

ISSUE NO. 9



# THE BLUE UMBRELLA

*collective*



# THE BLUE UMBRELLA COLLECTIVE

ISSUE NO. 9  
NOVEMBER 2019

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|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| EDITOR EXTRAORDINAIRE | Toni Rozzi                      |
| CONTENT CURATORS      | Kate Montaldo<br>Kristina Rozzi |
| DESIGN DIVA           | Anna Petronio                   |
| COVER PHOTOGRAPHER    | Jenn Satinsky                   |

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## OUR NAME

### BLUE:

blue is the color of trust. it is sincere, reliable and tranquil. blue reduces stress and creates a sense of calmness, it enhances communication and conveys wisdom.

### UMBRELLA:

the umbrella is all encompassing, it is a protecting force, an enveloping shelter. the umbrella is something that covers many different elements, concepts, and subjects. it is an all inclusive agent offering sanctuary for those impacted.

### COLLECTIVE:

a cooperative enterprise, an aggregate with a unified goal. people acting with combined efforts towards a shared end point. a group coming together where individuals have a unique elements to contribute.

# *collective credo*

\* WE SPREAD KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE,  
AND EXPERTISE

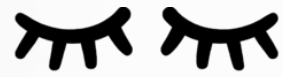
\* WE ARE COMMITTED TO MAKING  
INFORMATION MORE ACCESSIBLE

\* WE ARE A COMMUNITY THAT CELEBRATES  
THE HIGHS AND SUPPORTS THE LOWS

\* WE OFFER SOLIDARITY ON THE JOURNEY  
OF EMBRACING DIFFERENT

\* WE PLEDGE TO PROMOTE ACCEPTANCE  
AND AWARENESS





littlesleepies



# *publishers note*

During this season of transition we've included some strategies and techniques that may help you in your home or classroom.

This issue has a comprehensive list of DIY Sensory Diet items, things you can do at home with little to no cost! Teachers, you must consider implementing some of these menu items in your classroom for those littles who seek or avoid.

Parents, you can find an article penned by yours truly on ways you can improve the relationship between you and your child's teacher.

If you've got an Annual Review coming up then you don't want to miss Connect the DOTS, by Brandie Rosen. Brandie breaks down the steps towards creating an IEP that you and your team can be proud of; most importantly, it can set your child on the path to success!

All you multi-sensory fans, check out the Current Obsession piece!

*-Loni*



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# contributors



THE CALMING CORNER  
School Psychologist



COR  
Autism/Disability Service



RAINA & DAVID CORDELL  
holFamily



SARAH KIRK  
School Counselor



BRANDIE ROSEN  
Brandie Rosen Consulting



TONI ROZZI  
Hamptons Ed







# What's in the bag

SCHOOL  
COUNSELOR  
EDITION



BY: SARAH KIRK  
SCHOOL COUNSELOR

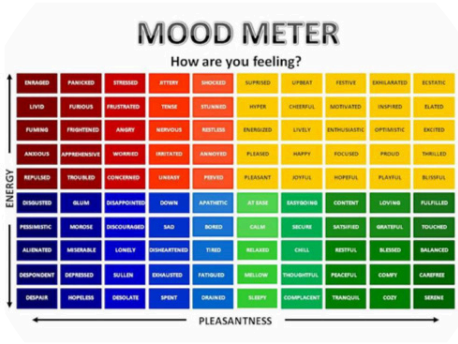


Hello! I am Sarah and I am a proud elementary school counselor in Oklahoma. As a school counselor, you never know what the day might throw your way but here on some "go-tos" that I will always keep nearby!





## FEELINGS POSTER OR MOOD METER



As a school counselor, we spend a lot of time talking about our feelings. However not all students have developed an understanding of their different emotions and how to manage them. Because of this, I have lots of visual resources available. I have emoji posters to identify different feelings and for the older students, I love using the Mood Meter. It is a great way for them to develop a deeper understanding of their emotions.

## AARON'S THINKING PUDDY

This stuff is pretty amazing! It can be bounced, stretched, and smashed. And it comes in so many forms: color-changing, scented, magnetic, glow-in-the dark. It is great for building strength in the hands and fine motor skills. Plus, I love it as a sensory tool or fidget while working with students.



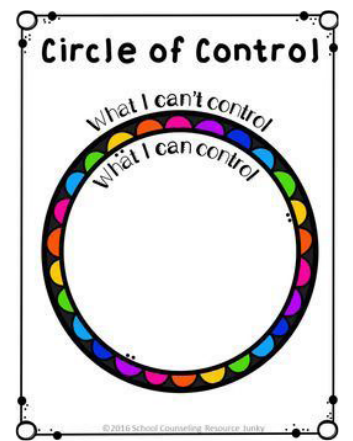
## "ALWAYS BE KIND" STICKERS

If you are a student of mine, you know how much I value kindness. I believe that kindness is one of the most important things we can teach our young people. Just imagine the world if everyone showed just a little more kindness! My students see and hear many messages of kindness but one of my favorite simple reminders are my "always be kind" stickers. I give them out to students who I "catch being kind" throughout our school.



# CIRCLE OF CONTROL

When working with young people, they often encounter struggles that are outside of their control: loss of a loved one through death or incarceration, a parent's divorce, the negative effects of poverty, another student being unkind. When these situations arise, I draw a big circle on a piece of paper and we have a conversation about what belongs on the inside of their circle (what they can control) and what belongs outside of their circle (what they cannot control). I have found that this visual is a great way to help students focus on what they can control and help them understand steps they can take that are within their control to alleviate their struggles.





## SNACKS

We know that students cannot be their best if they are hungry. Because of this, I keep many snacks on hand and I pass them out all the time. I always say “no hungry tummies!”

## A SMILE, TWO LISTENING EARS, & TWO ARMS READY FOR A HUG

While all the resources listed above (and many more!) are great supports for school counselors, I have found that a genuine smile, ears to listen, and a comforting hug are the most valuable tools I have in my toolbox. My goal is for my students to love, to trust, and to know they can depend on me— that is when I know I have succeeded. Relationship must be at the heart of all that we do!



rose & rex





ROCKETS OF AWESOME

# TIPS & TRICKS *with*

COR is an ABA and Autism Service provider in NY, NJ & MO. They offer ABA, parent training, early intervention (ei), multidiscipline training, center-based programming, and these fantastic videos!



*click to watch*



*Holiday Tips & Tricks for Kids with  
(and without) Special Needs*

— THE COR —  
BEHAVIORAL GROUP

**Autism Services, ABA Therapy, and Adaptive Fitness**

[www.corbehavioral.com](http://www.corbehavioral.com)





**minted.**



# sensory DIET!



BY: DAVID AND RAINA HOL  
THE HOL FAMILY



When our son was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 6, a lot of things began to click for us about his behavior and development over the years.

From day one, there were a lot of red flags in all seven sensory domains. Overall, he was a more sensitive baby. He struggled with breastfeeding, constipation, colic, sleep, startled easily, had extreme separation anxiety, was delayed in most developmental skills, was sensitive to lights and sounds...you get the picture.

Even before his official autism diagnosis, our son underwent various therapies related to sensory processing issues including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy.

While these therapies did help with developing some of his lagging skills, our insurance always ran out before we could see any real improvement in his behavior and emotional regulation...so often we just gave up on the ability for any of these therapies to really benefit him.

It was when our son turned 5 that we really began to hit some walls. His behavior was out of control. We were at a loss as to how to help our son.

As we began to research more, we stumbled across the idea of a DIY sensory diet that parents could design at home. Without health insurance and limited funds to cover the soaring cost of therapies, the idea that we could provide some therapy at home gave us hope.

We started looking at areas our son was avoiding certain sensory situations (hated swings, couldn't ride a bike, avoided crowds) and was seeking out additional sensory stimulation in other areas (craved being tickled, physical touch, weighted blankets, bouncing, fidgeting).

As soon as we realized our son didn't just love to be tickled and play chase...but that he actually needed these types of activities to be able to regulate his brain...it was like a light-bulb went off...for us and for him!

Our son has a combination of underreactive and overreactive sensory processing, depending on the environment and several other factors. Being able to create an individualized sensory diet that caters to his unique situation has made a world of difference in helping him to regulate his ability to stay calm, remain focused, and regulate his overall behavior.

Read on to learn all about what a sensory diet is, how it can benefit your child with learning, focus, behavior, and emotional regulation, and how to discover which activities should be part of your child's individual sensory diet.

## What is a Sensory Diet?

A sensory diet is an individually designed "menu" of physical activities and accommodations to provide a level of stimulation that is uniquely tailored to each child.

The goal is to find a "just right" level of sensory input for each individual child for each of the seven sensory domains (auditory, visual, tactile, gustatory, olfactory, proprioceptive, and vestibular).

A sensory diet can be created by a specialist such as an Occupational Therapist, or can be designed by parents.

Once you have created your child's sensory diet menu, you can choose different activities to create a routine that your child repeats throughout the day, OR you can use their sensory diet menu to create individual "meals" depending on what your child is craving from a sensory perspective.

If you are brand new to sensory issues or just want a bit more info, you can check out this post on making sense of sensory issues in kids.

## Who Can Benefit from a Sensory Diet?

Many children with mental or physical disabilities have irregular responses to sensory input, and sensory processing issues often go hand in hand with emotional

regulation and behavioral problems.

A sensory diet is especially helpful for children with sensory processing disorder, autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, and any child who struggles with regulating emotions, behavior, or responses to sensory stimuli.

Some children are overreactive, quickly becoming overwhelmed and hyperactive in response to sensory stimulation. Other children are underreactive and seek out sensory stimulation in order to regulate their brains and function.

Some children (like my son) have a combination of these two reactions, and require different activities or accommodations depending on their needs.

## How a Sensory Diet Improves Learning, Focus, Behavior, and Emotional Regulation?

Children with sensory processing issues have difficulty with organizing input the brain receives from the various senses.

This underlying neurological dysfunction impacts the child's ability to regulate many areas including basic functions (eating, sleeping, elimination), learning (memory and comprehension), focus (sitting still and paying attention), behavior, and emotional regulation.

A sensory diet of activities and accommodations improves all of these areas by targeting the underlying dysfunction in the brain rather than just focusing on individual symptoms.

For example, sensory therapy can benefit children with learning disabilities by enhancing the brain's ability to learn rather than teaching specific skills.

As the brain begins to develop the ability to properly regulate sensory input, children naturally begin to pay attention in school, remember, learn new skills, and regulate their emotions.

The brain of a child with sensory processing issues is like a thermostat that either always makes the room too hot or too cold. Sensory seeking and sensory avoiding behaviors are the brain's way of trying to regulate the "temperature."

A sensory diet helps to regulate the thermostat (brain) to find a temperature that is just right for that child.



# How to Create an Individualized Sensory Diet for Your Child

When you are creating your child's individual sensory "menu," you first need to observe whether your child is exhibiting sensory seeking behaviors, or sensory avoiding behaviors.

If your child consistently is seeking out sensory stimulation by being overly aggressive with hugs and touch, then part of their sensory diet might include a weighted blanket or vest.

## Examples of Sensory Seeking Behaviors Include:

- Prefers sour or spicy foods
- Overly aggressive with physical touch
- Loves to roughhouse, tickle, chase
- Constantly moving, spinning, on the go
- Hates routine
- Touches everything
- Climbs everything
- Puts everything in their mouth
- Loves loud noise, bright lights, crowded places
- Trouble sleeping

## Examples of Sensory Avoiding Behaviors Include:

- Dislikes loud noises, large crowds, public places
- Dislikes bright lights, prefers complete darkness for sleep
- Prefers quiet activities
- Likes to be alone or play 1:1
- Low threshold for pain
- Is bothered by clothing tags, itchy material, certain textures
- Is a picky eater
- Doesn't like to be hugged or touched
- Prefers routine and is bothered by any change in routine

If your child tends to shut down in response to loud noises, some quiet time with noise cancelling headphones or gentle music may be part of their sensory diet.

Once you have identified your child's sensory needs in each domain, you can create a sensory diet routine.

This is a routine of activities your child performs for about 5-10 minutes, 2-3 times throughout the day.

Another option for children who may show both sensory seeking and sensory avoiding behaviors depending on the circumstances, creating a sensory menu that allows them (or you) to choose from may be a better choice.

Whether you choose a set sensory diet routine or a sensory diet menu, it is important to re-evaluate your child's response from time to time and adapt their sensory diet.

You may find that certain activities are no longer working and replace them with new ones, or your child may no longer require sensory activities in all domains over time.

Be sure to include your child's other caregivers at home, daycare, and school so their sensory diet can be part of their day anywhere they go.

Another great way to incorporate sensory activities into your child's sensory diet is with a sensory scavenger hunt. You can create sensory scavenger hunts for each season to incorporate fun, outdoor activities into your child's sensory diet. Check out this post to grab your free printable sensory scavenger hunts for each season.

## 121 Sensory Diet Activities

### Tactile (touch):

- Play with playdough
- Massage lotion onto hands or skin
- Play with kinetic sand
- Play with foam
- Play with slime
- Build sandcastles
- Play with a water table
- Make dough (cookie, bread, pizza)
- Brush teeth with a vibrating toothbrush
- Squeeze a stress ball
- Play with silly putty
- Finger paint
- Pretend to shave with shaving cream
- Give or receive a massage
- Tickle or be tickled

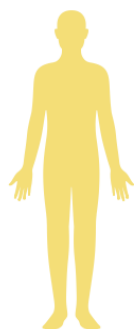


- Carry groceries
- Push a vacuum
- Carry laundry basket
- Do yoga
- Shovel snow
- Build a snowman
- Rake leaves
- Knead dough
- Mop, Sweep, Dust
- Use a therapy ball
- Use a weighted blanket
- Carry a weighted teddy bear

### Vestibular (movement, balance, spatial orientation):

### Proprioceptive (self-movement, body position, body awareness):

- Jump on a trampoline
- Roll on a therapy ball
- Wear a body sock
- Practice yoga
- Do "heavy work":
- Move furniture
- Move a wood pile
- Rearrange books or toys
- Take out the trash
- Push a shopping cart (real or toy)
- Push a stroller



- Do this animal moves workout for kids
- Move your body: run, jump, march, dance, walk
- Climb stairs
- Ride a bike, scooter, or roller-blade
- Ice-skate
- Go sledding
- Ride a merry-go-round
- Roll down a hill
- Do somersaults
- Do push-ups
- Do jumping jacks
- Play catch
- Kick a ball
- Swing a bat



- Throw a ball
- Play "Simon Says"
- Make snow angels
- Swing
- Play hop-scotch
- Jump with a skipping rope
- Climb and slide on playground
- Bounce on therapy ball
- Walk on a balance beam
- Practice gymnastics
- Dance

### Oral motor (gustatory):

- Chew on gummy snacks
- Chew gum
- Blow bubbles
- Drink from a straw
- Eat crunchy foods
- Suck on a hard candy or lollipop
- Blow a whistle
- Play an instrument that uses the mouth like a harmonica or wind instrument
- Use chew beads or other chewelry
- Apply lip balm
- Eat something sour or drink lemonade
- Brush teeth with a vibrating toothbrush
- Lick a popsicle
- Suck on frozen fruit
- Lick a stamp
- Use mouthwash
- Use an oil pulling tab for kids
- Eat something frozen like homemade ice cream
- Practice vowel sounds (A-E-I-O-U)
- Sing
- Yawn



### Visual:

- Wear sunglasses or hat
- Use calming sensory bottles
- Read a social story
- Use story stones
- Lower or brighten lights



- Read a book
- Look at pictures
- Watch television
- Do a crossword
- Solve a puzzle
- Color, paint, draw
- Use a visual timer
- Use room-darkening blinds
- Use a nightlight

### Auditory:

- Listen to music
- Listen to a podcast
- Listen to a book on tape
- Bang on pots and pans
- Play an instrument
- Wear noise cancelling headphones
- Use a white noise machine
- Listen to nature sounds
- Play "guess that sound"
- Have ten minutes of silence



### Olfactory (smell):

- Use essential oils
- Bake something
- Go on a smelling scavenger hunt (smell a flower, smell a tree, etc)
- Play a guess that smell game
- Scratch and sniff stickers
- Smelly markers
- Scented playdough
- Practice deep breathing



*enjoy trying these  
diy sensory diet  
ideas at home!*



Strategies, techniques,  
and approaches to  
support the littles in  
your life!



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# podcasts

# MEDIA

## PODCASTS FOR LITTLE THINKERS

**Smash Boom Best** - This family friendly, intro to debate podcast features kids arguing their opposing viewpoints on crucial topics such as Pizza vs Tacos. A kid judge scores the debaters on facts and passion, then crowns the winner Smash Boom Best! Introducing your learner to the Socratic Method in this fun and silly format is a great way to prepare them for future educational expectations. *Ages 6-12*

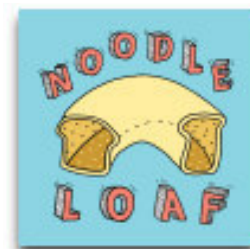


**But Why?** - No, but why? Our little thinkers can be inquisitive beyond our knowledge and patience. This great podcast addresses questions submitted by children going beyond the classic *Why is the sky blue?* to *Why do days start at 12 o'clock?* *Ages 5-10*

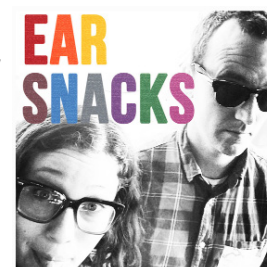


## PODCASTS WITH A MUSIC FLAIR

**Noodle Loaf** - A music education specialist creates an interactive podcast with the help of his goofball kids. This dad knows what's boppin' and keeps episodes to around 10min. He gets listeners singing, rhyming, and moving, and features special guests to share their expertise on things like bones and being a rockstar. *Ages 3-9*



**Ear Snacks** - 'A musical podcast for kids about the world.' Andrew & Polly know music and they know kids. Their podcast features catchy music about topics that are important to children, like animal teeth, bugs, and pajamas. *Ages 3-6*



## PODCASTS FOR EMOTIONAL GROWTH

**The Big Life Kids Podcast** - From the folks over at The Big Life Journal, this podcast encourages children to take control of their mindset to reach big goals. Listeners learn tips and tricks from others world wide to change their mindset and take on new challenges like hospital trips and believing in themselves. *Ages 5-10*



**Be Calm on Ahway Island** - These soothing voices incorporate inclusion, bedtime stories, and meditation for your littles. They teach strategies for self-regulation and calming techniques, even taking 'deep dragon breaths' which your child can implement anytime they need to get a handle on big feelings. *Ages 2-8*



# dexterity

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/dek-'ster-ə-dē/

*noun*

skill and ease using the hands,  
ability to manipulate the fin-  
gers while performing small  
motor tasks,

*synonyms*

fine motor skills, nimbleness,  
finesse, readiness, mastery,  
aptness, adroitness



# IMPROVING THE PARENT - TEACHER relationship



BY: TONI ROZZI  
HAMPTONS ED



Parents. Teachers. Working together for what's best for your child, right? Sometimes you hit it off and things are great, but other times you are counting down the days till the end of the school year. So, what can you do as a parent to improve the relationship between you and your child's teacher? Read on and try what works for you.

## INITIATE EARLY

Alright so it's the beginning of the year, you just found out who your child's teacher is going to be.

You might be feeling elated that you got who you wanted. Or you might be apprehensive based on what you've heard from the rumor train.

Either way, take charge of the new relationship and initiate contact

with your child's teacher!

Many teachers will send a note home to your child, or an introduction email to you, but don't feel like you have to wait for this to respond back.

We're all capable of finding an email address, especially when most are listed on the school's website.

If you are unable to find it there, consider calling the school's office to ask for contact information for your child's teacher.

A quick little note from you will set the tone for your relationship and begin to build rapport.

*"Hi Mrs. Hamilton!  
Our daughter is Aimee  
Jones and we just  
discovered you will be  
her teacher.  
We are all so excited for  
a fabulous second  
grade year!"*

It's important to note that some teacher's do not check their email over the summer, so if you're not getting a response, don't panic!

If your child has an IEP or 504 you may want to share the most recent copy with your child's teacher in a follow up email this is why initiating contact early is best.

*\*Surprisingly, teachers (especially GenEd teachers) often do not receive copies of your child's paperwork till after school is in session.*

*This is not the time to unload your hopes and dreams or write a dissertation of previous experiences, keep it short and sweet.*

*You also want to establish rapport with each of the support teachers or therapists your child sees, so get your correspondence on!*

## EXPECTATIONS

Alright, it's time to keep your expectations in check. While your child is the center of your whole world, he or she is just one of many of other center's of the world in the teacher's classroom.

This does not mean they are not invested in your child's education!

You just need to remain realistic when it comes to communication and understand that there are probably 30 other adults who feel exactly the same as you.

Despite your previous experience with a teacher, you need to try your best to start off with a clean slate.

Ultimately, this is about your child and their future. Refrain from projecting your feelings about last year's teacher onto this year's teacher, who has no control over their co-worker.

What you can do, is be clear about your expectations of the year to come, or from this point on.

While the teacher may not be able to meet all your expectations, it is a good conversation to walk through.

The teacher can express what they expect from you as a parent, and you can express what you expect of the teacher. Acknowledging and accepting each other's roles can prevent resentment.

As you have this conversation, remember that you are both on the same side, be courteous and respectful.

If your child receives related services or support from a resource teacher, it is important to make sure that you speak with them as well.

## PROGRESS

Seeing your child make progress gives you that feeling in your heart that sometimes you just can't contain, so don't!

Reaching out to your child's teacher and acknowledging that you are seeing progress is like a giant high five!

A short little email or written note goes so far.

*"We are so happy to see that Aimee has made progress with her subtraction skills, keep up the great work, Mrs. Hamilton. We appreciate you!"*

If your child is failing to make progress, bring it to the teacher's attention, but be sure the way you say it is not accusatory. It is not solely this teacher's fault (and it is never EVER your child's fault).

The most important thing to fo-

cus on is how things are going to change so your child can make progress.

If you end up having to request an evaluation, having your child's classroom teacher on board is helpful.

## HOMELIFE

While you try to keep your home life home, sometimes it's better to let your child's teacher know what's happening in their home life in case it is impacting your child at school.

Let's be honest, things get crazy at home, but we're not talking about sending an email daily to talk about your mama taxi schedule.

If a routine is changing, someone in the family is ill, a parent is away or has gone back to work, etc. you will want to share this with your child's teacher as it may impact their school day in a physical or emotional way.

If your child struggles with communication, this is an incredibly important area to focus on.

Informing your child's teacher of sleep patterns, eating habits, changes in routine, medication, mood, preferences, etc. is crucial.

If your child is unable to communicate what takes place at school or home, you may want to request a home/school communication book be added to your child's accommodations.



# CONFERENCES

Ahhhh parent-teacher conferences.

If you have built up a solid rapport with your child's teacher then there should be no surprises at a conference.

Any concerns your child's teacher may have about their growth should have already been introduced to you.

If you are surprised by something your child's teacher says to you, take a breath. Express your confusion and request a meeting at a later date when there is more time.

Prepare for the conference. Know your beginning and end times, and respect them.

If you have further questions that

would take you beyond the allotted conference time, ask to schedule a follow up. Be prepared to take notes if needed.

Stop the teacher and ask them to explain any 'teacher jargon' they start throwing around. You are not expected to know everything!

Openly communicating what further information you need will only help your child.

Tell them IN-PERSON how much you appreciate what they are doing in the classroom.

A face to face is always more appropriate to express gratitude and chances are, they will express their appreciation of the engaged role you have taken in your child's educational career.



**minted.**



**Wonderbly**





Obsession is an understatement! It's hard to describe just how awesome this product is.

TacScreen is a screen that can be applied to your smart device to provide learners with a multi-sensory experience.

The tactile experience that this brings to learning apps is amazing. It revolutionizes the 'sand writing' strategy used in many interventions.

The multisensory experience of texture under the fingertip allows additional input to the learner's system, triggering additional senses beyond sight to help the learner retain the information

This dyslexic mama developed the TacScreen when she and her son were introduced to tactile learning through Orton-Gillingham.

True to the out of the box thinking that is a dyslexia superpower, TacScreen is now available as a removeable tool which can be used as a tracing pad on vertical surfaces such as the refridgerator or dishwasher!!!



The benefits of the TacScreen are not limited to those with dyslexia, learners who aquire information in different ways such as those with ADHD, Autism, Sensory Processing Disorder, ect. also benefit from the tactile input provided by the TacScreen, but let's be honest, every learning profile benefits!

And if the development of this incredibly amazing product wasn't enough, they also offer an app.

The app is for tracing upper and lower case letters as well as long and short vowels - huge win!







# mosaic

WEIGHTED BLANKETS



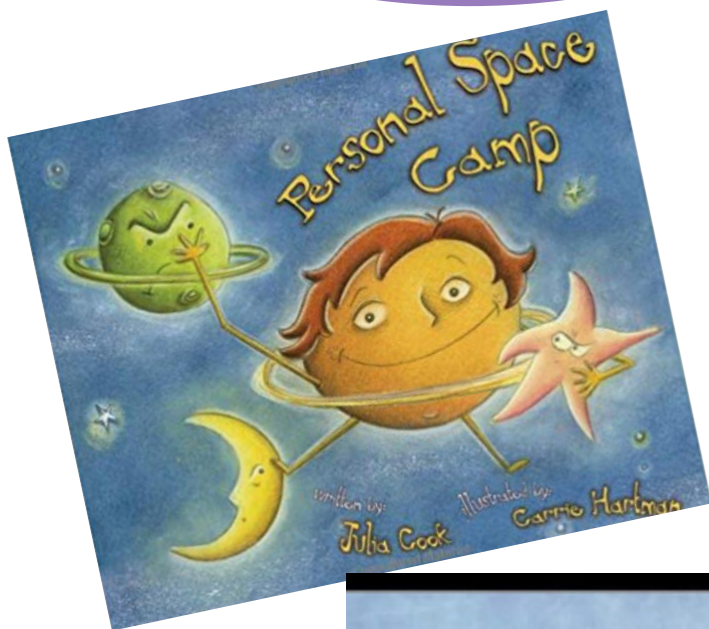
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A child is  
struggling with  
personal space...  
Any suggestions  
for the classroom?

-Beth L.

COLLECTIVE  
COLLOQUY

The  
Calming  
Corner



the calming corner  
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

The book Personal Space Camp! Also, I always have my kids stick their hands out straight in front of them to give them a visual of how far away from other students they should be when in line, sitting, etc.





This Space Invader is part of The Superflex crew in SocialThinking's Superhero Curriculum. He is great as a visual prompt to remind your littles to stay in their own space. This song can be found on the Superflex CD.

## Space Invader

(1:38)

I'm gonna get real close  
Really close to you,  
Invade your space  
That's what I like to do.

I'm gonna get so close  
That we almost touch,  
Folks turn away  
They don't like that too much.

That's cuz I'm Space Invader, Space Invader  
That's my name.  
Space Invader, Space Invader  
That's my game.

I want my friends to feel good  
When they're next to me,  
Where do I stand?  
How close can I be?

I'll flex my brain  
See what others do,  
What does it say if they turn away?  
They don't want to stay  
Hey, that's not okay,  
I'll get the clue, that's a big break through.

C'mon, get closer.

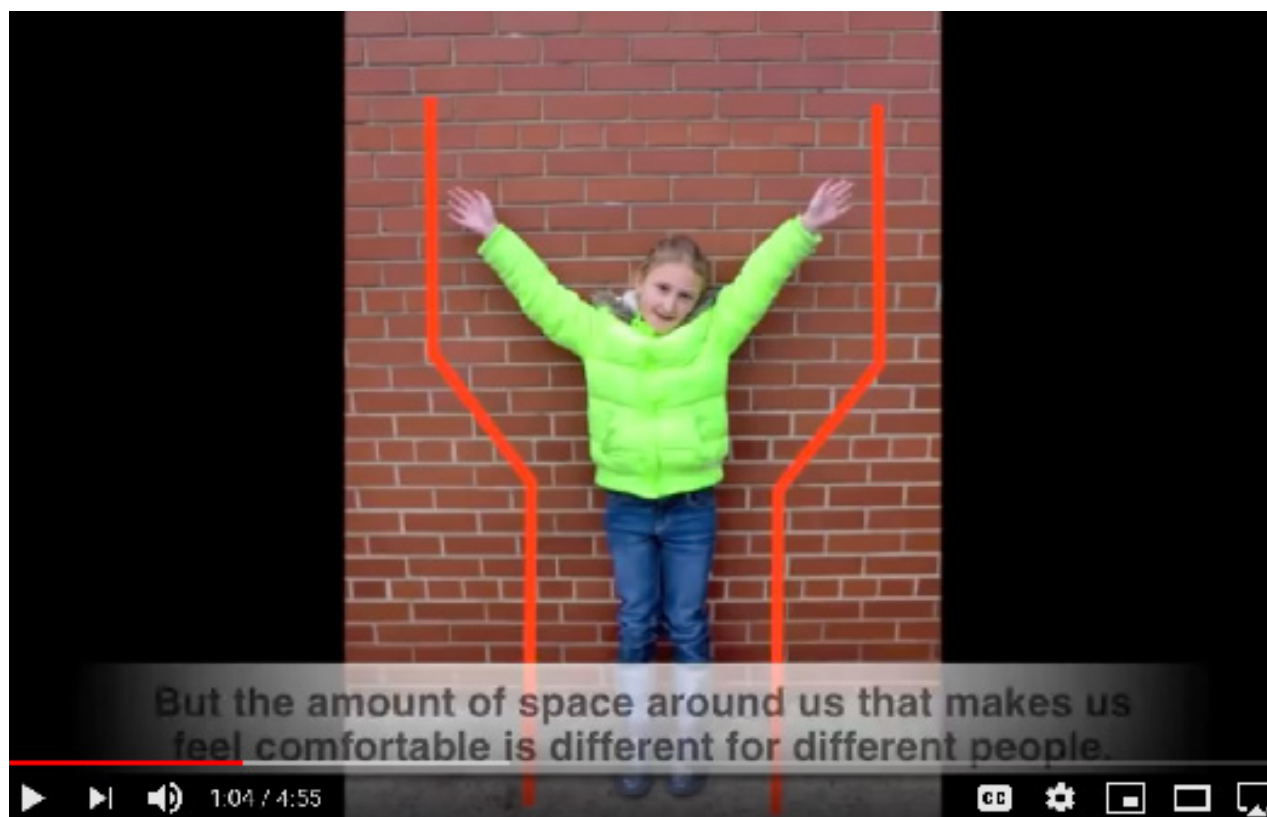
No, Space Invader  
I don't want to play.  
I want folks to feel good  
When I look their way.

If I keep one arm distance  
Between them and me,  
We'll each have personal space  
Where we all want to be.

Head, hips, feet forward  
Face to face,  
Space Invader, Space Invader  
Stop invading my space!

Head, hips, feet forward  
Face to face,  
Space Invader, Space Invader  
Stop invading my space!

Copyright © 2015 Think Social Publishing, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Lyrics by Patti & Michael Silverthorn  
CD Title: Superflex™: My Hero Inside is based on the book, Superflex™: A Superhero Social Thinking® Curriculum



Join the kids from Baraboo School District as they explain personal space with plenty of definitions and hands on techniques to identify and practice staying in your own personal space! Great for school aged littles who may be struggling with personal space.

This catchy song is set to a familiar tune and is accompanied by cute graphics. The video includes some concrete visuals that will help your little apply concepts from the song to real personal space activities, such as the hula hoop personal space example.







# CREATE AN IEP

YOU AND YOUR TEAM

CAN BE PROUD OF

AND SET YOUR CHILD  
DOWN A

path to success

BY: BRANDIE ROSEN  
BRANDIE ROSEN CONSULTING



Does the idea of helping to create an IEP overwhelm you and leave you feeling like you don't have anything to offer to the team? Do you end up leaving the IEP meeting feeling like what the team created doesn't represent your child and might not be enough to meet their needs?

The emotions that are activated when dealing with critical issues around our children can be intense and walking into your first IEP (or your 10th or 20th) can be an overwhelming experience.

Not long ago, I met with a family who had just finished their son's second IEP. They were feeling confused and upset.

They hadn't felt heard at the IEP meeting but what was most upsetting to

them was that they didn't feel like they had enough knowledge even to know if the new IEP for their child was what he needed.

They felt as if they were failing their son because they didn't know enough to make sure what they'd done for their son was the right thing. That's a terrible feeling.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be that way!



What if I told you that all you have to do is connect the dots to assure your child has an IEP that meets all of his/her needs? Hopefully you'll say,

*"A simple connect the dots?  
I can handle that!"*

Let's start at the beginning where all good connect the dots start!  
Grab the Connect The Dots PowerSheet to keep you on track.



eating, social skills, behavior skills, communication skills, and mobility skills.

Developing the present levels requires an assessment to gather data to be able to define current levels accurately.

Present levels are critical because they are the starting point for the entire IEP.

Without accurate present levels, the team won't know where to start, and without that starting point, it's impossible to know where to go next.

The IEP team must talk about the impact of the child's disability on his or her ability to learn and do the kinds of things that typical, nondisabled children learn and do.

It is NOT the IEP teams' job to assure that every child can fully experience schooling (in the same way) that nondisabled children do, however, it IS their job to make sure that all children access the learning environment to the maximum extent possible!

## OBJECTIVE AND MEANINGFUL IEP GOALS

The goals should always be developed based on the deficits noted in the Present Level of Performance section of the IEP.

### *Power Rule!*

*If there is a deficit noted in the present level portion of the IEP, there needs to be a goal in that area, and if there is a goal, there needs to be a present level.*

## DATA-DRIVEN PRESENT LEVELS

The present levels statement is developed by considering the areas of development in which a child with a disability may need support.

These are roughly divided into two areas of development: academic and functional.

*Academic Development* generally refers to a child's performance in academic areas (e.g., reading or language arts, math, science, and history).

*Functional Development* are generally skills that are not considered academic. Some examples of these skills could be;



*(This is an easy way to remember what needs to be included in the IEP).*

Just as present levels will be discussed and recorded in both academic and functional development areas, IEP goals should be developed in those areas as needed.

IEP goals should be individualized for each student. No two students are alike so no two goals should be alike!

*IEP goals need to:*

- *Be measurable*
- *Include a baseline of where the student currently is performing*
- *Specify what skill they focus on*
- *Be actionable*
- *Be time specific*

Goals are the heart and soul of an IEP! People tend to focus on the services, but the goal is what will be taught and what a student is expected to learn!

The goals lay out the learning path for a student and the focus for their entire school year.

Although an IEP will not include every single item that a student will work on throughout the school year, by looking at the goals, anyone involved in the process should be able to see what the targets and focus for that child are.

## **T** THOROUGH AND THOUGHTFUL ACCOMMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

Accommodations change how a stu-

dent learns the material. A modification changes what a student is taught or expected to learn.

Students that are working on grade level curriculum but just need support in the way things are presented are changes in the way they learn, generally only require accommodation.

Some students are working far below grade level or require a separate curriculum. These students typically will have both accommodations AND modifications.

*Examples of Accommodations include:*

- *Extra time to complete the assignment*
- *Doing every other math problem (as long as all standards are covered)*
- *Movement breaks*
- *Ability to type assignments*

*Examples of Modifications Include:*

- *Below grade level assignments (that cut out critical standards)*
- *Use of alternative curriculum*
- *Use of notes and textbook for all tests*

### **Power Rule!**

*Accommodations help a student while they are learning the skill deficits identified in the present levels and goals. These are the supports that educators provide for students WHILE they are learning the skill.*

## **S** SERVICES THAT MEET THE CHILDS NEEDS

By definition, special education is

“specially designed instruction.”

Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction:

- To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability
- To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum
- So that the child can meet the educational standards.

What does that mean? Special education is an umbrella under which many supports and services may be included.

No two programs should look exactly alike, just as no two students look precisely alike.

Other services that may be recommended by the IEP team could be (but not limited to):

- Speech and Language
- Occupational Therapy
- Counseling
- Behavior Supports
- Physical Therapy

**Power Rule!**  
**Services are driven by goals**  
**which are driven by present**  
**levels. (Connect the dots)**

MORE services are not always the end goal. The law states that a student's IEP must be “reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances.”

This progress must be “appropriately ambitious in light of his [or her] circum-

stances,” as “every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives.”

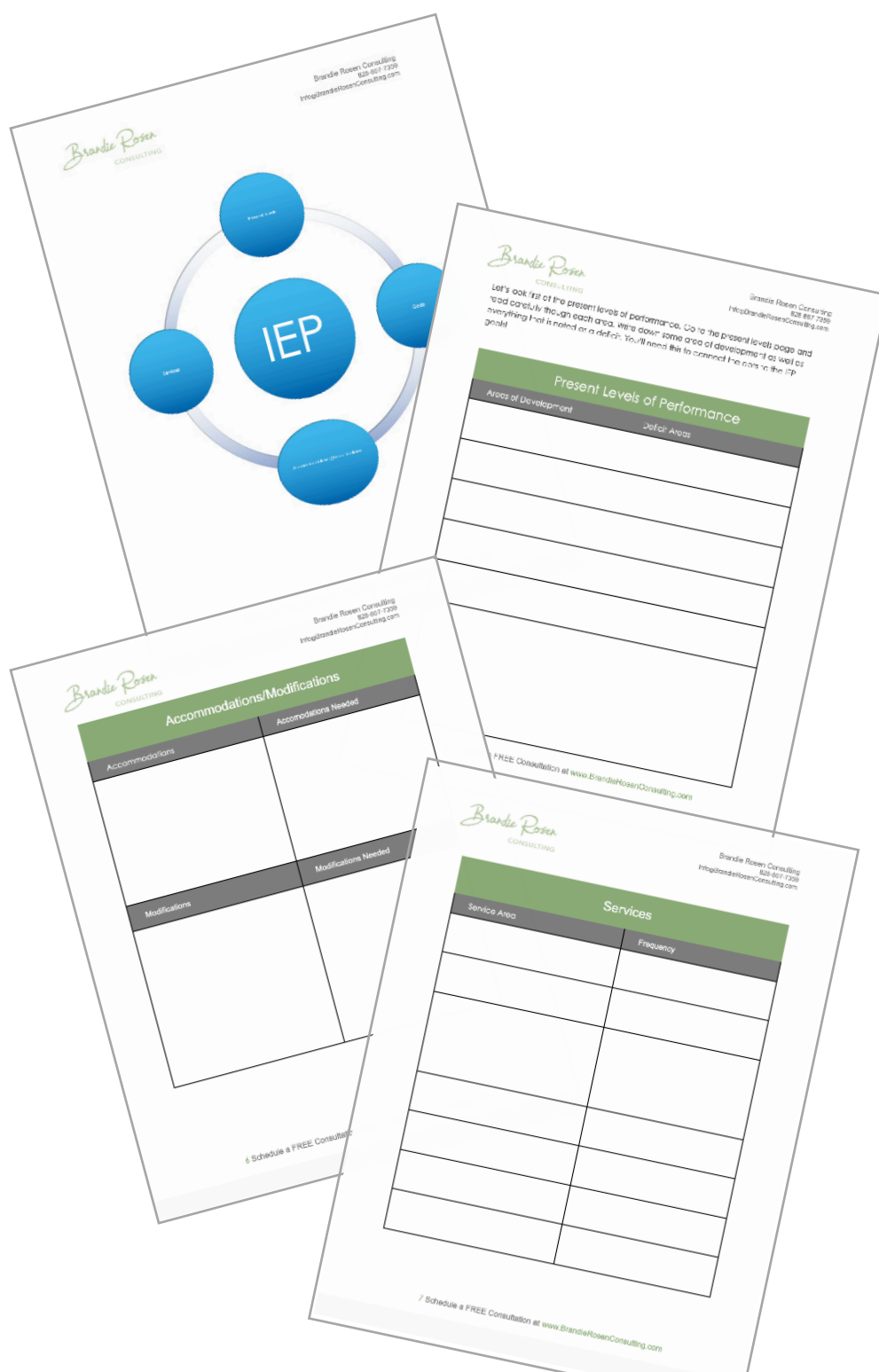
See, I told you “connecting the dots” would be easy! Grab the Connecting the Dots PowerSheet to take this information and connect the dots for your own child's IEP.

Don't miss out! Sign up to receive my blog posts, newsletters, and announcements on all upcoming events!

*click me*



Brandie Rosen  
CONSULTING







tea





BY: THE BLUE UMBRELLA COLLECTIVE

*BOOST YOUR LITTLE'S SELF-ESTEEM BY  
IDENTIFYING WHAT THEY EXCEL AT USING THE  
MY BRAIN IS GOOD AT... PRINTABLE!*

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