

WHOLE BODY LISTENING

and why we need to move away from it

"Whole Body Listening" is a way for teachers to **make sure everyone is paying attention** by having children sit still, stop talking, put their hands in their lap, and look at the teacher, particularly when sitting on the mat.

Some children might appear to be able to stick with the rules of Whole Body Listening, but the reality is that many children can't. **Listening, or being regulated enough to pay attention, looks different for everyone.**

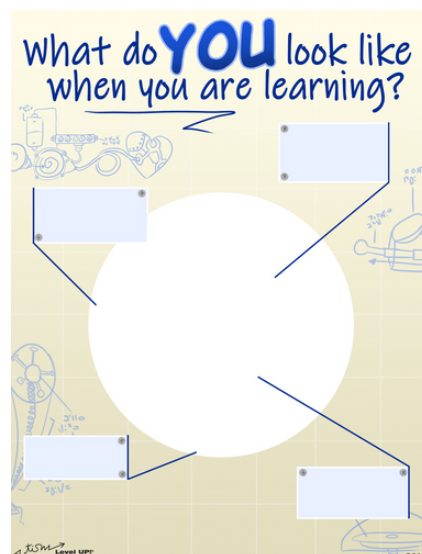
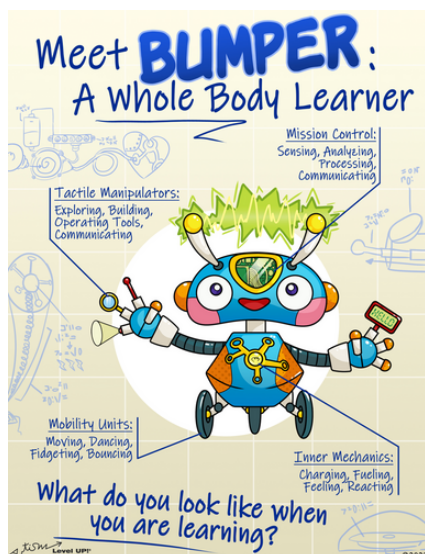
For example, if you see a child sitting on the mat and they're fiddling with their shoes, wriggling around on their bottom, sitting on their knees, or looking away from you, this is likely their way of regulating.

Whole Body Listening is expecting all children to learn in the exact same way. Neurodivergent children in particular (i.e. those whose brains do not fit the mould of what society considers usual/best, e.g. autism, ADHD, dyslexia) have trouble with this.

Helping students to listen might look like allowing and providing **alternative seating options**, e.g. lying down or sitting on a chair, sitting children on the perimeter of the group where they have **space to move**, frequent **movement breaks**, or **fidget tools**. Some students might need individual prompts, e.g. "It looks like your body needs to move. You can sit on this wobble cushion or sit on this stool", or "It looks like your hands need something to fidget with. Instead of touching Sarah, here's a fidget toy".

So rather than encouraging Whole Body Listening, let's try the phrase **"Does everyone have what they need to listen?"**

This needs to be prefaced with a **discussion with students about how everyone learns differently.** There is a great resource to help with this here: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/In-Our-Class-15-page-resource-for-teachers-11541519>



Visit <https://www.autismlevelup.com/> for more info and resources



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