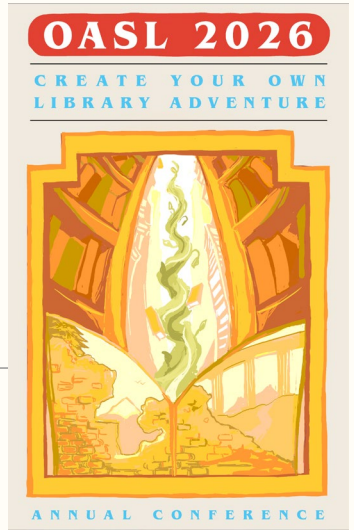
Book Joy for Neurodivergent Readers

Connecting with youth who experience books in a unique way

Nancy Roop

nancyroop.com/resources



Agenda

- Neurodiversity
- Co-regulation Supports Self-regulation
- 5 Tips for a Successful School Year
  - Best Practices
  - Differentiated Instruction
  - Neurodivergent Readers
- Take aways *and some glimmers!*

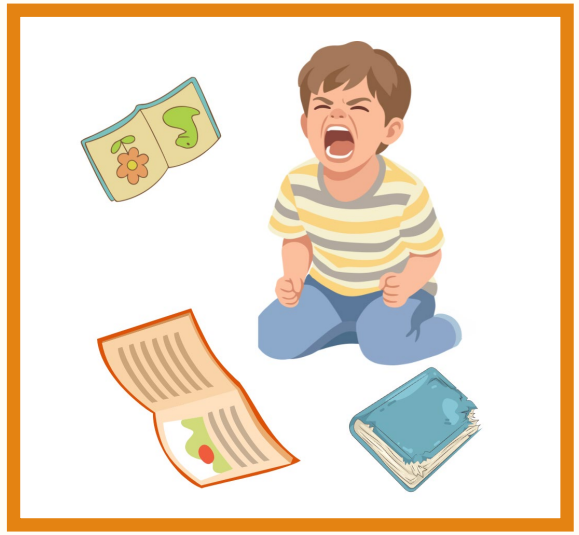
Challenges

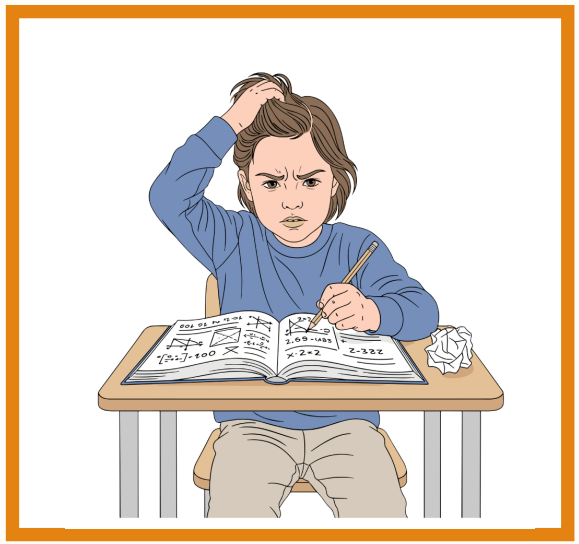
Student Behavior

Access to Curriculum

Engaging Struggling Readers

Creating Book Joy





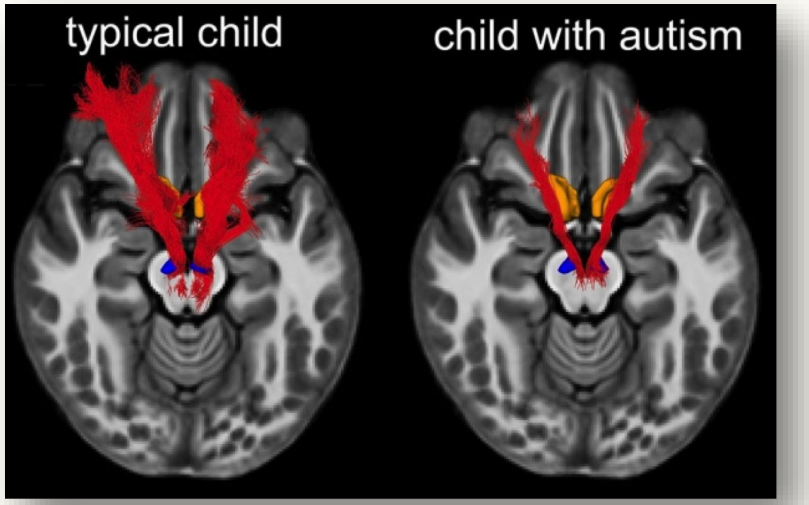
Neurodiversity: Why it Matters to the School Library

- Presume competence
- Promote autonomy
- Respect all communication styles
- Strength’s base approach
- Tailer supports to individual needs

Language Delays and Comprehension

"It is perhaps not surprising that children with poor speech and language have problems with literacy."

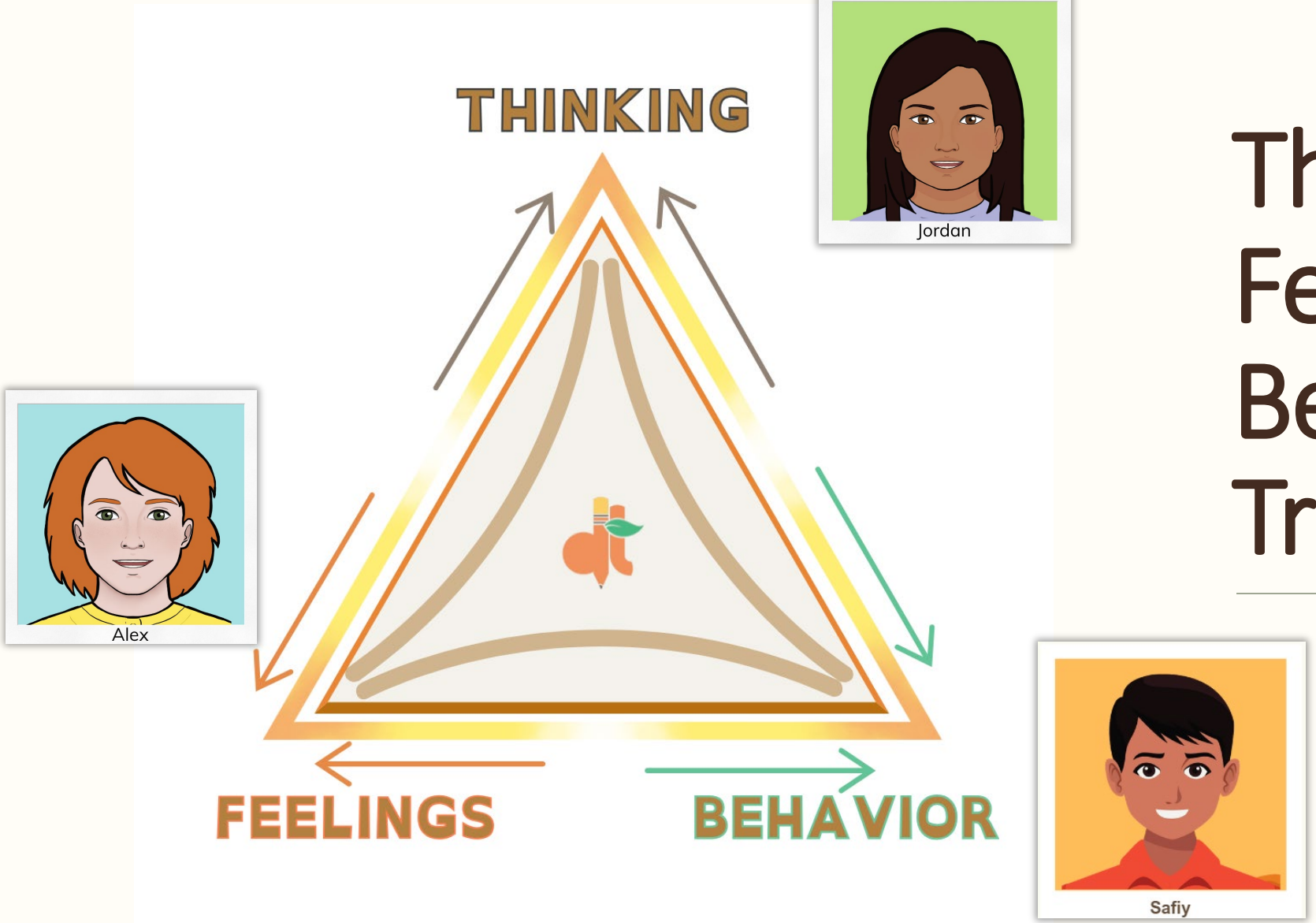
Nation et al 2004



Most neurodivergent youth have language differences:

Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, PTSD, CPTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, Anxiety disorders, Other Learning Disabilities

Thinking, Feelings, Behavior Triad



developmental texts

PARA TO PARA

Nancy Roop

Author Publisher

Developmental Texts

Paraeducator Coach and Trainer

Para to Para

Special Education Substitute Teacher

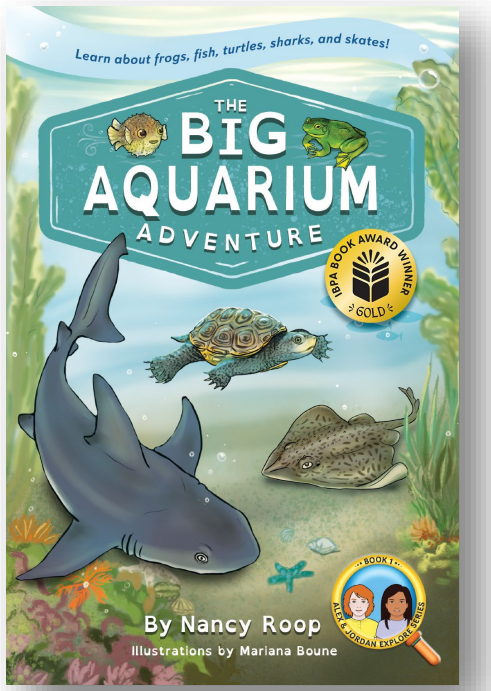
Former Paraeducator

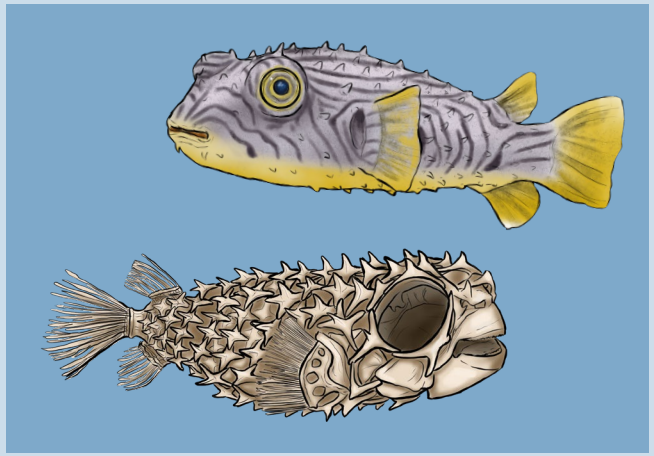
Education

BA in Integrative Studies,

Oakland University

developmental texts





Nancy Roop
Author

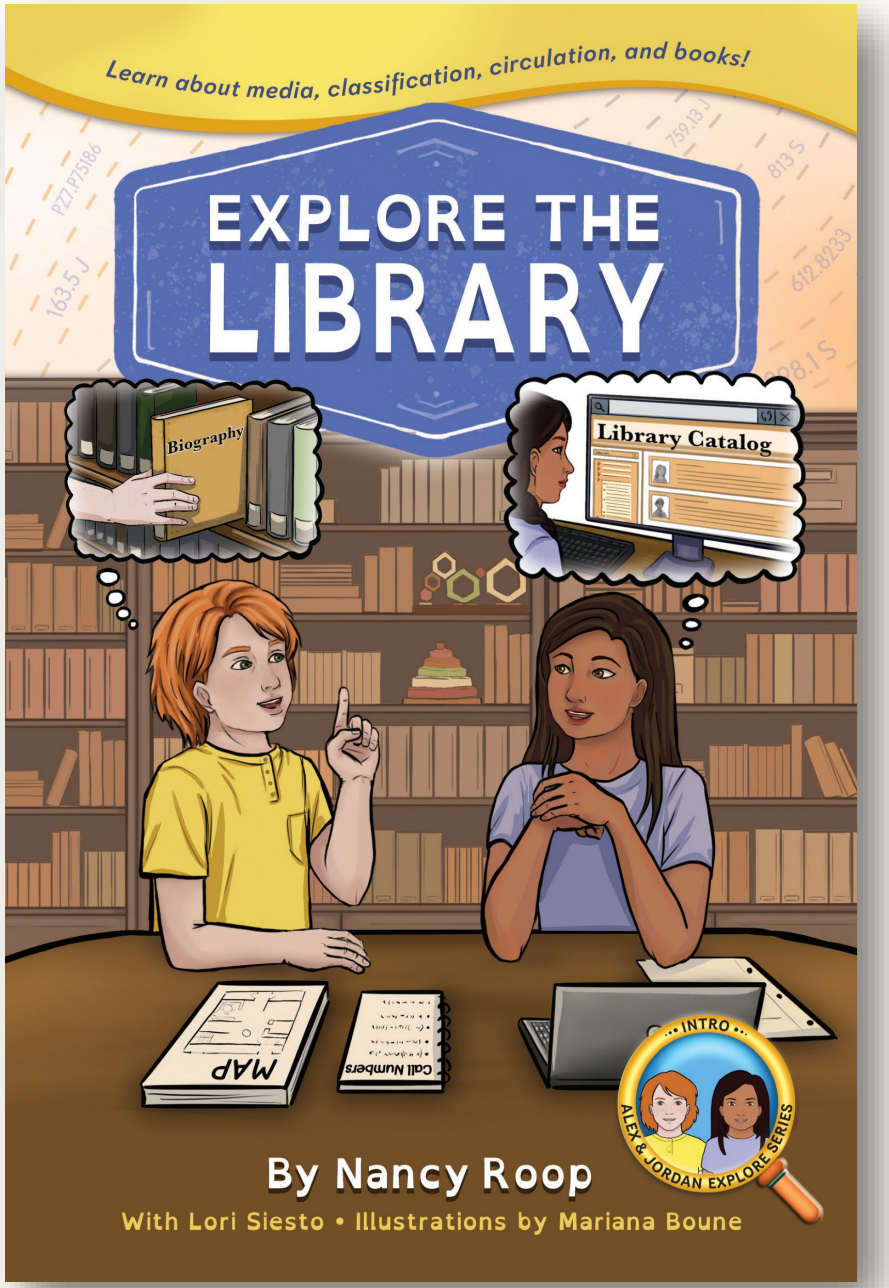
Evidence-based comprehension strategies

Builds background knowledge

Beautiful illustrations

Designed for neurodivergent readers

Real, relatable, and relevant!



***The Big Aquarium Adventure* en Espanol!**

Coming in 2027

Explore the Library

Learn about media, classification, circulation, and books!

Resources

Neurodiversity Affirming Schools

Emily Kircher Morris
Amanda Morin

The Writing Revolution 2.0

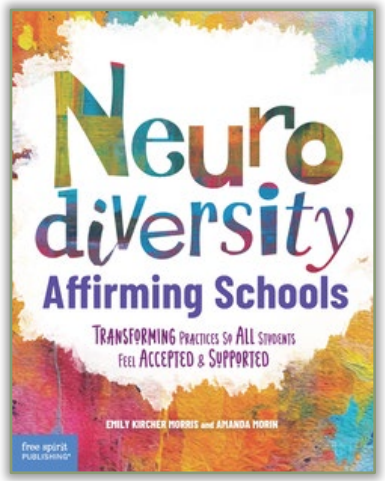
Janet C. Hoffman
Natalie Wexler

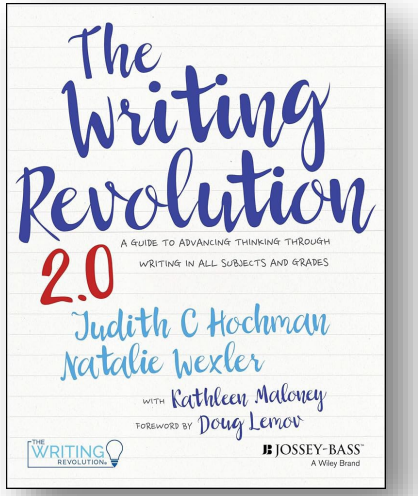
Our Polyvagal World

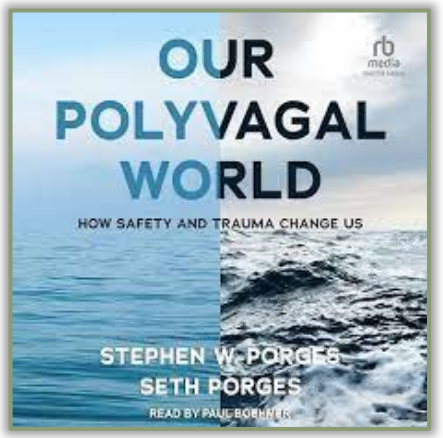
Stephen W. Porges
Seth Porges

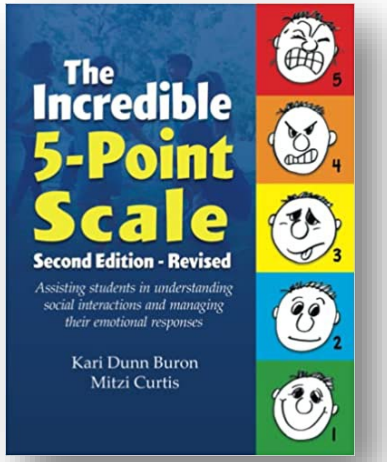
The Five-Point Incredible Scale

Kari Dunn Buron
Mitzi Curtis









Angela Durham

Retired Librarian

Oak Pointe Elementary School

2017-18 School Librarian of the Year

South Carolina

Coretta Scott King Book Award

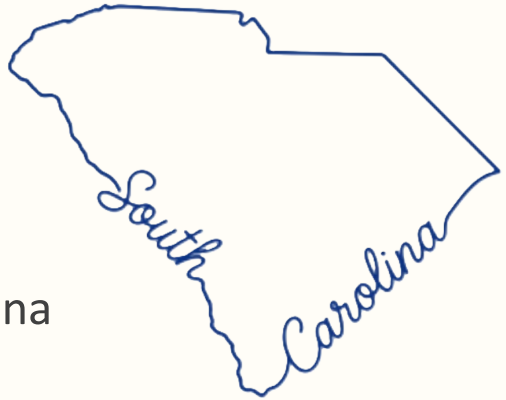
Juror 2024-2026

Education

B.S.B.A. M.L.I.S. NBCT

Ph.D. Candidate

University of South Carolina



Resources

Library Programming for Autistic Children and Teens, 2nd Edition

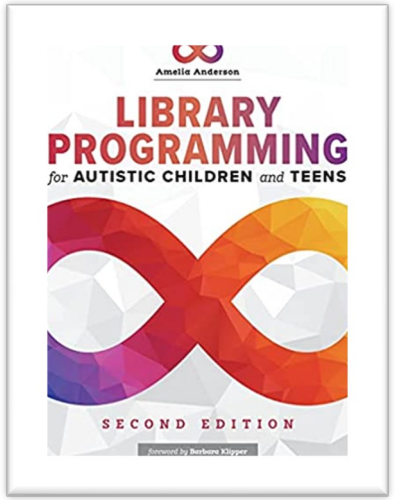
- Amelia Anderson

Programming for Children and Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Barbara Klipper

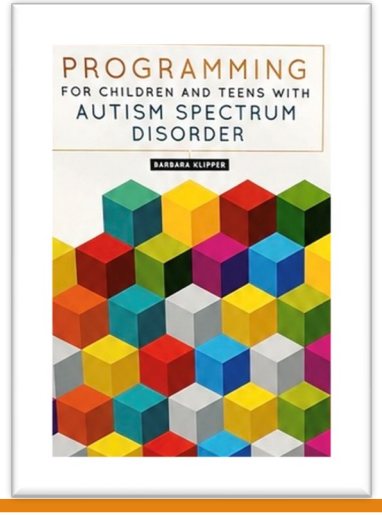
Project Enable

Library of Congress Blogs



Project enable

Project ENABLE online training



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS BLOGS

Lesson Plans

Book Joy for Neurodivergent Readers

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- 5 Tips for a Successful School Year
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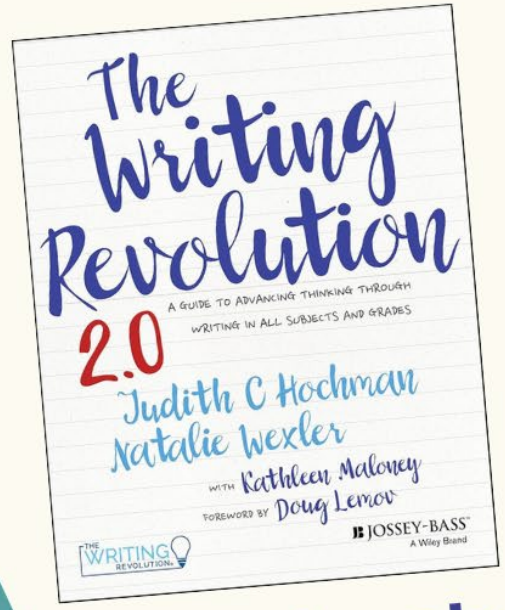
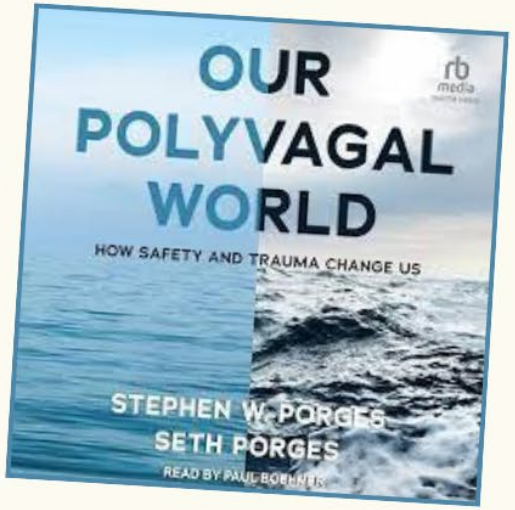
Spiral Bound

Libro.fm
Audiobooks

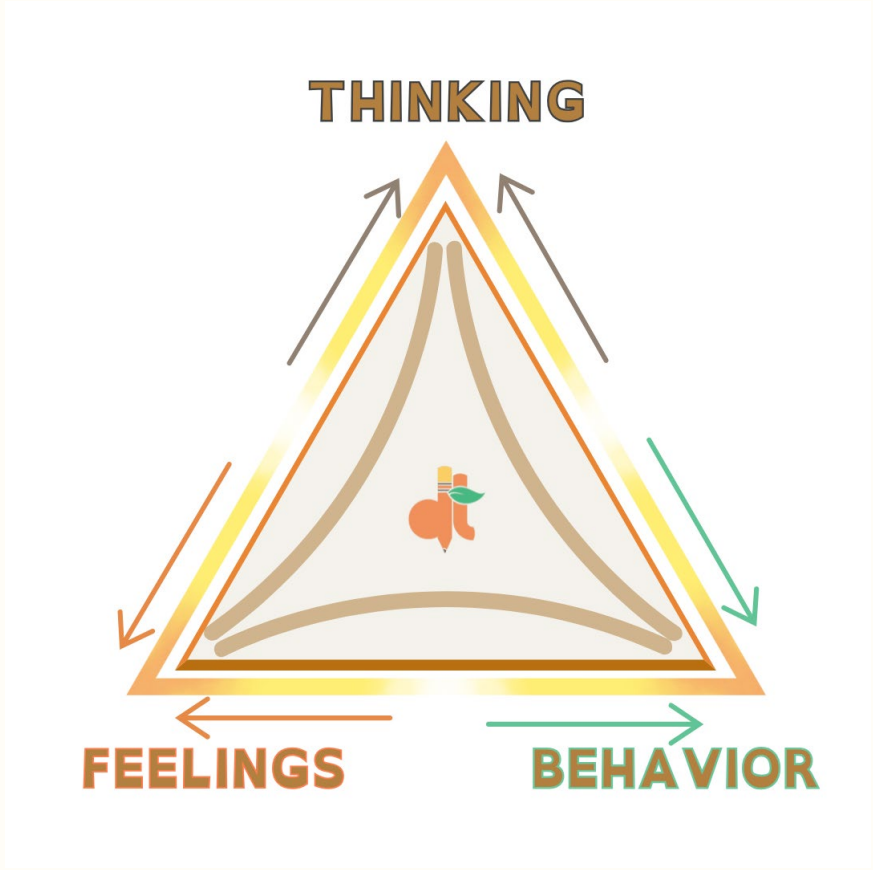


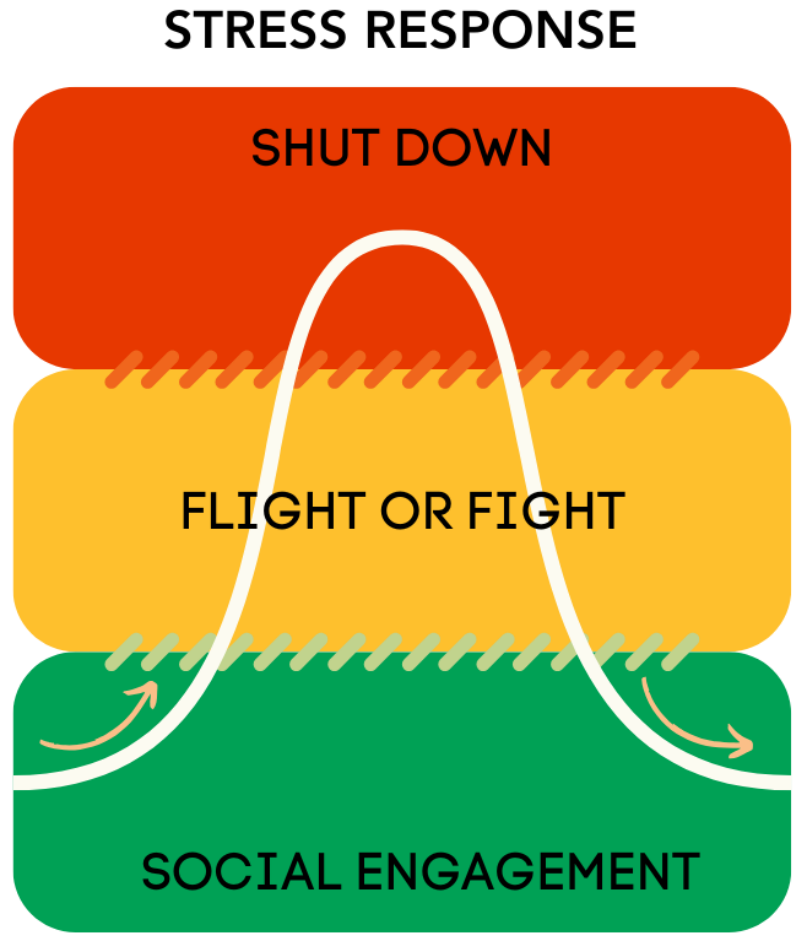
Audiobook



Audiobook

Emotional Regulation Takes Attention and Energy!





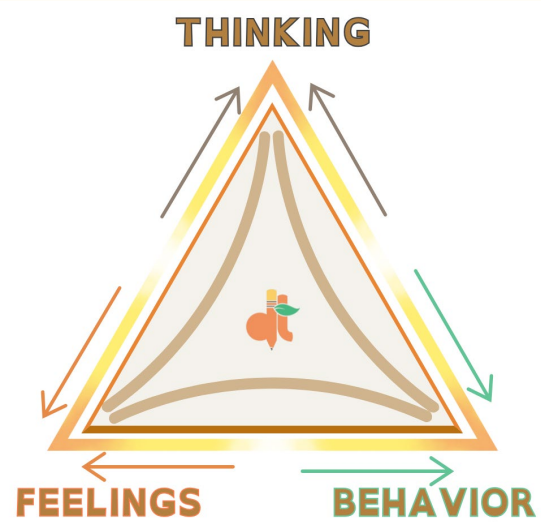
Polyvagal Theory

Physiological state is the sum of:

- Emotions and sensory perceptions
- Ability to manage executive functions
- Carry out the chosen behavior

Must feel safe to maximize thinking

- Environment
- Emotionally
- Physically (sensory)



When feelings and behavior are regulated, learning is possible!

Co-regulation

Our calm response can help students regulate.

- **Check in with a feelings chart**
- **Stay calm and empathetic**
- **Use clear, simple directions**
- **Offer a fidget or break**
- **Give time to respond**

Empathy is our foundation

Understanding and honoring another person's situation, thoughts, and feelings

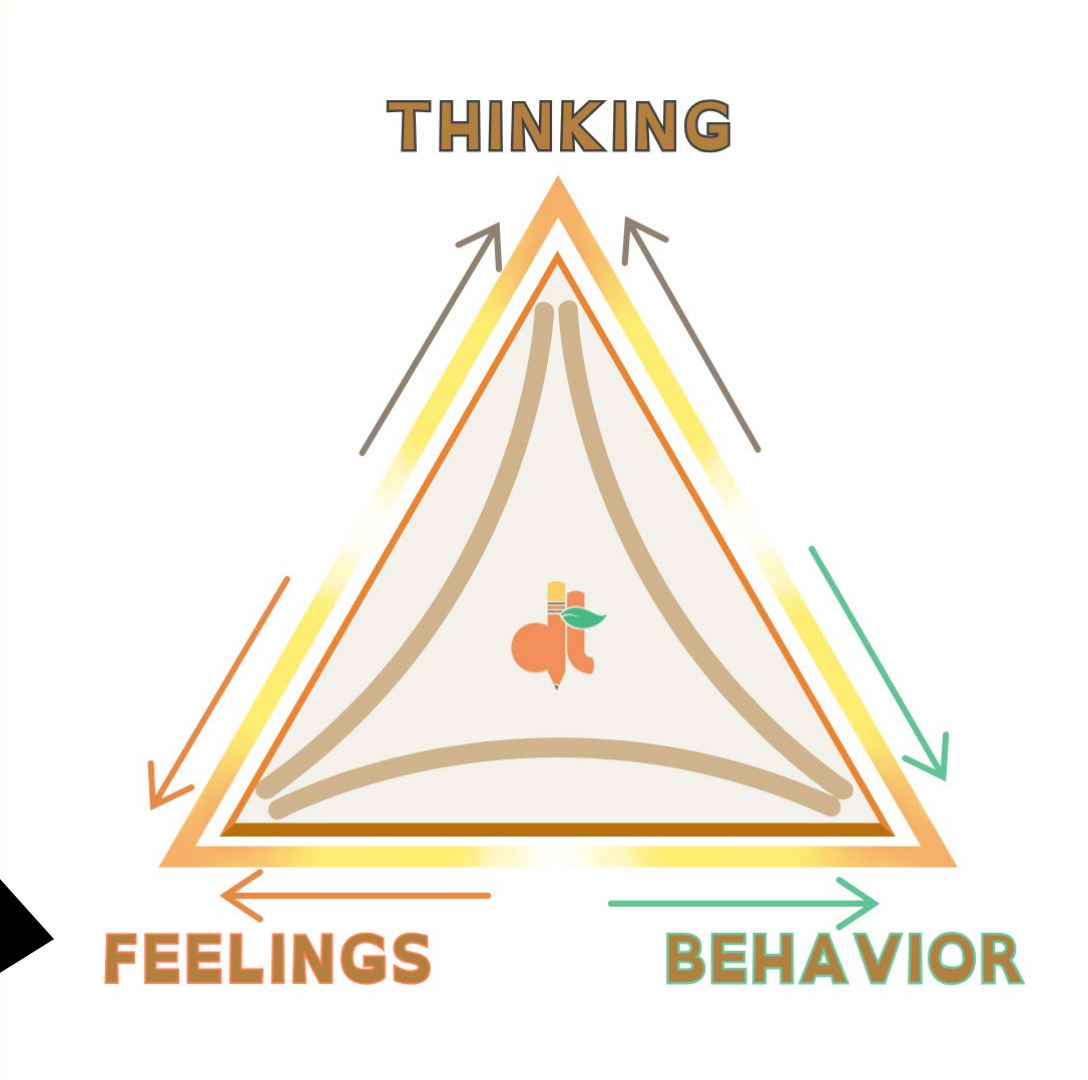
TFB Triad

Feelings are:

- Physical: internal & external
- Sensory : 8 senses
- Emotional

Improve Sensory Input

- Visual supports
- Music, rhythm regulates
- Deep Breathing



Then thinking and behavior improves.

STEPHEN'S QUICK TIP FOR STAYING CALM

When I start to feel too much in my body, I can take deep breaths.

I breathe in with a deep belly-breath and count to five: 1 2 3 4 5.

I focus on the numbers and remember to go slowly.

Then, I exhale slowly and count backwards from five: 5 4 3 2 1.

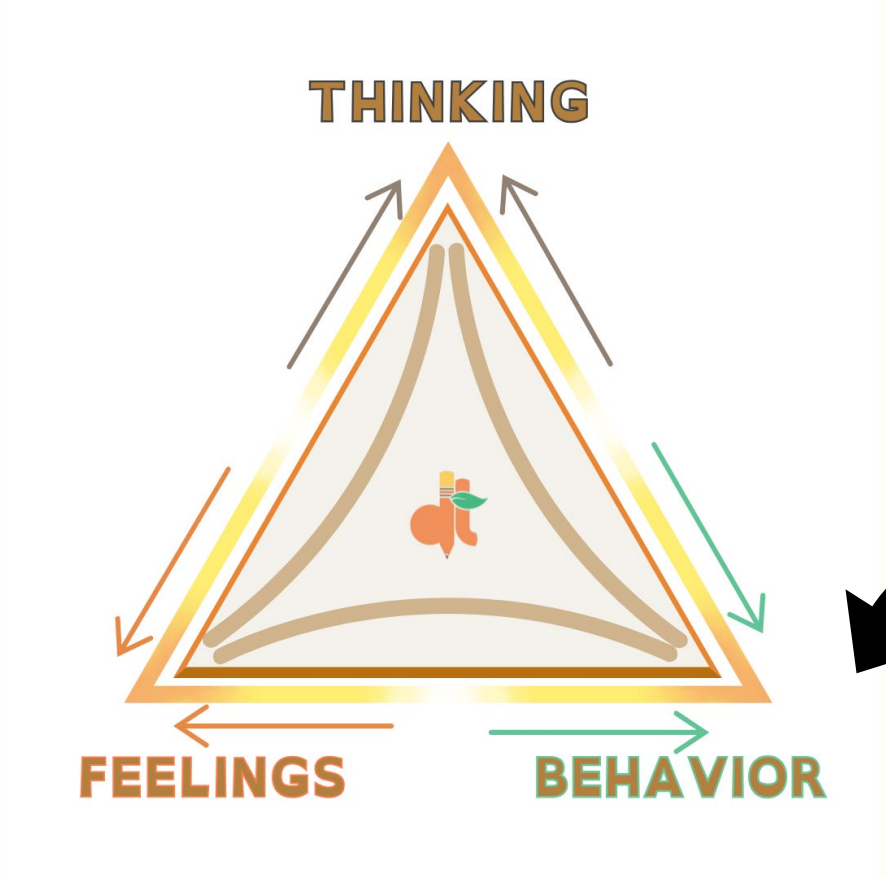
I repeat these two more times.

I look at frogs, squeeze a toy, or listen to music.

Deep Breathing

- Breathing and mindfulness calms the vagus nerve.
- Be sure to practice with students when they are calm.
- Stephen's Quick Tip for Staying Calm is in the handouts.
- Print and laminate.
- Print a poster size for comfort or sensory room.

TFB Triad



Behavior

- Physical actions
- Behavior choices in action
- Stress response / impulsive reactions

Change up behavior

- Stand instead of sit or add movement
- Reduce expectations
- Calming corner

Then thinking and sensory improves.

Movement

Walking helps regulate the Vagas Nerve

- Bilateral Stimulation
- Cross midline: eyes are sweeping
- Other area with different sensory input

All movement outside is optimal

- Natural sensory input

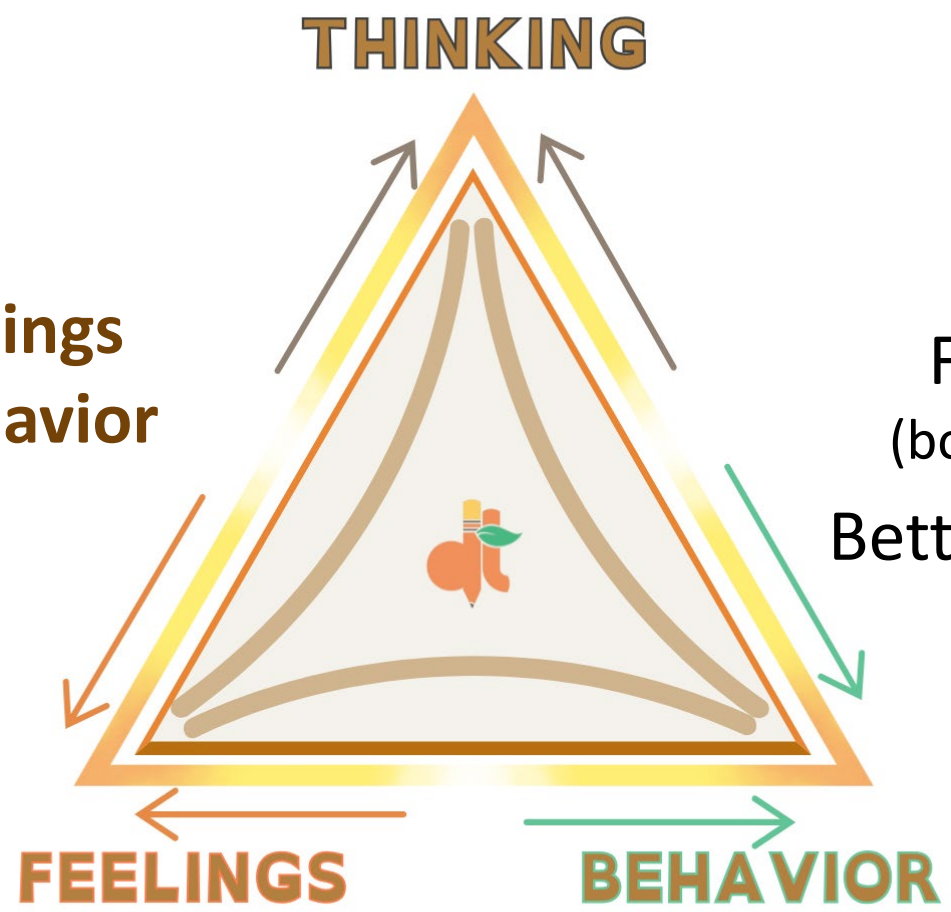
Occupational therapist prescribed activities

- Activating vs. deactivating

TFB Triad

Thinking

- Executive Functions
- Decisions / choices
- Thoughts about feelings
- Thoughts about behavior
- Learning



Change up Thinking

- Visual Supports
- Explicit directions
- Positive self talk
- Differentiate Instruction

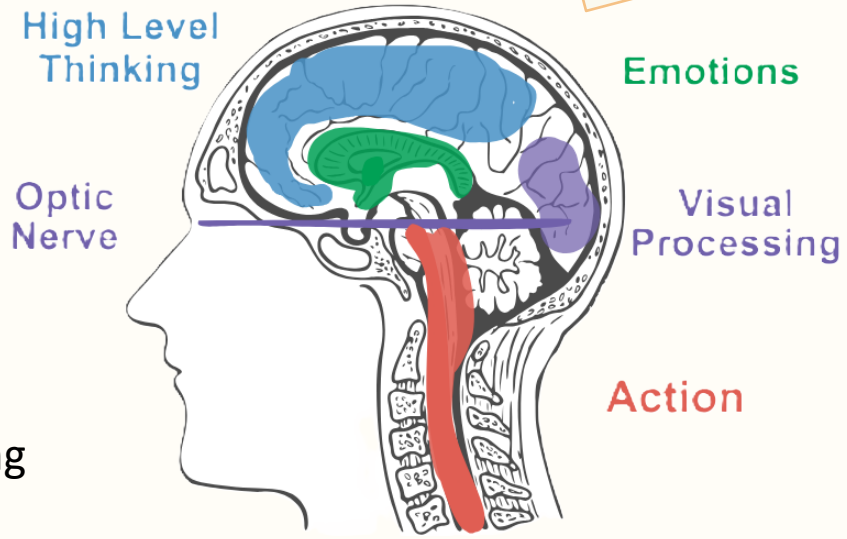
Feelings are improved
(both sensory and emotional)

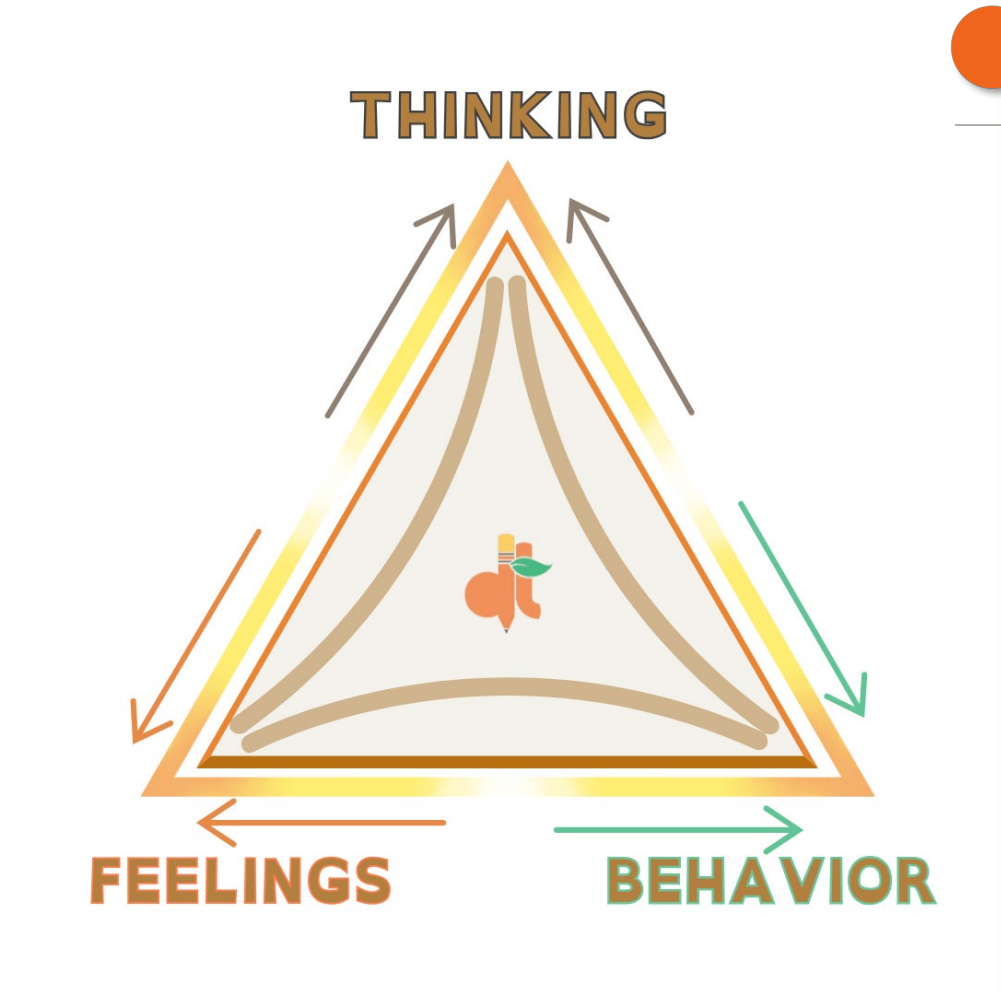
Better able to make good behavior choices

The Power of Visuals

The only part of the autistic brain that is not affected by autism is **visual processing**.

Language takes higher-level processing





TFB Triad Summary

Thinking

- Executive Functions
- Decisions / choices
- Thoughts about feelings
- Thoughts about behavior
- Learning

Feelings

- Physical: internal & external
- Sensory
- Emotional

Behavior

- Physical actions
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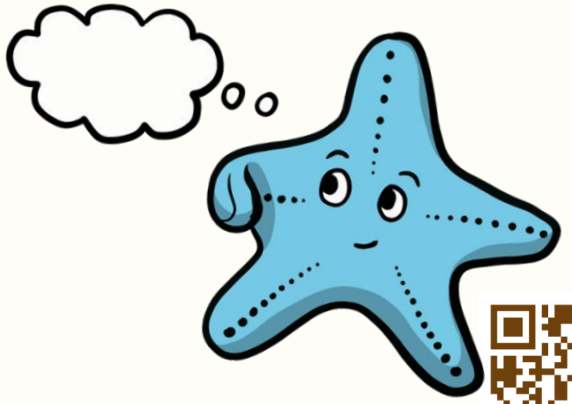
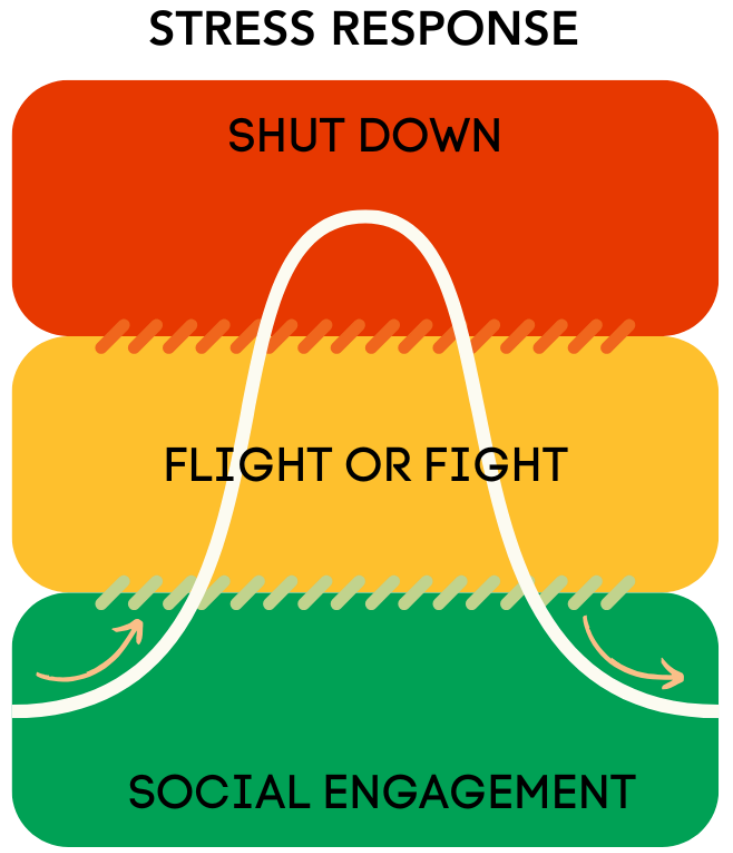
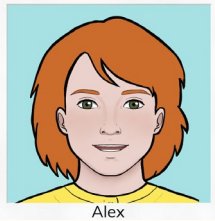


Pause and Think About Your Student



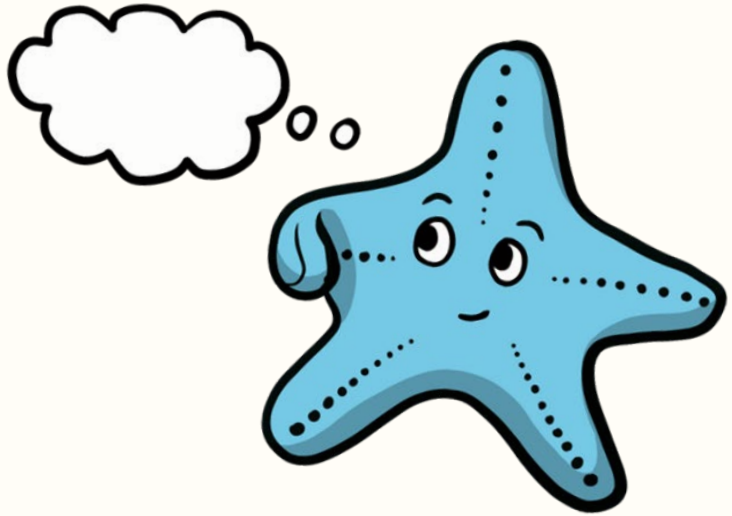
Safiy

Jordan


Alex

What color(s) match your student?

Think about co-regulating with them!



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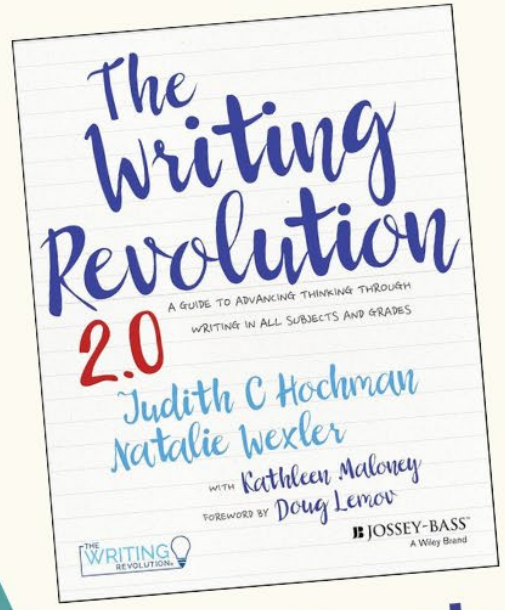

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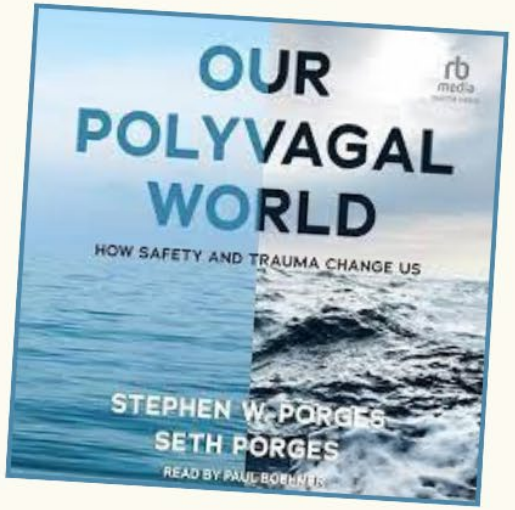


Audiobook

A-Team is Coming to the Library!

Tips and Tricks for Getting Started

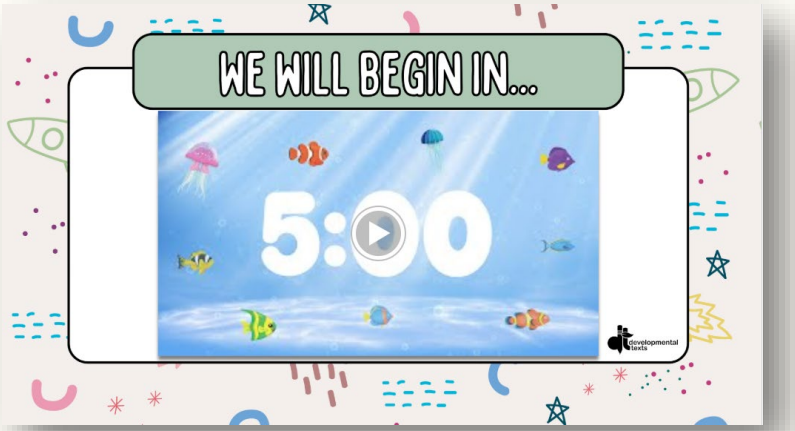
Tip #1: Meet with the Special Education Teachers and Assistants

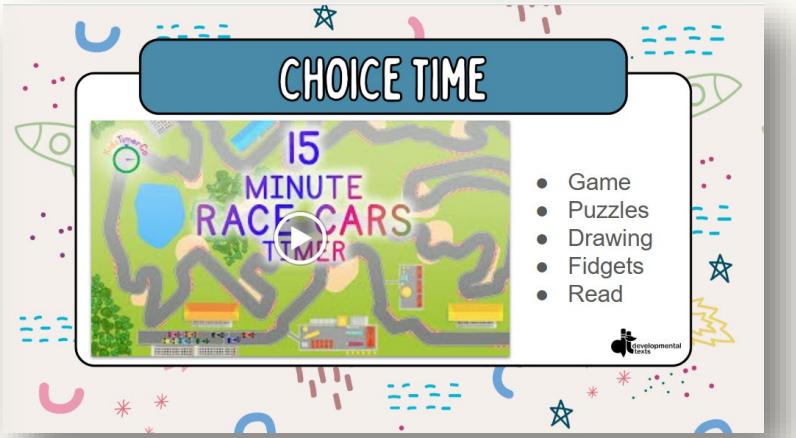
- Discuss students Individual Education Plan (IEP) & 504 Plans
  - Goal: be compliant with IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act.)
  - Get to know the students
- Ages, levels of Support, Behaviors
- Favorite books, School District Curriculum, Class themes, etc.

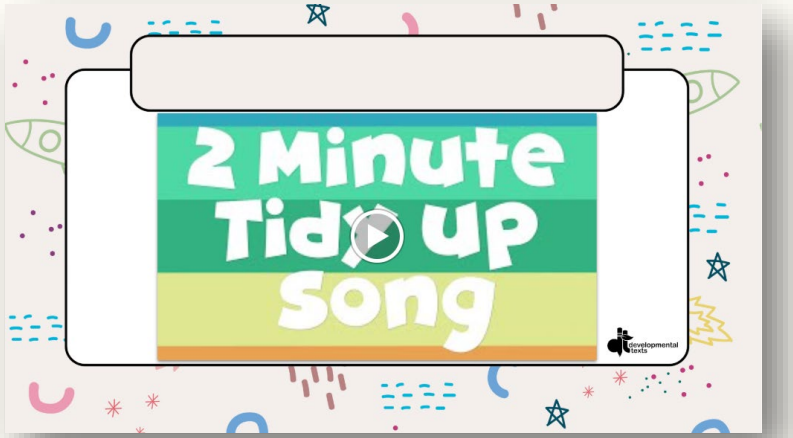
Connecting the Power of Visuals

Tip #2: Create a Visual Schedule

- 25 Minutes recommended
- Decide the learning area
  - seating options or books on table, etc.
- Red timers
- Fidget basket
- Class Management: same wording from classroom
  - "Use your Listening Ears" or "Sit and Raise your Hand"







Timer Slide Shows

USE A SLIDE DECK TO PROVIDE TIMERS

1. Students can relax and not wonder about time
2. Kids walking into the room know what is happening
3. Systematic organization is predictable and supports self-regulation

Tip #3: Think…Whom Will I Be Teaching today?

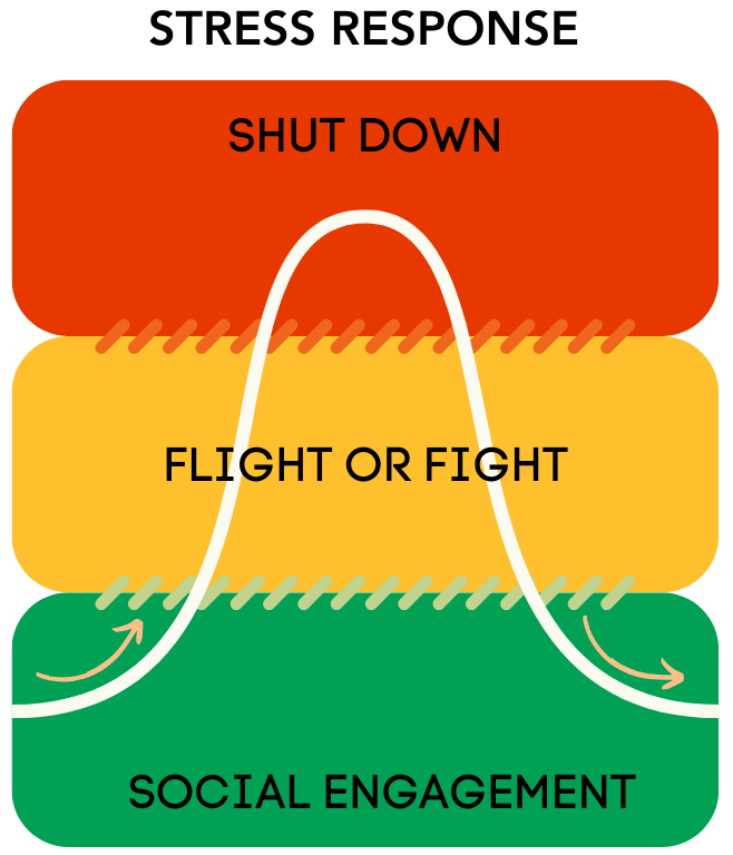
More supported needed	Range of Learners	More independent
• Simple directions • Visual and technical supports • Accessible ways to participate • May be nonverbal.	• Different levels of support within the same activity • Travels with general education classes • Likely 7 years old & up	• Milder learning or support needs • Verbal • may participate with peers and a learning buddy.

These categories reflect the level of support you are providing, not based on the student's diagnosis.

Safiy

Student Profile: Safiy

- Fourth Grader
- Uses sensory fidgets and chew stick
- Hesitant with everything new
- Easily overwhelmed
- Reading level: first grade
- CPTSD due to unstable home
- Level three autism



Safiy

Often hovers near red
- Body feels trauma
- Transitions are hard

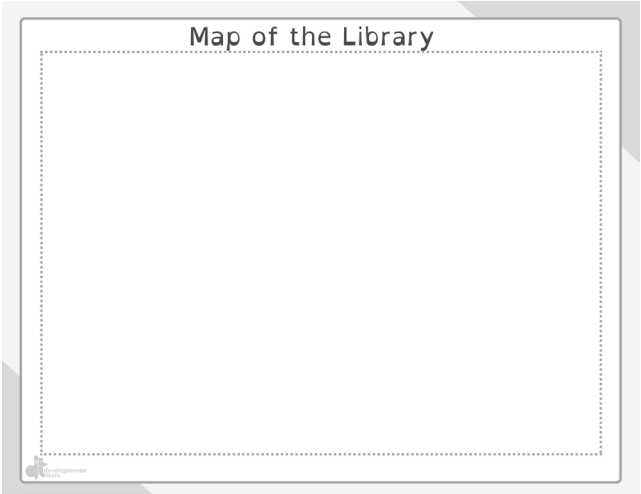
Is seldom in green
- Routine schedule
- Favorite activities

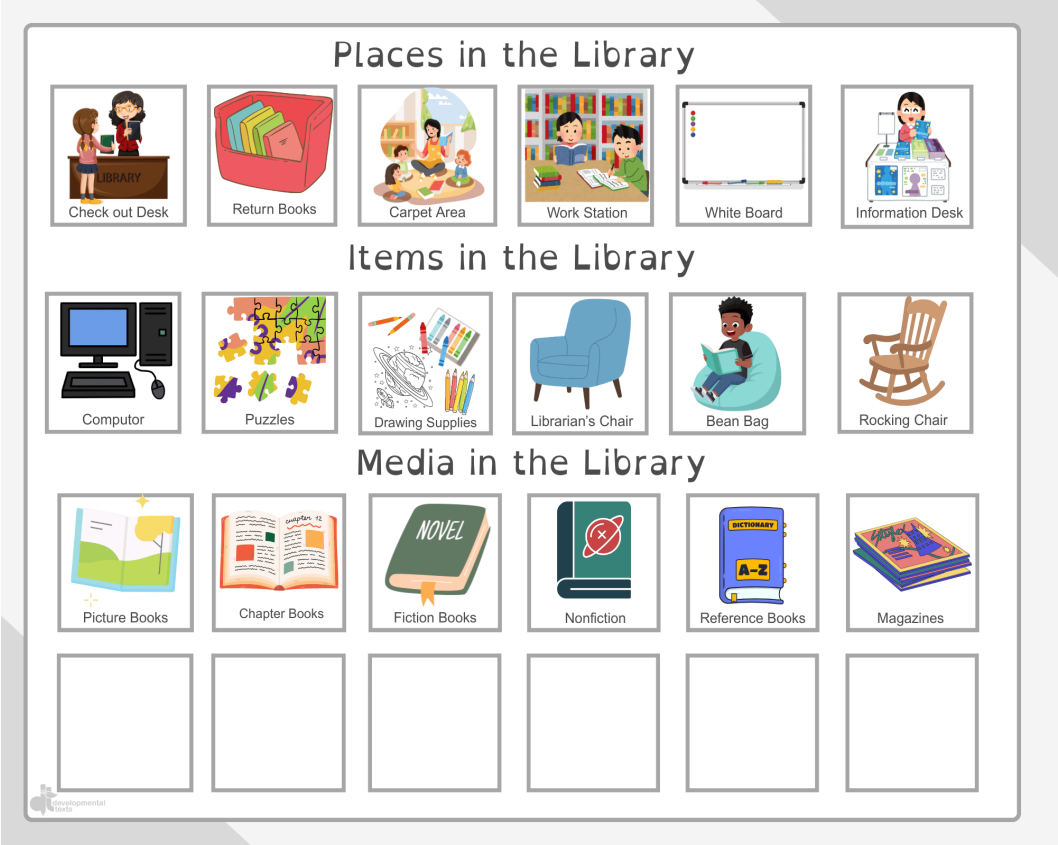
Needs extra time to process
- Finish scripting and routines
- Needs to work on one goal at a time.

Safiy needs an educator who is patient and empathetic.

Map Activity

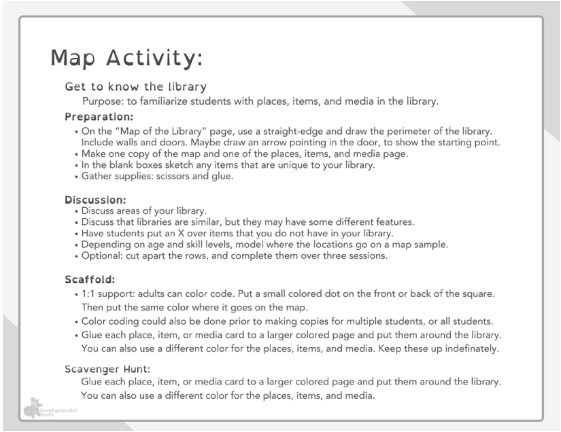
Students get to know the library with an adaptive map





- Draw the floor plan
- Students cut & glue

Nancyroop.com/resources



Map Activity:

Get to know the library

Purpose: to familiarize students with places, items, and media in the library.

Preparation:

- On the "Map of the Library" page, use a straight-edge and draw the perimeter of the library. Include walls and doors. Maybe draw an arrow pointing in the door, to show the starting point.
- Make one copy of the map and one of the places, items, and media page.
- In the blank boxes sketch any items that are unique to your library.
- Gather supplies: scissors and glue.

Discussion:

- Discuss areas of your library.
- Discuss that libraries are similar, but they may have some different features.
- Have students put an X over items that you do not have in your library.
- Depending on age and skill levels, model where the locations go on a map sample.
- Optional: cut apart the rows, and complete them over three sessions.

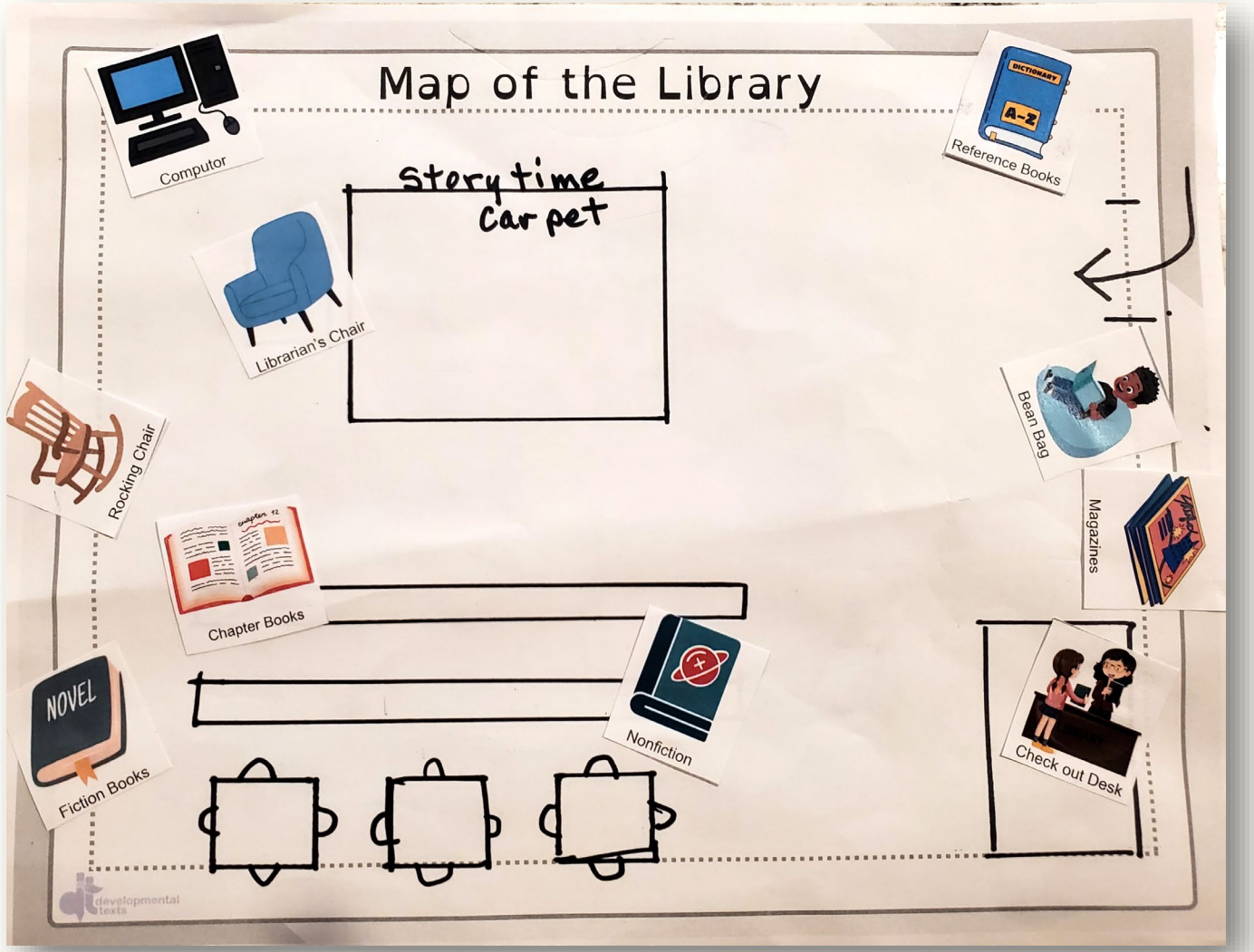
Scaffold:

- 1:1 support: adults can color code. Put a small colored dot on the front or back of the square. Then put the same color where it goes on the map.
- Color coding could also be done prior to making copies for multiple students, or all students.
- Glue each place, item, or media card to a larger colored page and put them around the library. You can also use a different color for the places, items, and media. Keep these up indefinately.

Scavenger Hunt:

Glue each place, item, or media card to a larger colored page and put them around the library. You can also use a different color for the places, items, and media.

Scavenger Hunt



Accommodations:

- Color code
- Do one row per week

Nancyroop.com/resources

Tip 4: Explore a Variety of Learning Ideas!

What's in a Year-Long Library Plan for Special Education Classes?

Angela Durham
B.S.B.A. M.L.I.S.
Ph.D. Candidate
University of South Carolina

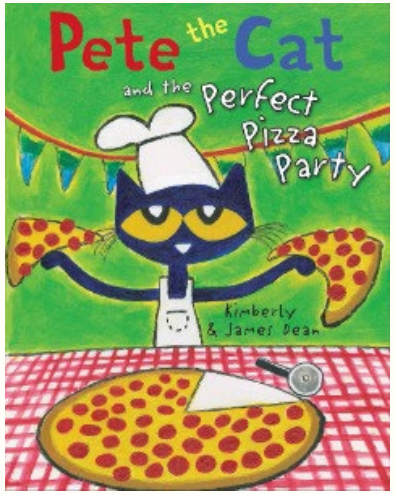
Read Alouds with Kinesthetic or Art Activities:

hand gestures, body movement, or songs.

- *Goin' on a Bear Hunt*
- *The Wheels on the Bus*
- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*
- *I Want Slop*
- Article by Angela Durham available at https://schoollibraryconnection.com/

Pizza Sequencing Activity

Students build a pizza with Pete the Cat's friends.



1. Read "Pete the Cat's Pizza Party" book
2. Students add felt or paper pizza ingredients in a sequence

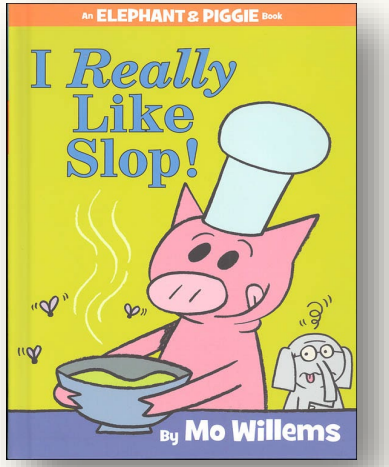
   cheese, pepperoni, sausage, mushroom, bell peppers

Free paper pieces are available at [Mrs. Merry Printable Pizza]

Level 3: Activity for Elementary

Student Participation Activity

1. Show the video or read the book
2. Fill the pot with multiple items and strings of yarn & stir
3. Complete the sensory pot activity:
   - one item from the pot
   - Keep eyes One student at a time
   - Remove closed
   - Feel the object & guess what it is

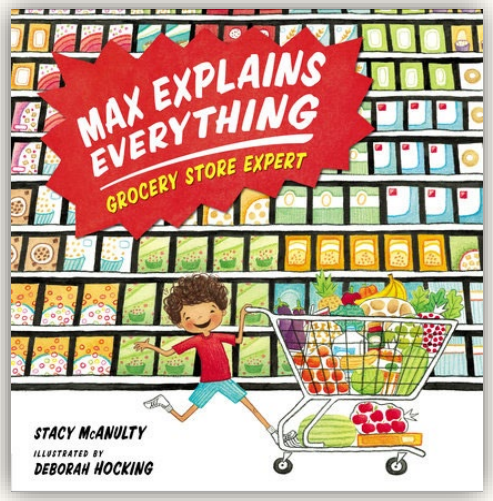


Elephant and Piggie's
I Really Like Slop
Video with Mo Willems

Level 3: Activity for Elementary

Read Aboud Activity

- Use scavenger/bingo cards and dry eraser markers
- Read the story while students mark the grocery store items on the card



Max Explains Everything; Grocery Store Expert

Student-led Bookmaking

Use topics of interest or common items at school.
Use a binder, lined paper, and plain white paper

Create a picture book—one page a day

1. Write a word, phrase, or a sentence on lined paper
2. Draw an illustration on plain paper
3. Put pages in binder
4. Read the book after new pages are added
5. Create cover page when book is complete.

Scaffold as needed: sentence choices or outline illustration

Student Profile: Alex

Fifth Grader

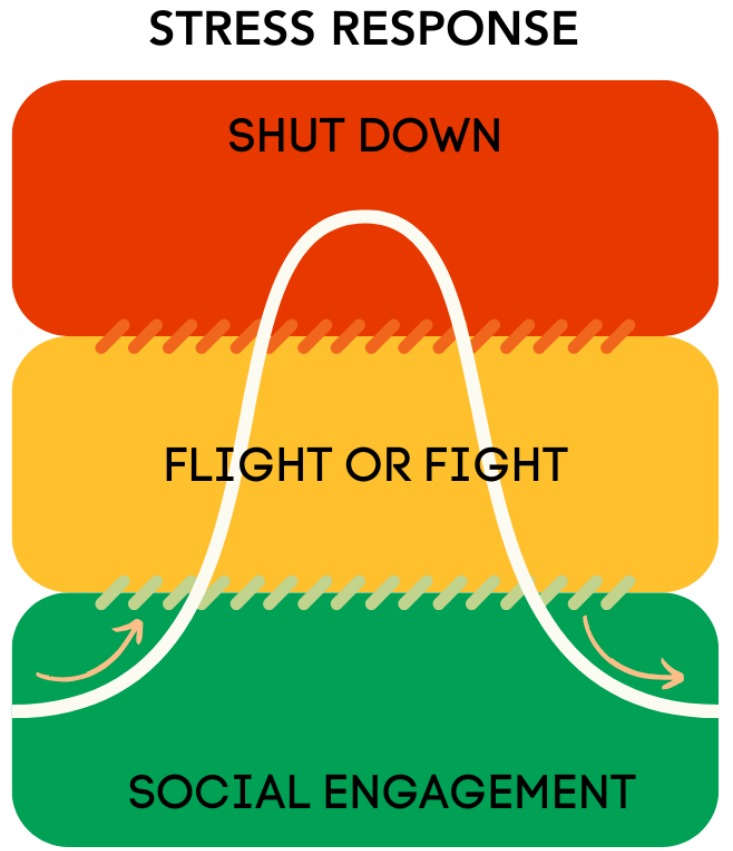
Likes to ask questions

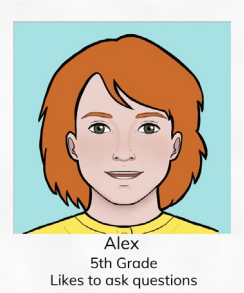
Hyperactive body and mind

Reading level: third grade

Social and emotional delay

Dysgraphia





Alex

Often in green
- Very social
- Has agency over sensory needs

Goes up to yellow quickly
- High demands
- Task switching too fast

Demands continue
- Escalates into red
- 20 minutes until de-escalation

Alex stays on alert due to cortisol for the rest of the day!

Notetaking Templates
Support Reading Initiative and Comprehension

1. Listen while librarian reads a book
2. As a Class, record literacy details of the book in each section.

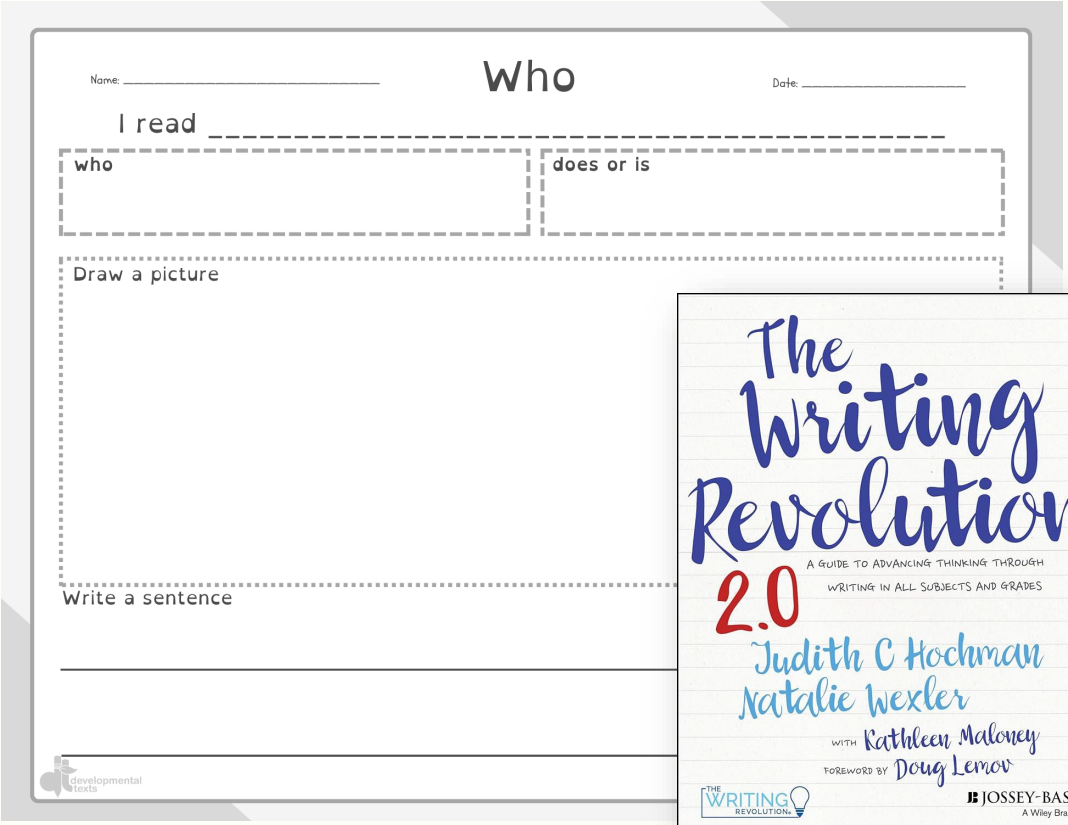
   Who or What does or is

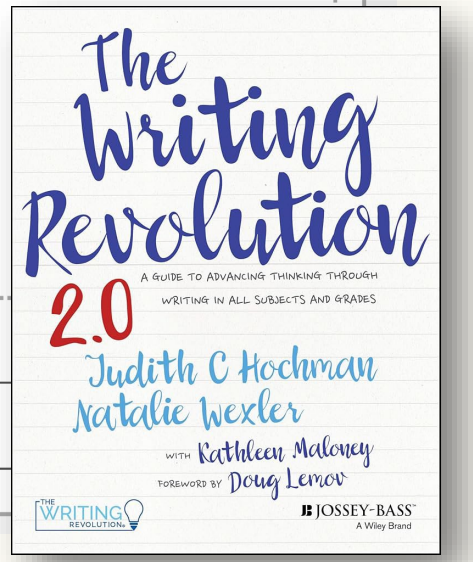
   (Subject/verb page creates base sentence)

3. Write a sentence about the favorite part of the story. May include details such as:

   When, Where, Why, or How

4. Put pages in a library folder

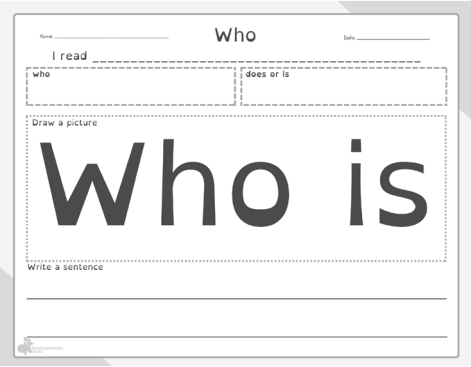




Notetaking Templates
for Teaching Writing Strategies

Combine sentences from two + templates with writing strategies:

1. Subject/verb page
   Who or What
2. Description page
   When, Where, Why, or How
3. Compound sentence with appositives, conjunctions, transitions, and dependent clauses



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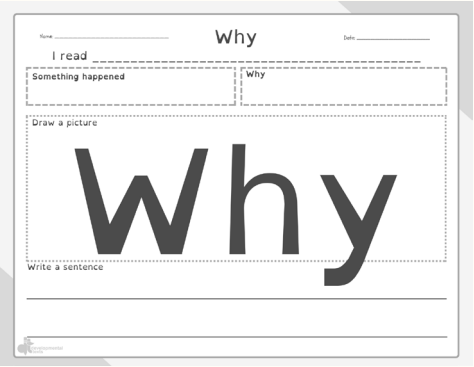
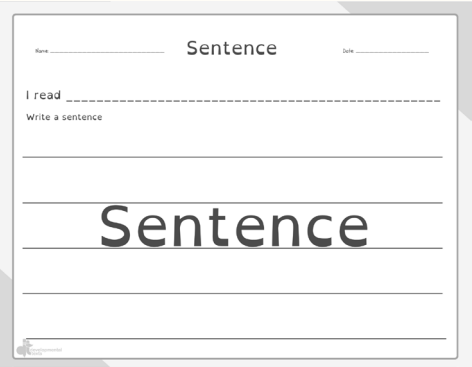
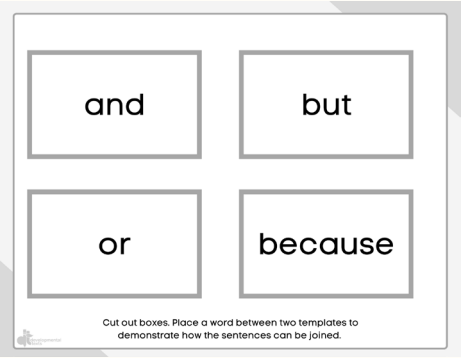




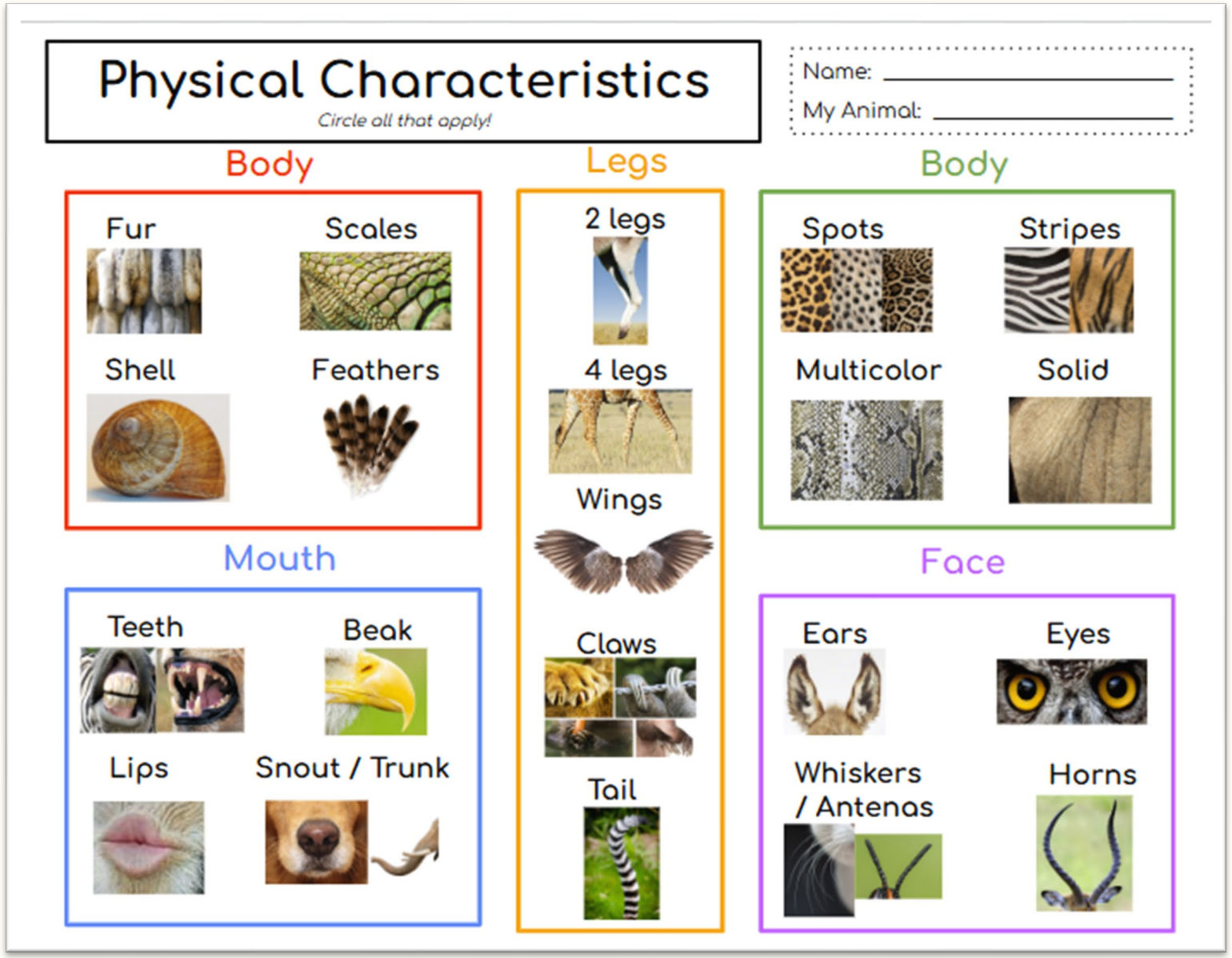


Use templates to organize information across all subject lessons.

Red Wolf

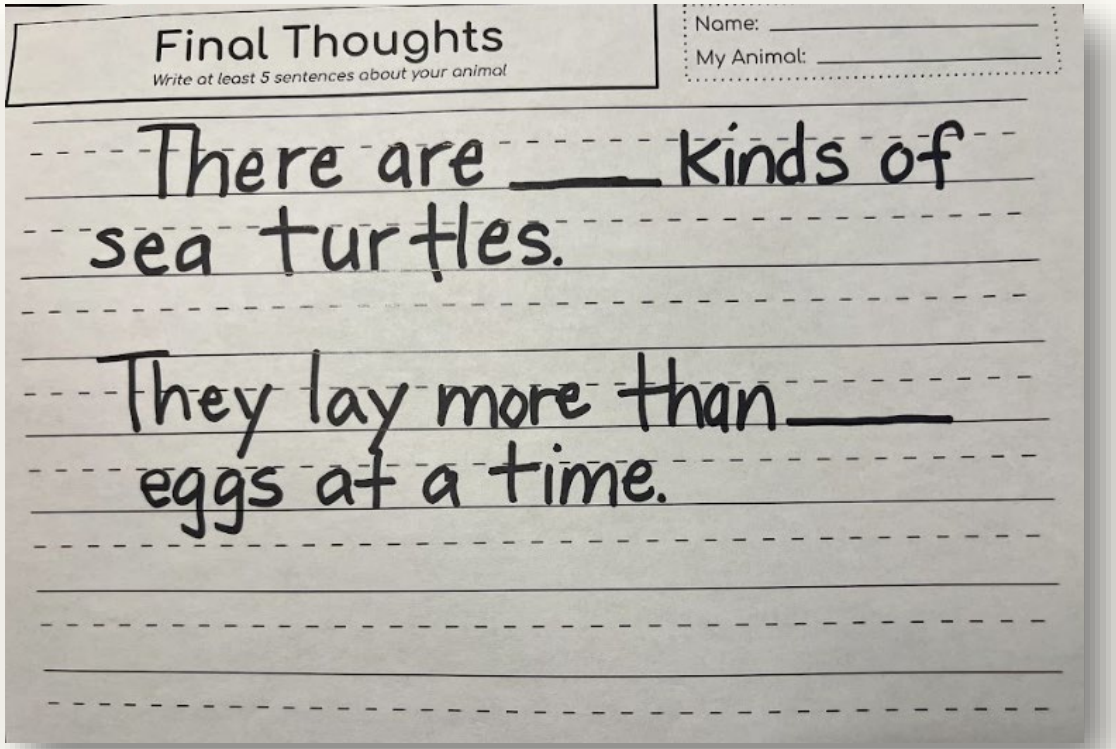
Endangered Animal Research project:

- Go to PebbleGo and Enchanted Learning for learning facts
- Distribute animal features page(s) from Teachers Pay Teachers ($6.50)
- Have students circle their answers
- Have students use the Enchanted Learning facts to fill in the blank and complete a sentence about their chosen animal.



Sea Turtle

Endangered Animal Research project:

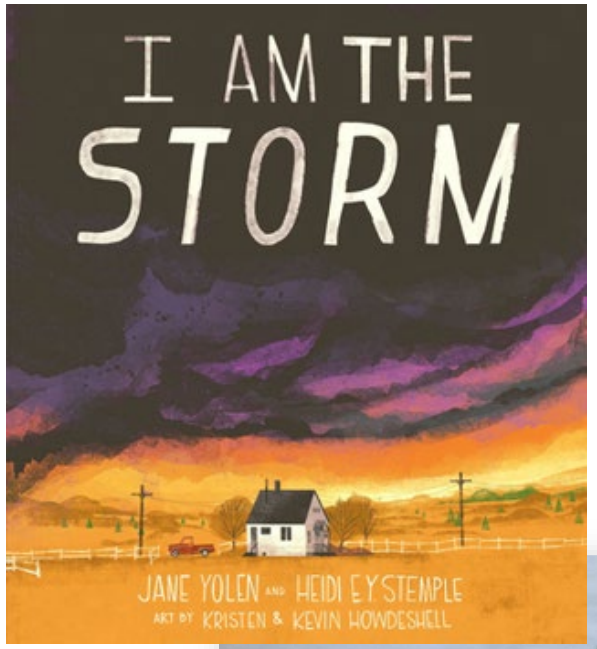


- Student choose an animal from a preselected group
- Use the Enchanted Learning & Teachers Pay Teachers website (re: embracing special) to create a "Read and Response Booklet"
- Print out basic facts of the animal.
- Read animal facts and student fills in the blanks using the facts.

A Port in a Storm

Extreme weather and STEM activity
***I Am the Storm* by Jane Yolen with building the sturdy storm shelter**

- Read the printed or show E-book (video)
- Pass out the keva planks to groups
- Build a sturdy shelter
  (build towers if extra time)



Lincoln’s Pockets

What Did Lincoln Have in His Pockets the Night of His Assassination?

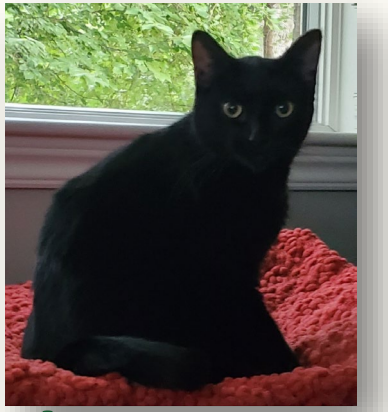
(primary Source lesson)

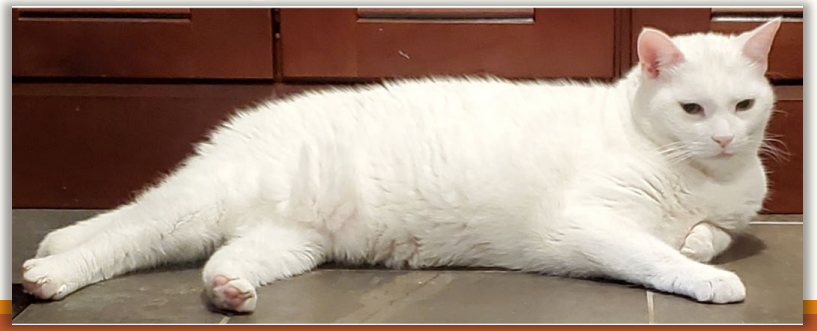
- Create a worksheet to match the items
- show the revealing video from the Library of Congress

Quick Tip from our Pets!

Stephen Porges says: Brains are naturally wired to focus on negative thoughts to keep us safe. Modern brains haven't evolved, yet.

Deb Dana says: **Glimmers are micro-moments of regulation that foster feelings of well-being.**





Use **good** gossip!

Positive narration

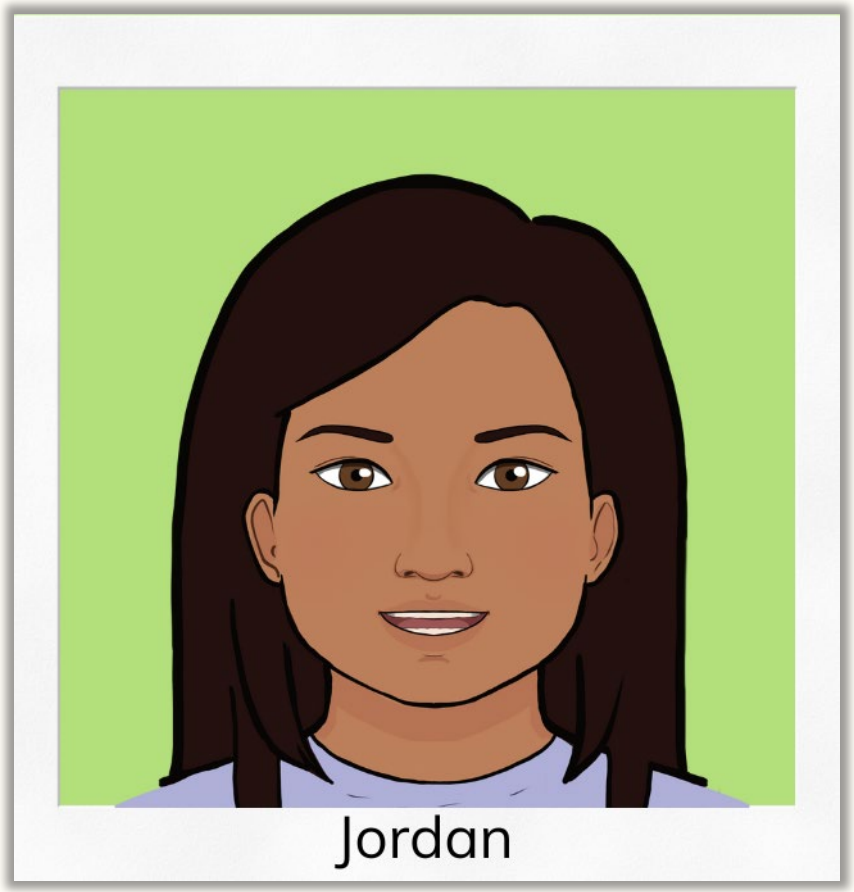
Mindfulness

Affirmations

Book Joy for Neurodivergent Readers

Agenda

- Neurodiversity
- Co-regulation Supports Self-regulation
- 5 Tips for a Successful School Year
  - Best Practices
  - Differentiated Instruction
  - Neurodivergent Readers
- Take aways *and some glimmers!*



Student Profile: Jordan

Fifth Grader

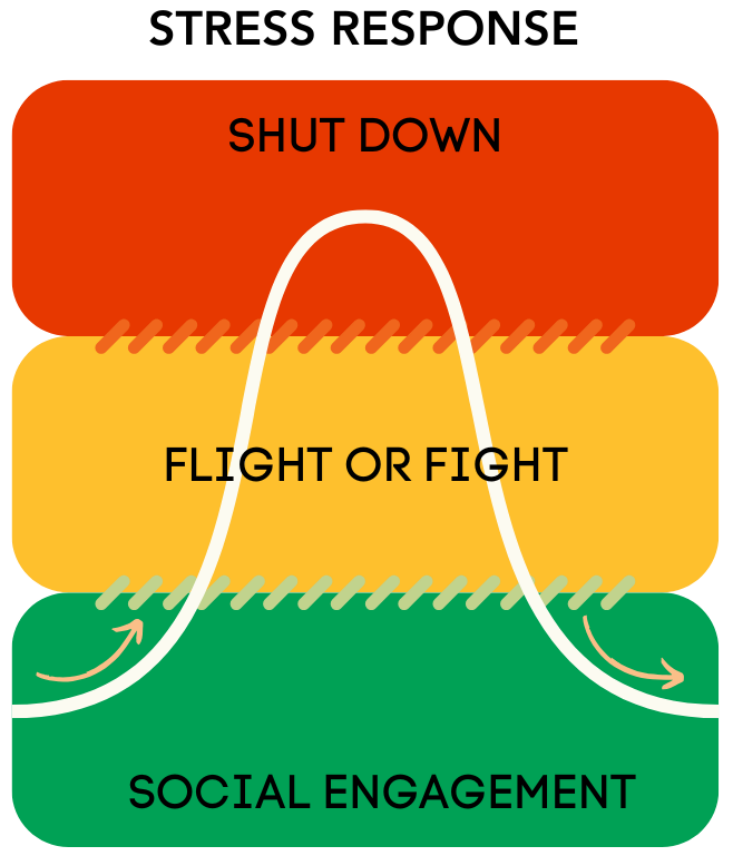
Likes to do research projects

Gifted

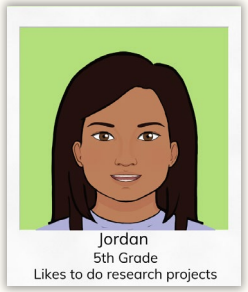
Reading level: eighth grade

Social and emotional delay

ASD and A.D.H.D



Jordan



Often in yellow
- But appears to be in green
- She masks her anxiety

Goes up to red slowly
- Works hard to not escalate
- She cannot learn in this state
- Starts to show agitation

Loses control
- Short period of time
- Tends to blow up after getting home

Jordan benefits from taking breaks and draws pictures.

Peer to Peer Social group

Create a club with activities like crafts, books, or games.

- Try to have equal numbers of neurodivergent and typical peers.
- If needed an extra adult or two might be helpful.

A social group

- usually begins with introductions and a short ice breaker activity.
- Then, do the main activity, and then maybe close with a snack.
- An hour is a good time to start. Maybe after a group is established a little longer may work.

Typical peers can be coached

- to be patient while listening & not be offended if an ND peer is rude or has an outburst.
- You might have a meeting prior to go over the process, so they become more comfortable.
- Also getting to know the other typical peers might be helpful.
- They can help brainstorm activities…like what's the latest game teens are playing, etc.

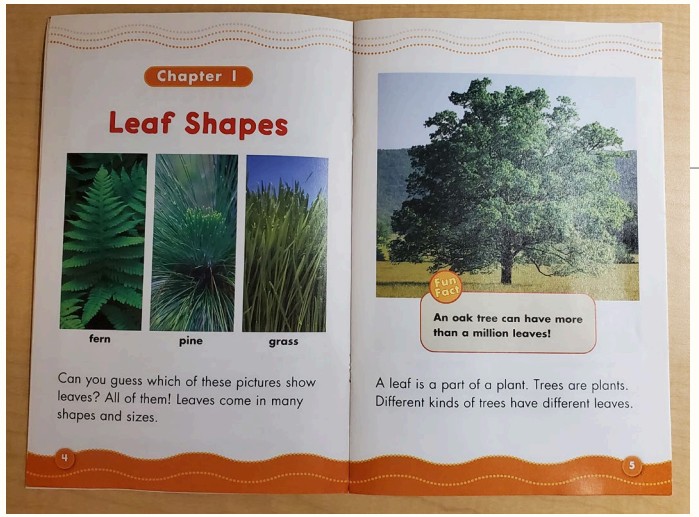
Contact your local school's guidance counselor or Special ED department

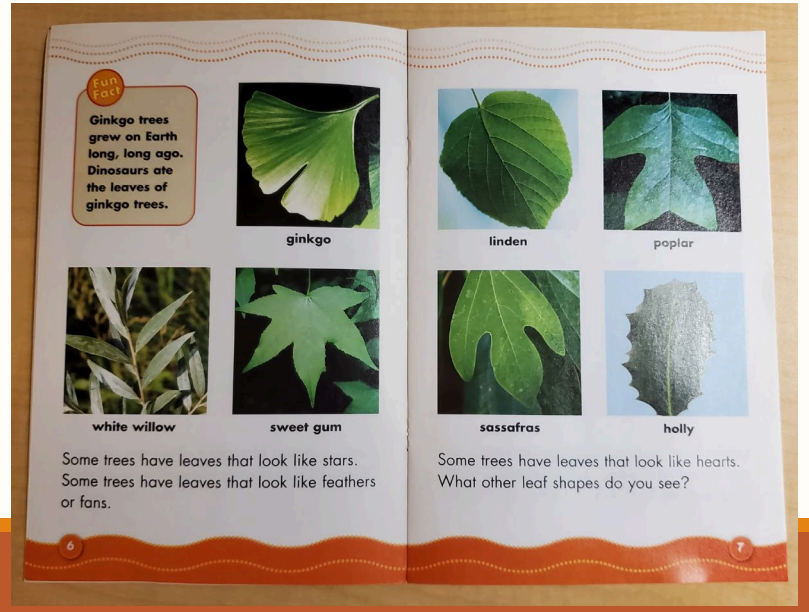
- for information on their groups if they have one.
- For student referrals for either neurodivergent students or typical peers (some honor societies have volunteer requirements; being a typical peer would count for this.)

Contact local autism therapy centers. They may want to partner or provide resources.

Tip 5: What Books Should I Collect?

Book Features for Reluctant Readers





1. **Clear, uncluttered pages**
2. **Predictable organization**
3. **Concrete, relatable content**
4. **Familiar series or repeated formats**
5. **Nonfiction or realistic fiction**

It’s time to select books and check them out!

<u>Younger students:</u>

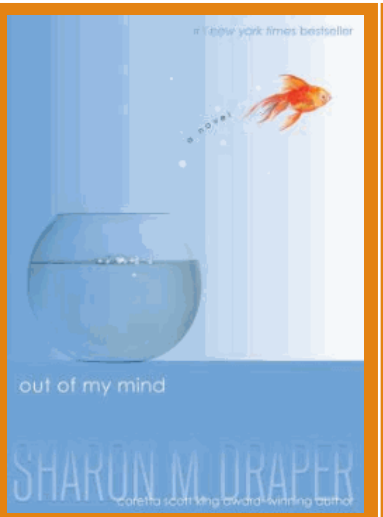
Call names on library cards during today’s closing activity

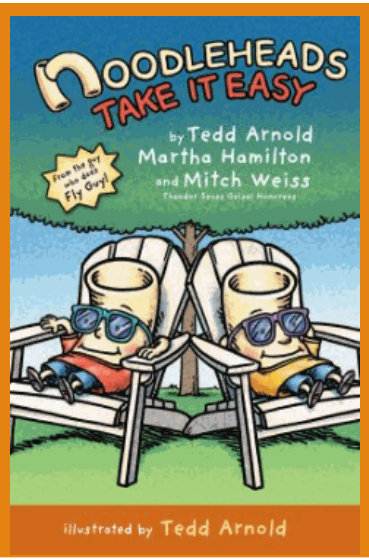
Students choose a book from either the Fiction or Nonfiction tables

Students line up at the Circulation Desk

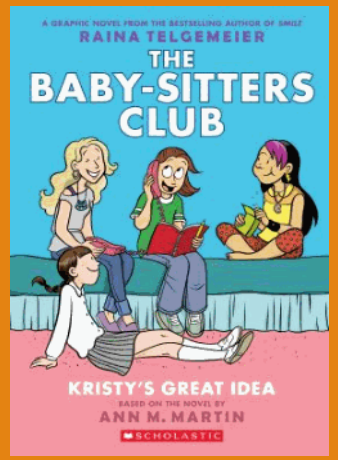
Series Recommendations:

Out of My Mind
by Sharon Draper

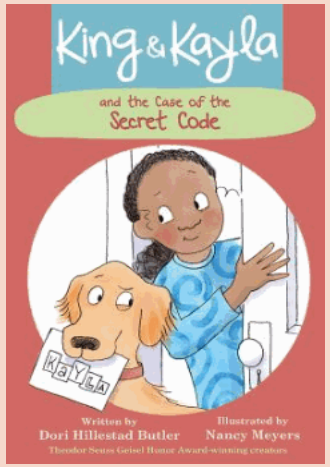




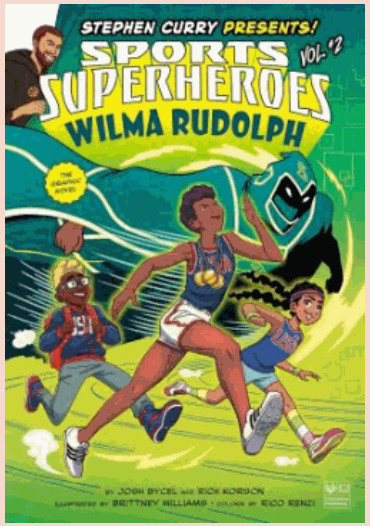
Baby Sitter Club series



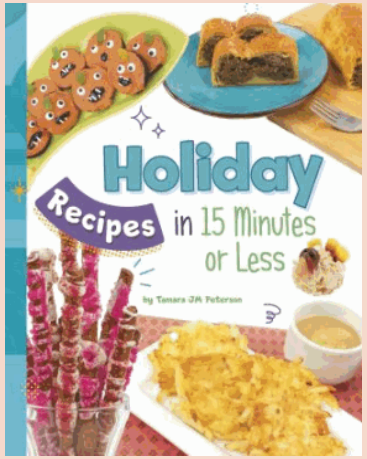
King and Kayla series



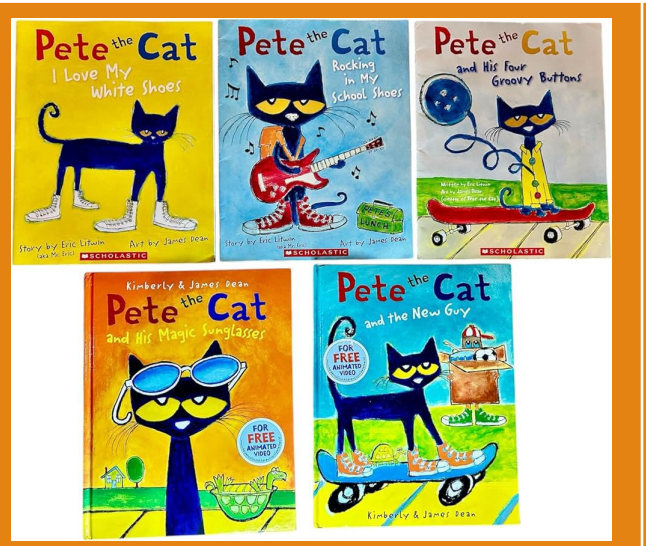
Sports Superheroes



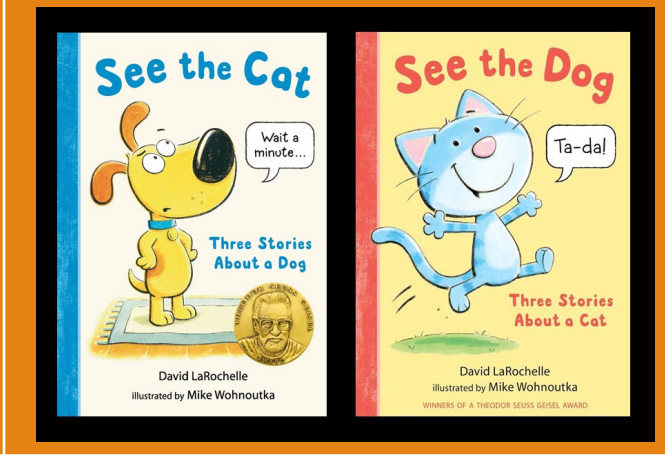
15 Minutes or Less Series



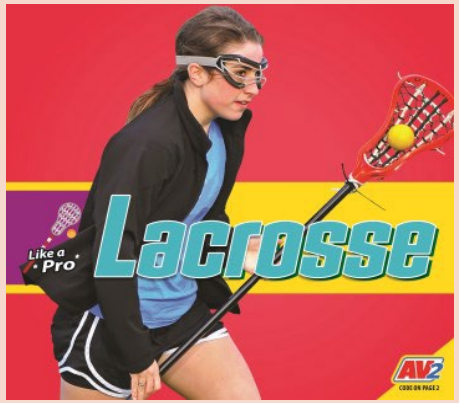
Recommendations:



David LaRochelle series

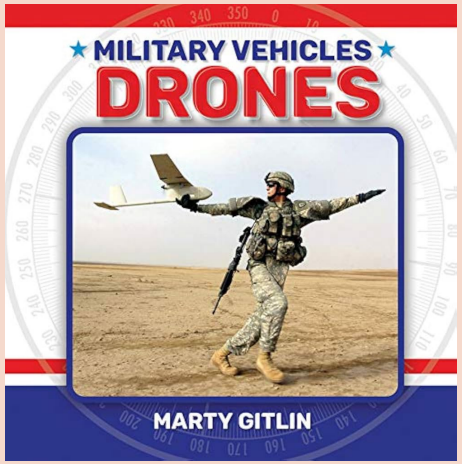


Lacrosse by Jessica Coupe'



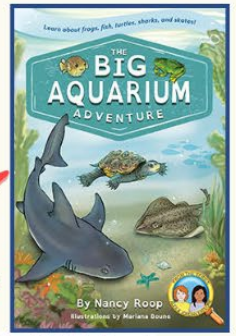
Axolotl by Jenna Grodzicki

Drones by Marty Gitlin

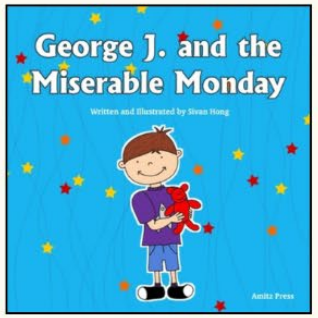


NEURODIVERSE INCLUSIVE BOOKS

A NOVEL MIND



anovelmind.com



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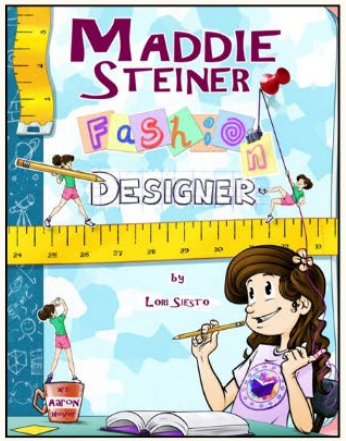

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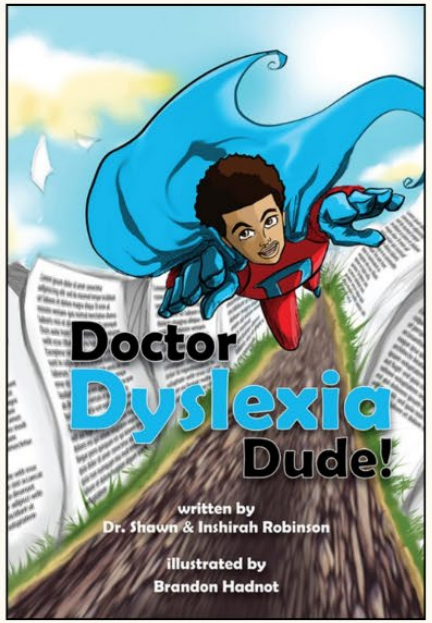
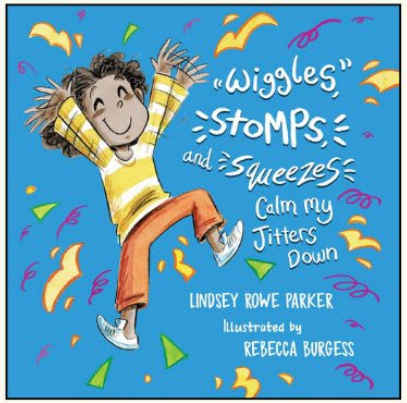
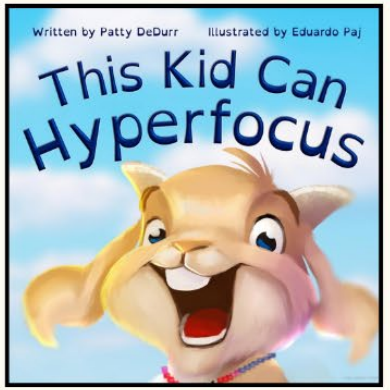


#DyslexiaAuthor





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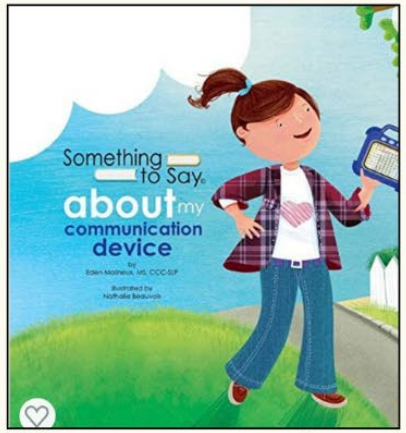
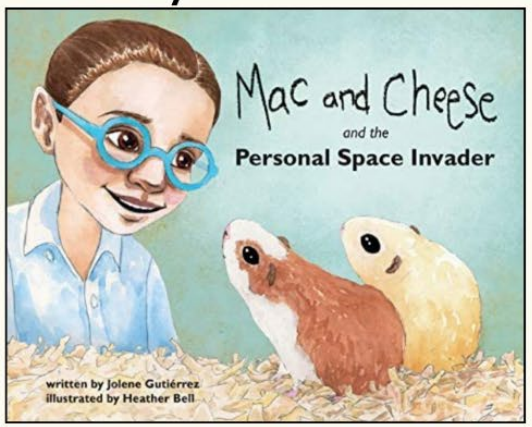


#AACAuthor



#proprioceptionauthor

Neurodivergent Database

Pause and Think About Your Readers

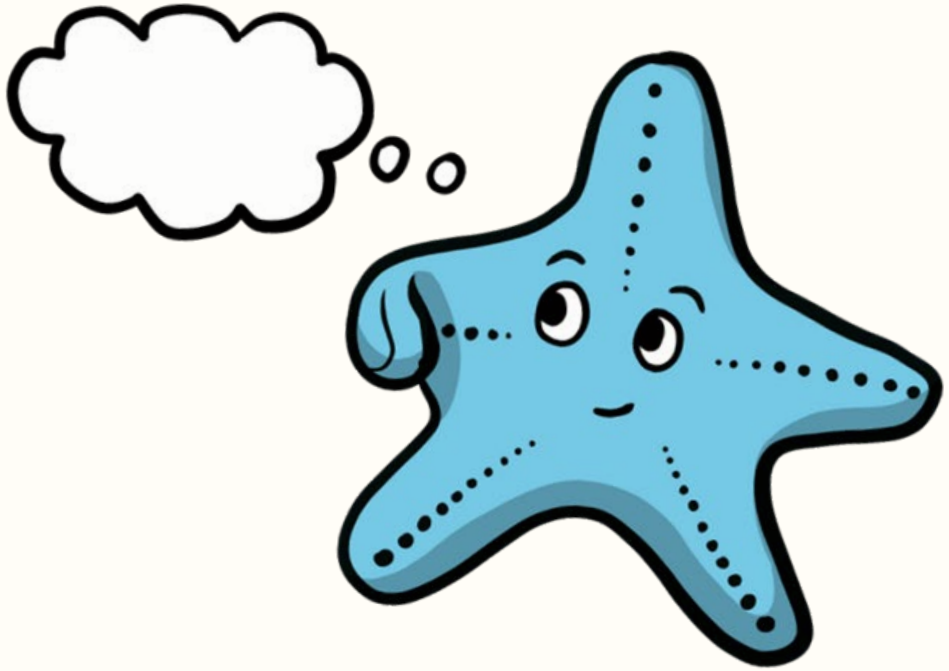
Safiy

Break

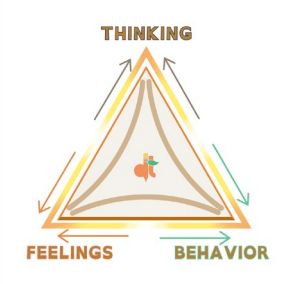
Jordan

1._____
2._____
3._____
4._____
Next: _____

Alex



Understanding Neurodiversity to Create an Inclusive Library



What's in a Year-Long Library Plan

Learning Takeaways:
Five Things You Can Do Tomorrow

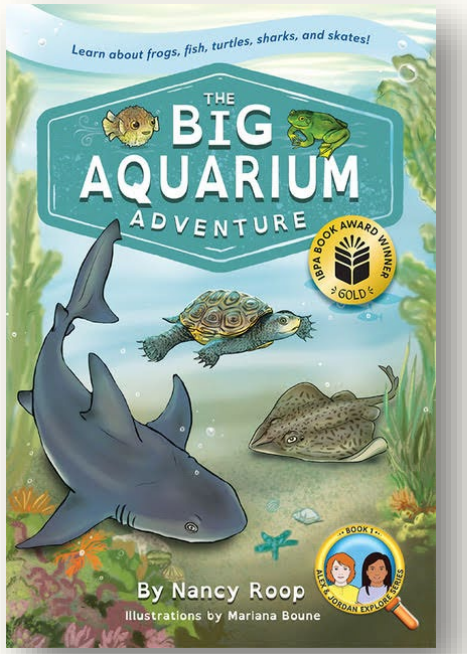
1. **Meet with the Special Education Team** to learn who you are teaching
2. **Coregulate:** provide empathy and support (download TFB framework card)
3. **Use visual** agendas, timers, seating, sensory options
4. **Adapt a lesson** (Refer to "Year at a Glance")
5. **Collection development** of books and resources

Resources

Nancy@DevelopmentalTexts.com

Get an Occasional newsletter

- Quick Tips for ND Readers
- Advance reader copies of new books



Access Slide Deck, Accommodation Guide, and More!

- nancyroop.com/resources

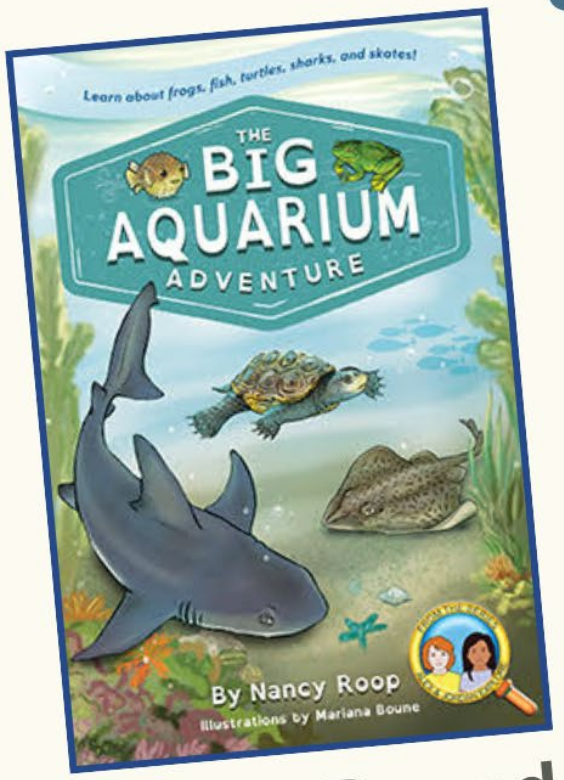
Thank you for being here!

Book Joy for Neurodivergent Readers

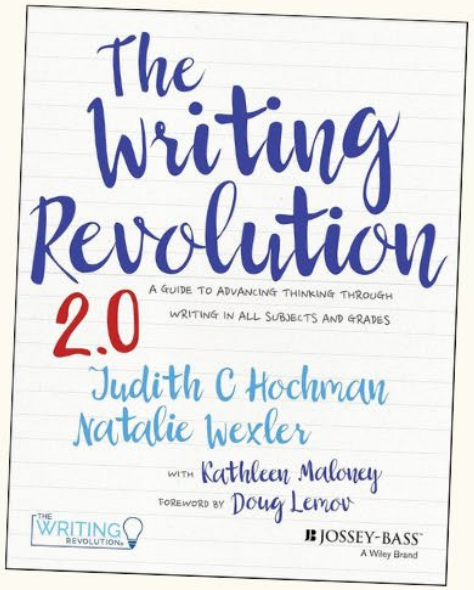
Agenda

- Neurodiversity
- Co-regulation Supports Self-regulation
- 5 Tips for a Successful School Year
- Best Practices
- Differentiated Instruction
- Neurodivergent Readers
- Take aways *and some glimmers!*

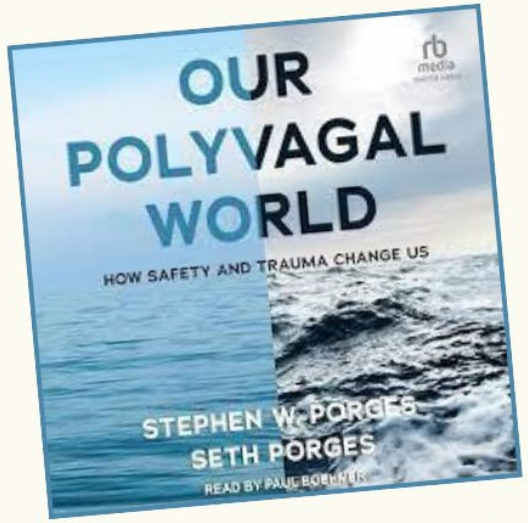
Winners choose at the end!



Spiral Bound



Audiobook



Audiobook

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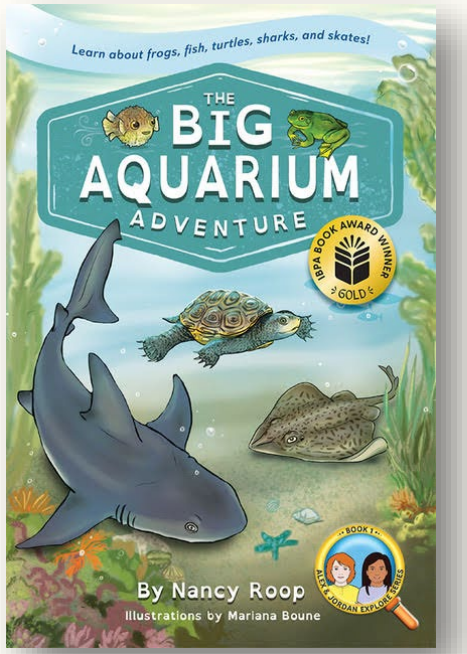

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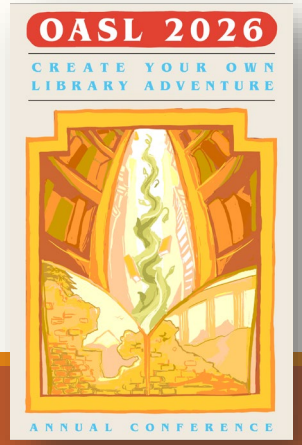


Thank you for being here!

What might you try?

1. Create a Visual Schedule
2. Explore the Library Map Activity
3. Max Explains Everything Scavenger Hunt Bingo
4. I like slop Participation Activity
5. Note-taking Templates (Who, What.)
6. Endangered Animal Project (sea turtle/red fox)
7. Primary Source Activity (Lincoln's Pockets)
8. I am the Storm (Science)
9. Makerspace Salt Art (Teen)
10. Adulting Vocation Station (Teen)

Accommodation Toolkit to Supports Executive Functions

Organization

Planning

Task Initiation

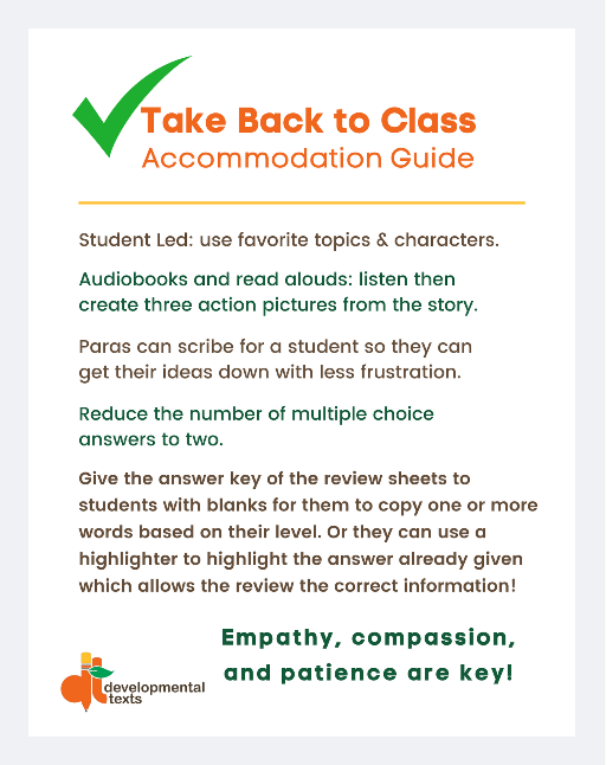
Working Memory

Impulse Control

Emotional Control

Self Monitoring

Flexible Thinking



Take Back to Class
Accommodation Guide

Student Led: use favorite topics & characters.

Audiobooks and read alouds: listen then create three action pictures from the story.

Paras can scribe for a student so they can get their ideas down with less frustration.

Reduce the number of multiple choice answers to two.

Give the answer key of the review sheets to students with blanks for them to copy one or more words based on their level. Or they can use a highlighter to highlight the answer already given which allows the review the correct information!

developmental texts

Empathy, compassion, and patience are key!

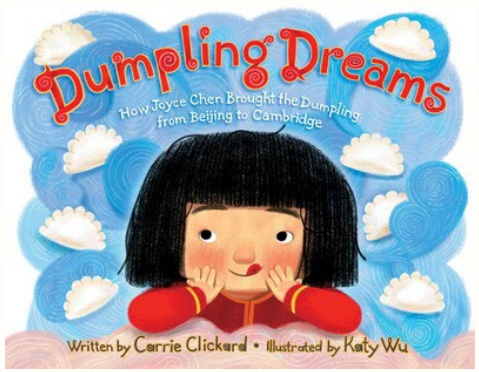
Reducing Executive Functions

1. Identify the learning objective
2. Identify executive functions to complete the work
3. Make a change to the number of tasks or functions
4. Create Routines
5. Use visual cues or lists
   - Vision is processed easier than hearing

Level 3: Activity for Middle/High

Student Craft Activity

- Show the video or read the book
- Use Coffee filters, cotton or pompom balls & glue
- Students will scoop cotton balls into filters and glue them closed



Dumplings Dreams

(Diversity and Lunar New Year)

Teen Story and Activities

Helen Prince
2025-26 SC School Librarian of the Year

Scan or click this link for more ideas!

Lesson Time:	What Should I Read?
--30 minute lesson --Folktales --Music & Dancing --Adulting Vocation stations (salesclerk, interview skills & online forms)	--Informational books --Superhero & Action stories --Fantasy and Science Fiction Stories --Graphic Novels --Ebooks (EPIC!) --Audiobooks --Tumblebooks (SC DISCUS) --Storyline Online --Real true stories

Teen Story and Activities

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Scan or click this link for more ideas!

Technology Fun!

QuiverVision 3D Augmented Coloring

-**Autistic Gaming Initiative website**

--Trivia Games
--Legos, Code.org and Ozobots (builds sequential thinking)

Group Activites:

--Book Club
--Pi Day (Circles with Compass)
--Board & Card Games
--Makerspace Salt Art

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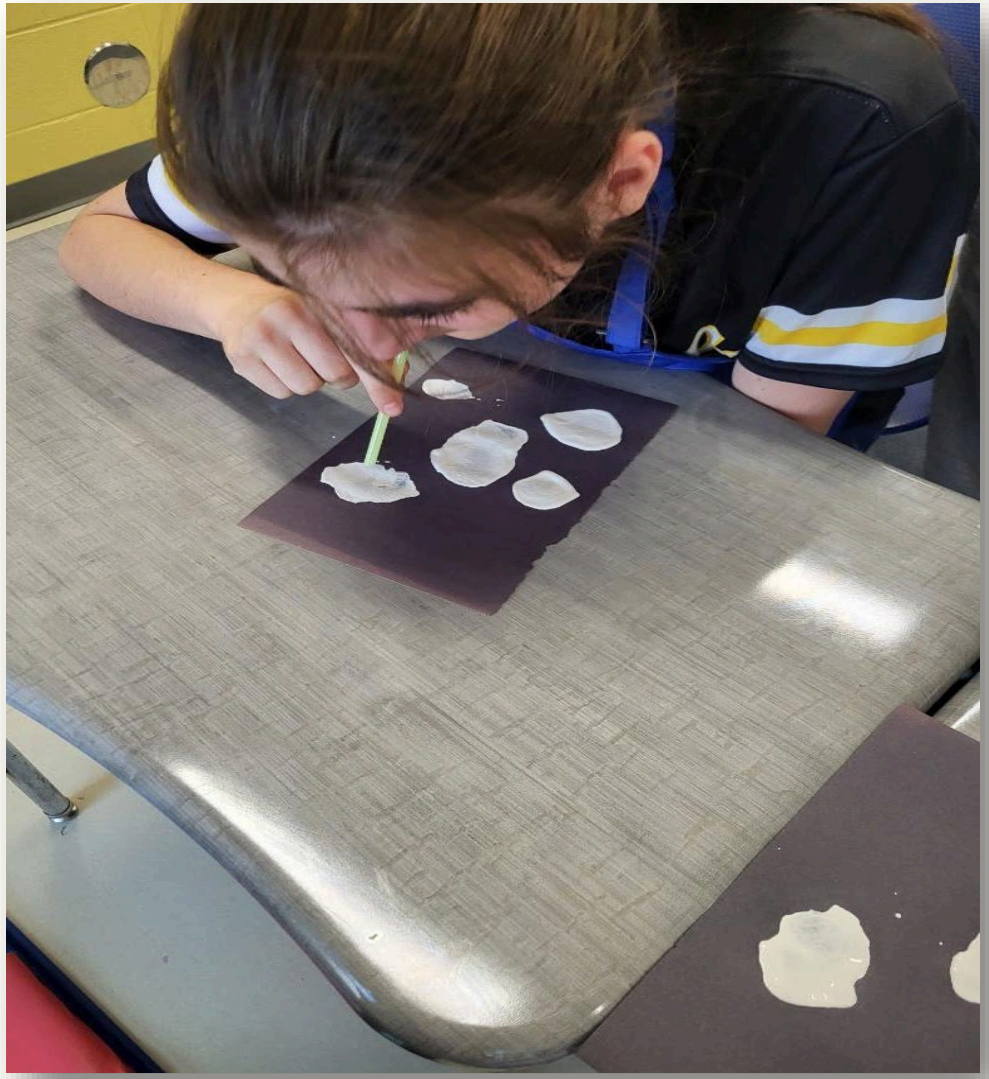
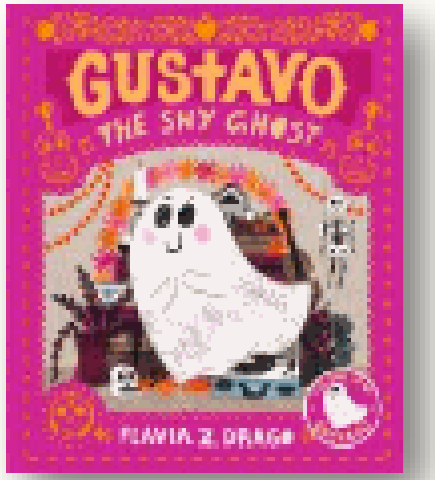


Level 3: Activities for Middle/High

Student Art Activity

- Use white (nontoxic) paint, black card stock paper and large holed straws
- Students will blow a circle of paint into a ghostly form and let them dry



Gustavo the Shy Ghost

(Spooky Fun)

Scaffolding

1. Include word banks
2. Detective questions: use page number clues
3. Add color to worksheets
   - Increases interest
   - Use color-coding to give clues to the answers.
4. Review sheet: provide answer keys
5. Reduce the number of multiple choice to two
6. Para scribes for student in notebook
   - Taking notes of teacher's lesson
   - Brainstorming ideas and sentence creation

Use a word bank.
Color code with lines or dots.
Use same colors consistently.

frog fish turtle shark skate

1. What animal is Stephen's favorite? _____ (p. 13)
2. What was too scary for Stephen? _____ (p. 21)
3. What animal helped Stephen feel calm?_____(p. 81)

DIRECTIONS: which word tells...

Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

aquariums	where	carefully	
turtles	what	last summer	
slowly		inside	
the tank		Alex	
Jordan		sandbar	

DIRECTIONS: expand the sentence.

He walked to the frogs.

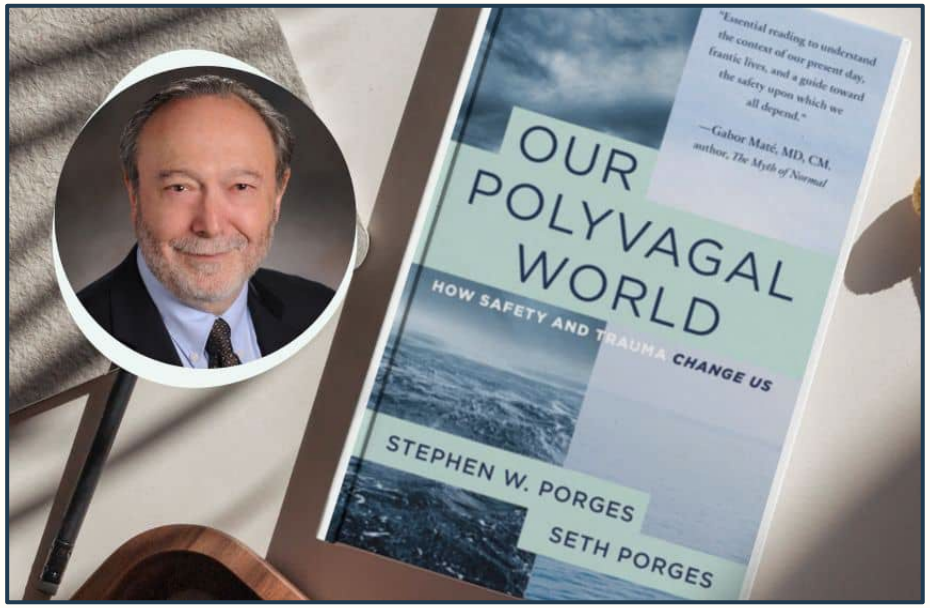
Who? Stephen

When? he felt scared

Where? at the Aquarium, or The Big Aquarium

Stephen walked to the frogs when he felt scared at the aquarium.

Polyvagal Theory by Stephen Porges



PVI | polyvagal institute

Neuroception: the body's automatic ability

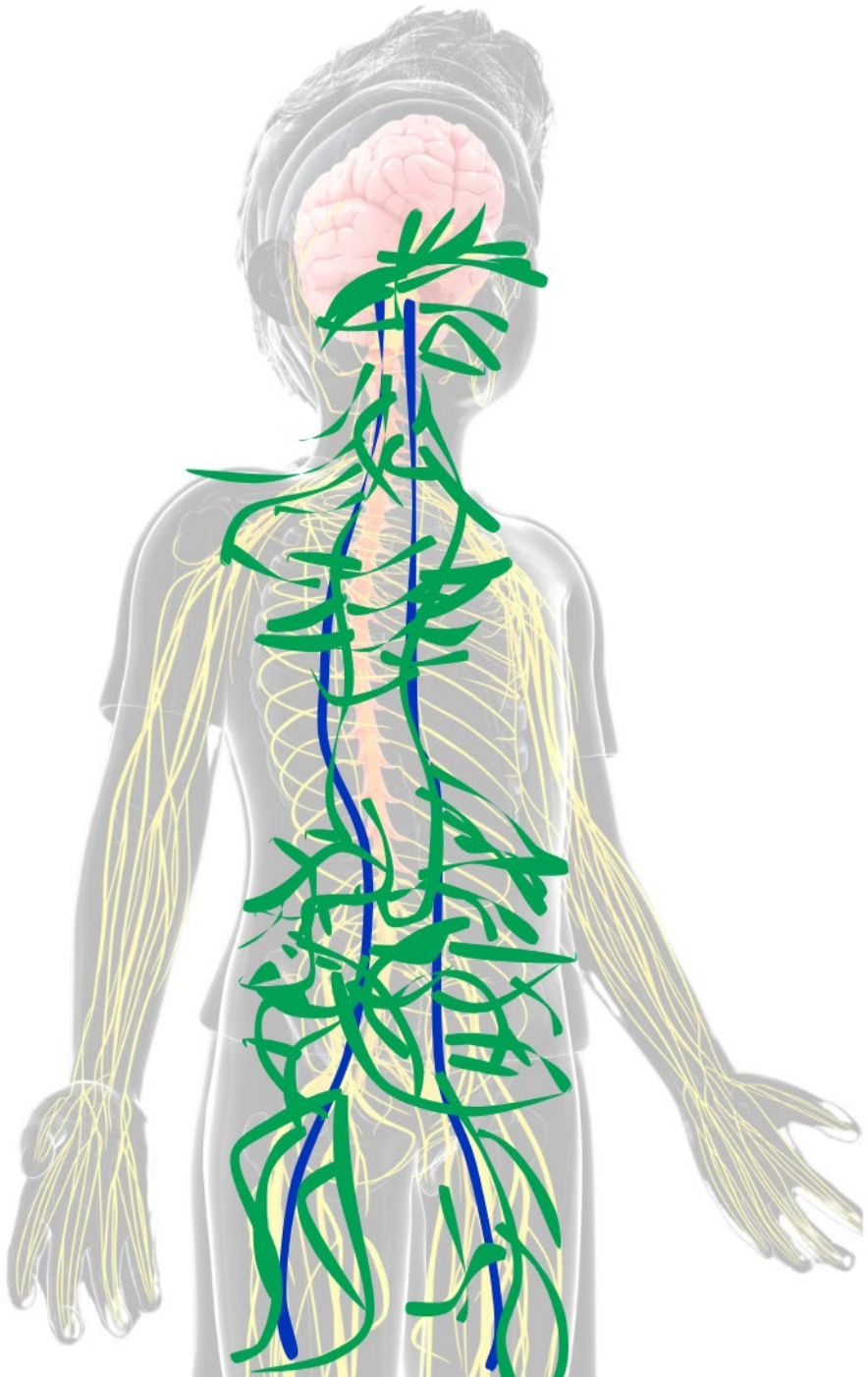
- To assess danger
- Reacts
- to keep us safe
- Attention

Self Regulation:

- A development skill
- Learning varies per person
- Is influenced by the nervous system
- Nervous system can override thinking and feeling

Vagus Nerve

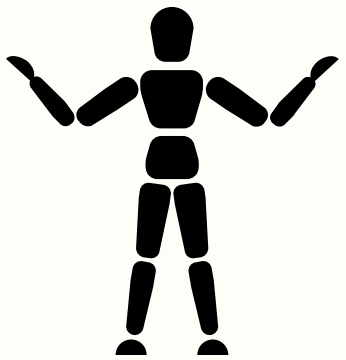
Vagus Nerve Main Branch	Vagus Nerve Connections	Other Nerves
blue	green	yellow



The Eight Sensory Systems

Basic Five: See, hear, smell, taste, and touch

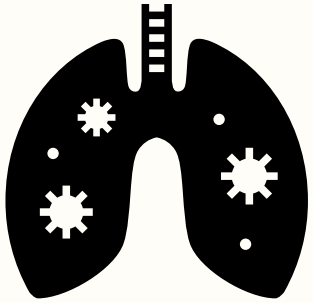
*touch is everywhere on the body



Proprioception is the body's spatial awareness

Vestibular is the motion and balance sense

Interoception is the body's internal awareness



Sensory Regulation and Learning

Environment:

- Designated quiet or comfy areas
- Reduce visual stimulation

Promote self-regulation

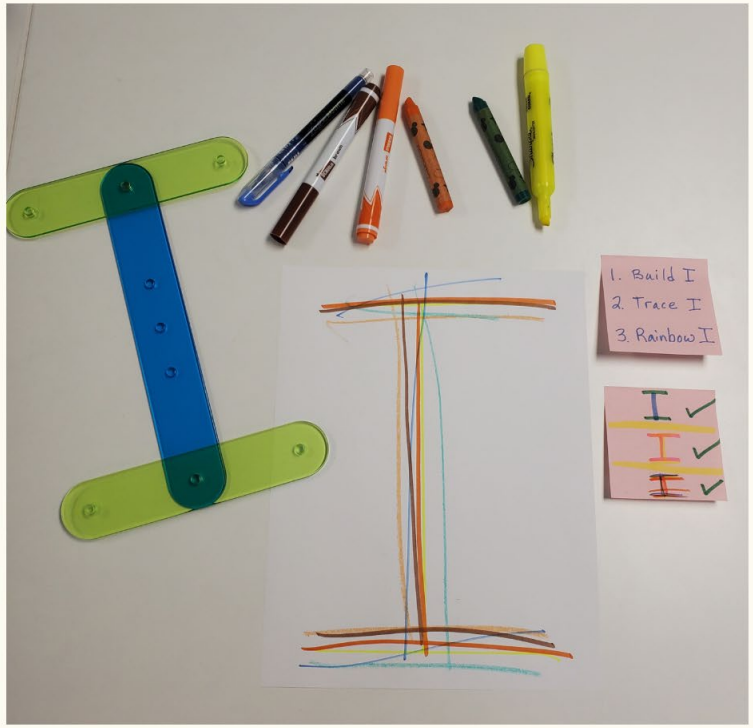
- Provide headphones and fidgets
- “When you are ready…”

Explicit directions

- Pause frequently
- Written on the board

Organization and Planning

Short Task Lists: written on sticky notes or laminated paper



1. Listen to teacher's lesson.
2. Write 3 notes in notebook.
3. Write 4 definitions pg 2.
4. Color 3 states on USA map.
5. Choice time: 5 minutes.

1._____
2._____
3._____
4._____
Next: _____

Moving from Book Trauma to Book Joy with Empathy!

"If a child with ASD is put in a learning situation that they don't understand, it is likely to produce anxiety which interrupts their ability to attend and learn.

Frustration and anxiety may cause negative behaviors such as inattentiveness, acting out, and an increase in ritualistic behavior."

Developmental Texts for Students with Autism;
a Safe Space in the Written World.
Nancy Roop, Undergraduate Thesis, 2020

Understanding Neurodiversity to Create an Inclusive Library

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