

Meet Laura

*A story about sensory health,
dyspraxia and school success*

Illustrated by Jacinta Read



Meet Laura. She's 6 years old, and she likes watching Spirit, swimming, and splash pads.

Laura has three older sisters and has been excited about starting Kindergarten for months.

Every morning on the walk to school Laura and her Mom talk about the coming day.

Laura really hopes each day that she will make her teacher smile and get a happy face on the wall.

Laura doesn't realize that it is unusual to find school as hard as she does.

When the teacher starts giving instructions Laura's brain quickly gets overwhelmed, and she only remembers parts of what the teacher had said.



Uh-oh. Laura's done it again.

In her enthusiasm, she only remembered one part of the instructions and started cutting up her worksheet before she completed all the other tasks.

She's not even cutting up her paper very well.

Her friends know what is coming next—the teacher won't be happy.

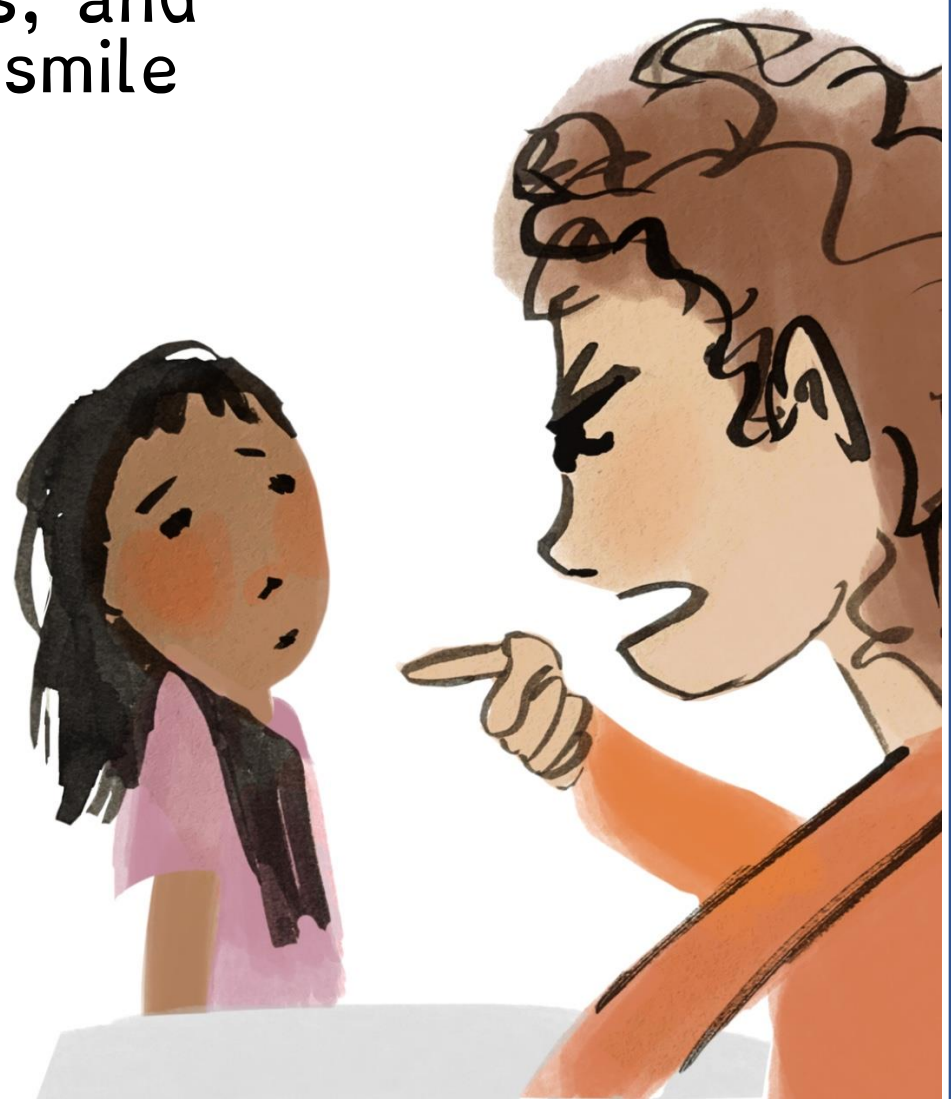


Laura's teacher is furious. To her, it seems like Laura deliberately breaks the rules every day.

Doing whatever she wants, not listening to any instructions, and clowning around with a big smile on her face.

There have only been three weeks of the term so far, and already Laura is being sent to the principal's office for the eighth time.

The teacher suspects that Laura will be expelled from Kindergarten before the term is finished.





Laura sits outside the principal's office hurt and confused.

Every morning, she starts the day enthusiastic and optimistic but before recess, she always ends up doing something wrong.

Laura's starting to think that maybe school isn't for her, maybe she is a bad kid and maybe she'll never enjoy school like her big sisters did.

Around the world, children in preschool and kindergarten are struggling to live up to the expectations of their teachers. Following multi-step instructions, organizing their bodies in space, impulse control and waiting are just part of the picture. We also expect our children to know how to be in space with others, relate to authority figures, follow routines, regulate themselves and be able to accept help and support from other adults.

There is so much readiness necessary for success at school and in most cases, children are expected to come to school with these skills in place.

In 2016 a study showed that 250 children per day were being expelled or suspended from preschool in the USA.

In Colorado alone, in the 2017–18 school year, more than 5,800 students faced such punishment.

That is about 3 suspensions for every 100 students in grades K–2. This is a global phenomenon.

Part of the solution is an equitable developmental approach to education that incorporates a robust understanding of the importance of sensory integration for school readiness and school success. The sensory–motor and self–regulation aspects of child development are pivotal to school readiness and availability for learning in the classroom.





Sensory Health Supports School Success

The principal of Laura's school noticed a pattern to her "misbehavior" and wondered about Laura's difficulties with following multi-step instructions, starting and ending activities, forgetfulness and the time it takes her to complete tasks. She realizes that Laura would probably benefit from an Occupational Therapy assessment.

The assessment shows that Laura is dyspraxic – this means that understanding multi-step instructions and making a plan for action are really hard for her.

Laura's Occupational Therapist works with her parents and her school to put in place the supports she needs. She also learns how to organize her actions through big exciting gross motor play, Laura's parents get to play too! As Laura starts to feel competent in her own body on the big play equipment the teacher starts to notice she is more organized in the classroom, she waits until she really understands tasks and she asks for help when she needs it. Laura is an asset to her class, her enthusiasm for learning is infectious and she is incredibly kind to the other children.

Does Laura's story sound familiar to you?

For support with school readiness and/or sensory integration and processing assessment reach out to your school, local sensory certified occupational therapy practice or contact us at **STAR** Institute and we'd be happy to guide you.

Sensory Health Transforms Lives



Laura was at risk of being expelled from school because of unidentified differences in sensory integration and processing. At STAR Institute we see a lot of Lauras (and Georgies and Elizabeths too) and the thing is most of the time it wasn't at all necessary for things to get as bad as they did at home, or at school or in the workplace.

Sensory Health Transforms Lives



Join us for sensory awareness month – five stories, over five weeks, each translated into an additional five languages. Download, repost, share and donate. Every act of support helps.

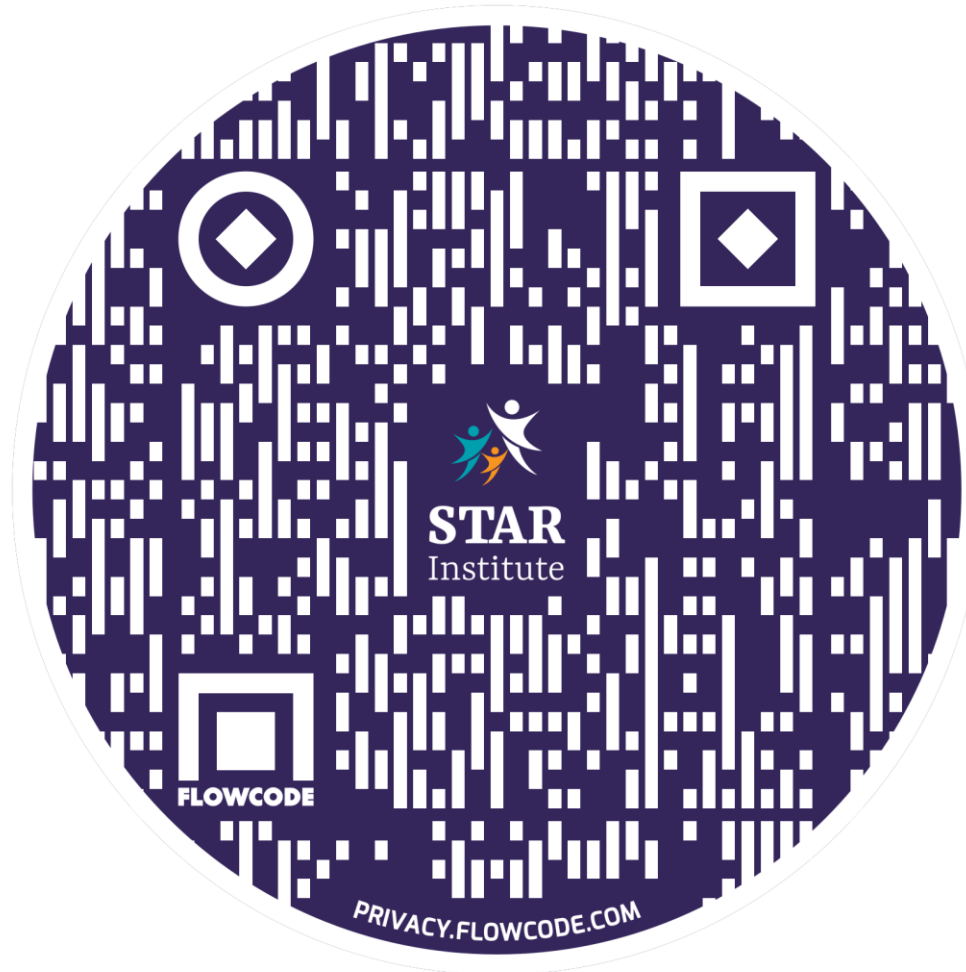
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