

MEET AET VOLUNTEER

Laura Doto, MA, ET/P



Level of AET membership:

Professional (ET/P)

Type and location of practice: (*City, State*)

I have a very small private practice -- max of 2 students/semester for college and professional students and adults. I work with private students in person and virtually. Mostly, I am a full-time learning specialist at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, working with high school students.

Leadership roles held in AET:

Currently, I am on the Member & Public Information committee as an AET representative to the NJCLD (National Joint Committee for Learning Disabilities) and serve on the Annual Conference committee as a proposal reader.

In the past, I have enjoyed getting to know so many folks on the Programs Committee (2014-2018) and I chaired our annual Conference in 2016. I helped to organize our Chicago area workshops, pre-pandemic. -- Currently, we're reorganizing around a Chicago area workshop, which I am excited to coordinate with my Chicago area study group partners. The date will be June 19, 2026.

What brought you to educational therapy?

In graduate school, I worked with college students as a writing tutor. Upon finishing my MA, I was invited to work in the Student Counseling and Resource Service at the University of Chicago. It was there that I was introduced to educational therapy -- what I was doing and didn't even know it! Once invited to Nan's living room, I was hooked. I had found my tribe and haven't looked back. I love working with students of any age to explore and leverage the inextricable link between emotions and learning.

Areas of expertise:

Making sense of individuals' cognitive profiles -- particularly adolescents and adults -- as they relate to their unique experiences and their academic and professional goals. "Who are you as a learner?" is my go-to question, followed quickly by "What are your goals?" I've been an executive function coach for individuals with ADHD and various learning disabilities since before "coaching" was the catchphrase. I also enjoy supporting students with specific writing tasks, credentialing exams, and reading with a focus on leveraging assistive technology.

How long have you been an educational therapist?

I attended my first study group in 1998 in Nan Freund's living room. In 2002 I received my ET/P status, with a letter from Alice Pulliam congratulating me.

What is the best career advice you can give to new ETs?

Trust your gut then back it up with research. Approach every client and collaborator with curiosity.

Describe a challenge you have faced as an educational therapist:

One challenge that repeats itself as I first engage with students and often parents is to lower their guard sufficiently to provide honest answers to questions that might prompt embarrassment or defensiveness. I often use the phrase, "If I were a fly on the wall watching and listening, what would I see or hear from you?" I then explicitly state that there is no right or wrong answer and I will not judge. The more honest a response, the more diagnostic it becomes, and it provides an opportunity to explore vulnerabilities -- both mine and the student's.

Describe a highlight of your educational therapy career:

Reconnecting via LinkedIn with former students and witnessing their successes.

How have you benefited from your membership in AET?

One benefit I value most is the camaraderie with fellow ETs and the allied professionals who observe and understand the complexities of our work -- without needing to give them a whole "lesson" on the host of neurodiversities that exist within our profession.

Hobbies/Leisure Activities:

I do love to sing, and I tag along with my husband's classic rock cover band as he plays out. Otherwise, I'm up for anything -- just invite me!

Anything else you want to add?

The ethical dimensions of our ET practice are critical to our professionalism. There's always something to consider thanks to the innovative and iterative nature of education. What's important to keep in mind is that the skills and techniques that have worked over time will still work, but the presentation may require refreshing and re-imagining for a new generation of learners.

