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# **A Beginner's Guide to Neurodiversity for the College Classroom**

*By Heather K. Vaughn,  
English Department Chair*



# Our Session

- Why start a neurodiverse initiative?
- What is the framework for success?
- What does adapting and engaging mean?
- How does this model “translate” to start other initiatives?

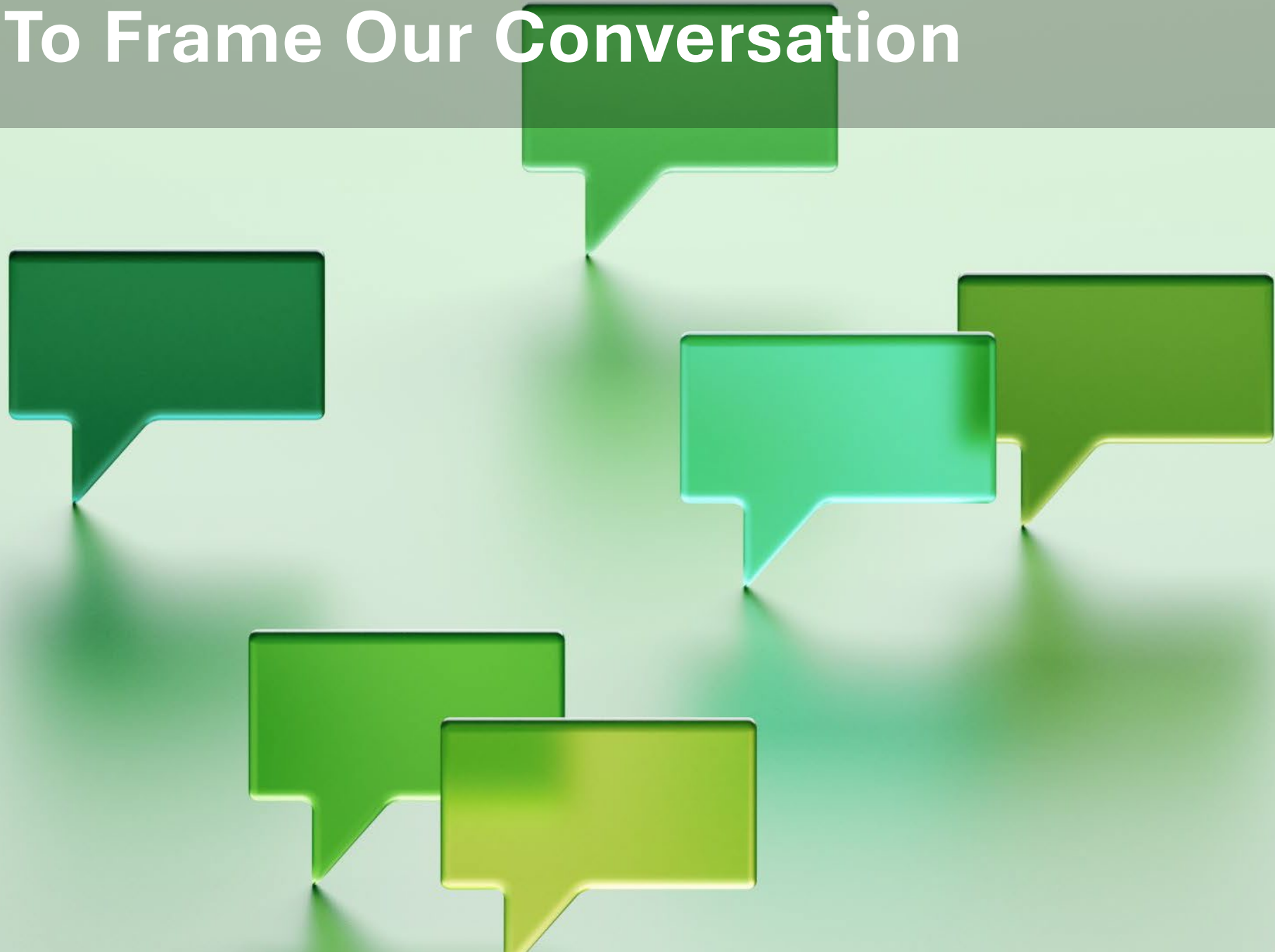
# Why?

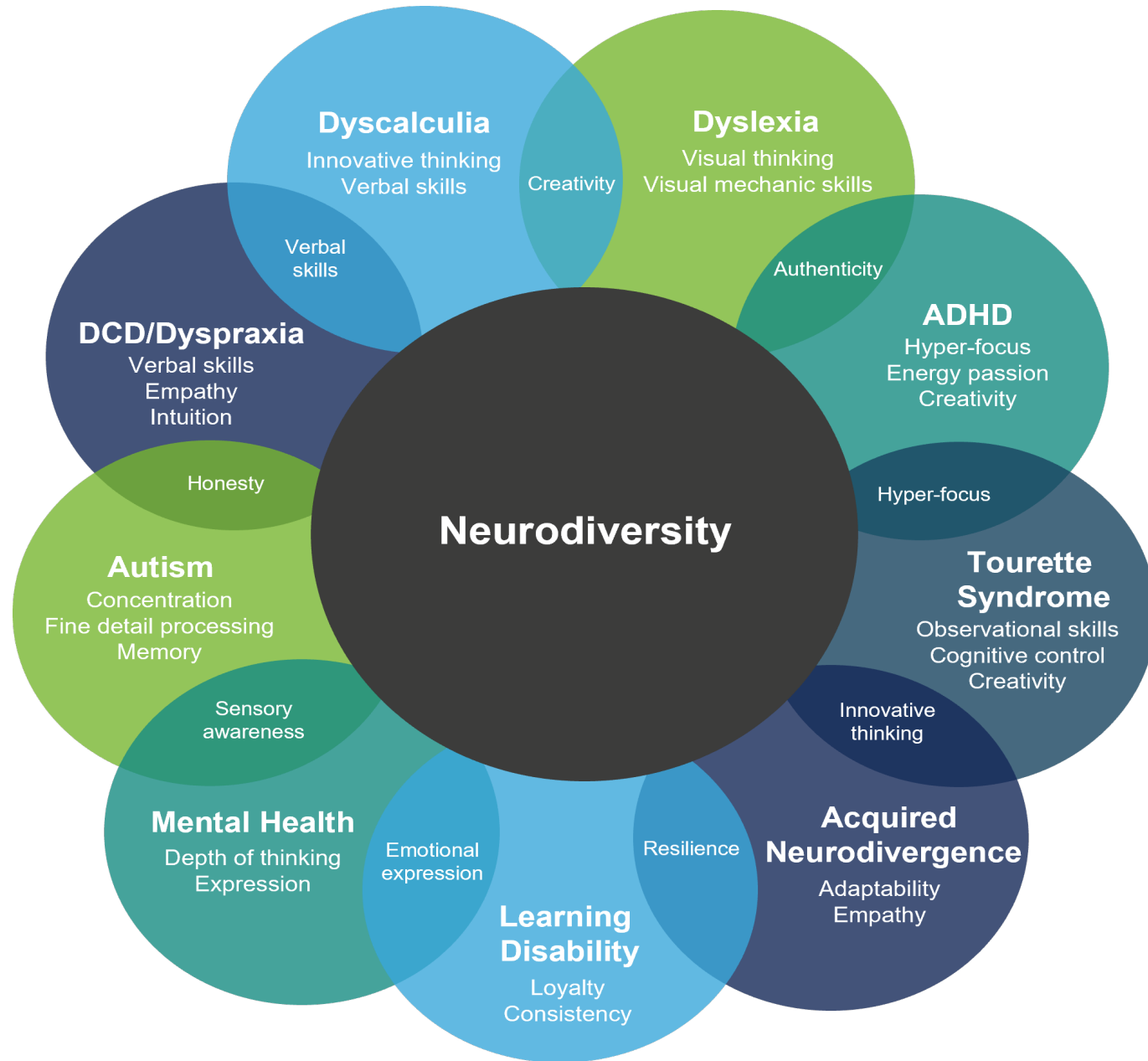
- **Unprepared**
- **Safety**
- **Practicable**





# How To Frame Our Conversation






Tim Powell from [People Scout](#)

**Our mission is to always meet students where they are**

# Play what if?

Imagine a researcher studying you for two years. They follow you around during your workday; they are in your home documenting your responses to your environment and other people. Occasionally, they ask you questions about your family and how you feel. They ask you to perform certain tasks. Some tasks you complete easily; you like these tasks. Some tasks and questions you struggle to complete or comprehend.

What would be quirks, mistakes, challenges, and vulnerabilities that researchers would observe? Create a checklist of all your (perceived) deficiencies.



**“I have had a couple of professors and it’s almost like they look down their nose at me kind of in a way that’s well why should you get anything different than the other students in the room. .. I didn’t think the things I was asking for was too much but sometimes it seems that they think that it is and I’m not trying to take advantage of anything here. I’m just trying to be able to do what I’m actually capable of.”** taken

from Quora

**“They don’t get what makes you, you and they don’t always have patience for it.”** taken from Quora



“As neurodivergent learners, we can internalize the ‘I’m the problem’ thread, and that’s difficult,” -[Megan Reilly](#)

“The thing I appreciate most about my own thinking is the creativity involved. There’s this web of connection in my brain, and I think that leads to novel ways of putting things together.” -[Anjelika, student](#)




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**How do we  
adapt?**

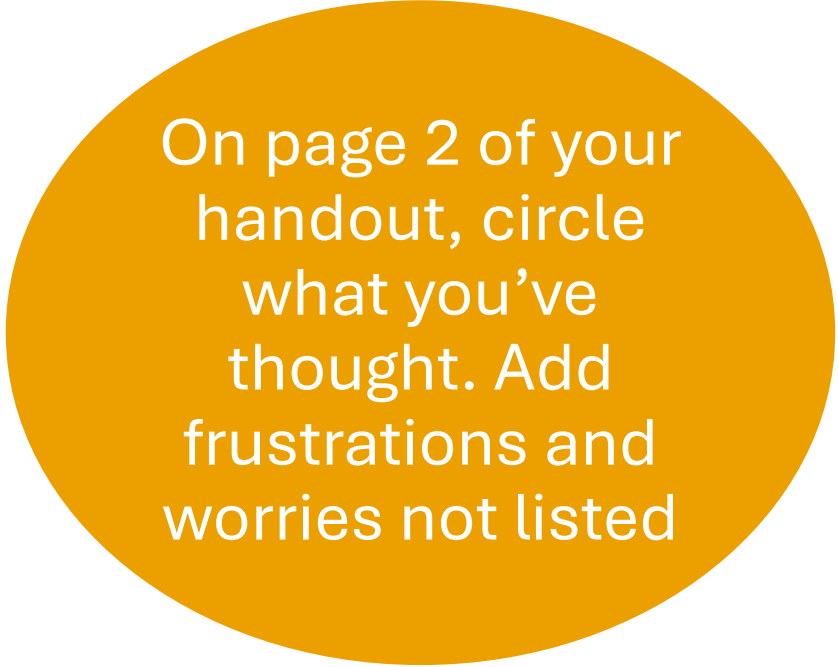
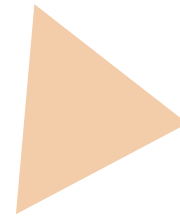
**What does  
adapting look  
like?**

**What are our  
challenges as  
we try to adapt?**

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First, we have to  
acknowledge our  
feelings, our  
worries, and our  
frustrations.



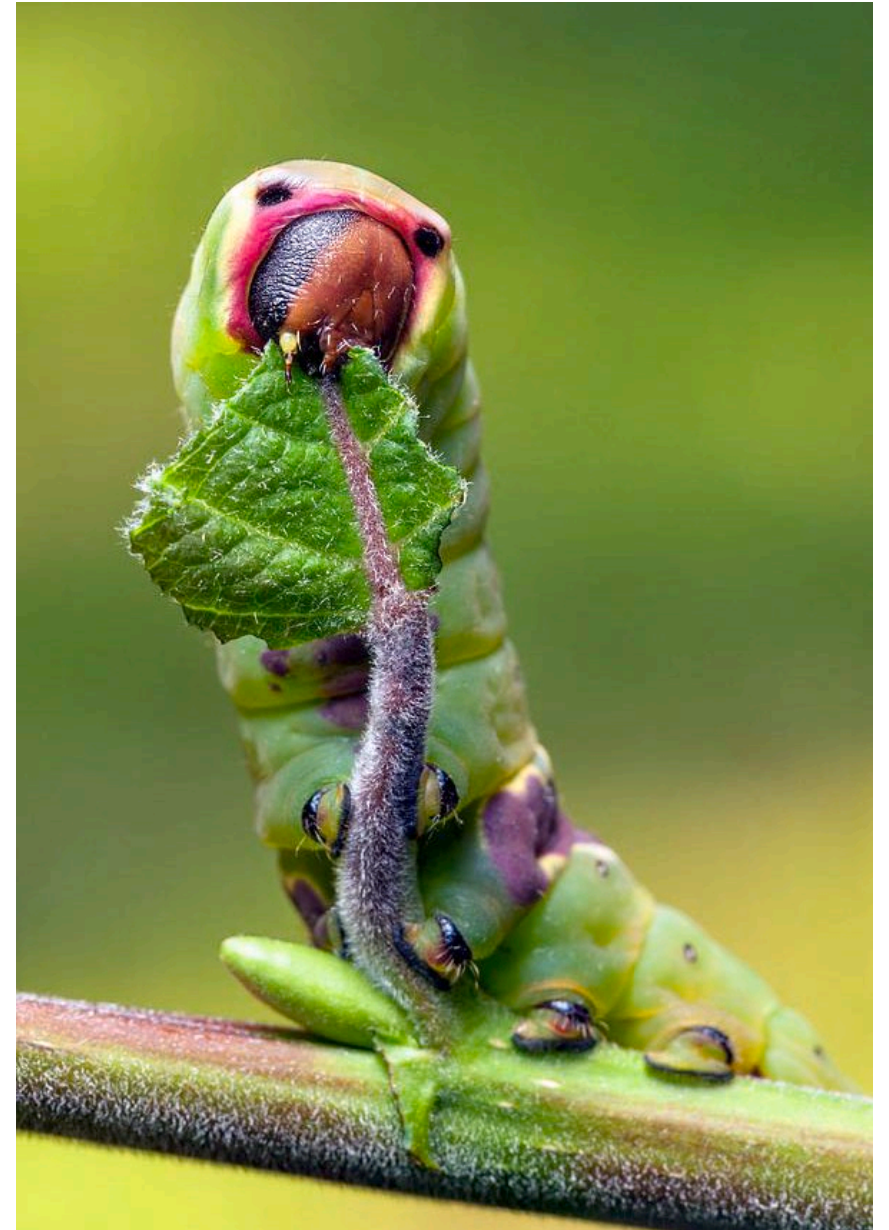
On page 2 of your  
handout, circle  
what you've  
thought. Add  
frustrations and  
worries not listed

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**From the sentences you circled, what did you notice?**

**Where do you see places to (try) adapt?**

Visual taken from [Science Photo Gallery](#)



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# Advice to Adapt

- Re-imagine classroom set up, assessments, discussions, handouts, and lectures.
- Actively listen.
- Answer the students' questions which sometimes “sound” like worry, like repetition, like. . .
- Address concerns. Follow up with where to start. “Let’s start here\_\_\_\_\_”
- Literal, step by step, clear and repeated
- Define vocabulary.
- Show students what the test or the assignment will look like.

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# Advice For The Classroom

- Set up a class routine: class schedule, 10-minute lecture, hands-on work, show how to complete next assignment, repeat class schedule.
- HyFlex- in-person, Zoom-in, or on-line only. And, they decide day-by-day how they participate.
- Students sit where they want, lights are turned off, during hands-on work time earbuds allowed.
- For complicated concepts, give the lecture/notes out as a handout with a highlighter. Ask students to engage with lecture/discussion.
- Flexible deadlines without point deduction for late work.
- Draft assignments in class.

# Advice For Coursework

- Step by step instructions: specific, clear, concrete, examples
- Create templates for how to complete assignments

Student 6

Hope Student  
H. Vaughn  
English 111/011  
March 8, 2024

Thesis Project

## Part I

1. The thesis in Hasler's essay is "quoted sentences from the essay" (786). This is the thesis because OR The thesis in Hasler's essay is implied, not directly stated because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Hasler proves the thesis by \_\_\_\_\_. List the methods then define them.  
Comparisons- defined-what kind of-how effective  
Quoted Research-  
Data-



# Incorporate growth mindset and mindfulness practice.

## Writing Workshop: Growth Mindset

Answer the following prompts:

1. What one thing could you do (you aren't doing now) that if you did on a regular basis, would make a tremendous positive difference in your personal life? Your work life? Your college life?
2. "If only", "I can't," "I have to," He/She/They made me/did\_\_\_" are phrases we often say out loud or to ourselves at low moments, when there is life chaos, when circumstances beyond our control seem to control our fate, when we are paralyzed with frustration. Make a list of the phrases you say in the midst of life challenges.

Specifically, list phrases that limit your problem solving, determination, and knowing your self-worth/brilliance.

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# Advice for Coursework

- Class discussions verbal and written. Non-verbal, anxiety-filled, or shy students can still participate, we still get to hear their ideas. . .
- Do not force students to talk or participate in group work.

## Class Discussion: Sedaris's "Us and Them" and Yousafzai "Who Is Malala?"

- What writing strategies do you see in these two essays that may be helpful to use in Essay 1 or in another writing project? Writing strategies include (but not limited to) the following: mini-narrative of experience, dialogue/conversation, description of place, description of people/place, references to artifacts/ideas/beliefs, chronological telling of events, integrating a "bigger story" into a narrative, showing through action what is important. . .

I think it would help if I add more dialogue/conversation, writing down more of my mother's beliefs, maybe even working in description of people/ and places. . . I think that all of these things could be important but

feel that we all have a story to tell. The events that lead to them thinking the way they and I do. What differentiates our story from the experience.

How do the videos/supplemental media about Sedaris and Yousafzai inform how you read or understand the essays? What does seeing them and/or hearing their voice provide? Videos/supplemental help you understand the emotion and language they are using. If you were to see them you could see the emotions and feelings. When you hear them you can hear how they feel about the subject or what they are talking about. It can help you to put a face and voice with the text.

Sedaris → as more funny and playful. View like Yousafzai is more emotional, heartfelt.

1. At the end of "Us and Them," Sedaris reflects on his mother's suggestion to "take a good look at myself" (896). How does this essay follow the mom's advice? What does Sedaris see in himself and his family? I think that the statement helped him look at how he thinks and talks about things. Yes his family is different than other families. It kind of helps him compare things but not judge because everyone is different including families.



**What does re-  
imagining your  
classroom look  
like?**

Visual by [LaybrinthCompany.com](https://LaybrinthCompany.com)

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Translating idea  
to initiative to  
implementation

What does this  
look like?



Taken from Sloss Tech 2024 (Nathan Watson / Bham Now)



LITTLE WOMEN  
THE FAIR-WEATHERS  
THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME

BECOMING A STUDENT-READY COLLEGE  
WICKS  
BOUNCE  
DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION  
Lynnda Mullaly Hunt  
FISHY TREE  
THE REASON I JUMP  
DIVERGENT MIND  
first, we make the beast beautiful sarah wilson  
THE LANGUAGE OF EMOTIONS  
NeuroTribes  
UNMASKING AUTISM  
Jodi Picoult rules house  
TRAIUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP  
TRAIUMA-INFORMED PEDAGOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION  
NEURODIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM

ARMSTRONG