



Disclaimer – average ordinary librarians, we do not have degrees in early childhood development, autism spectrum issues or any doctoral degrees. My experience has been 2 years working in an elementary school as a librarian and dealing directly with children who are on the autism spectrum as well as 6 years working in a public library as a children’s librarian and running a sensory storytime for a year. We are frontline staff when it comes to directly dealing with children who have developmental issues. Often we feel the best we can do is be welcoming and friendly at regular storytimes. Sensory storytimes give us the option to tell parents that their child has been thoughtfully considered and will be celebrated at your sensory storytime. Sensory storytimes are a journey for both the librarian and the child. Each storytime should be unique because each week the children’s behaviors will be unique.

**New data shows an average of 1 in 110
children have an autism spectrum
disorder**

**-Centers for Disease Control &
Prevention**



Do you have children who are unable to attend or disrupt your regular storytime? Are you noticing children who seem to have problems following directions to stay seated beyond the typical squirmy 2-3 year old behavior?

- **Developmental Disabilities are increasing in children in the U.S.**
- **1 in 6 children in the U.S. had a Developmental Disability in 2006–2008**
-Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

1 in 70 boys are diagnosed on the autism spectrum
1 in 315 girls are diagnosed on the autism spectrum

Developmental Disabilities in Children Aged 3-17 Years*

| | |
|------------------------------|--------|
| Any developmental disability | 13.87% |
| Learning disability | 7.66% |
| ADHD | 6.69% |

*Percentage of U.S. children in this age group, 1997-2008.

- Over the last 12 years, the Prevalence of DDs has increased 17.1%—that's about 1.8 million more children with DDs in 2006–2008 compared to a decade earlier;
- Prevalence of autism increased 289.5%;
- Prevalence of ADHD increased 33.0%; and,
- Prevalence of hearing loss decreased 30.9%.

From the center for disease and control prevention.

Why Sensory Storytime?

- * It includes children who are excluded by regular storytimes
- * It gives freedom to children with special needs within a structured space
- * Every child loves sensory storytime so be inclusive, not exclusive!

Ideally you would limit sensory storytimes to less than 10 children. The reason for this is if you have children who are high on the autism spectrum or have another disability, often large crowds will scare and frustrate them. It also gives you the opportunity of instead of trying to run crowd control on a group that is completely out of control, with 10 or even 15 children and their caretakers you have the opportunity to spend time and focus on each child and be aware of their special needs. ALWAYS make sure caretakers of children with special needs are involved and do not leave storytime. They typically know their child's specific needs better than you do. Conversations before or after storytime are always great to follow up on how each child can get the best experience out of storytime. Is there a need the child has that the caretaker can help you understand how best to accommodate that need through your storytime?

What is so Different About a Sensory Storytime?

- * More interaction
- * Built in play time
- * Sensitivity to:
 - * delayed motor skill development
 - * freedom of movement
 - * Less sitting, more action
 - * Visual schedules or storyboards
 - * Deliberate sensory input
 - * Loud noise/crowd issues
 - * Allergies (No Food Rule)

What is So Different About a Sensory Storytime?

- * Flexibility on the part of the librarian
- * Flexible storytimes – less sitting more moving
- * Storytime pieces can be used, not used, according to the flow of the event

Remember, parents are often used to feeling they have to constantly apologize for their children while trying in vain to control behaviors. They need to feel accepted, welcomed, and encouraged.

Peer inclusion, or adding children who are typically developing helps both kids with special needs and the other children raising sensitivity, awareness, socialization, and development as they head toward school. This way they can learn from each other. You are helping any child with Atypical social development to feel comfortable in the library, often leading to less acting out or negative issues when they come to the library on regular visits.

Putting Together a Sensory Storytime

- * What if every single child has a different developmental need? – Your role is still the same
- * Forced vs. Focused
 - * Example: storytime with 3 stories in a row vs. 1 story with flannel board interaction. Which one is best for a sensory storytime?
 - * What is a reasonable expectation for storytime length?

Don't set the child up for failure! You are helping them participate, NOT master storytime. Goal for regular storytime is often mastery

Putting Together a Sensory Storytime

- * Evaluate your storytime area
 - * Are there too many distractions?
 - * Can it be in an enclosed area for children who cannot sit still and like to run away?
 - * Is it away from bookshelves and books?
 - * Will your activities allow for movement but stay calm enough that children are still able to stay in control?

Making a Visual Schedule



Example Sensory Storytime

Welcome song

* Always start by explaining the visual schedule and what will happen next

Story with flannel board

Song - scarves

Mystery box

Oral story with props for the kids (stone soup)

Song - shakers

1 more story or song

Coloring or simple craft – Storytime end

Remember success is participation, NOT mastery! Visual schedule can be purchased: called Board maker by Mayer-Johnson. Or you can Google and print out specific images that will help children understand your specific storytime schedule. You can also use therapands with the children while doing songs. Use yellow or the lightest resistance. Always have caretakers help children get set up with their therapands as you demonstrate the proper way to use them. Another great idea is purchasing individual “toothettes” to have children practice or pretend to brush their teeth while you sing the “brush your teeth” raffi song. Scarves in tissue box -

Tools

- * Repetition
- * Visual schedule
- * Manipulatives
 - * Bubbles
 - * Weighted toys
 - * Bean Bags
 - * Flannel board pieces
 - * Fingerplays
 - * Water station/sand station

Repeat a song, do it once at beginning, once toward the end Or have one song you sing every week.

Use a visual schedule, a few libraries even include visuals online where families can look at pictures of the library, librarian, and special storytime area before they arrive so children are already introduced to the area and their anxiety can be helped.

Tactile Floor Balance Beams



Fidget Toys



Tag Blankets



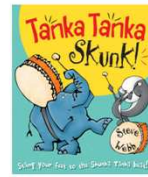
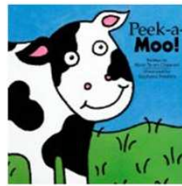
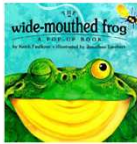
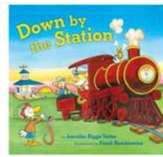
Books

- * Every book should be interactive
 - * Does it have flaps?
 - * Do you have flannel pieces the children can help with while you do the story?
 - * Is there a song that goes with the story?
 - * Can the children clap or do shakers to the story?
 - * High Interest Themes
 - * Cars, Dinosaurs, Animals, etc.

How can you make a book interactive? Can you do a song or fingerplay with the story? Can you repeat the song that goes with the story after the story is over or even go through the story twice? Are shakers too noisy for your group?

PRESS
●
HERE
Read TALK

Book Ideas



Future training

- * ALA's ALSC has a great webinar on Sensory Storytimes
- * Observe a sensory storytime at a nearby library
- * Talk to people who have advanced training in the field (your local elementary school is often a great place to start)
- * Check out the Libraries and Autism website

Ask for help from local therapists who specialize in working with children. They can suggest environment modifications, techniques, materials, types of stories, and activities. They may be willing to observe and even assist at your storytimes. Attend local autism chapter meetings.

Resources:

- * ALSC blog:
<http://www.alsc.ala.org/blog/2012/03/sensory-storytime-a-brief-how-to-guide/>
- * Barbara Klipper's Presentation at ALA:
http://connect.ala.org/files/36370/sensory_storytimeala_7_ppt_18635.ppt
- * Charlotte Mecklenberg Library Powerpoint on Sensory Storytimes:
<http://www.slideshare.net/NCLA2011/sensory-storytimes>

Resources:

The Autism Consortium:

* <http://www.autismconsortium.org/>

Library Services to Special Population Children and their Caregivers Committee:

* <http://www.ala.org/alsc/aboutalsc/coms/pg1childadv/als-lscsn>

Libraries and Autism website:

* <http://www.librariesandautism.org/>

Libraries and Autism We're Connected resources list:

* http://okautism.org/conference/documents/Handout2_SensoryStorytime_Resources.pdf

Suggested Book Titles

Book Suggestions For Sensory Storytimes:
Esther Moberg, April 2013

Dear Zoo: a lift-the-flap book by Rod Campbell

Down by the Station by Jennifer Riggs Vetter

A book you can sing! You can create the different vehicles out of felt for the children to take turns putting on the board.

Who Says Woof by John Butler

What will Fat Cat Sit on by Jan Thomas

Magpie Magic by April Wilson

PeekaMoo! A lift the flap book By Marie Torres Cimarusti

The Doghouse by Jan Thomas

Duck On a Bike by David Shannon

Mouse Paint by Ellen Stoll Walsh

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see? By Bill Martin & Eric Carle

Mr. Gumpy's Outing by John Burningham

Peek a Choo Choo! By Marie Torres Cimarusti

Bark, George by Jules Feiffer (1999)

A Birthday for Cow! by Jan Thomas

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin Jr.

Hand out egg shakers and have the kids follow you in making a rhythm while you read the book

Suggested Book Titles

Circle in the Sky by Zachary Wilson

Make felt shapes to match those in the book. Kids take turns finding the right shape and help build the rocket.

The Cow that laid an Egg by Andy Cutbill (2007)

Dear Zoo: a pop-up book by Rod Campbell

Doggies by Sandra Boynton (a counting and barking book)

The doghouse by Jan Thomas (2008)

Dog's colorful day by Emma Dodd (2001)

I made a felt dog and colored dots; the kids take turns finding the right color and putting it on Dog.

The Itsy Bitsy Spider by Iza Trapani

Sing the song while you read the story. Before or after the story sing and do the fingerplay to itsy bitsy spider.

Let's Play in the Forest (while the wolf is not around) Claudia Rueda (2006)

Little Green Frogs by Frances Barry (a fold and find out book) (2008)

Lunch by Denise Fleming

My Heart is Like a Zoo by Michael Hall

The Napping House pop-up book by Audrey Wood

Pete the Cat: I love my white shoes by Eric Litwin

Make a felt cat with colored shoes that kids can take turns putting on Pete. Or, pass out different colored socks the kids can put on their hands and have them wave them as their color is read. Have them sing along with the "I love my ___ shoes" part.

The Pigeon and the Hotdog by Mo Willem

Press Here by Herve Tullet

Kids can take turns pressing the buttons in the book as you read the story.

Skippyjon Jones by Judith Schachner (2003)

Stop Kissing Me! by Ethan Long (2007)

Kids can take turns pressing the button that makes the kissing noises.

Tanka Tanka Skunk by Steve Webb

Very Hungry Caterpillar Pop-Up Book by Eric Carle

The Wide Mouthed Frog: A pop-up book by Keith Faulkner

Wolf's Coming! by Joe Kulka (2007)