Building Bridges: Empowering ADHD Kids in School Settings

A neuroscience-informed, school-based framework integrating social–emotional learning, emotional translation, and self-advocacy — piloted at the dePaul School for Dyslexia (2024/25).

The dePaul School for Dyslexia

- This poster presents outcomes from an ongoing pilot collaboration at the dePaul School for Dyslexia (Clearwater, FL).
- The project examines how a multimodal, neuroscience-informed framework—integrating emotional regulation, psychoeducation, empathy-based communication, and self-advocacy—can enhance well-being, focus, and classroom participation for both neurodivergent and neurotypical students.
- Implemented flexibly across grades 2–8, the pilot included both in-class and after-school applications.
- Core components—Happy Core™ Program, Homework Hero™, More Than Behavior™ Letters, and Advocacy Lab™—illustrate how evidence-based mind–body, reflective, and narrative practices can create calmer classrooms, stronger communication, and confident, emotionally literate learners.

Student | Home | School | Future

AWARENESS
Feel Seen
Recognize Your Story

Purpose:
- Teaching practical, brain-based strategies for emotional regulation, attention, and resilience using humor and SEL storytelling.
- Turn reflection into real-world emotional and social skills practice.

Pilot Structure
- Weekly read-aloud sessions from The Secret Society of G.O.A.T. and ready to print cross-subject worksheets that mix humor, SEL, and real-world learning.
- Adaptable 20–40 minute sessions for classroom transitions or SEL blocks.

Learning Objectives
- Understand emotions using simple, brain-based language.
- Practice real strategies to calm, refocus, and recover.
- Build belonging, confidence, and self-acceptance.

Expected Outcomes
- Greater emotional awareness and engagement.
- Improved self-regulation and empathy.
- Notable gains in calm, confidence, and connection.

Regulation
Build Focus
Turn Emotion into Action

Purpose:
- Help students channel strong emotions into focus, motivation, and goal-directed action.
- Teach practical tools for calming, initiating, and sustaining effort.
- Foster executive-function growth through integrated mind–body learning, play and art.

Pilot Structure
- After School Club/ 12 students /grades 2-4.
- Six weekly 90-minute sessions blending guided hypnosis, NLP strategies, play, movement, and art-based reflection to strengthen focus, confidence, and self-regulation.

Learning Objectives
- Recognize “Caveman Brain” vs. “Boss Brain” responses.
- Apply calming and focus tools to begin and complete tasks.
- Strengthen intrinsic motivation, regulation, and follow-through.

Outcomes
- Calmer transitions and higher engagement.
- Stronger self-regulation and empathy.
- Improved follow-through and focus.

Connection
Be Understood
Turn Misunderstandings into Empathy

Purpose:
- Strengthen home–school communication through empathy-based reflection.
- Translate behavior into emotional and practical insights for teachers and parents.
- Support educators in responding to needs, not just visible behaviors.

Pilot Structure
- Grade 7–8 implementation using More Than Behavior™ letters (“Dear Me,” “Dear Teacher,” “Dear Grown-Ups”).
- Two-part reflection: guided questionnaire + workshop on learning patterns and supports.

Learning Objectives
- Increase emotional self-awareness and communication skills.
- Enhance educator understanding of learning and behavior roots.
- Model constructive 504/IEP collaboration language.

Outcomes
- Stronger empathy and trust between home and school.
- Students reflected greater ownership of learning needs.
- 504 conversations shifted toward personalization and shared understanding.

Advocacy
Be Heard
Advocate and Apply Your Strengths

Purpose:
- Equips 8th-graders to express how they learn and what supports them best as they transition to high school.
- Using “Dear Younger Me” and “Dear Teacher” letters to transform reflection into self-advocacy.

Pilot Structure
- Ongoing Project: The Advocacy Lab
- Session 1: Guided questionnaire; student-authored “Dear Future Teacher.”
- Session 2: Compare & Practice — AI-rendered Dear Teacher letter; Advocacy Snapshot + brief role-play/email script.

Learning Objectives
- Turning self-awareness into advocacy.
- Practice expressing learning needs using solution- based language.
- Strengthen confidence and readiness for new academic settings.

Expected Outcomes
- Increased reflection and participation
- Greater comfort sharing learning needs
- Smoother transitions and stronger rapport

Conclusion

- The Happy Core™ Framework offers a **replicable, school-based model** integrating emotional regulation, empathy-based communication, and student self-advocacy.
- Grounded in neuroscience and practical application, it bridges emotional, cognitive, and behavioral supports within everyday learning environments.
- Early results from the dePaul pilot show measurable gains in regulation, confidence, and engagement, highlighting its **adaptability across school and counseling settings** and its **equal value for neurodivergent and neurotypical learners.**
- Future studies will examine **scalability and educator-training pathways** to inform broader implementation and curricular alignment with standard SEL instruction.

Designed to be shared — adaptable for classrooms, counseling, and community learning spaces.

The Happy Core™
For kids with big feelings and busy brains.
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What if every brain had a toolbox, a story, and a cheer squad?