

Nurturing the Inner Genius of Every Child

Presented by

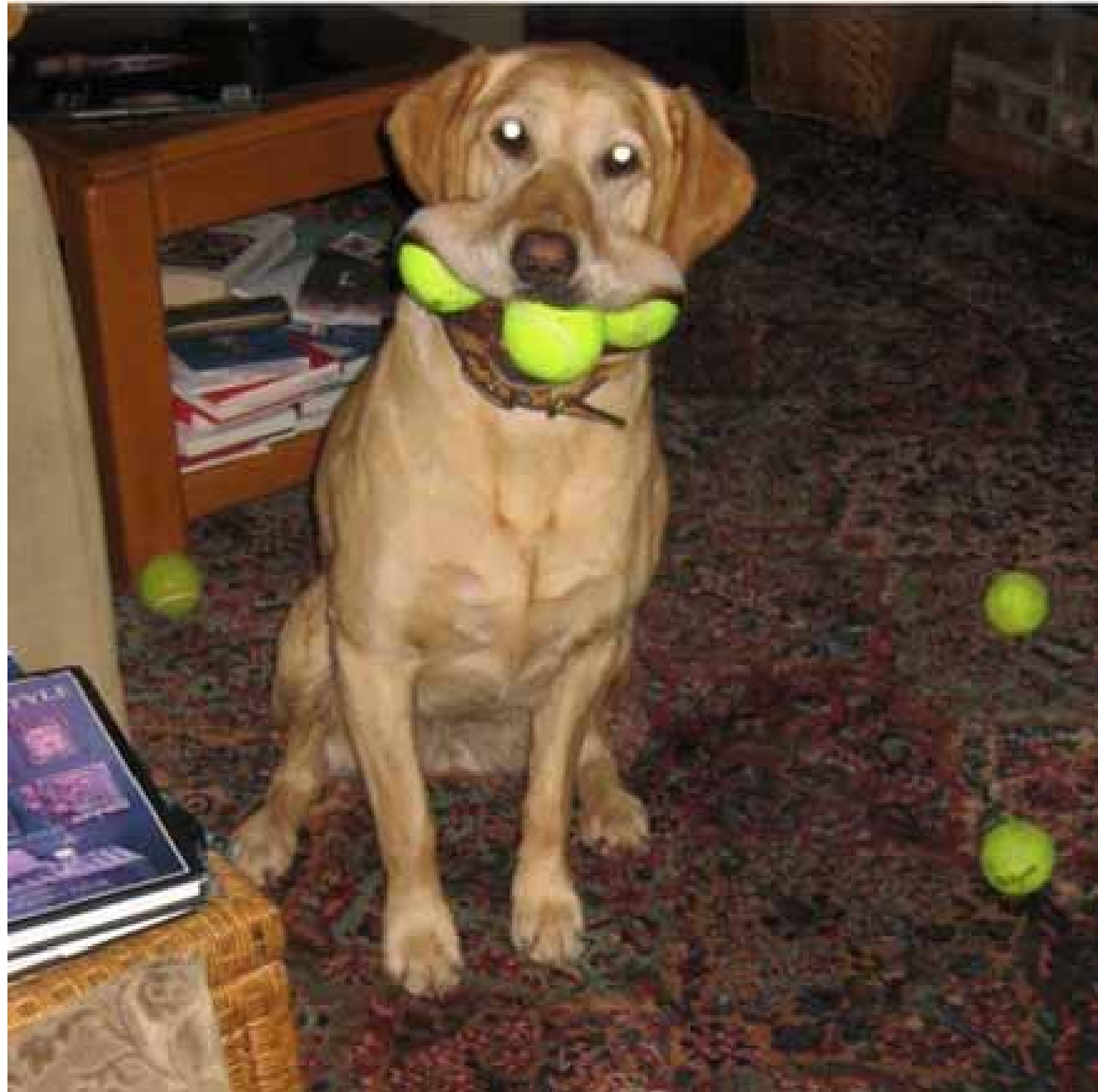
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What is Neurodiversity?



The concept that atypical (neurodivergent) neurological development is a normal human variance.







Basic Principles of Neurodiversity



- The Brain is a Rain Forest
- Cultural values often dictate what is “normal”
- Success = Adapting to the Environment
- Success = Changing the Environment
- Niche Construction works to modify the brain

How are students diverse?

- Autism
- Intellectual Challenges
- Emotional and Behavioral Challenges
- Attention Challenges
- Learning Disabilities
- Learning Preferences



What is Niche Construction?

- In Nature: An organism thrives through modification of the environment in ways that promotes it's chances for survival.



- In Culture: A child thrives through modification of the environment in ways that enhance the child's chances for success.

Success is *Adapting* to the Environment



Success is *Changing*
the Environment



Promoting Positive Niche Construction

- Strength Awareness
- Positive Role Models
- Assistive Technologies/UDL
- Strength-Based Learning Strategies
- Enhanced Human Resource Network
- Affirmative Career Aspirations
- Positive Environmental Modifications



What is their Niche?



What does their niche environment look like?

How can we provide a variety of niches?

Models of Instruction

Survival of the Fittest

“You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink.”



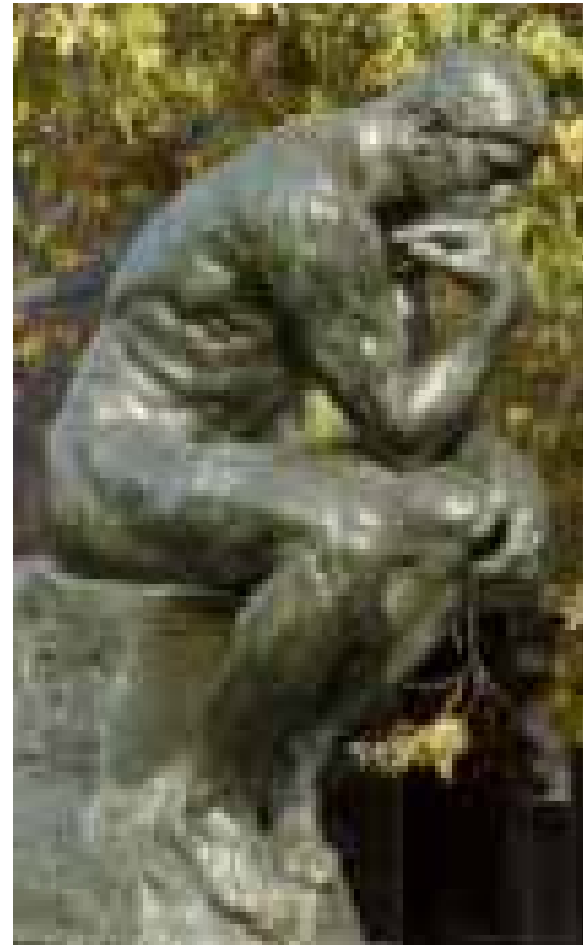
Determined Behaviorist

“With enough punishment and rewards, you can get any behavior you wish.”

Brain-Based Naturalist

“How can we make the horse thirsty so that it will *want* to drink from the trough?”

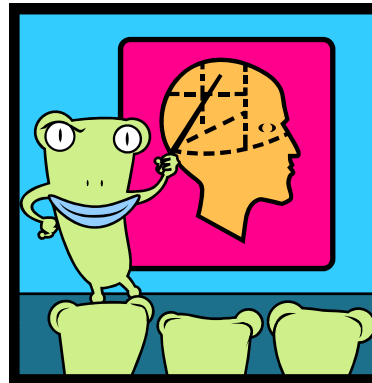
“People are naturally curious, but we are not naturally good thinkers: unless the cognitive conditions are right, we will avoid thinking.”



Willingham, D.T. (2009). *Why don't students like school?* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass”

What our brains need to learn:

- *Grab our attention*
- *Link to our memory*
- *Provide opportunities to rehearse, recall, and process*
- *Give a strong learning context*
- ***Evoke emotion! Make me care!***

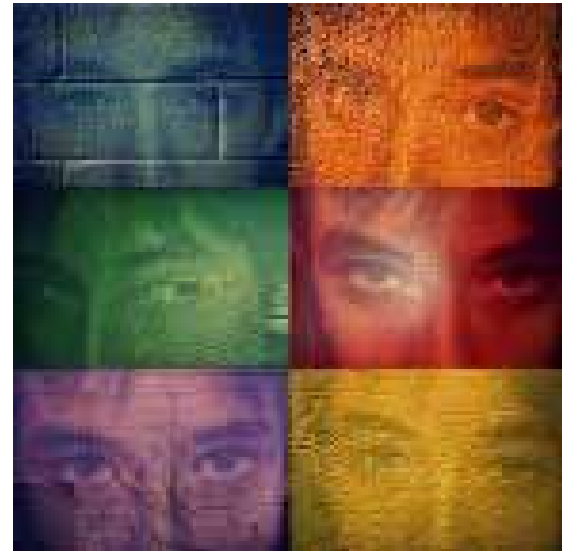


Evoke Emotion!

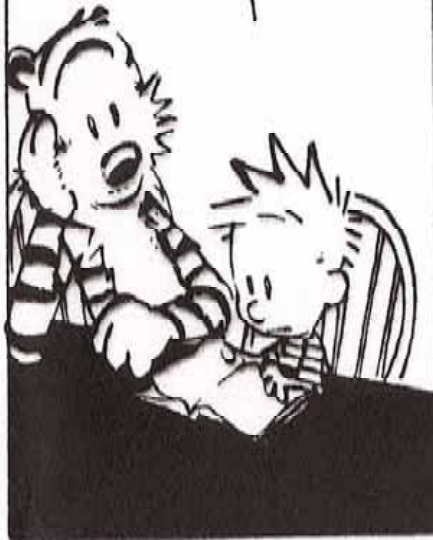
**Provide association
around learning.**



Make me care!



PROBLEMS OFTEN LOOK
OVERWHELMING AT FIRST.



THE SECRET IS TO BREAK
PROBLEMS INTO SMALL,
MANAGEABLE CHUNKS.
IF YOU DEAL WITH *THOSE*,
YOU'RE DONE BEFORE YOU
KNOW IT.



FOR EXAMPLE, I'M SUPPOSED
TO READ THIS ENTIRE
HISTORY CHAPTER. IT LOOKS
IMPOSSIBLE, SO I BREAK
THE PROBLEM DOWN.



YOU FOCUS
ON READING
THE FIRST
SECTION?

I ASK
MYSELF,
"DO I EVEN
CARE?"



HITTEBOON

Joy has everything to do with learning.



“We do things backwards. We think in terms of getting a skill first, and then finding useful and interesting things to do with it. The sensible way, the best way, is to start with something worth doing, and then, moved by a strong desire to do it, get whatever skills are needed.”



-John Holt, Educator 1923-1985

First, Discover Their Strengths



Identifying Strengths in Students

- Observation
- Documentation
- Cumulative Files
- Colleagues
- Families
- Students



What are *your* strengths?

How have you used your strengths?

What does it feel like when you go *against* your strengths?



Qualities of a Strength Based School

A top priority is identifying and building on *all students'* strengths, talents, interests, intelligences, abilities, capacities.



All students are included in regular classrooms.

Celebration and education about *all types* of diversities.

Essential Questions



Do learners think they can succeed?

Do learners want to succeed?

Do learners know what they need to do to succeed?

How can we make this happen?

Enhancing Social Networks

*Relationship, relationship
relationship!*



Real relationships make all
the difference.

Motivation

“For academic motivation to remain high, students must be successful and perceive that they are successful.”

Pressley, 2006



Universal Design for Learning

Originates in building codes!



In education the purpose is to create environments that are designed, **from the outset**, to be open and accessible to all.

Embrace the outdoors!





Don't Rescue Too Soon!

Build Resiliency

Students need to experience success and be able to self-recognize success.

The GOAL of
Differentiated Instruction is...



Total student Participation!



Become a Strengths Specialist!

- ✓ **Conduct strength-based formal and informal assessments**
- ✓ **Develop curriculum strategies for each student based on strengths**
- ✓ **Consult/Co-teach with other educators to design strength-based strategies**
- ✓ **Promote the concept of strength-based learning and neurodiversity**

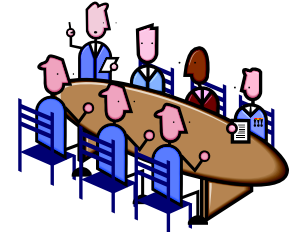


Strength-Based IEPs

Look at *all* of the student's strengths – be comprehensive!

Build the language of strengths into instructional objectives.

Start Meetings with Success



For the student: Tell us about some of your successes this year.

For the family: What successes have you seen your child enjoy this year?

For the teachers and specialists: What successes have you seen for the student?

For the group: What suggestions or changes can you think of to make the student's program work even better?

Goals



Ask students:

What are you interested in? What kind of work do you think you'd like to do when you grow up? What are your goals?

What do you think you'll need to do to achieve your goals?

What have you done so far to to move toward your goals?

To the group: What kinds of support and help can you provide to create programs that work toward the goals students have?

REFRAMING

Rather than

*hyperactivity, impulsivity,
distractability*

How about

**vitality,
spontaneity,
creativity,
imagination**

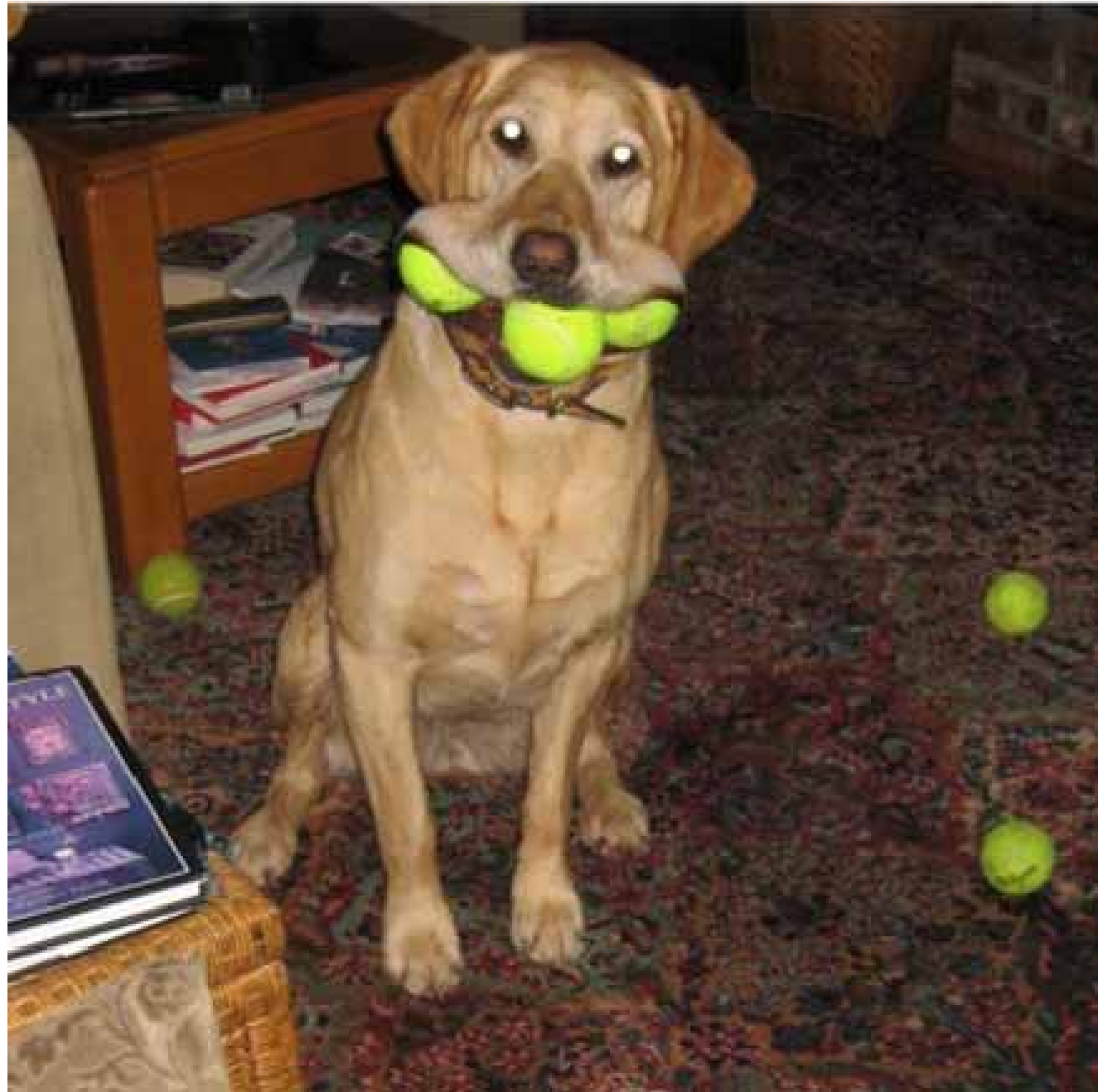


Celebrate what works!















Kids have been changing for schools for a long time.



It is time for schools to change for kids.

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