistent support when the team is ready to implement strategies.
- The identification of students with low vision especially those with multiple disabilities.
- To improve the student's quality of life, independence, and success by enhancing their ability to navigate their environment and participate in daily activities.





# Feedback: LID Deaf & Hard of Hearing Program

## Observations

- Need for common language defining communication modes and education philosophy
- Staff need time for training on sensory loss and impact.
- Student need supports related to access, language development and community engagement.



## Training

- K-12 Students Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing: The Educational Impact



## Impact

- Increase awareness of strategies and resources to general education curriculum





**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 delivery to create, maintain, and enhance specific programs that meet the needs of students with multiple disabilities.





# Feedback - LID Multiple Disabilities Team

## Observations

- Increasing need for a variety of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for students
- Increasing need for training on how to use AAC
- Increasing need for use of curriculum and what is available



## Training

- AAC: Introduction, Modeling, Literacy, Set up/Support
- Transition Planning
- Paraprofessional Training
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Adapted Literacy Curriculum
- Classroom Management



## Impact

- Increase local capacity to teach students who have multiple disabilities with significant communication needs





**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.



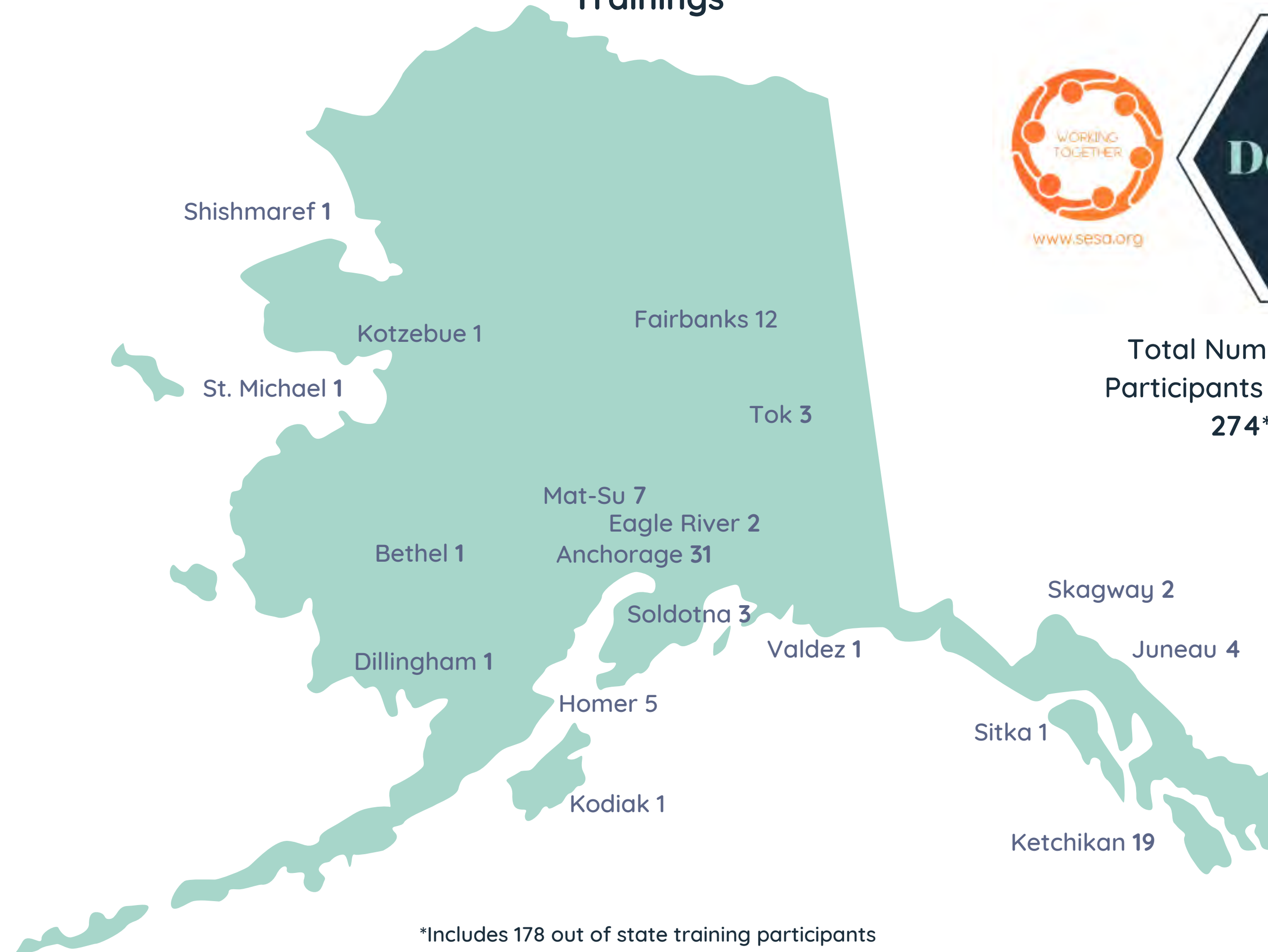


# Participants Served by Location Trainings



**Alaska  
Deafblind  
Project**

Total Number of  
Participants Served:  
**274\***



\*Includes 178 out of state training participants

# Observation of Needs

## Observations

- Increase in Infant Learning Program Referrals
- More trainings being requested
- Increase in participant numbers in and outside of Alaska for webinars.



## Training

- Deafblind Etiquette Training for School Districts
- Specific DB Student Training for School Sites
- Understanding Deafblindness



## Impact

- Improved communication
- Higher quality of educational programming
- Greater student independence
- Increased social inclusion with higher expectations







**Meriah Cory**  
Grant Coordinator



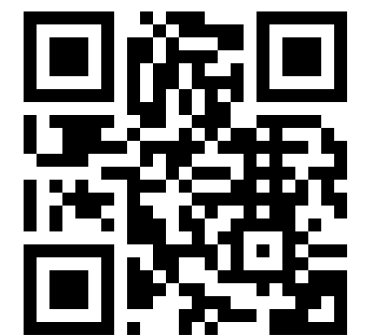
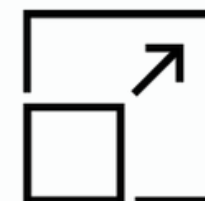
**Samantha Weiland**  
AKCAM Specialist

# 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





Alaska Center for Accessible Materials

**FY25 YTD**  
Total Number of  
Participants served:  
**478**



Outreach

Consultation

Materials

Trainings



# Observation of Needs

## Observations

- Need for educating sites what is a print disability and the accessible materials that are available.
- Increased need for material conversion: large print and braille.
- Increased need for assistive technology to help support access.



## Training

- What is a Print Disability?
- Support for Students with Print Disabilities
- Defining and Supporting Print Access
- Introduction to Print Disabilities & Accessible Education Materials
- Introduction to Bookshare & Access to Resources
- Modeling of assistive technology tools



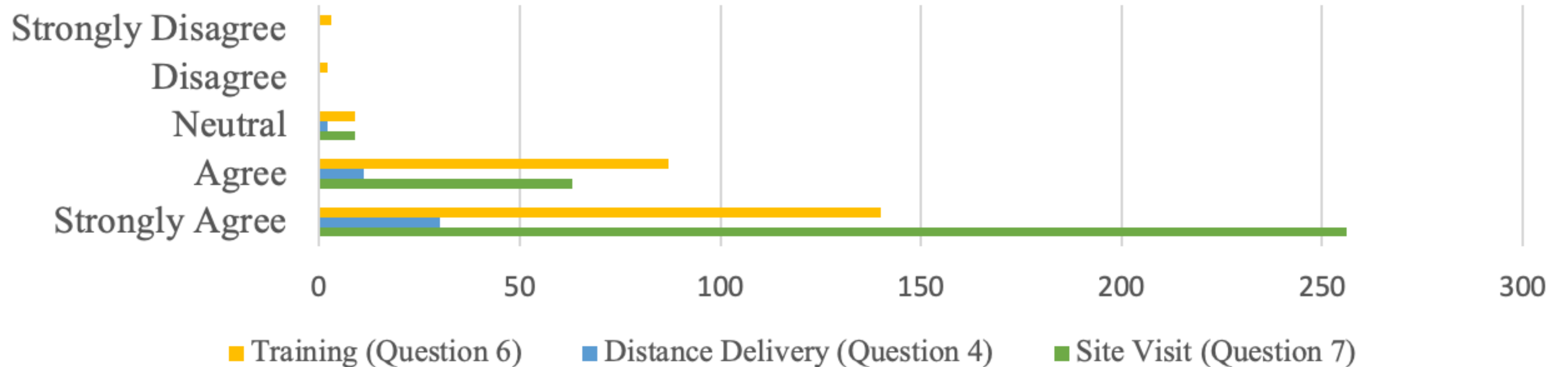
## Impact

- Ensure that ALL students are able to access educational materials
- Sites develop more mindful practices when selecting curriculum to ensure the accessibility to all students.



# LID Satisfaction Survey Responses

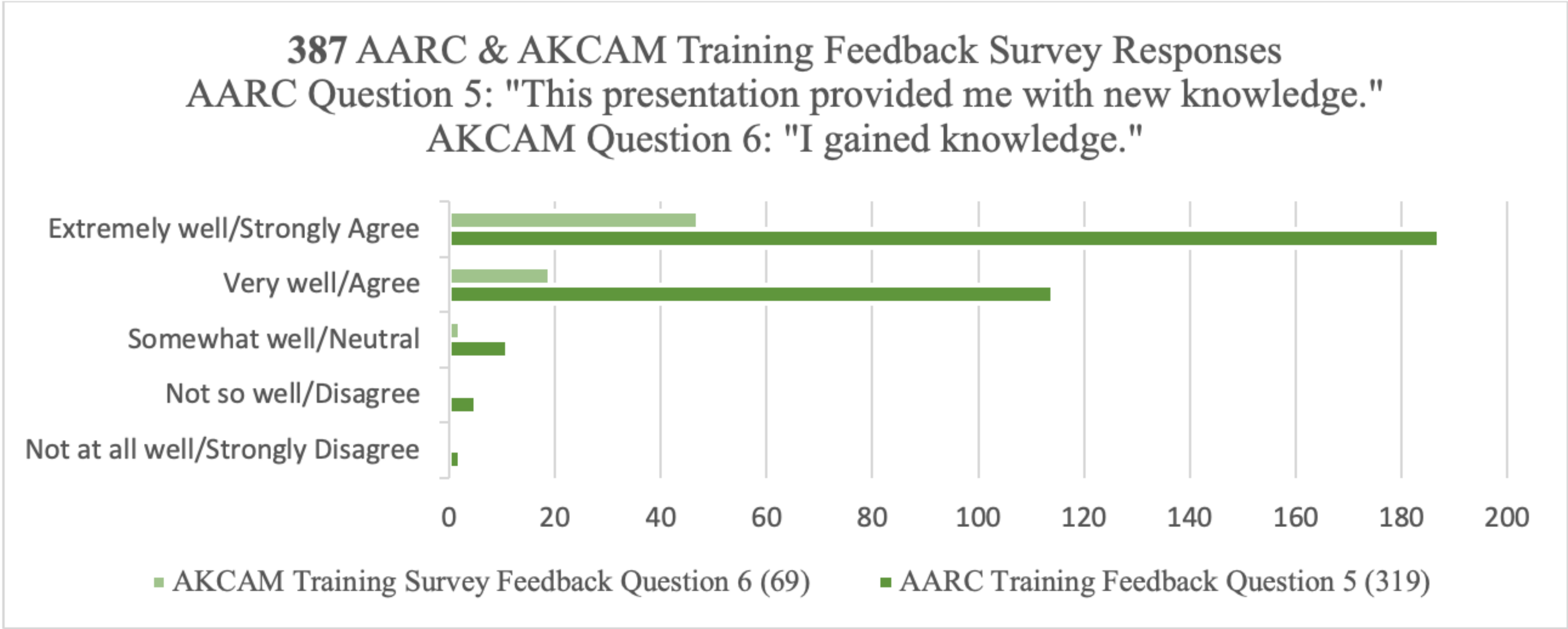
612 LID Satisfaction Survey Responses  
07/01/24 - 03/27/25  
"I gained knowledge..."



Satisfaction Survey Results demonstrated that **95.91 %** of respondents reported gaining knowledge about a disability and how to implement a strategy as a result of the technical assistance received this school year. Out of 328 Completed LID Site Visit Surveys, **82.41%** requested on-site services as their preferred mode of technical assistance.



# AARC & AKCAM Training Feedback Survey Responses



Satisfaction Survey Results demonstrated that **94.48%** of respondents reported gaining knowledge about a disability during a training received from a SESA specialist this school year.



# Since August 2024

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.

FY25 Site Visit Survey

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

FY25 AKCAM Distance Delivery



# 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.



Meet Sylvia. Sylvia is a paraprofessional in rural and remote Alaska. Her school doesn't have an in-person SPED Teacher, so Sylvia was there to coordinate and make sure there was follow-through on SESA's recommendations. Sylvia asked SESA for support in helping her students learn to do some basic skills. After working with a Multiple Disabilities specialist and following the recommendations provided, Sylvia's student is able to take off his coat, put on his apron, and now uses a 4-button voice output device. Way to go!



# The Alaska Deafblind Project

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



An AKDBP Specialist walks behind a student. They have been working on the diagonal white cane technique. The student is learning to walk on the right side of the hallway.



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





# The Alaska Autism Resource Center

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



The AARC gives trainings to different groups across the state. This one was in Juneau for the staff of the Early Learning Center.



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.



**Special Olympics**  
Alaska



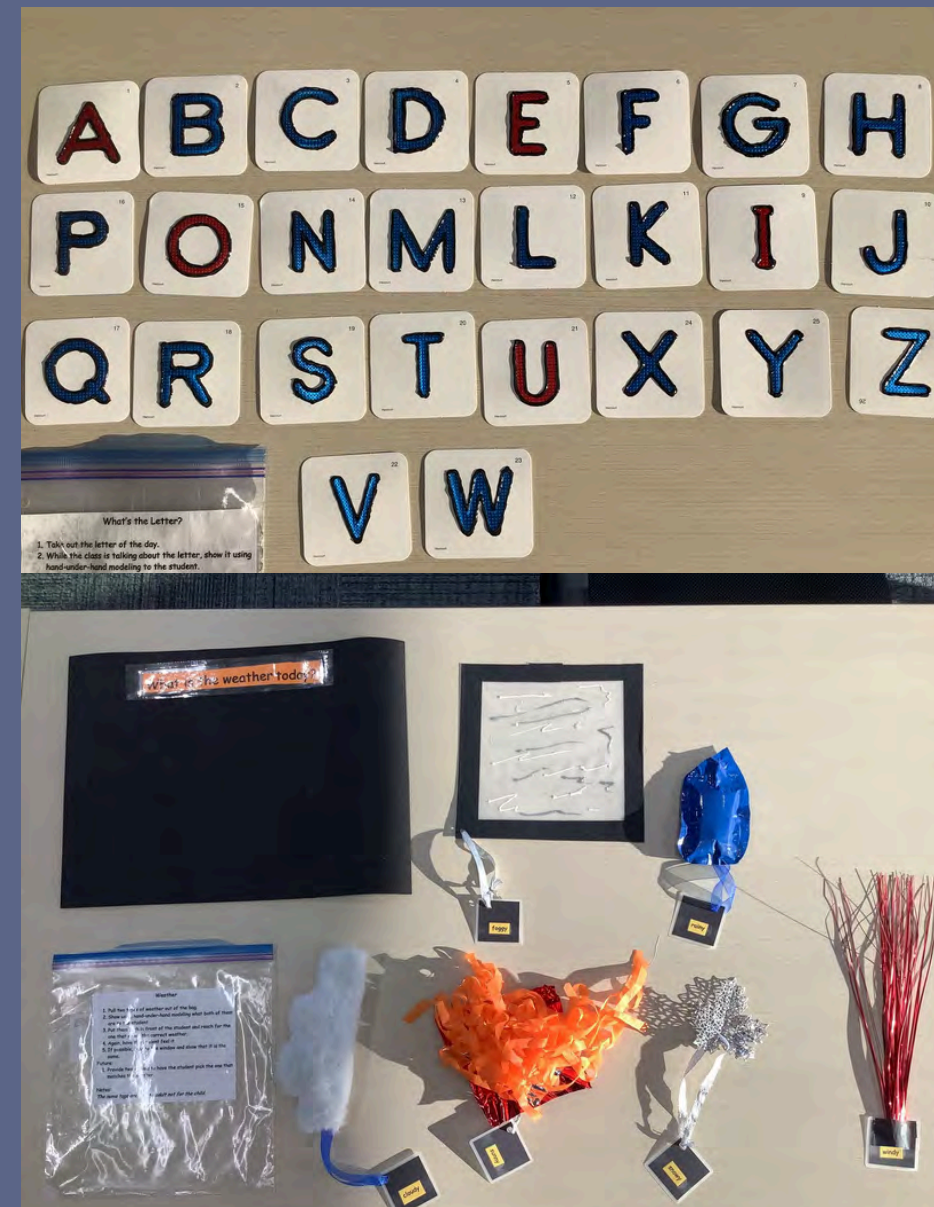
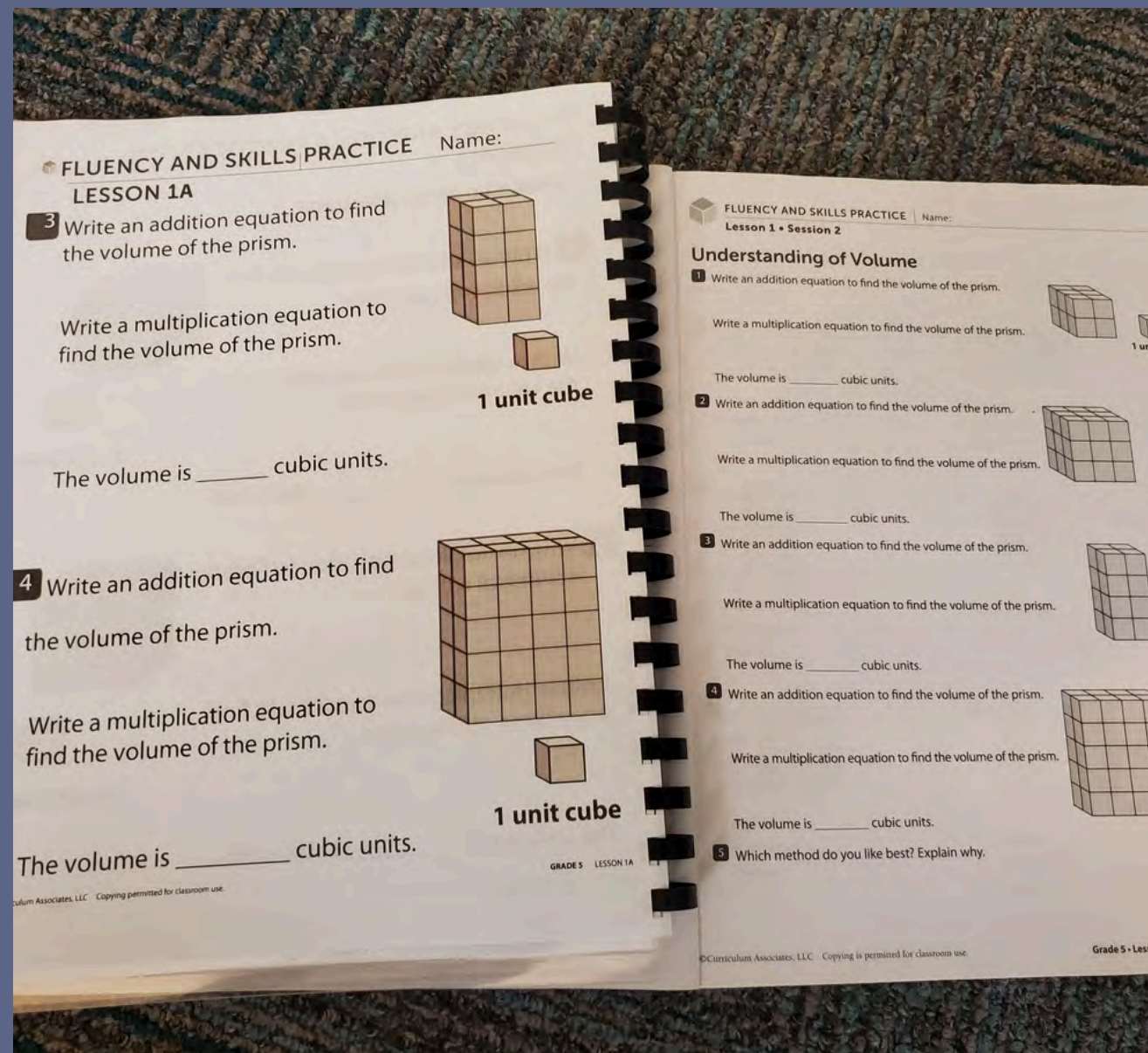


# The Alaska Center For Accessible Materials

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.

An AKCAM specialist used puffy paint to outline letters and everyday items to represent weather conditions for a tactile calendar. Both will allow a student to participate in calendar time with the rest of their class

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.





# Fostering Community

We couldn't do it alone.  
Thanks to partnerships, sponsorships, and grants, SESA is better able to serve Alaskans.

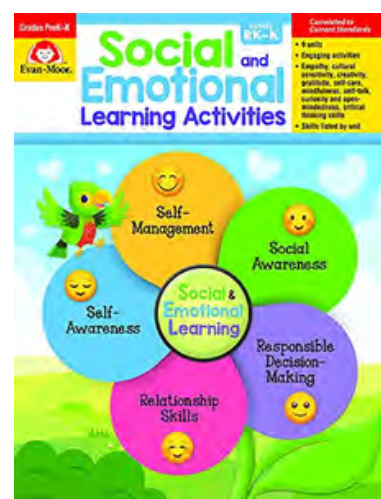




# The Anne Freitag Library



## Books



## Sensory Materials



## Toys & Games



## Accessible Reading Materials





## Autism Activities for Children with Autism



## Emotional Disabilities Children and Grieving

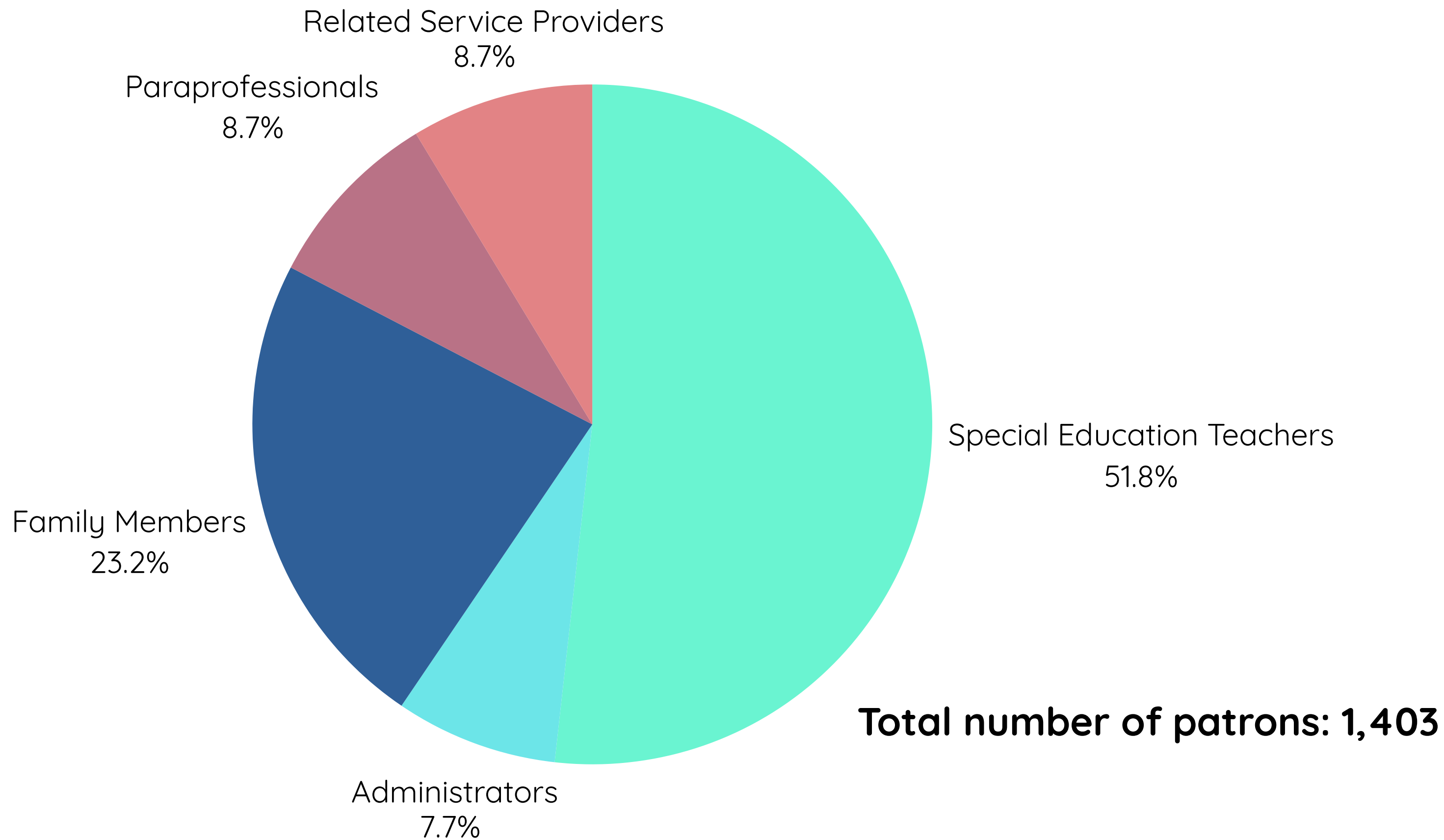
## Multiple Disabilities Characters Who Are Non-Verbal



## Vision Impairment Braille Books for Beginning Readers

## Deafblind Project Deafblind Communication







# Partners of The Anne Freitag Library

## Rasmuson Foundation

\$15,000 in 2023



## Carr Foundation

\$5,000 in 2024



## Walmart Spark Good

\$2,500 in 2024



## American Printing House for the Blind

\$59,754.05 in 2025 \*quota funds



# SESA Hosted Webinar Speakers



Lara Rondberg  
Benetech



Ann Meyer  
Attainment Company



Robbin Keating Clark  
Utah School for  
the Deaf and Blind



Dr. Yue-Ting Siu  
Northwest Center for  
Assistive Technology Training



Dr. Susan Bashinski  
Missouri Western  
State University



Michele Hart  
Amplify Education, Inc.



Leslie Romeo  
Northwest Center for  
Assistive Technology Training



Dr. Amy Parker  
Portland State University



Ilse Willems  
Perkins School  
for the Blind



# Upcoming Events

The AARC will moderate a FREE Webinar:  
**Understanding Experiences of Autistic Parents.**

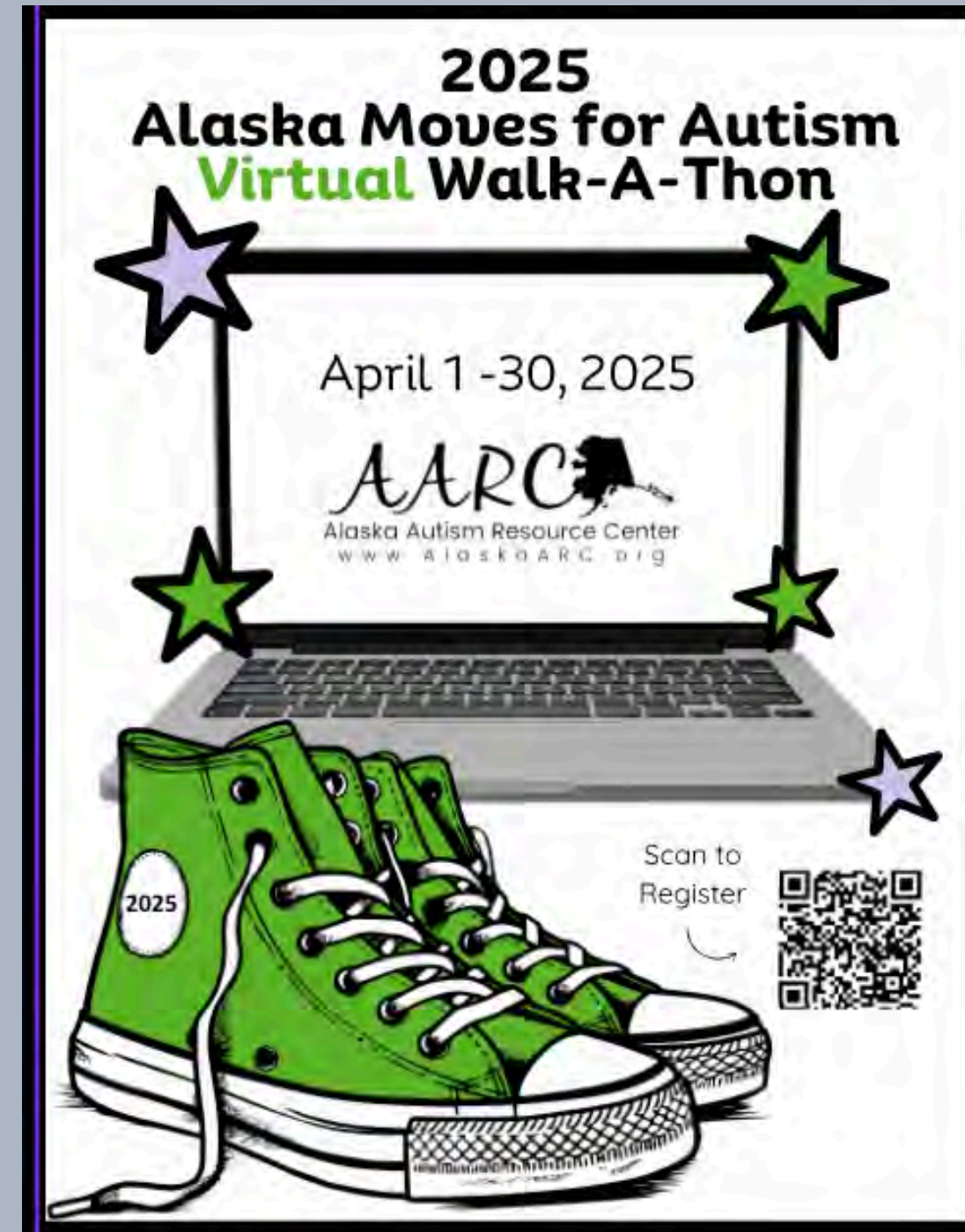
Dr. Sam Brandsen, a researcher and a parent with autism, will outline common experiences of parents with autism. He will also be offering suggestions for clinicians and educators who want to effectively interact and learn from parents with autism.

Today  
**April 2, 2025**  
12 pm to 2 pm



**Register Now!**

# Upcoming Events



Register at [www.alaskaarc.org](http://www.alaskaarc.org)





# Connect With Us

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(907) 334-1300

Business Hours:  
Monday - Friday  
8:00am - 4:30pm

[sesa@sesa.org](mailto:sesa@sesa.org)



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