

GETTING TO KNOW ME



My name is Stephanie Menefee.

I've taught elementary music in Tacoma, WA since 2000. I also serve as the district content lead for all of elementary music in Tacoma Public Schools.

My husband and I have three incredible children, two of whom you will get to hear a little bit about later on in the session. They are why I am so passionate about this subject.



GETTING TO KNOW YOU

What is your level of experience with teaching students who are neurodiverse?

Throw your answer in the chat:

1- little to no

2- some

3- on the daily, at school

4- I live it, either me or my family members

Abstract geometric lines in black on a white background, forming various overlapping polygons and shapes, primarily concentrated in the upper left and center of the page.

REACHING OUR NEURODIVERSE LEARNERS

FOCUS FOR TODAY:

- Understanding Neurodivergence
- What is Autism?
- Our Senses
- Techniques for Teaching



NEURODIVERGENCE

“The term “neurodivergent” describes people whose brain differences affect how their brain works. That means they have different strengths and challenges from people whose brains don’t have those differences. The possible differences include medical disorders, learning disabilities, and other conditions.”

- Cleveland Clinic

AUTISM IS A SPECTRUM

Each person is unique and has their own way of experiencing the world

There are many traits which are common among each person:

- Sensory issues (either oversensitive or undersensitive, usually a combination of these across all sensory modalities)
- ADHD is usually present in some capacity
 - Inattentive
 - Hyperactive/Impulsive
 - Combined

Many times students may not appear to be listening, but they actually are.

Each person with autism is unique.
There is a saying, "If you've seen one person with autism, you've seen one person with autism."

HOW MANY SENSES DO WE HAVE?

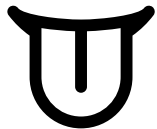
Sight



Hearing



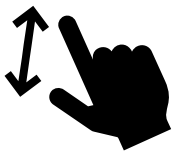
Taste



Smell



Touch



But wait! There's more!

Proprioceptive
Vestibular

HELPING ALL OF OUR STUDENTS BE SUCCESSFUL

- Manage/Miss/Move On
 - ✓ Let the students be themselves, but monitor (peripheral vision)
 - ✓ When you call kids on behaviors, etc. be clear, fair, firm, and give them another opportunity to try again – not every behavior is willful – but every behavior is communication
- Be predictable in your classroom environment (this helps every student, not just the neurospicy students)
 - ✓ Seating – be thoughtful and intentional about who students sit next to/near
 - ✓ Routines

HELPING ALL OF OUR STUDENTS BE SUCCESSFUL

- Lots of movement (LM/NLM throughout class)
 - ✓ Allow multiple ways for participation.
 - ✓ Set up a variety ways of being in the classroom space throughout the class session.
- Have tools easily available (headphones, wiggle cushions, etc)
 - ✓ Have protocol established for who, how, and when students are permitted to use these tools.

TOOLS AT WORK:

THIS IS BUZZ THE TURTLE. HE'S A WEIGHTED TURTLE THAT STUDENTS USE IF NEEDED. BUZZ GETS PASSED AROUND CLASS FREQUENTLY



Photos courtesy of Laura Kexel, choir and orchestra teacher at Kilo M.S. in Kent, WA



HELPING ALL OF OUR STUDENTS BE SUCCESSFUL

- Allow students to take a break and return as needed.
 - ✓ Inside the classroom and/or in the hallway as appropriate for your space. Have protocol for when it's their choice vs when it's your choice.
- Recognize effort. It can take these students years to be able to participate fully alongside their peers. Some may never fully get there, and that's ok.
- Every day is a fresh start.

PRESENTATION IN GIRLS

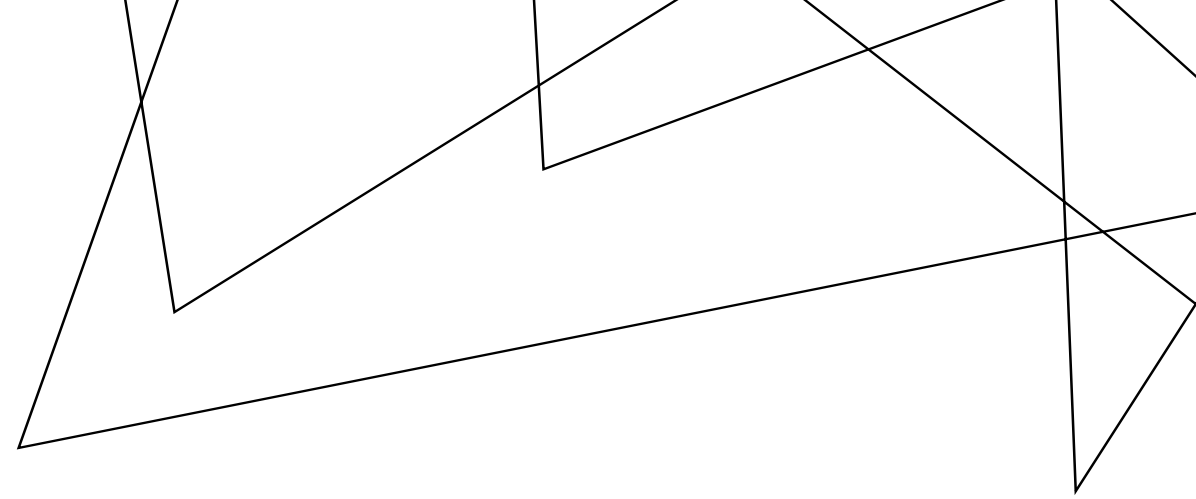
- **Girls mask – this means they hide their symptoms or manifestations to be more socially acceptable.**
- **Girls may observe and try to mimic – movements, conversational conventions.**
- **Girls may freeze when not masking until they figure out what they're doing.**
- **Girls may agree with everything so as to not be perceived as a “problem”.**
- **Girls may “fake it” to either hide or fit in.**
- **Can be the target of bullying because they don't have many friends.**
- **Girls may not share problems**

AUTISM AT HOME



WHAT DO THE PARENTS WANT YOU TO KNOW?

- Our kids are totally capable. They just might not look like the other kids when they're doing things.
- Many parents are open to questions being asked for better understanding.
- Be patient with our kids! They may need a few tries to get started on a task or verbal statement/response.
- Processing time is probably going to be a little longer. Allow them that time.
- Our kids are more than their diagnosis. Get to know them for who they are. They are some of the most fantastic people on the planet and will definitely give you a different perspective on things.
- Don't assume every behavior is willful. Behavior is communication. What is the child communicating through their behavior?
- Be flexible.
- Each child is unique. "When you've seen one person with autism, you've seen one person with autism."





QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONNECTIONS



THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME TODAY!

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO REACH OUT!

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