



STORY-DRIVEN SEL FOR NEURODIVERSE LEARNERS

The Secret Society of G.O.A.T.™ Pilot at the dePaul School for Dyslexia

*"It's the first time ADHD students can laugh and learn
about their brains in the same moment."*

— 5th grade teacher, Florida

OVERVIEW

- A laugh-out-loud, story-based SEL framework where students learn brain-based tools for focus, emotional regulation, and resilience through classroom read-alouds.
- Humor, heart, and neuroscience come together to help kids recognize their story and pay forward what they learn.

WHY IT FITS ADHD AND NEUROTYPICAL LEARNERS ALIKE

- **Humor boosts dopamine** → attention, memory, engagement.
- **Short, sensory-rich sessions** fit real classroom attention spans.
- Teaches **regulation through embodiment**, not explanation.
- **Normalizes differences** → reduces shame and peer stigma.
- "Curiosity Quests," "Think-Like-Moo Missions," and "Brain Stretch Sheets" **turn SEL into play**.
- **Fast-paced language, short sentences, and visual pacing** respect ADHD attention flow.
- **Dyslexia-friendly layout**, fonts, and white space ensure accessibility for all readers.
- **Interdisciplinary** prompts link emotions to literacy, art, math, and science.
- **Gamified** elements (missions, badges, secret codes) keep motivation high.
- Humor reduces stress, making learning safe and social.
- **Neurodiversity-affirming language** ("wired spicy") builds pride, not pressure.

WHY STORY?

- **Emotion before instruction:** humor activates attention and memory.
- **Safety through fiction:** kids explore big feelings vicariously.
- **Practice through imagination** — students rehearse self-regulation before applying it in real life.
- **Shared language** — phrases like “Boss Brain” and “Spicy Brain” help kids talk about emotions with pride, not shame.

HOW IT WORKS

- **Each chapter of The Secret Society of G.O.A.T. transforms** everyday challenges into humorous, relatable story moments that **model self-regulation and growth.**
- Paired **Curiosity Quests—humor-filled, cross-subject worksheets—**extend learning through creative writing, art, geography, and discussion, helping students process emotions while connecting them to real-world knowledge.

Why “tiny detail” questions work

- They train active listening and short-term memory without feeling like a test.
- They give “fast thinkers” an instant win: kids who might miss big comprehension points can still shine by catching a name or number.
- They build visual recall — students start making mental movies of what they hear.
- They spark humor and competition (“Who remembers the bus driver's name?”).
- And when phrased playfully, they keep engagement high even during rereads.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

- **Narrative Transport Theory:** stories heighten empathy & internalization.
- **Social Learning Theory:** students model regulation through characters.
- **Cognitive-Behavioral Integration:** Stories link automatic thoughts → feelings → actions, reinforcing self-awareness and metacognition. Reframing = thought–emotion–behavior link.
- **Neurodiversity-Affirming Pedagogy:** Emphasizes strengths (“wired spicy”) and reframes differences as identity assets.

Category	Key Concept	Function
Emotional Regulation		Calming & grounding
Cognitive Tools	Reframing · Naming Brain · Humor · Boss Brain Model	Cognitive distance & self-control
Physiological Education	Amy the Amygdala · Caveman/Legs/Boss Brain trio	Understanding body–mind connection
Behavioral Anchors	Exhale Protocol · Juice Box · Ritual Closure	Replace panic with action
Identity Integration	“Spicy-brained” label · Cheat-sheet letter · Self-advocacy	Builds self-esteem & neurodiversity acceptance

FEEL SEEN - Recognize Your Story

KEY FEATURES FOR EDUCATORS

CASEL CORE COMPETENCIES ADDRESSED

Aligned with CASEL core competencies:	How This Lesson Supports It
Self-Awareness	Students identify personal strengths and traits that make them unique.
Self-Management	Humor and reframing demonstrate a healthy way to manage self-talk and anxiety.
Social Awareness	Students practice perspective-taking through Moo's empathy and word choice.
Relationship Skills	Encourages supportive peer language and respectful curiosity.
Responsible Decision-Making	Promotes reflection on how words (like "weird") shape identity and belonging.

FLORIDA B.E.S.T. & SEL ALIGNMENT (GRADES 4-6)

Area	Standard Connection
ELA.4.R.1.1 / ELA.5.R.1.1 / ELA.6.R.1.1	Analyze how character thoughts and dialogue reveal feelings and traits.
ELA.K12.EE.3.1	Make inferences to support understanding of text and subtext.
ELA.K12.EE.4.1	Use appropriate tone and vocabulary when expressing ideas orally or in writing.
Health/Social-Emotional Learning	Recognize and label emotions; demonstrate empathy; describe personal strengths.
Science of the Brain (optional cross-link)	Relate emotional experiences to brain and body responses (stress regulation).

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RESOURCES VIA QR CODE

- Sample Chapter & "Mission from the Secret Society" Worksheet
- Overview of The Happy Core™ Framework
- Summary of CASEL alignment and pilot design template

FEEL SEEN - Recognize Your Story

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Physiological Education	Amy the Amygdala ·	Understanding body-mind
Behavioral Anchors	Exhale Protocol · Juice Box · Ritual	Replace panic with action
Identity Integration	“Spicy-brained” label · Cheat-sheet	Builds self-esteem & neurodiversity

-  **Educator & Student Voices**
- “It’s the first time my ADHD students laughed and learned about their brains in the same moment.”
- — 5th Grade Teacher, Florida
- “When Max messes up, everyone laughs — but they also get it. The room gets quieter in a different way.”
- — School Counselor, Pilot Program
- “I used to feel weird. Now I say I’m spicy-brained.”
- — Student, Age 10

Part of The Happy Core™ Framework

Feel Seen. Recognize Your Story. Regulate Your Brain. Reframe Your Power. Pay It Forward.