

**BETTER  
TOGETHER**



HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

# We're All in this Together: Strengthening the Home-School Connection

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Who am I?

Dr. Matt Zakreski -  
clinical psychologist,  
professional speaker,  
podcast host, and  
published author

I specialize in working  
with neurodivergent people  
and helping their  
communities support them

I'm born and raised Jersey

# Goals for Today



Explore the importance of a home-school connection



Determine what makes an effective home-school connection



Workshop how to improve the home-school connection

# What are the Biggest Three Predictors of Academic Success

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- Books in the Home  
/ Reading to Kids
- Positive Parental  
Involvement
- School Attendance

**YOUR  
PRESENCE  
IS MY  
PRESENT**



# What is the Home-School Connection?

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Emphasizes a collaboration between two prominent contexts in a student's life: the school and the home



The degree to which schools and families take on the joint responsibility of fostering open communication, cooperation, and collaboration for the purpose of supporting students' development



Both sets of adults have strengths and weaknesses, and can amplify the best aspects of their roles

# Outcomes

Better GPA for students

Increased student attendance (and decrease truancy)

More positive attitudes towards school

More likely to move onto the next phase of education

Less conflict at home with parents

Fewer detentions, suspensions, transfers

More Trust





In the absence of information..





First Leg  
- the  
Student

Why do  
kids go to  
School?

- A place to learn
  - A place to be inspired
  - A place to get access to materials/opportunities
  - A place to eat
  - A place to be warm/cool
  - A place to be around people who love/like you
- 
- Our interventions to get kids to stay at school **might not be about learning**

Why do  
kids  
stop  
going  
to  
school



Mental Health concerns - Social Anxiety, Depression, Trauma



Bullying



Academic Struggles



Lack of Connection/Feeling Seen



Social Challenges

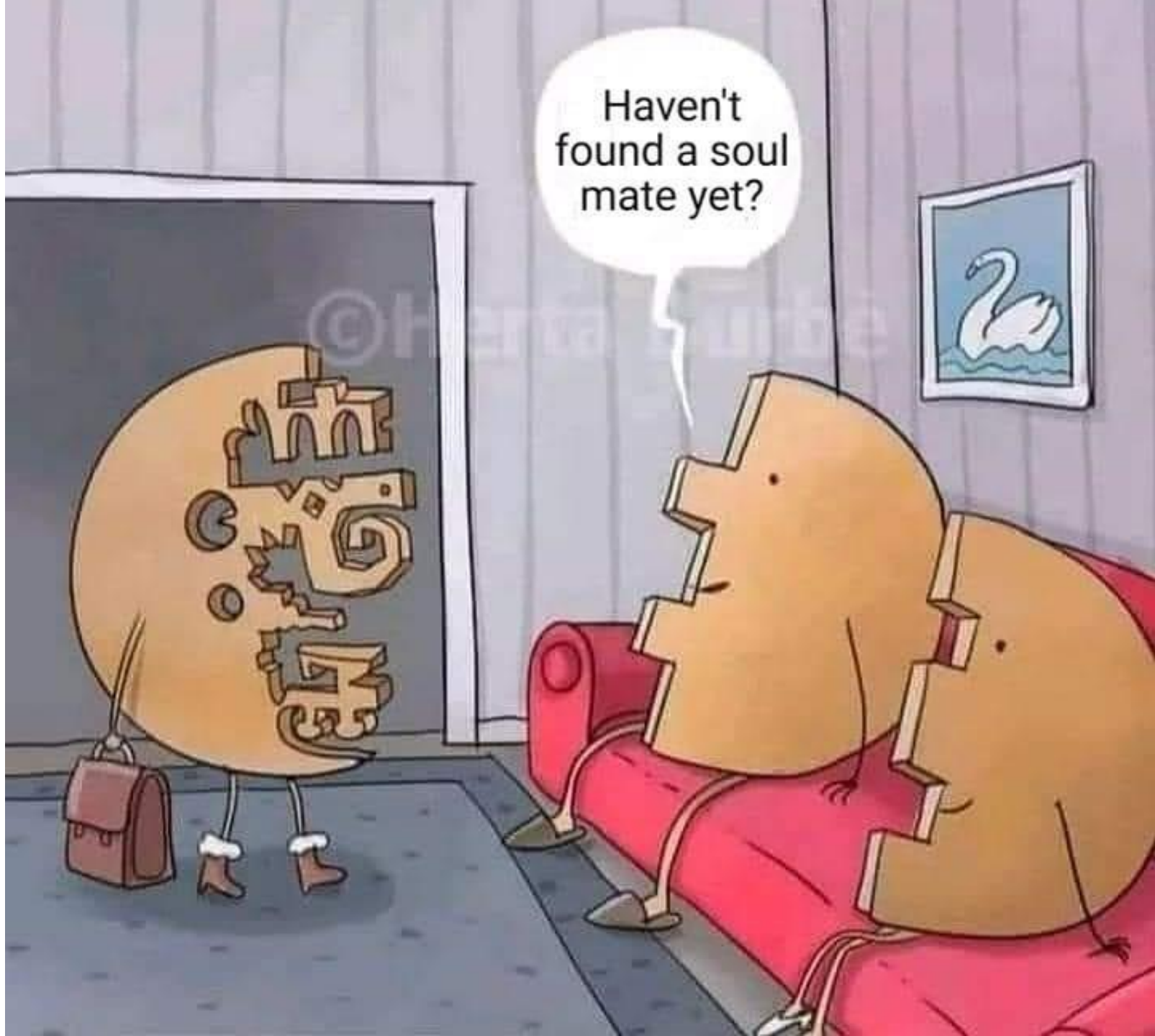
I DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL! I HATE SCHOOL. I'D RATHER DO ANYTHING THAN GO TO SCHOOL!



## School Avoidance

- 10 percent to 15 percent of students are estimated to miss 10 percent or more school days each year, making them “chronically absent.”
- Three reasons why kids don’t go to school:
  - Medical concerns
  - Lack of family/community support
  - School feels too difficult socially, emotionally, academically (School Avoidant)
- School Avoidant Categories:
  - Don’t attend at all
  - Rarely attend
  - Under-attend: miss at least 10-20% of the school year

Haven't found a soul mate yet?







# Following your values

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- The Miracle Question
- There is no "right" way to be a person
- Extracurriculars
- Classes
- Careers – "I wanna be a YouTuber"
- Actively learning vs. passively learning

A black and white portrait of Elvis Presley, looking slightly to the left of the camera. He has his signature pompadour hairstyle and is wearing a dark jacket. The image is framed in a circular shape.

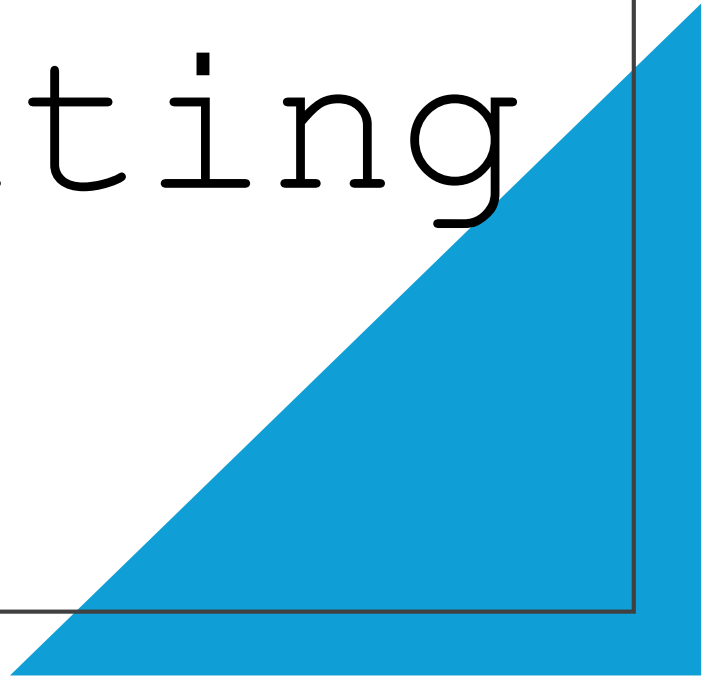
**VALUES ARE LIKE FINGERPRINTS.  
NOBODY'S ARE THE SAME, BUT YOU LEAVE  
'EM ALL OVER EVERYTHING YOU DO.**

*~Elvis Presley*





Second  
Leg -  
Parenting



# Positive Parenting



*Supportive*



*Involvement*



*Healthy Lifestyle*



*Reward*



*Encouragement*



*Praise Achievement*



*Listen*



*Explain*



*Trust*



*Inspire*



*Enforce Rules*



*Have Patience*

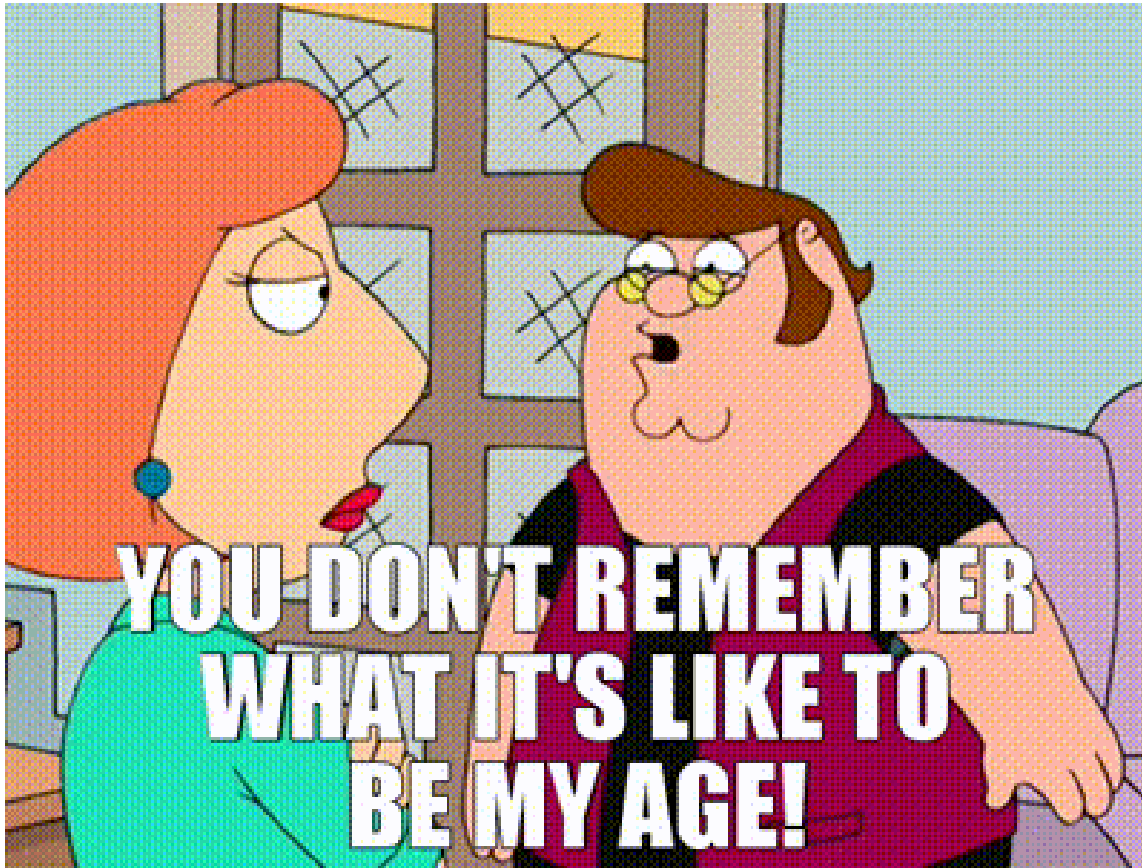
## Parental Role

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- Boundary-Setter
- Granting Access to things
- Transportation
- Bank 😊
- Guide
- Drill Sergeant
- Communicator
  - To Whom?
  - How?
  - Content vs. Process

# Perspective

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- The Fundamental Attribution Error
  - Personality
  - Context
- We are raising kids in a world that is wildly different than the one we were raised in – we NEED different strategies
- Can we collaborate with our kids?

# THE COERCIV E CYCLE

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# Be Curious, Not Furious

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Replace "Should" with  
"Could"

# Consequences over Punishment

- Punishment doesn't work!  
(At least not how we think it does)
  - We get frustrated
  - Punishment is about US  
(Consequences are about the kids)
- Natural consequences –
  - work at home
  - Potentially failing a test
  - Truancy
- Speed Trap Test







JAMES PATTERSON PRESENTS

# HOW TO BE A SUPERVILLAIN



## Adulting Exercise

- OK, so you've angered your child/student
- They're MAD
- How do we inject other perspectives?
  
- What was I trying to do?
- Do I know what makes you upset?
- If both are true...



# How do I do this?

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- Start with your child's (real) interests
- How/where do you want to allocate your energy
- Tutors only if necessary
- Try many things - and be willing to back away
- The future is unpredictable... so stop trying to anticipate it!
- Parent the kid you HAVE not the one you WANT

Be brave to step up  
and try something new.

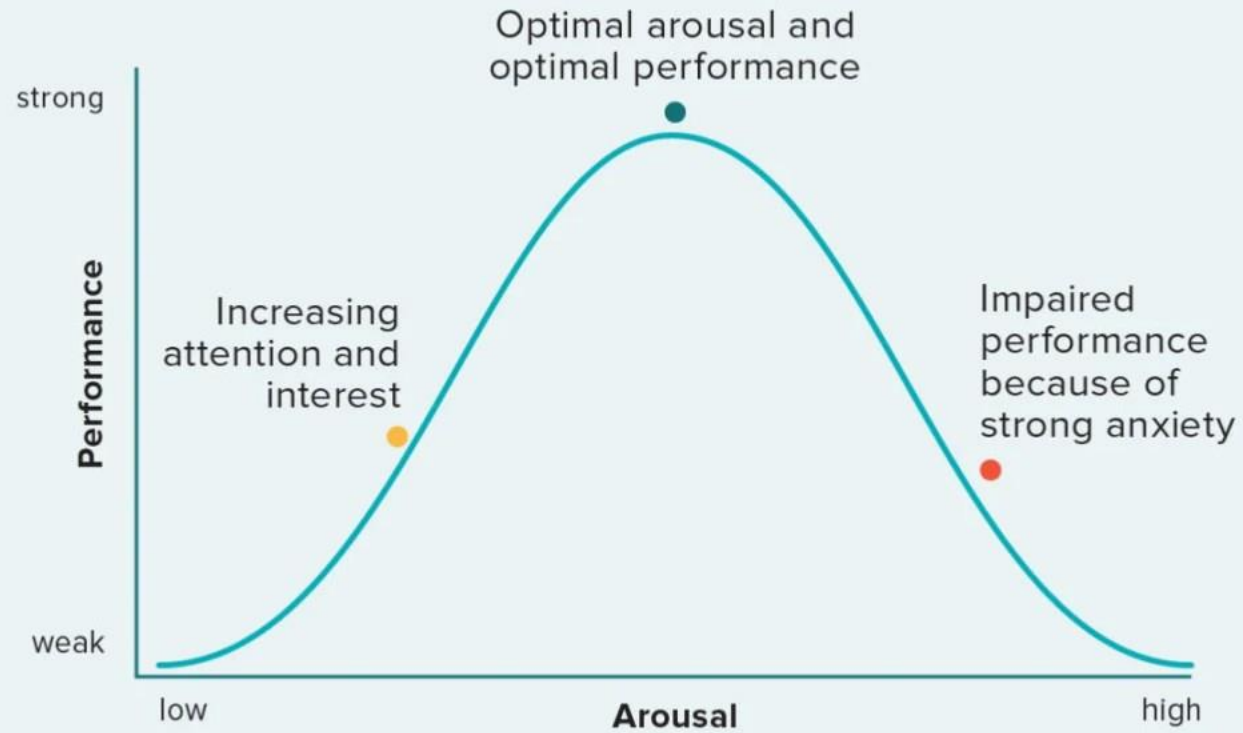


Be brave to step out  
when it isn't for you.



Third  
Leg -  
Teachin  
g

## YERKES-DODSON LAW BELL CURVE



# Interest-Based Learning



Interest-based learning (IBL) occurs when students identify their interests and use those interests to drive and lead learning experiences.



The purpose of designing learning experiences around interests is to encourage an intrinsic motivation to learn and inspire a passion for learning.



IBL channels the inherent eagerness of kids to learn about things they like into a guided cycle of asking questions and finding answers.



IBL is a process for expanding inquiry and discovery to increase engagement in learning, which ideally generalizes to other subjects

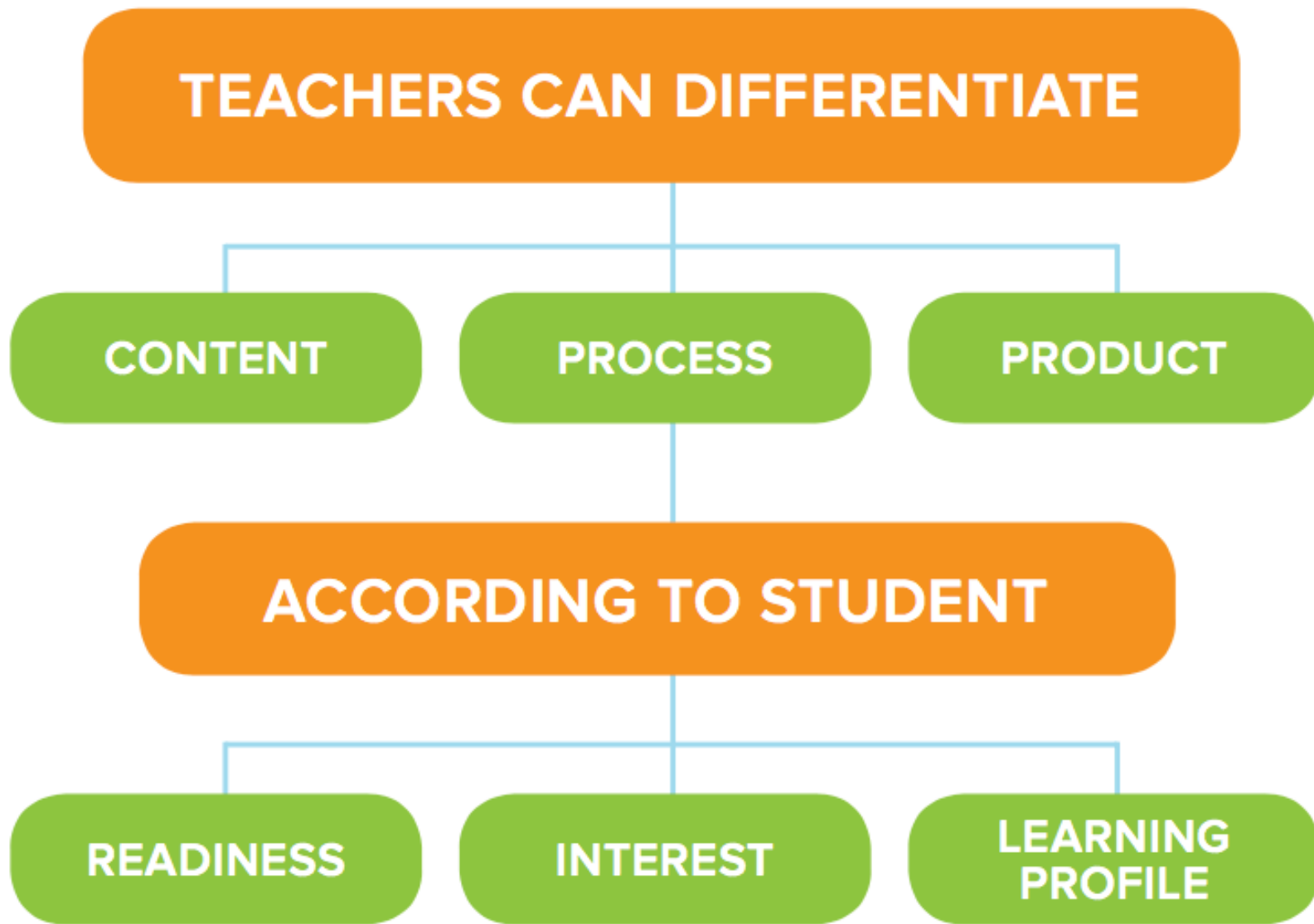


FIGURE 1: DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION GRAPHIC ORGANIZER (TOMLINSON & IMBEAU, 2010)

- If you do “top down” thinking
  - What is left to do
  - Results-oriented
  - First sensation is disappointment

- “Bottom up” thinking
  - How far you’ve come
  - Aspirational
  - Allows for process





Search  
for  
strengths



“ Don't assume that the kids you have are the same kid you were. **Teach the kids in front of you**—not the ones you thought you'd have, wish you had, or are afraid you'll have.

— LAURA THOMAS, TEACHER

edutopia

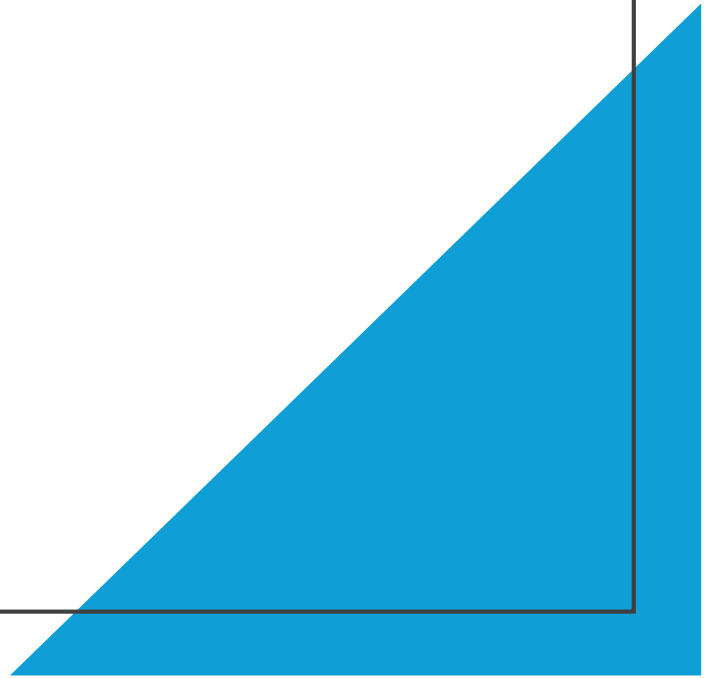
There is  
no  
perfect  
stool

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easy, your  
kids would  
have done it  
already

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Questions

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Comments?

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# Resources

- [https://wp.nyu.edu/steinhardt-appsych\\_opus/fostering-the-home-school-connection-in-middle-school-years/](https://wp.nyu.edu/steinhardt-appsych_opus/fostering-the-home-school-connection-in-middle-school-years/)
- <https://www.yalemedicine.org/conditions/school-related-problems>
- <https://childmind.org/article/when-kids-refuse-to-go-to-school/>
- <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/attendancedata/chapter1a.asp#>
- <https://hbr.org/2023/02/how-to-find-define-and-use-your-values>

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