



Bexley City Schools

Cultural Awareness Resources

Edition V: Neurodiversity Awareness (January 2025)



The purpose of this document is to:

- Build cultural competency within the Bexley community
- Provide resources to teachers and administrators to gain an increased awareness of the strengths and challenges of neurodiverse people.
- Support all teachers and administrators with incorporating resources at the classroom and school building-level during NeuroDiversity Awareness Month.

Curated by the Bexley Culture Climate Team

**The information within this document primarily reflects the medical recognition of mental and behavioral health conditions. The resources listed in the document are general in nature.*



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Building Understanding

Neurodiversity is the idea that it is natural and acceptable for people to have brains that function differently from one another, rather than a deficit. Instead of thinking there is something wrong or problematic when some people don't operate similarly to others, neurodiversity embraces the differences in both brain function and behavioral traits as a natural element of diversity within the human population. Neurodiverse people experience, interact with, and interpret the world in unique ways. This concept can help reduce stigma around learning and thinking differences.

Neurodiversity includes many different types of brain differences, including ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, sensory processing disorder, and several more. We see neurodiversity as a way to celebrate the many different ways our brains process the world!

Florence Welch, a famous singer and songwriter with dyspraxia, openly speaks about how, “very proud to be dyspraxic and that the condition does not get as much attention as it should. Dyspraxia and other learning and thinking differences may create some challenges. But they don’t stand in the way of finding success.”

Although no definition can capture all aspects of all disorders in the range contained in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), the following elements are required:

- A mental disorder is a syndrome characterized by clinically significant disturbance in an individual’s cognition, emotion regulation, or behavior that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or developmental processes underlying mental functioning.
- Mental disorders are usually associated with significant distress or disability in social, occupational, or other important activities.
- An expectable or culturally approved response to a common stressor or loss, such as the death of a loved one, is not a mental disorder. Socially deviant behavior (e.g., political, religious, or sexual) and conflicts that are primarily between the individual and society are not mental disorders unless the deviance or conflict results from a dysfunction in the individual, as described above.
- The diagnosis of a mental disorder should have clinical utility: it should help clinicians to determine prognosis, treatment plans, and potential treatment outcomes for their patients. *However, the diagnosis of a mental disorder is not equivalent to a need for treatment.* Need for treatment is a complex clinical decision that takes into consideration symptom severity, symptom salience (e.g., the presence of suicidal ideation), the patient’s distress (mental pain) associated with the symptom(s), disability related to the patient’s symptoms, risks and benefits of available treatments, and other factors (e.g., psychiatric symptoms complicating other illnesses).

Clinicians may thus encounter individuals whose symptoms do not meet full criteria for a mental disorder but who demonstrate a clear need for treatment or care. The fact that some individuals do not show all symptoms indicative of a diagnosis should not be used to justify limiting their access to appropriate care. To ensure children receive appropriate services as needed in support of their learning, the Ohio Department of Education has adopted the Ohio Operating Standards for the Education of Children with Disabilities. These standards define the provisions of special education and related services to children with disabilities by school districts, county boards of developmental disabilities, and other educational agencies.

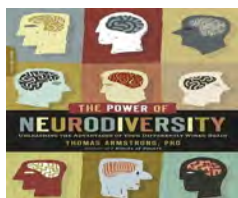
The following terms are reflective of the definitions as used within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and hence are followed by members of a schools evaluation team in the determination of services a student with a disability may qualify for under the IDEA guidelines.

- **Child with a disability** - A child evaluated as having an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, a developmental delay (for a child between the ages of 3 and 5), multiple disabilities, or other health impairments and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and/or related services. If it is determined, through an appropriate evaluation, that a child has one of the disabilities identified, but needs only a related service and not special education, the child is not a child with a disability under this rule.
- **Autism** - A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with "autism" are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.
- **Intellectual disability** - A significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. This definition replaces the definition of mental retardation and shall be used instead whenever referring to mental retardation or cognitive disability. "Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning" refers to an intelligence quotient of seventy or below as determined through a measure of cognitive functioning administered by a school psychologist or a qualified psychologist using a test designed for individual administration.
- **Deaf-blindness** - Concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.
- **Deafness** - A hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
- **Emotional disturbance** - A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: (a) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. (b) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. (c) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. (d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. (e) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. (f) Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted.
- **Hearing impairment** - An impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this rule.
- **Multiple disabilities** - Concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech or language impairment, orthopedic impairment, serious emotional disability, autism spectrum disorders, and traumatic brain injury), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be

accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. “Multiple disabilities” does not include deaf-blindness.

- **Orthopedic impairment** - A severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).
- **Other health impairment** - Having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that: (a) Is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, [epilepsy](#), a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and (b) adversely affects a child’s educational performance.
- **Specific learning disability** - A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.
- **Speech or language impairment** - A communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.
- **Traumatic brain injury** - An acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force or by other medical conditions, including but not limited to stroke, anoxia, infectious disease, aneurysm, brain tumors and neurological insults resulting from medical or surgical treatments. The injury results in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment or both, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries, as well as to other medical conditions that result in acquired brain injuries. The injuries result in impairments in one or more areas such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.
- **Visual impairment** - An impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term “visual impairment” includes both partial sight and blindness. Visual impairment does not include a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes, such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

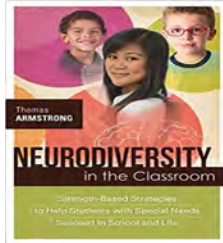
Additional insights on Neurodiversity



The Power of Neurodiversity: Unleashing the Advantages of Your Differently Wired Brain (published in hardcover as Neurodiversity): by Thomas Armstrong

ADHD, dyslexia, autism. The number of illness categories listed by the American Psychiatric Association has tripled in the last fifty years. With so

many people affected, it is time to revisit our perceptions on this "culture of disabilities." Bestselling author, psychologist, and educator Thomas Armstrong illuminates a new understanding of neuropsychological disorders. He argues that if they are a part of the natural diversity of the human brain, they cannot simply be defined as illnesses. Armstrong explores the evolutionary advantages, special skills, and other positive dimensions of these conditions.



Neurodiversity in the Classroom: Strength-Based Strategies to Help Students with Special Needs Succeed in School and Life Illustrated Edition: by Thomas Armstrong

A new concept on human diversity has emerged over the past 10 years that promises to revolutionize the way educators provide services to students with special needs: neurodiversity. Just as we celebrate diversity in nature and cultures, so too do we need to honor the diversity of brains among our students who learn, think, and behave differently. In *Neurodiversity in the Classroom*, best-selling author Thomas Armstrong argues that we should embrace the strengths of such neurodiverse students to help them and their neurotypical peers thrive in school and beyond.

This book focuses on five categories of special needs: learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, intellectual disabilities, and emotional and behavioral disorders. For each category, Armstrong provides an in-depth discussion of:

- * The positive attributes associated with that category
- * Acclaimed neurodiverse adults who have excelled in their chosen fields
- * Computer programs and applications that allow students with special needs to overcome obstacles and achieve success
- * Rich networks of human resources both inside and outside of school that educators can draw upon to support the social and emotional lives of neurodiverse students
- * Innovative learning strategies that are tailored to each student's unique strengths
- * Future career paths for which a student's particular gifts might be a good fit

Modifications in the school environment that allow for seamless inclusion of neurodiverse students in the regular classroom, and timely information about how to integrate the strategies and assessments for each category with the Common Core State Standards.

[Human Neurodiversity Should Be Celebrated, Not Treated as a Disorder | Op-Ed | NowThis](#)

[Neurodiversity Explained \(6-8\)](#)

The following is a brief listing of neurological conditions children and adolescents may experience.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

sourced from <https://www.healthline.com/health/adhd>

For more details on ADHD click [HERE](#)

What is ADHD	Potential Challenges	Possible Strengths	Tips for Supporting	Looking Forward
<p>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a mental health condition that can cause unusual levels of hyperactivity and impulsive behaviors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Lack of Focus >Self-Focused Behavior >Interrupting >Trouble waiting their turn >Emotional Turmoil >Fidgeting >Problems Playing Quietly >Unfinished Tasks >Avoidance of tasks needing extended mental effort >Mistakes >Daydreaming >Trouble Getting Organized >Forgetfulness >Symptoms in Multiple Settings >Symptoms as Children Age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Being energetic >Being spontaneous >Being creative and inventive >Being hyper focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Keeping a routine and a schedule >Organizing everyday items >Using homework and notebook organizers >Being clear and consistent >Giving praise or rewards when rules are followed 	<p>All children are going to exhibit some of these behaviors at some point. Daydreaming, fidgeting, and persistent interruptions are all common behaviors in children. You should start thinking about the next steps if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Your child regularly displays signs of ADHD. >The behavior is affecting their success in school and leading to negative interactions with peers.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Specific Learning Differences (SLD)

*Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia

Sourced from American Psychiatric Association: <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/specific-learning-disorder/what-is-specific-learning-disorder>;
https://www.additudemag.com/slideshows/types-of-learning-disabilities-overview/?src=embed_link

For more details on SLD click [HERE](#)

What is a Specific Learning Disorder (SLD)?	Types of Learning Differences: Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia	Possible Strengths	Tips for Organization	Looking Forward
<p>Specific learning disorders are neurodevelopmental disorders that are typically diagnosed in early school-aged children, although may not be recognized until adulthood.</p> <p>They are characterized by a persistent impairment in at least one of three major areas: reading, written expression, and/or math.</p>	<p>Dyslexia refers to difficulty in acquiring and processing language. People with dyslexia have difficulty connecting letters they see on a page with the sounds they make.</p> <p>Dysgraphia is used to describe difficulties with putting one's thoughts on to paper. Problems with writing can include difficulties with spelling, grammar, punctuation, and handwriting.</p> <p>Dyscalculia is used to describe difficulties learning number related concepts or using the symbols and functions to perform math calculations.</p>	<p>Dyslexia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Good problem solvers >Creative, observant >High levels of empathy >Excellent big picture thinkers >Good at making connections >Strong narrative reasoning >3-dimensional thinking <p>Dysgraphia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Good listening skills >Strong memorization and recall of details >Great storytellers >Social >Efficient problem solvers <p>Dyscalculia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Creativity >Strategic thinking >Practical ability >Problem solving >Love of words >Intuitive thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > When identified early, intervention can be more effective, and children can avoid going through extended problems with schoolwork and related low self-esteem. >Most effective treatments for reading disorders are structured, targeted strategies that address phonological awareness, decoding skills, comprehension and fluency. >Treatments for writing problems are in two general areas: the process of writing and the process of composing written expression. >Treatment for dyscalculia often includes multisensory instruction to help kids understand math concepts. Accommodations, like using manipulatives and assistive technology are also helpful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >LDs are a lifelong condition, but people with LDs can be found in every type of occupation. >Today's job market is highly accommodating for people with learning disabilities. This is because the right job for a person depends on their skills, talents, interests, and goals. People seeking work may feel wary during the hunt, but there are hundreds of job opportunities.

Down Syndrome

Sourced from: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/downsyndrome.html>
<https://www.ndss.org/about-down-syndrome/down-syndrome/>
<https://www.healthline.com/health/triploidy#causes> <https://www.ndscenter.org/news-events/more-alike-awareness-campaign/>

For more details on Down Syndrome, click [HERE](#).

What is Down Syndrome	Types of Down Syndrome	Possible Strengths	Tips for Organization	Looking Forward
<p>Down syndrome is a condition in which a person has an extra chromosome. Chromosomes are small “packages” of genes in the body. They determine how a baby’s body forms and functions as it grows during pregnancy and after birth. Typically, a baby is born with 46 chromosomes. Babies with Down syndrome have an extra copy of one of these chromosomes, chromosome 21. Down syndrome is also referred to as Trisomy 21. This extra copy changes how the baby’s body and brain develop, which can cause both mental and physical challenges for the child.</p>	<p>There are three types of Down syndrome.</p> <p>Trisomy 21: About 95% of people with Down syndrome have Trisomy 21. With this type of Down syndrome, each cell in the body has 3 separate copies of chromosome 21 instead of the usual 2 copies.</p> <p>Translocation Down syndrome: This type accounts for a small percentage of people with Down syndrome (about 3%). This occurs when an extra part or a whole extra chromosome 21 is present, but it is attached or “trans-located” to a different chromosome rather than being</p>	<p>Some of the specific learning strengths that characterize many children with Down syndrome include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >A distinct preference for visual learning >High capacity for empathy and social understanding >Strong visual short-term memory >Steady vocabulary acquisition >Age-appropriate self-help and daily living skills >A natural adeptness with technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >People with Down syndrome should always be referred to as people first. >Instead of “a Down syndrome child,” it should be “a child with Down syndrome.” >Avoid “Down’s child” and describing the condition as “Down’s,” as in, “He has Down’s.” >Down syndrome is a condition or a syndrome, not a disease. >People “have” Down syndrome, they do not “suffer from” it and are not “afflicted by” it. >“Typically developing” or “typical” is preferred over “normal.” >“Intellectual disability” or “cognitive disability” has replaced 	<p>Many traits and conditions in people with Down syndrome are manageable with treatment and therapies. Medical care, support and education help them throughout their lives. Like anyone else, people with Down syndrome go to school, work, have meaningful relationships and can lead healthy and active lives.</p> <p>>Follow this link to learn more about the efforts of the National Down Syndrome Congress to increase awareness that people with Down syndrome are “More Alike Than Different”.</p>



	<p>a separate chromosome 21.</p> <p>Mosaic Down syndrome: This type affects about 2% of the people with Down syndrome. Mosaic means mixture or combination. For children with mosaic Down syndrome, some of their cells have 3 copies of chromosome 21, but other cells have the typical two copies of chromosome 21.</p>		<p>“mental retardation” as the appropriate term.</p>	
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Supports & Resources

The Bexley City School District Student Services department provides access to various resources to accommodate the needs of students with special learning situations. Two documents in particular that may be helpful for staff and families who may require transitioning assistance are available and they are [The BCSD Transition Teacher Resource Page](#) and the [BCSD Transition Family Resource Page](#). Additional resources include the Bexley Schools [2023-2024 Gifted Handbook](#) as well as support from the district [Parent Mentor Program](#).

Please select a link below to learn more about the various services, resources, and information that is available to Bexley students and families.

- Ohio Department of Education and Workforce: [Special Education](#), and [A Guide to Parents Rights in Special Education](#).
- <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Testing/Accommodations-on-State-Assessments>
- <https://www.neurodiversityweek.com/school-resources>
- <https://ataem.org/> - Assistive Technology & Accessible Educational Materials Center
- <https://deafandblindoutreach.org/> - The Outreach Center for Deafness and Blindness
- <https://dsaco.net/> - Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio
- <https://www.epilepsy.com/> - Epilepsy Foundation
- [Neurodiversity in Education](#) - Trends shaping education including Neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) affect increasingly large numbers of students. Education systems must work to meet the needs of these students and ensure that all types of learners thrive at school and beyond.
- [The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities \(OCECD\)](#) is a statewide nonprofit organization that serves families of infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities in Ohio, educators and agencies who provide services to them. OCECD works through the coalition efforts of over 40 parent and professional disability organizations and over 70 individual members which comprise the Coalition. OCECD has also been funded since 1984 to serve as the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) for the state of Ohio from the federal government, U.S. Dept of Education, Office for Special Education Programs.
- [Parents Helping Parents - Parents of Neurodiverse High Schoolers](#) Support Groups meet to discuss various topics in a compassionate and supportive space. The purpose of the support groups is to create safe spaces where group members share experiences about parenting no matter where they are on the parenting journey. Groups are free, confidential, and open to anyone who identifies as a caregiver. They are run by volunteer facilitators who are trained in the Parents Helping Parents Mutual Aid Support Group Model. Groups are for parents looking for support, and are considered a safe space for parents; therefore, observers are not allowed in group sessions.
- [Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence \(OCALI\)](#) "OCALI is a recognized global leader in creating and connecting resources and relationships to ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to live their best lives for their whole lives." OCALI is committed to the full continuum of inclusion across the lifespan. OCALI's Centers of Excellence bring together internationally renowned experts, best practices, latest research, innovative resources, and extensive support, materials, and professional development.

Daily Announcements

Sourced from: <https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/mental-health/autism/related/history-of-autism/> <https://otsimo.com/en/history-of-autism-when-was-autism-first-diagnosed/> <https://www.ayoa.com/ourblog/achievements-founded-by-neurodivergent-individuals/> <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/conditions/aspergers-syndrome>

Jan 1 - The term Neurodiversity was originally adopted by Judy Singer, an autism advocate, as part of her dissertation in sociology in the 1980's, to specifically address the fact that many autistic people were made to feel like they were "lesser than other people" because their brains work differently. Neurodiversity is about the fact that nobody in our society is, or should feel, "lesser than" due to completely natural differences between them and other people.

Jan 2 - Research has found that people who are neurodiverse — specifically those with ADHD — are creative, tend to be out-of-the-box thinkers, and are calm under pressure. They bring energy and new approaches to their projects.

Jan 3 - Neurodiversity is something to be celebrated, and this is something that businesses have taken note of. For instance, autistic people tend to have strengths in attention to detail, memory, and systemizing. Neurodiversity is increasingly becoming seen as a competitive advantage.

Jan 4 - World Braille Day is celebrated every year on January 4th because it is Louis Braille's birthday, the inventor of braille! Louis was born in 1809 in France. He became blind after a childhood accident, and he quickly mastered his new way of living. When he was just 15 years old, he created the system we know today as braille, based on a system of writing developed by Charles Barbier. Over the years braille was tweaked to make it easier to read, and now it's used the world over!


Jan 5 - In 1988, the movie "Rain Man" revolved around the story of an autistic scholar Raymond Babbitt, portrayed by Dustin Hoffman. This movie increased public awareness about autism spectrum disorder, but it also generated a stereotype regarding the abilities of people with autism.

Jan 6- In 1990, the U.S. Congress passed legislation to include autism in the category of education disability. This helped individuals with autism qualify for special education.

Jan 7- In 1998: Andrew Wakefield and his colleagues released a report in the Lancet journal suggesting that the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine may predispose children to autism. The study involved only 12 subjects and did not have scientific controls, but it received widespread media attention. Various scientific research studies have provided no evidence of a connection between vaccines and ASD.

Jan 8- Michael Phelps is one of the most recognized swimmers in the Olympics games. Phelps was diagnosed with ADHD in sixth grade. He talks about how challenging it was to sit through class without fidgeting, but that he could swim for up to three hours at the pool after school. Turn lemons into lemonade!

Jan 9- A research study published in 2009 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed that 1 in every 110 children had autism. A similar survey conducted by the CDC in



2007 indicated that 1 in every 150 children had autism. This rise in autism was believed to be caused by increased autism awareness and changes in autism diagnosis criteria.

Jan 10- Dyslexia is a part of neurodiversity that affects 10% of the population. Some of the most brilliant minds of our time have been known to have dyslexia like Albert Einstein, Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, Winston Churchill, Benjamin Franklin, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and John Lennon, to mention only a few.

Jan 11 - Paget's Awareness Day, is an opportunity to raise the profile of Paget's Disease of Bone and the 11th of January is the anniversary of the birth of Sir James Paget, whose name was given to the condition. Through research, including that funded by the Paget's Association, there has been great progress in alleviating the effects of the condition, however, there is still much to be done. It has been estimated that as few as 7% of those who have x-ray evidence of Paget's disease actually come to medical attention. Wouldn't it be something if we could find all those suffering in silence who are yet to have their condition acknowledged?

Jan 12 - In 1967: Bruno Bettelheim, an Austrian-born psychologist, popularized the theory that autism was the result of cold and inattentive mothers, coining the term "refrigerator mothers". This theory has been solidly discredited.


Jan 13 - In 1999, the Autism Awareness Puzzle Ribbon was adopted by the Autism Society as a universal sign of Autism Awareness. The puzzle pattern reflects the complexity of the autism spectrum. The different colors and shapes represent the diversity of the people and families living with the condition. The brightness of the ribbon signals hope — hope that through increased awareness of autism, and through early intervention and access to appropriate services/supports, people with autism will lead full lives able to interact with the world on their own terms.

Jan 14 - In 2010: Andrew Wakefield, a British former physician and academic, who falsely claimed a link between the MMR and autism, lost his medical license and was barred from practicing medicine after his Lancet MMR autism paper was retracted.

Jan 15 - Alan Turing is regarded as one of the most innovative thinkers and brilliant mathematicians of the 20th century due to his work at Bletchley Park during World War II. Thanks to his role in cracking the 'Enigma' code used by the German Armed Forces, Turing helped to shorten the war by two years and saved 14 million lives.

Jan 16 - Albert Einstein is hailed as one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century – and although it is unproven, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Einstein may have also had dyslexia. He famously had problems with spelling and grammar, excelling in mathematics and science instead. Einstein also experienced delayed speech, not speaking comfortably until he was 6 years old, and many said he continued to experience difficulty when reading aloud.

Jan 17 - Henry Ford, founded the Ford Motor Company (or 'Ford' as we more commonly know it today), which has become one of the most successful businesses in the world, and the second-largest automaker based in the U.S. With the invention of the Model T, Ford succeeded in his mission to produce a simple, reliable and affordable car. Henry Ford struggled with dyslexia throughout his life – and in a bid to 'overcome' his condition, he would repeat certain actions over and over again, until they became "like clockwork".



Jan 18 - Richard Branson has been open about his difficulties at school and how he lives with not one, but two neurological differences – dyslexia and ADHD. Branson is one of the most influential businessmen in the world. He founded his first magazine aged just 16, then went on to launch Virgin Records and Virgin Atlantic.

Jan 19 - Despite being considered 'incapable of learning' when he was at school, Bill Gates famously founded Microsoft, one of the largest and most successful technology companies in the world. It's hardly surprising that Gates has become one of the richest men in the world whose name is synonymous with success. Like many others, Gates has dyslexia and didn't finish his honorary degree until 30 years after he left Harvard University.

Jan 20 - Anthony Hopkins' autistic diagnosis, more specifically Asperger's, was diagnosed late in life. He told the Daily Mail he was a loner and said: "I don't go to parties, I don't have many friends...But I do like people. I do like to get inside their heads."

Jan 21 - Paige Layle is an eyelash technician from Ontario who recently went viral on TikiTok after posting a 4-part series about being an autistic woman. Her TikTok account is filled with facts about autism and she talks about how it took a long time to get her diagnosis because she is a woman that doesn't necessarily "fit the mold" of being autistic.


Jan 22 - Scott Steindorff produced top films like the Lincoln Lawyer. Now according to The Hollywood Reporter, he is producing a documentary called "Spectrum Neurodiversity. Steindorff is on the spectrum himself and said the documentary: "will focus on conditions such as dyslexia, ADD, ADHD and autism as examples of diversity in the human condition rather than disorders that must be cured."

Jan 23 - Keir Gilchrist plays teenager Sam Gardner in Netflix's Atypical. Sam is autistic in the show, causing many fans to ask "is Keir Gilchrist autistic?" The answer is no: Despite playing an autistic character, Gilchrist is not autistic. The actor did a great deal of research to get to the point where he could play an autistic person, including reading works by writer and speaker David Finch.

Jan 24 - Lionel Messi is a worldwide soccer superstar, but there are rumors that he struggled with Autism early in life. According to WessexScene.com: "There are unconfirmed reports that Messi was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome (a pervasive developmental disorder on the autistic spectrum) at the age of 9." As a child, Messi kept to himself and was known in his village as 'el pequeño mudito' ('the little mute'). His extreme focus on his sport has many autism experts convinced he has Asperger's or is somewhere on the autism spectrum.

Jan 25 - Down Syndrome is the most common chromosomal disorder in the United States. Each year, about 6,000 babies are born with Down syndrome in the US. One out of every 700 babies born in the United States is estimated to have the condition. The estimated incidence of Down syndrome is between 1 in 1,000 to 1 in 1,100 live births worldwide, according to the World Health Organization.

Jan 26 - National Down Syndrome Society uses the preferred spelling, Down syndrome, rather than Down's syndrome. Down syndrome is named for the English physician John Langdon Down, who characterized the condition, but did not have it. An "apostrophe s" connotes ownership or possession. While Down syndrome is listed in many dictionaries with both popular spellings (with or without an apostrophe s), the preferred usage in the United States is Down syndrome.



Jan 27 - Sensory processing disorder is yet another aspect of neurodiversity. In the 1970s, Dr. Ayres introduced the idea that certain people's brains struggle to do what most people take for granted: process all the information coming in through seven — not the traditional five — senses to provide a clear picture of what's happening both inside and outside of their bodies. Along with touch, hearing, taste, smell and sight, Dr. Ayres added the “internal” senses of body awareness (proprioception) and movement (vestibular).

Jan 28 - Tim Harris is an athlete who has competed in basketball, poly hockey, volleyball, golf and track and field, winning numerous gold medals at the Special Olympics and is the only person with Down syndrome in the US to have owned his own restaurant.

Jan 29 - Born in Ridgefield, Connecticut, Colette [Divitto](#) developed a passion for baking after taking a class in high school. She created her own recipe for a cinnamon chocolate chip cookie and called it "The Amazing Cookie." After being rejected from multiple job openings, she decided to start her own business, which she called Colletty's Cookies. After appearing on the Boston CBS TV affiliate, she went viral, going on to appear on CNN, Good Morning America, MSNBC, Inside Edition, the BBC, and more.

Jan 30 - A study conducted by Susan Folstein and Michael Rutter found that autism had a high chance of occurring in one twin if their identical twin had autism. In the case of non-identical twins, however, there were no occurrences of autism in both siblings. This study showed that genetics plays an important role in the development of autism, challenging the view that autism was caused by bad parenting.

Jan 31 - The name for Asperger's Syndrome has officially changed, as the symptoms of Asperger's Syndrome are now included in a condition called Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ASD is now the name used for a wide range of autism-like disorders. Some providers may still use the term Asperger's Syndrome, but others will say “ASD – without intellectual or language impairment.” These two syndromes are, for the most part, the same.

When using the following classroom resources, it is a teacher's responsibility to ensure direct connections to the learning standards as well as the quality of the lessons. These resources should be used as a starting point and teachers should use their professional expertise to create high quality learning experiences. When discussing any new or sensitive topic, there is the potential for some students to react with stereotypes or in disrespectful ways. It is therefore critical that educators carefully review the lesson/activity and assess students' maturity and readiness to engage prior to exploring the topic and to establish clear parameters with students that will ensure safe and constructive dialogue.



Bulletin Boards

Tip: Click on each title to access printable materials to make bulletin boards for your school or classroom that are inspired by the ones below.



[Autism Classroom Visuals for Staff](#)

[Disability Awareness](#)

[Neurodiversity Posters](#)



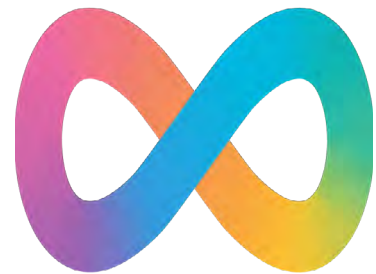
[Our Community](#) **Bulletin Board** [Epilepsy Poster](#)

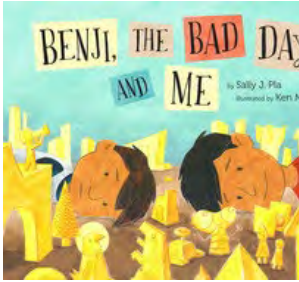

[Elementary Book Recommendations](#)



Set Up

by: Breezy Special Ed



Title	Synopsis
<p><i>Benji, the Bad Day, and Me</i> Author: Sally J. Pla Illustrator: Ken Min</p>  <p>Teacher's Guide</p>	<p>Nothing seems to be going right for Sammy today. At school, he got in trouble for kicking a fence, then the cafeteria ran out of pizza for lunch. After he walks home in the pouring rain, he finds his autistic little brother Benji is having a bad day too. On days like this, Benji has a special play-box where he goes to feel cozy and safe. Sammy doesn't have a special place, and he's convinced no one cares how he feels or even notices him. But somebody is noticing, and may just have an idea on how to help Sammy feel better.</p> <p>In this tender story about siblings, author Sally J. Pla shares her experience of raising sons with different personality traits and needs. <i>Benji, the Bad Day, and Me</i> embraces the philosophy that we are all part of a wide spectrum of neurodiversity. And on those really bad, rotten days, you can always count on family to be there for you.</p>
<p><i>How We Are Smart</i> Author: W. Nikola-Lisa Illustrator: Sean Qualls</p>  <p>Teacher's Guide</p>	<p>Musician Tito Puente. Ballerina Maria Tallchief. Explorer Matthew Henson. Congresswoman Patsy Mink. These are some of the people profiled in this book. They are well known for different reasons, but they also have something in common. They were all smart!</p> <p>Readers will learn that being smart is about more than doing well in school. There are eight ways to be smart, and they are reflected in how a person uses his or her body, relates to the natural world, responds to music and art, and more. When readers see how the people in this book used their smarts, they will learn about themselves too, and their own unique ways of being smart. Back-of-book information about the eight intelligences, along with activities, enhance the learning experience.</p>
<p><i>Jay and Ben</i> Lulu Delacre & Katharine Swanson</p> 	<p><i>Jay and Ben</i> is an interactive book developed for use with children with developmental and learning differences and disabilities, including—but not limited to—autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and language delays. The book is designed to help educators, parents, and caregivers teach children about language, reading, story comprehension, functional skills, and basic concepts.</p> <p>Jay can make his own breakfast, dress himself, and play by himself, but sometimes he feels sad and wishes for a friend. When a magical horse appears and befriends Jay, his wish comes true. Clear visual representation of the text, through sequential illustrations along with picture symbols (based on the commonly-used Boardmaker® Picture Communication Symbols), enables children to gain understanding of the story plot and to recognize printed words.</p>

I Can Do That!

Author: Kayla J.W. Marnach

Illustrator: Kate Collazo

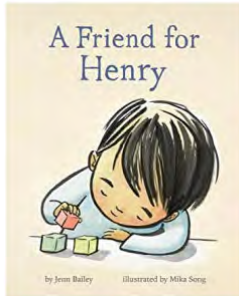


I Can Do That! helps children learn self-regulating techniques. Told through rhyme from a child's point of view, strategies are shared empowering the child to effectively learn and practice ways they can control their emotions and actions when they feel themselves becoming dysregulated. The discussion questions at the end of the book provide an easy transition for counselors and parents to open a discussion, assisting the child in exploring ways they can learn to manage themselves.

A Friend for Henry

Author: Jenn Bailey

Illustrator: Mika Song

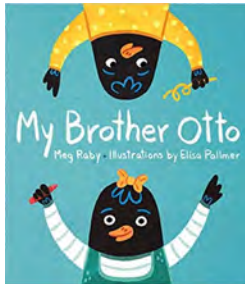


In Classroom Six, second left down the hall, Henry has been on the lookout for a friend. A friend who shares. A friend who listens. Maybe even a friend who likes things to stay the same and all in order, as Henry does. But on a day full of *too close* and *too loud*, when nothing seems to go right, will Henry ever find a friend—or will a friend find him? With insight and warmth, this heartfelt story from the perspective of a boy on the autism spectrum celebrates the everyday magic of friendship.

My Brother Otto

Author: Meg Raby

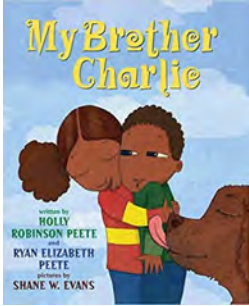
Illustrator: Elisa Pallmer



This engaging picture book shows everyday life with little crow siblings when one of them is on the autism spectrum.

My Brother Otto is a child-friendly, endearing, and fun picture book for children about the love, acceptance, and understanding a sister, Piper, has for her little brother Otto, who is on the autism spectrum. The book provides explanations for Otto's differences and quirkiness in an easy-to-understand language, and highlights Otto's desires for adventure and love—just like his peers. To be more specific, *My Brother Otto* is a sweet story about a sister and a brother who engage in common, everyday experiences in their own unique way with the idea that kindness and understanding always win!

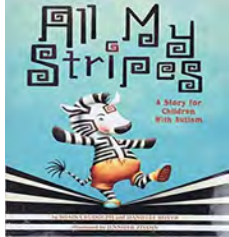
My Brother Charlie
 Author: Holly Robinson Peete/ Ryan Elizabeth Peete
 Illustrator: Shane W. Evans



From bestselling author and actress Holly Robinson Peete--a heartwarming story about a boy who happens to be autistic, based on Holly's son, who has autism.

"Charlie has autism. His brain works in a special way. It's harder for him to make friends. Or show his true feelings. Or stay safe." But as his big sister tells us, for everything that Charlie can't do well, there are plenty more things that he's good at. He knows the names of all the American presidents. He knows stuff about airplanes. And he can even play the piano better than anyone he knows. Actress and national autism spokesperson Holly Robinson Peete collaborates with her daughter on this book based on Holly's 10-year-old son, who has autism.

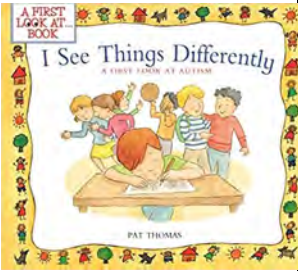
All My Stripes: A Story for Children with Autism
 Author: Shaina Rudolph
 Illustrator: Jennifer Zivojn




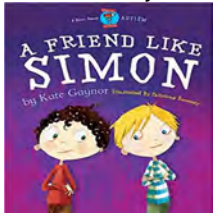
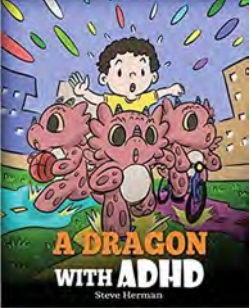
Zane the zebra feels different from the rest of his classmates. He worries that all they notice about him is his "autism stripe." With the help of his Mama, Zane comes to appreciate all his stripes — the unique strengths that make him who he is!

Includes a Reading Guide with additional background information about autism spectrum disorders and a Note to Parents and Caregivers with tips for finding support.

I See Things Differently
 Author/Illustrator: Pat Thomas

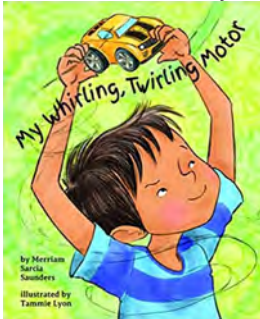


I See Things Differently will help children understand what autism is and how it affects someone who has it, and is a wonderful catalyst for discussion that will help children to better understand and support autistic classmates or siblings. Titles in the sensitively presented *A First Look At* series explore the dynamics of various relationships experienced by children of preschool through early school age. Kids are encouraged to understand personal feelings and social problems as a first step in dealing with them. Written by psychotherapist and counselor Pat Thomas, these books promote positive interaction among children, parents, and teachers. The story lines are simple and direct--easily accessible to younger children.

<p>Noah Chases the Wind Author: Michelle Worthington Illustrator: Joseph Cowman</p> 	<p><i>Noah knew he was different. He could see things that others couldn't, like the patterns in the dust that floated down on sunbeams.</i></p> <p>Noah is different. He sees, hears, feels, and thinks in ways that other people don't always understand, and he asks a lot of questions along the way. Noah loves science, especially the weather. His books usually provide him with the answers he needs, until one day, there's one question they don't answer—and that is where Noah's windy adventure begins.</p>
<p>A Friend Like Simon Author: Kate Gaynor Illustrator: Cairtriona Sweeney</p> 	<p>This is a special education children's picture book that introduces autism. When an autistic child joins a mainstream school, many children can find it difficult to understand and cope with a student that is somewhat 'different' to them. This story encourages other children to be mindful and patient of the differences that exist and to also appreciate the positive contribution that an autistic child can make to the group.</p>
<p>A Dragon with ADHD Author: Steve Herman</p> 	<p>Having a pet dragon is very fun! He can sit, roll over, and play... He can light a candle on a birthday cake, light a campfire, or so many other cool things... But what if your dragon talks a lot and speaks really fast? What if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● He's very active and always runs around? ● He likes to interrupt when others are talking? ● He has a hard time concentrating and staying on task? ● He's disorganized, forgetful and often loses his things? And more... <p>What if your dragon is diagnosed with ADHD? What if he is worried, scared and wonders what is wrong with him? What should you do? You help him understand ADHD! You teach him ADHD is not a "defect" and with the right attitude and help, it can be his asset!</p>

My Whirling, Twirling Motor

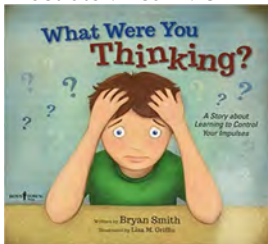
Author: Merriam Sarcia Saunders
Illustrator: Tammie Lyon



Charlie feels like he has a whirling, twirling motor running inside him all the time and sometimes he just can't settle. When his mom wants to talk to him, he figures he's in trouble...but she has a surprise for him instead! Includes a Note to Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers with more information on ADHD, behavior management, and helping children focus on the positives.

What Were You Thinking?

Author: Bryan Smith
Illustrator: Lisa M. Griffin



When you're a child, it's not easy controlling your impulse reactions - kids do things before they think all the time. Strengthen executive function skills and empower impetuous young people with a humorous story about an impulsive third-grader. Teach students a strategy of four simple steps for stopping, thinking, decision-making, and choosing the right behavior. Third-grader Braden is a real character. He loves to be the center of attention. Everyone just LOVES his jokes, witty comments, and immediate reactions. Or at least that's what he thinks. His comic genius, as he sees it, causes his friends to look at him in awe. But when he is corrected in class for ill-timed jokes, and an impulsive reaction during a game of dodgeball ends up with a classmate in tears, Braden's teachers and parents start working with him on how to control his impulses. Will the lessons provided by the adults in Braden's life help him see a better way to manage his impulses?

Crow Boy

Author/Illustrator: Taro Yashima

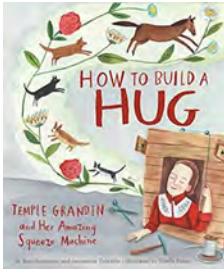


A shy Japanese boy having difficulty adjusting to school is misjudged by his classmates. Chibi has been an outcast since that frightening first day of school when he hid under the schoolhouse. Afraid of the teacher and unable to make any friends, Chibi passes his free time alone — alone at study time, alone at playtime, always a "forlorn little tag-along." But when Mr. Isobe arrives, the teacher sees things in Chibi that no one else has ever noticed...

Story about acceptance and empathy

**How to Build a Hug:
Temple Grandin and
Her Amazing
Squeeze Machine**

Author: Amy Guglielmo
Illustrator: Jacqueline
Tourville



As a young girl, Temple Grandin loved folding paper kites, making obstacle courses, and building lean-tos. But she *really* didn't like hugs. Temple wanted to be held—but to her, hugs felt like being stuffed inside the scratchiest sock in the world; like a tidal wave of dentist drills, sandpaper, and awful cologne, coming at her all at once. Would she ever get to enjoy the comfort of a hug?

Then one day, Temple had an idea. If she couldn't receive a hug, she would *make* one...she would build a hug machine!

**The Girl Who
Thought in Pictures:
The Story of Dr.
Temple Grandin**

Author: Julia Finley Mosca
Illustrator: Daniel Rieley

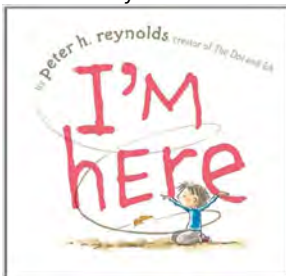


If you've ever felt different, if you've ever been low, if you don't quite fit in, there's a name you should know... Meet Dr. Temple Grandin—one of the world's quirkiest science heroes!

When young Temple was diagnosed with autism, no one expected her to talk, let alone become one of the most powerful voices in modern science. Yet, the determined visual thinker did just that. Her unique mind allowed her to connect with animals in a special way, helping her invent groundbreaking improvements for farms around the globe!

I'm Here

Author/Illustrator: Peter H.
Reynolds



I'm here.
And you're there.
And that's okay.
But...
Maybe there will be a gentle wind that pulls us together.
And then I'll be here and you'll be here, too.


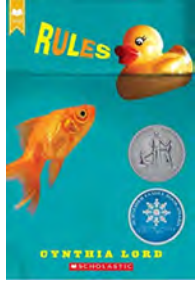
Pure, powerful and deceptively simple, bestselling author and illustrator Peter H. Reynolds reminds us that children—and the friendships they make—can take flight in unexpected ways.

Story about acceptance and empathy

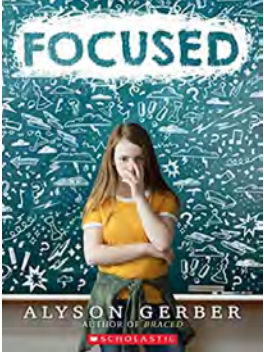


<p>Focused</p>  <p>ALYSON GERBER AUTHOR OF BRACED SCHOLASTIC</p> <p>Grades 3-5</p>	<p>Following <i>Braced</i>, which had three starred reviews, comes a story of a girl caught between her love of chess and her ADHD.</p> <p>Clea can't control her thoughts. She knows she has to do her homework . . . but she gets distracted. She knows she can't just say whatever thought comes into her head . . . but sometimes she can't help herself. She knows she needs to focus . . . but how can she do that when the people around her are always chewing gum loudly or making other annoying noises?</p> <p>It's starting to be a problem—not just in school, but when Clea's playing chess or just hanging out with her best friend. Other kids are starting to notice. When Clea fails one too many tests, her parents take her to be tested, and she finds out that she has ADHD, which means her attention is all over the place instead of where it needs to be.</p> <p>Clea knows life can't continue the way it's been going. She's just not sure how you can fix a problem that's all in your head. But that's what she's going to have to do, to find a way to focus.</p> <p>In a starred review, called Alyson Gerber's first novel, <i>Braced</i>, "a masterfully constructed and highly empathetic debut about a different kind of acceptance." With <i>Focused</i>, she explores even further how, when life gives you a challenge, the best way to face it is with an open mind, an open heart, and the open support of the people around you.</p>
<p>Get a Grip, Vivy Cohen!</p>  <p>*"A standout."—<i>School Library Journal</i>, starred review</p> <p>GET A GRIP, VIVY COHEN! Sarah Kapit</p> <p>Grades 3-5</p>	<p>In this perfectly pitched novel-in-letters, autistic eleven-year-old Vivy Cohen won't let anything stop her from playing baseball—not when she has a major-league star as her pen pal.</p> <p>Vivy Cohen is determined. She's had enough of playing catch in the park. She's ready to pitch for a real baseball team.</p> <p>But Vivy's mom is worried about Vivy being the only girl on the team, and the only autistic kid. She wants Vivy to forget about pitching, but Vivy won't give up. When her social skills teacher makes her write a letter to someone, Vivy knows exactly who to choose: her hero, Major League pitcher VJ Capello. Then two amazing things happen: A coach sees Vivy's amazing knuckleball and invites her to join his team. And VJ starts writing back!</p> <p>Now Vivy is a full-fledged pitcher, with a catcher as a new best friend and a steady stream of advice from VJ. But when a big accident puts her back on the bench, Vivy has to fight to stay on the team.</p>
<p>Hank Zipzer Series</p>  <p>HANK ZIPZER Henry Winkler "Hogan's Falls, or Does It?"</p> <p>Grades 3-5</p>	<p>Inspired by the true life experiences of Henry Winkler, whose undiagnosed dyslexia made him a classic childhood underachiever, the Hank Zipzer series is about the high-spirited and funny adventures of a boy with learning differences.</p>



<p>Not If I Can Help It</p>  <p>Grades 3-5</p>	<p>From award-winning Carolyn Mackler, the story of Willa, who has been living with Sensory Processing Disorder but is thrown for a BIG loop when her dad announces he's dating Willa's best friend's mom.</p> <p>Willa likes certain things to be certain ways. Her socks have to be soft . . . and definitely can't have irritating tags on the inside. She loves the crunch of popcorn and nachos . . . but is grossed out by the crunch of a baby carrot. And slimy foods? Those are the worst. Willa can manage all these things -- but there are some things she can't deal with, like her father's big news. He's been keeping a big secret from her . . . that he's been dating the mom of Willa's best friend Ruby. Willa does NOT like the idea of them being together. And she does NOT like the idea of combining families. And she does NOT like the idea of her best friend becoming her sister overnight. Will she go along with all of these changes? NOT if she can help it!</p>
<p>Rules</p>  <p>Grades 3-5</p>	<p>This Newbery Honor Book is a heartfelt and witty story about feeling different and finding acceptance -- beyond the rules.</p> <p>Twelve-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life. Which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. She's spent years trying to teach David the rules from "a peach is not a funny-looking apple" to "keep your pants on in public" -- in order to head off David's embarrassing behaviors. But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a surprising, new sort-of friend, and Kristi, the next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask: What is normal? Rules joins the Scholastic Gold line, which features award-winning and beloved novels.</p>

Middle School Book Recommendations

<p>Focused</p>  <p>ALYSON GERBER AUTHOR OF BRACED SCHOLASTIC</p>	<p>Following Braced, which had three starred reviews, comes a story of a girl caught between her love of chess and her ADHD.</p> <p>Clea can't control her thoughts. She knows she has to do her homework . . . but she gets distracted. She knows she can't just say whatever thought comes into her head . . . but sometimes she can't help herself. She knows she needs to focus . . . but how can she do that when the people around her are always chewing gum loudly or making other annoying noises?</p> <p>It's starting to be a problem-not just in school, but when Clea's playing chess or just hanging out with her best friend. Other kids are starting to notice. When Clea fails one too many tests, her parents take her to be tested, and she finds out that she has ADHD, which means her attention is all over the place instead of where it needs to be.</p> <p>Clea knows life can't continue the way it's been going. She's just not sure how you can fix a problem that's all in your head. But that's what she's going to have to do, to find a way to focus.</p> <p>In a starred review, called Alyson Gerber's first novel, Braced, "a masterfully constructed and highly empathetic debut about a different kind of acceptance." With Focused, she explores even further how, when life gives you a challenge, the best way to face it is with an open mind, an open heart, and the open support of the people around you.</p>
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Get a Grip, Vivy Cohen!



In this perfectly pitched novel-in-letters, autistic eleven-year-old Vivy Cohen won't let anything stop her from playing baseball--not when she has a major-league star as her pen pal.

Vivy Cohen is determined. She's had enough of playing catch in the park. She's ready to pitch for a real baseball team.

But Vivy's mom is worried about Vivy being the only girl on the team, and the only autistic kid. She wants Vivy to forget about pitching, but Vivy won't give up. When her social skills teacher makes her write a letter to someone, Vivy knows exactly who to choose: her hero, Major League pitcher VJ Capello. Then two amazing things happen: A coach sees Vivy's amazing knuckleball and invites her to join his team. And VJ starts writing back!

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Hank Zipzer Series



Inspired by the true life experiences of Henry Winkler, whose undiagnosed dyslexia made him a classic childhood underachiever, the Hank Zipzer series is about the high-spirited and funny adventures of a boy with learning differences.

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Rules



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Twelve-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life. Which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. She's spent years trying to teach David the rules from "a peach is not a funny-looking apple" to "keep your pants on in public" -- in order to head off David's embarrassing behaviors. But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a surprising, new sort-of friend, and Kristi, the next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask: What is normal? Rules joins the Scholastic Gold line, which features award-winning and beloved novels.

Fish In a Tree



Ally has been smart enough to fool a lot of smart people. Every time she lands in a new school, she is able to hide her inability to read by creating clever yet disruptive distractions. She is afraid to ask for help; after all, how can you cure dumb? However, her newest teacher Mr. Daniels sees the bright, creative kid underneath the trouble maker. With his help, Ally learns not to be so hard on herself and that dyslexia is nothing to be ashamed of. As her confidence grows, Ally feels free to be herself and the world starts opening up with possibilities. She discovers that there's a lot more to her—and to everyone—than a label, and that great minds don't always think alike.

The author of the beloved *One for the Murphys* gives readers an emotionally-charged, uplifting novel that will speak to anyone who's ever thought there was something wrong with them because they didn't fit in. This paperback edition includes *The Sketchbook of Impossible Things* and discussion questions.

Mockingbird



National Book Award, Young People's Literature, 2010

In *Mockingbird*—a poignant gem by acclaimed author Kathryn Erskine—a talented young artist struggles to overcome a disability. Diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, 10-year-old Caitlin faces a range of social and emotional challenges. The unexpected death of her caring brother makes matters even worse, but will the memory of his words of wisdom and the help of a compassionate counselor be enough to enable her to connect with others?

Planet Earth Is Blue



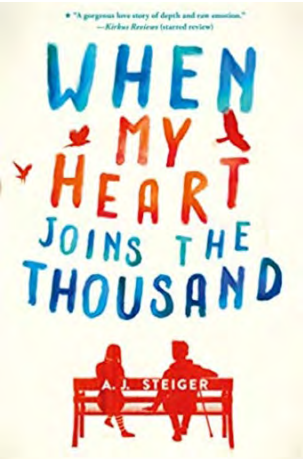




A heartrending and hopeful story about a nonverbal girl and her passion for space exploration, for fans of *See You in the Cosmos*, *Mockingbird*, and *The Thing About Jellyfish*.

Twelve-year-old Nova is eagerly awaiting the launch of the space shuttle Challenger--it's the first time a teacher is going into space, and kids across America will watch the event on live TV in their classrooms. Nova and her big sister, Bridget, share a love of astronomy and the space program. They planned to watch the launch together. But Bridget has disappeared, and Nova is in a new foster home.

While foster families and teachers dismiss Nova as severely autistic and nonverbal, Bridget understands how intelligent and special Nova is, and all that she can't express. As the liftoff draws closer, Nova's new foster family and teachers begin to see her potential, and for the first time, she is making friends without Bridget. But every day, she's counting down to the launch, and to the moment when she'll see Bridget again. Because as Bridget said, "No matter what, I'll be there. I promise."

Secondary Book Recommendations

<p>Tune It Out</p>  <p>JAMIE SUMNER author of <i>Roll with It</i></p>	<p>From the author of the acclaimed <i>Roll with It</i> comes a moving novel about a girl with a sensory processing disorder who has to find her own voice after her whole world turns upside down.</p> <p>Lou Montgomery has the voice of an angel, or so her mother tells her and anyone else who will listen. But Lou can only hear the fear in her own voice. She's never liked crowds or loud noises or even high fives; in fact, she's terrified of them, which makes her pretty sure there's something wrong with her.</p> <p>When Lou crashes their pickup on a dark and snowy road, child services separate the mother-daughter duo. Now she has to start all over again at a fancy private school far away from anything she's ever known. With help from an outgoing new friend, her aunt and uncle, and the school counselor, she begins to see things differently. A sensory processing disorder isn't something to be ashamed of, and music might just be the thing that saves Lou—and maybe her mom, too.</p>
<p>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</p>  <p>the curious incident of the dog in the night-time</p> <p>a novel by mark haddon</p>	<p>A bestselling modern classic—both poignant and funny—about a boy with autism who sets out to solve the murder of a neighbor's dog and discovers unexpected truths about himself and the world.</p> <p>Nominated as one of America's best-loved novels by PBS's <i>The Great American Read</i></p> <p>Christopher John Francis Boone knows all the countries of the world and their capitals and every prime number up to 7,057. He relates well to animals but has no understanding of human emotions. He cannot stand to be touched. And he detests the color yellow.</p> <p>This improbable story of Christopher's quest to investigate the suspicious death of a neighborhood dog makes for one of the most captivating, unusual, and widely heralded novels in recent years.</p>
<p>When My Heart Joins the Thousand</p>  <p>WHEN MY HEART JOINS THE THOUSAND</p> <p>A. J. STEIGER</p>	<p>A heartbreaking debut YA romance featuring a neuroatypical girl with a tragic history and the chronically ill boy trying to break the vault encasing her heart.</p> <p>Alvie Fitz doesn't fit in, and she doesn't care. She's spent years swallowing meds and bad advice from doctors and social workers. Adjust, adapt. Pretend to be normal. It sounds so easy.</p> <p>If she can make it to her eighteenth birthday without any major mishaps, she'll be legally emancipated. Free. But if she fails, she'll become a ward of the state and be sent back to the group home.</p> <p>All she wants is to be left alone to spend time with her friend, Chance, the one-winged hawk at the zoo where she works. She can bide her time with him until her emancipation. Humans are overrated anyway.</p> <p>Then she meets Stanley, a boy who might be even stranger than she is—a boy who walks with a cane, who turns up every day with a new injury, whose body seems as fragile as glass. Without even meaning to, she finds herself getting close to him. But Alvie remembers what happened to the last person she truly cared about.</p> <p>Her past stalks her with every step, and it has sharp teeth. But if she can find the strength to face the enemy inside her, maybe she'll have a chance at happiness after all.</p>
<p>When My Heart Joins the</p>	<p>FINALIST FOR THE BOOKS FOR A BETTER LIFE FIRST BOOK AWARD • NEW YORK TIMES</p>

<p>Thousand</p> 	<p>BESTSELLER</p> <p>You've never read a book like <i>The Reason I Jump</i>. Written by Naoki Higashida, a very smart, very self-aware, and very charming thirteen-year-old boy with autism, it is a one-of-a-kind memoir that demonstrates how an autistic mind thinks, feels, perceives, and responds in ways few of us can imagine. Parents and family members who never thought they could get inside the head of their autistic loved one at last have a way to break through to the curious, subtle, and complex life within.</p> <p>Using an alphabet grid to painstakingly construct words, sentences, and thoughts that he is unable to speak out loud, Naoki answers even the most delicate questions that people want to know. Questions such as: "Why do people with autism talk so loudly and weirdly?" "Why do you line up your toy cars and blocks?" "Why don't you make eye contact when you're talking?" and "What's the reason you jump?" (Naoki's answer: "When I'm jumping, it's as if my feelings are going upward to the sky.") With disarming honesty and a generous heart, Naoki shares his unique point of view on not only autism but life itself. His insights—into the mystery of words, the wonders of laughter, and the elusiveness of memory—are so startling, so strange, and so powerful that you will never look at the world the same way again.</p> <p>In his introduction, bestselling novelist David Mitchell writes that Naoki's words allowed him to feel, for the first time, as if his own autistic child was explaining what was happening in his mind. "It is no exaggeration to say that <i>The Reason I Jump</i> allowed me to round a corner in our relationship." This translation was a labor of love by David and his wife, KA Yoshida, so they'd be able to share that feeling with friends, the wider autism community, and beyond. Naoki's book, in its beauty, truthfulness, and simplicity, is a gift to be shared.</p>
<p>Kids Like Us</p> 	<p>A tender, smart, and romantic YA novel from debut author Hilary Reyl, about an autistic boy who falls in love</p> <p>Martin is an American teen on the autism spectrum living in France with his mom and sister for the summer. He falls for a French girl who he thinks is a real-life incarnation of a character in his favorite book. Over time Martin comes to realize she is a real person and not a character in a novel while at the same time learning that love is not out of his reach.</p>
<p>A List of Cages</p> 	<p>When Adam Blake lands the best elective ever in his senior year, serving as an aide to the school psychologist, he thinks he's got it made. Sure, it means a lot of sitting around, which isn't easy for a guy with ADHD, but he can't complain, since he gets to spend the period texting all his friends. Then the doctor asks him to track down the troubled freshman who keeps dodging her, and Adam discovers that the boy is Julian--the foster brother he hasn't seen in five years.</p> <p>Adam is ecstatic to be reunited. At first, Julian seems like the boy he once knew. He's still kind hearted. He still writes stories and loves picture books meant for little kids. But as they spend more time together, Adam realizes that Julian is keeping secrets, like where he hides during the middle of the day, and what's really going on inside his house. Adam is determined to help him, but his involvement could cost both boys their lives.</p>