It’s More Than Just Sensory! Incorporating the Zones of Regulation® into the Classroom

Mt. Diablo Unified School District Training

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Introduction

- **What are The Zones of Regulation®?**
  - It is a concept to help students learn how to self-regulate. It creates a system to categorize how the body feels and emotions into four colored zones with which the students can easily identify.
  - Can easily be compared to traffic signs:
# The ZONES of Regulation®

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLUE ZONE</th>
<th>GREEN ZONE</th>
<th>YELLOW ZONE</th>
<th>RED ZONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Mad/Angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>Feeling Okay</td>
<td>Silly/Wiggly</td>
<td>Terrified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>Focused</td>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>Yelling/Hitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving Slowly</td>
<td>Ready to Learn</td>
<td>Loss of Some Control</td>
<td>Out of Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is Self-Regulation?

“The ability to attain, maintain and change arousal appropriately for a task or situation”

- Williams & Shellenberger, 1994, p.1-5
Why is it Important?

- Higher academic achievement is more likely when interventions include self-regulation components - Blair & Razza, 2007

- Self-regulation abilities have a stronger correlation with academic readiness than IQ or entry level reading or math skills – Blair, 2002, 2003; Normandeau & Guay, 1998

- Research shows that teachers can have a positive effect on a student’s self-regulation skills - Burchinal, Pelsner-Feinberg, Bryant & Clifford, 2000

- Students with good self-regulation are better able to connect with peers.
Components of Self-Regulation

- **Sensory Processing**
  - How the body takes in information

- **Executive Functioning**
  - Working Memory/Attention shifting/Flexibility of thoughts

- **Emotional Regulation**
  - Fight/Flight/Fright

- **Theory of Mind**
  - Social thinking/perspective taking
Self Regulation

What emotions do you feel throughout your day and how do you self regulate?

Tired? Overwhelmed? Frustrated? Bored?
Sensory Processing

- The way that the body takes in sensory information from the environment.
- Auditory (sound)
- Gustatory (taste)
- Olfactory (smell)
- Tactile (touch)
- Vestibular (movement)
- Proprioception (body awareness)
Levels of arousal is regulated by the student’s response to sensory input and how it’s processed.

- Sensory strategies throughout the school day

Be patient

- Children can begin to independently self regulate around 2nd grade

Be mindful of children who are developmentally at a lower level

- Will need to utilize modifications and expectations
Executive Functioning

- **Working Memory**
  - Ability to draw from past experiences to problem solve for the present

- **Attention Shifting**
  - Quickly switching back and forth between mental tasks

- **Flexibility**
  - Need to be able to consider multiple options and revise plans
Emotional Regulation

- The processes that are responsible for controlling the emotional reactions in order to meet one’s goals
  - Autonomic Nervous System
    - Fight
    - Flight
    - Fright
Social Thinking®

- Zones of Regulation incorporates the work of Michelle Garcia Winner’s Social Thinking® Curriculum

- Paradigm shift – Not social skills training rather teaching children how to think socially.
  - Whole Body Listening
  - Expected/Unexpected Behaviors
  - Comfortable thoughts/Uncomfortable thoughts
  - Size of the Problem (big problem/little problem)
  - Perspective taking
What are The Zones of Regulation®?
The Zones of Regulation®

✧ **Blue Zone**
  • Low state of alertness. Feeling sad, tired, sick or bored

✧ **Green Zone**
  • A regulated state of alertness. Feeling calm, happy and focused.

✧ **Yellow Zone**
  • A heightened state of alertness, but still having control. Feeling frustration, anxiety, excitement, or silliness.

✧ **Red Zone**
  • An extremely heightened state of alertness or very intense feelings. Feeling anger, rage, panic, terror, extreme excitement or experiencing explosive behavior.
Goal of The Zones

- To teach students:
  - To identify their feelings and levels of alertness
  - Effective regulation tools
  - When and why to use tools
  - To problem solve positive solutions
  - Understand how their behaviors influence others’ thoughts and feelings
  - ....and eventually – Independent self-regulation!!
Important to remember:

- We experience feelings in ALL of the zones at one time or another. Therefore, it is important not to label any zone as “good” or “bad”
- Need to match one’s zone to the social context and environment – You can have feelings in the “red zone” but your behavior can be in the “green or yellow zone.”
- Some emotions can fall into more than one zone
- Although Yellow and Red Zones might get more attention, it is important to provide positive reinforcement for the Green Zone as well.
Implementation

How do you begin?
To Begin...

- Identify Feelings and Levels of Alertness in Others
- Identify Feelings and Levels of Alertness in Self
- Social Thinking®
- Exploring Tools

Road Map – Pages 18-19
Identify Feelings and Levels of Alertness
Identify Feelings and Levels of Alertness

- **Books**
  - Great for whole group!
  - *See Book List

- **Apps**

- **Videos**
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=H4BNbHBcnDI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=H4BNbHBcnDI)
Identify Feelings and Levels of Alertness

I feel .

I'm in the Zone.

This is a picture of me in the BLUE ZONE:

My face and body clues are:

I feel in the BLUE ZONE when:

I am more likely to make others feel:

Zones Check–in

Flip Books (pg 101)

Popsicle Sticks

Drawing/Taking pictures of self in all 4 Zones (pg 76-81)
Understanding Different Perspectives

When I am in the RED ZONE and it is unexpected...

Other kids might feel

Other kids might be thinking

Other kids might say

Expected/Unexpected Behaviors – page 48

Whole Body Listening

Social Detectives
Exploring Tools

- Sensory Supports
- Calming Techniques
- Thinking Strategies
Sensory Supports
**Six Sides of Breathing**

Starting at the yellow star trace with your finger the sides of the hexagon as you take a deep breath in, feeling your shoulders rise as the air fills you. Trace over the next side as you hold your breath for a moment. Slowly breathe out as you trace the third side of the hexagon. Continue tracing around the bottom three sides of the hexagon as you complete another deep breath. Continue The Six Sides of Breathing cycle until you feel calm and relaxed.

**Lazy 8 Breathing**

Trace the Lazy 8 with your finger starting at the star and taking a deep breath in. As you cross over to the other side of the Lazy 8, slowly let your breath out.
Calming Techniques

Brain Gym

Yoga/Stretching/Movement
Thinking Strategies

Inner Coach vs. Critic

Size of the Problem

Remember the size of your reaction has to match the size of the problem!

How big do others see the problem?

How big should your reaction be?

Size:

1. Little Problem
2. Medium Problem
3. Big Problem
4. Huge Problem
**SUPERFLEX takes on the Unthinkables!**

Superflex helps a citizen to be a more flexible thinker, which allows the person to better control his or her brain and change how he or she thinks. He helps a citizen think about how to act and behave to keep others (and himself/herself) feeling good. He helps a citizen see a better, problem-solver by thinking of many different solutions to one problem. He helps a citizen notice when an Unthinkable is becoming more active in his brain and then quickly comes up with a strategy to defeat the Unthinkable.

- **Rock Brain** - I make people get stuck on their ideas.
- **Glassesman** - I make people have huge upset reactions.
- **D.O.F.** - I make people overly competitive.
- **Mean Jane** - I get people to act mean and bossy.
- **Space Invader** - I get people to invade other's personal space.
- **One-Sided Sid** - I get people to only talk about themselves.
- **Washy Wally** - I get people to use humor at the wrong time, the wrong place or with the wrong person.
- **Brain Eater** - I distract people.
- **Body Snatcher** - I move people's bodies from the group.
- **Grump Grumpus** - I put people in grumpy moods.
- **Worry Wart** - I make people worry too much.
- **Un-Wonderer** - I don't like people to socially wonder about others.
- **Energy Harry** - I give people too much energy.

www.socialthinking.com
Tools

When I feel... I can try...

Tool Icons
Page 140-141
Although students are often able to state calming strategies, they have a more difficult time generalizing them when it’s needed the most.

Students need to learn to use tools once they BEGIN to move into less regulated states.
Student Monitoring

Jack’s ZONES Across the Day: 5/25/2011

- Getting ready for school
- Bus ride
- Do morning work
- Specialist
- Math
- Recess and lunch
- Math
- Reading
- Recess
- Units
- Bye Bye

Uncomfortable Thoughts

Good Thoughts
CAUTION! Sometimes things happen to make me feel worried, upset, or frustrated! These things are called “triggers.” These put me in the Yellow or Red Zone! Here are some of my triggers:
Final Thoughts

- Adaptations for Special Populations
  - Keep it basic
  - Establish strong behavior management
  - Lots of Visuals
  - More adult support for regulation required

- Be Proactive
  - Incorporate into daily routine
  - Practice strategies when in a calm state
  - Ensure hunger, rest and thirst are accounted for

- Consistent implementation over time!

- Strong multi-disciplinary approach (Psych, SLP, OT, Teacher)
Websites:
- ZonesofRegulation.com
- SocialThinking.com

Presentations:

Books:
  - See page 179 for resources
  - See handout for additional resources.
I would love to hear how you’re implementing The Zones in your classrooms or with your students!

Feel free to contact me with any comments or questions!

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