

## Tips from the OT Gym!



What's all this talk about engines? If you haven't heard your child talking about "engines" or "engine speeds", you may be in the near future. Emotional regulation is becoming common terminology at the League School as we embrace the SCERTS model and its frameworks for teaching students on the autism spectrum. Emotional regulation is the ability to maintain a level of neurological arousal that supports availability for learning. We often refer to this optimal arousal level as a "calm alert state". Being calm and alert allows the student to attend to and process relevant information, remain socially engaged, and actively participate in everyday activities. In the emotional regulation domain of the SCERTS model, we look at both **mutual regulation** (responding to others' attempts to offer calming input) and **self regulation** (using strategies for one's self to remain calm and organized).



Many students are being introduced to the *How Does Your Engine Run?*<sup>®</sup> *The Alert Program*<sup>®</sup> for Self-Regulation which was developed by two internationally known occupational therapists, Mary Sue Williams and Sherry Shellenberger. The program helps students compare how they are feeling to the engine of a car. Sometimes our engines move into **high gear** (hyper, energetic), into **low gear** (lethargic) or stay **"just right"** (attentive and focused).

By using the engine terminology, we can help students learn about self-regulation and ways to change how alert they feel based on the environment or situation they are in. We teach the five ways to change how alert you feel: put something in your mouth, move, touch, look or listen. For example, if you are in a "high gear" or moving too fast and it is time to sit and listen in class, you can sit on a therapy ball, give yourself a bear hug, take a walk break to the water bubbler, or squeeze a stress ball.

We all self-regulate during the day but rarely do we discuss it or even notice it. For instance, think about how your engine felt when you woke this morning. Did you drink a hot cup of coffee or eat a crunchy bowl of cereal (mouth)? Did you take a steaming hot shower (touch) or take the dog for a brisk walk (move)? Did you watch TV (look) or turn on the radio (listen)?

The program is typically done in three stages. In stage one, students are introduced to the terminology paired with a behavioral description. For example, "I see your head is down and your eyes are closed, your engine looks low" or "I see you jumping in the classroom, your engine looks very high". In stage two, students learn how to identify their own engine levels through structured movement opportunities and lessons. Finally, in the third stage students learn, with adult support, when and how to use strategies to achieve and maintain the "just right" engine speed.

You can support self-regulation at home by talking about your engine with your child. If your engine is in low gear when you are trying to read a book or it goes into high gear when you're rushing to an appointment, share that with your child. Just don't be surprised if they offer you a strategy like chewing gum or taking some deep breaths.



To read more about the Alert Program, visit [www.AlertProgram.com](http://www.AlertProgram.com).

## Easter Will Be Here Soon!



### How To Help Decrease Your Child's Anxiety Over Holidays

### Twelve Tips for Helping People with Autism and Their Families Have a Happy Holiday

Visit our website to read these helpful tips for managing holiday challenges. Go to [www.leagueschool.com/blog/](http://www.leagueschool.com/blog/).

## THE NURSE'S CORNER



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League School students at the P-Bruins!

### Inside:

- This Issue's Featured Student
- This Issue's Featured Staff Member
- League School Winter Concert is a big success!
- Nurse's Corner



More Winter Concert Photos on page 3!

### Reminders

**March 19th:**  
Staff training  
No school!

**April 8th:**  
Parent/Teacher  
Conferences

**April 19th-23rd:**  
Spring Break!

**Remember, April is  
Autism awareness  
month!**



Check out the League School website and read our blogs!

# LEAGUESCHOOL OF GREATER BOSTON

SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE CHILD WITH AUTISM

## League School Family Newsletter

### Meet the New Interim Director of Education

Dear League School Community,

Dr. Margaret Reed was recently appointed Interim Director of Education at League School. Dr. Reed brings many years of experience in the field of autism and special education, having served as Program Director of the SPOKE Collaborative, a model program designed to increase district services for children with autism. Dr. Reed is also an Associate Professor in the Special Education Department at Fitchburg State College specializing in special education law, collaboration strategies and research, as well as a respected speaker on those topics. "To be joining the League School as director of education is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said Dr. Reed. "I look forward to working with the school's dedicated and expert team of educators to continue to bring innovative, creative and compassionate programs to our students."

"Dr. Reed is one of the foremost leaders in autism and special education, and we are fortunate to have her breadth of experience, broad perspective and collaborative style at the helm of our education program." noted Frank Gagliardi, League School's Interim Director.

We welcome Dr. Reed to our staff!

### Congratulations Jared and Binah!

League School recently graduated two popular students, Binah J. on January 22nd, and Jared F. on February 12th. Both students were fondly remembered by many fellow students, teachers, and other staff members. We wish them the best as they move on to other opportunities!



Jared is congratulated by Assistant Director of Education, Suzanne Gervais



### Enjoy the Fun!

By the League School SLP Department

Does your child love computers, being creative, or watching videos? If so, check out these websites:

**FreeRice:** a great site for elementary through high school students. Its goals are to provide free education and to provide rice to people in need worldwide. Subjects range from grammar to foreign language to chemistry. Website: [www.freerice.com](http://www.freerice.com)

**Kneebouncers:** offers free games designed for young children, but that often benefit students with autism. Games address the basics of cause and effect, helping kids understand their actions have an impact on the world around them. No typing skills needed—just tap the keys and see what happens! Website: [www.kneebouncers.com](http://www.kneebouncers.com)

For more great website ideas read our blog at [www.leagueschool.com/](http://www.leagueschool.com/)

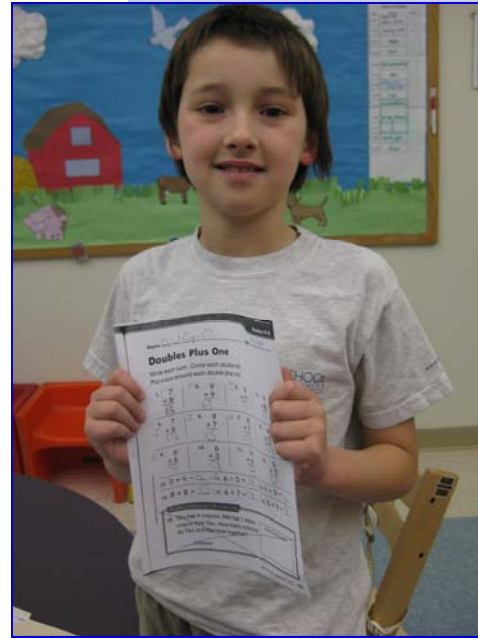
Check out League School online at [www.leagueschool.com](http://www.leagueschool.com)



### Featured Student—Paul S.

This season, we would like to recognize Paul S., a student in our Pathfinders Program. Paul was recently enrolled as a student at Bristol Community College! This semester he is taking an introductory college math course on Saturdays, while continuing to attend League School during the week. Paul demonstrates a great work ethic and commitment to learning!

Congratulations Paul!



On January 28th, the League School music department, under the direction of Frank Fitzpatrick, presented its Winter Concert. The concert showcased the singing, dancing, instrumental and rhythmic talents of our students. Selections included *I'm A Little Snowman* performed by Foundations, *Werewolves of London* by Transition, *Cotton Eyed Joe* by Pathfinders and CAT, and *Rhythm of the Rain* by CLS, among many others! The League School Chorus also sang *Jingle Bell Rock*. The concert was attended by many family and friends. Everyone really enjoyed the show!



### Featured Staff Member—Brian Linton

Brian Linton joined the League School staff in January 2009 as one of our Directors of Program Quality Assurance. In addition to his position at League, he is also a member of the Natick Fire Department. Brian and his coworkers were recently presented a group meritorious conduct award, the fire service's second highest award for heroism, for performing an ice rescue in December 2008. Presented by Governor Deval Patrick, the award recognized Brian's and his colleagues' role in saving two teenage boys from chest-deep water on Pickerel Pond in Natick. Brian and one other firefighter were the first to reach the boys after hiking over a half mile of snow-covered roads and cutting through underbrush to reach the water. League School is fortunate to have Brian on our team!

