

MEET AET VOLUNTEER

Jessica Gentry, ET/P, BCHHP



Level of AET membership:

Professional

Type and location of practice:

Virtual/in-person, San Diego, CA

AET Committee(s) - including any leadership roles - in which you are/have been involved:

- San Diego Study Group
- Membership Committee
- 2e Committee
- Volunteer for Annual Conference

How long have you been an educational therapist?

I've been a member of AET since 2020.

What brought you to educational therapy?

I started teaching at the Frostig Center and then transitioned into public schools as an ed specialist, which had me questioning all of my life decisions. I started working at the K&M Center in Santa Monica and learned all about educational therapy. I realized there could be a place for me in education that wouldn't burn me out and appropriately challenge me while capitalizing on some of my talents.

Areas of expertise:

I have done many trainings and re-trainings or advanced trainings in certain research-based remediations, but I tend to attract students who need support in math or the sciences, specifically those involving a lot of math.

Hobbies/Leisure Activities:

Walking my dog, Eddie Munster, teaching Lagree classes, orienteering, making music playlists, reading or listening to biographies/nonfiction, and thrifting/estate sales (I love guessing what people were like based on their belongings).

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

I feel lucky that I started in a center to ask for support, be monitored, and watch how others handled situations. One of the best teachers is experience. It's essential to remain a constant curious learner yourself, and when you are with your students, my best advice is to be very present with them. They can tell when you zone out or are not staying in a zone of support for them. Be genuine; you must find something you truly love about them because they can sense that. They may be challenging at times, but you are the expert, and it is a journey you are taking together.

Describe a challenge you have faced as an educational therapist:

My number one challenge is scheduling, though I don't suspect that is what this question is asking. However, a challenge I am cognizant of is collaborating with the students' other team members and allied professionals. Solutions can be complex or straightforward, but this past year, I realized some teachers could not do the math they were teaching. It was challenging to figure out how to support the student and the teacher without appearing condescending. Communication and patience are huge.

Describe a highlight of your educational therapy career:

I get to do research with a team at Stanford for Dr. Jo Boaler as we explore equitable instruction in math(s). While I sometimes wondered how I got so lucky to be part of this group, part of it is because I get to help represent the diverse learner perspective in the conversation.

I also got to tour the world with an A-list singer one summer when she hired me to work with her family while she performed. That was fun!

How have you benefited from your membership in AET?

AET holds me accountable for what I believe is the foundation of educational therapy. There are audits on professional development, participation, and review of the ethics agreements. Marci Peterson, who supervised me during the ET/P process, helped me get involved in various committees, and that helped me feel connected and supported as I figured out how to create my practice. I enjoy attending board meetings and hearing the different perspectives and the hard work people put into this organization. With other professional memberships, you can pay and say you belong, but AET is best if you participate because there is a community to be found that way. The community will also help you do your best for yourself and your clients.

Anything else you want to add?

I would just like to thank Marci Dann and Ashley Shapiro, who were amazing teachers while I was at CSUN. I also want to thank Carolyn Patterson for helping me with my internship and Marci Peterson for helping me with my professional-level membership. I still feel like I'm learning and have appreciated all the different views, lessons, and ways to be effective in this role. But above and beyond, just joining and doing something in AET that helps you build community and learn is so valuable!

