

FIRST WAVES

## My Body Tells Me

*A Tide Pool Introduction to Ocean Zones*

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### COMPREHENSIVE TEACHER GUIDE

12-Week Curriculum for Students with Significant Support Needs

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Includes:

Quick-Start Guide • Visual Material Descriptions • Differentiation Strategies

In-the-Moment Scripts • Family Materials • Tracking Forms

Calm Connections Learning Lab LLC

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## QUICK-START GUIDE (Read This First!)

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*You have 5 minutes before students arrive. Here's everything you need:*

### THE 30-SECOND SUMMARY

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First Waves teaches Calm vs Not Calm first, then teaches 5 core feelings over the remaining weeks. Every day, spend 5 minutes: Show card → Point to body → Name it (any response counts) → Take ONE breath → Celebrate.

**If you only remember one thing:** This is a skills routine, not a discussion. Keep language short, repeat the same script, and measure progress by participation (not perfect answers).

### TODAY'S 5-MINUTE ROUTINE

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Time	Step	Say This
30 sec	<b>GATHER</b>	"Let's check our bodies!"
30 sec	<b>SHOW</b>	Hold up card: "This is [FEELING]. [Feeling]. [Feeling]. [Feeling]."
1 min	<b>BODY</b>	"Where do you feel it?" + point to body part
1 min	<b>NAME</b>	"Show me [feeling]!" or "Point to how you feel."
1 min	<b>BREATHE</b>	"Let's take a belly breath. In... Out..." (just ONE)
30 sec	<b>CELEBRATE</b>	"You LISTENED to your body! That's AMAZING!"

## WHICH FEELING THIS WEEK?

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Weeks 1-2	CALM / NOT CALM	Weeks 7-8	MAD
Weeks 3-4	HAPPY	Weeks 9-10	SCARED
Weeks 5-6	SAD	Weeks 11-12	TIRED

## NON-VERBAL STUDENTS?

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Success is ANY response:

- Looking at the card = participation
- Any sound = communication
- Body movement toward card = choosing
- Being present = learning

## STUDENT IN CRISIS?

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Skip the routine. Just say: "**Your body is telling you something. I'm here. Let's breathe.**" One breath. That's it. Return to routine tomorrow.

**That's it. You're ready. The rest of this guide is details.**

## STAR / PROGRAM ALIGNMENT (PLACEHOLDER)

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This section will be finalized after we confirm your classroom's STAR program and daily tier structure.

**[STAR-DEPENDENT: Fill in when teacher replies]**

- STAR program used: \_\_\_\_\_
- Tier 1 looks like: \_\_\_\_\_
- Tier 2 looks like: \_\_\_\_\_
- Tier 3 looks like: \_\_\_\_\_
- Primary communication system (PECS/AAC/choice boards): \_\_\_\_\_
- Visual style that works best (Boardmaker/photos/icons): \_\_\_\_\_
- Reinforcement system used (tokens/items/sensory): \_\_\_\_\_
- Data style currently used (frequency/duration/prompt levels): \_\_\_\_\_

**Default implementation (until customized):** Run First Waves as a 5-minute whole-group routine once daily, plus 30–60 second 1:1 probes for students who need errorless practice.

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## SECTION 1: FOUNDATIONS

# WELCOME TO FIRST WAVES

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First Waves: My Body Tells Me is a foundational social-emotional curriculum designed specifically for students with **significant developmental support needs** who are learning to recognize and name their feelings for the very first time.

## This Curriculum Is For:

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- Students with significant cognitive delays
- Students with autism spectrum disorder (Levels 2-3)
- Students who are non-verbal or have limited verbal communication
- Students who use AAC devices or picture communication
- Students with multiple disabilities
- Any learner who isn't ready for a standard SEL curriculum

## This Curriculum Is NOT For:

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- Students who can already identify and name 4+ emotions
- Students who can participate in 15+ minute group lessons
- Students ready for the full Ocean Zones curriculum

 **RED FLAG:** If you're unsure whether a student needs First Waves or Ocean Zones, start with First Waves. It's always okay to move up; it's harder to move back down.

# CORE PHILOSOPHY

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## The 5 Beliefs Behind First Waves

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### 1. THE BODY KNOWS FIRST

Before children can name an emotion, their bodies are already feeling it. Tight fists. Fast heartbeat. Heavy shoulders. We don't ask "What's wrong?" — we ask "What is your body telling you?"

## 2. ONE FEELING AT A TIME

We spend **two full weeks** on each feeling. Week A introduces it; Week B connects it to the child's experience. This repetition is not boring for our learners — *it's essential*.

## 3. CELEBRATION OVER CORRECTION

Every attempt is celebrated. There are no wrong answers in First Waves.

✗ Don't Say	✓ Say Instead
"No, that's not sad."	"You're trying! Let's look together."
"Use your words."	"You showed me with your body! I see it!"
"You're not even trying."	"You're here. You're learning. That's amazing."

## 4. SIMPLE IS POWERFUL

<b>Two zones (not four)</b>	<b>Six feelings (not dozens)</b>
<b>One breath (not five)</b>	<b>Five minutes (not twenty)</b>

## 5. ALL FEELINGS ARE OKAY

Mad is not bad. Sad is not wrong. We **never** shame a feeling. We simply **name it**, notice **where it lives in the body**, and **take one breath** together.

# The Encouragement Approach

These students may rarely hear genuine excitement about their efforts. In First Waves, we bring the enthusiasm. Say these phrases *like you mean them*:

"You LISTENED to your body! That is SO cool!"

"You pointed! Your body told you something and you HEARD it!"

"Look at you taking a breath! You're doing it! You're really doing it!"

"You showed me MAD! You KNOW what mad feels like! That's AMAZING!"

# THE 2-ZONE SYSTEM

Before learning four zones, students need to understand the most basic distinction: **\*Am I calm, or am I not calm?\***

CALM (Blue)	NOT CALM (Red)
Calm body / safe body / ready body (choose wording your class already uses)	Not calm body / busy body / upset body (choose wording your class already uses)

## Visual Description: 2-Zone Mat

**VISUAL MATERIAL:** The 2-Zone Mat is a floor mat or large poster divided in half. LEFT SIDE: Blue background with the word "CALM" in large white letters and a simple peaceful face (closed smile, relaxed eyes). RIGHT SIDE: Red background with the words "NOT CALM" in large white letters and a simple distressed face (frown or open mouth). Size: Minimum 24" × 18" for floor mat; 18" × 12" for desk card version.

## How Students Use the 2-Zone Mat

Student Ability	How They Participate
Can walk	Stand or walk to the zone that matches their feeling
Can point	Point to the zone on a poster or desk card
Can grasp objects	Place a marker (photo, token) on the zone
Limited mobility	Eye gaze toward zone; nod/shake head when teacher points
Uses AAC	Select zone symbol on device

### CRITICAL REMINDER

"Not Calm" is NOT bad. It simply means "my body needs something." We NEVER punish, shame, or negatively reinforce the red zone. It is information, not misbehavior.

## THE CORE FEELINGS

First Waves starts with Calm vs Not Calm. After that, we teach 5 core feelings. Each feeling is paired with a **body cue**.

Weeks	Feeling	Body Cue	Key Phrase	Zone
3-4	<b>HAPPY</b>	Smiling face, bouncy body	<i>"My face goes UP!"</i>	Calm
5-6	<b>SAD</b>	Tears, heavy body	<i>"My body feels heavy"</i>	Not Calm
7-8	<b>MAD</b>	Tight fists, hot face	<i>"My hands go TIGHT!"</i>	Not Calm
9-10	<b>SCARED</b>	Big eyes, fast heart	<i>"My heart goes FAST!"</i>	Not Calm

Weeks	Feeling	Body Cue	Key Phrase	Zone
11-12	<b>TIRED</b>	Droopy eyes, slow body	"My eyes want to close"	Not Calm

## Why This Order?

<b>Calm/Not Calm first</b>	<b>Teach the basic distinction and the help options.</b>
<b>Happy next</b>	Start positive and build confidence with a calm-state feeling.
<b>Sad next</b>	Gentle intro to Not Calm (lower intensity).
<b>Mad next</b>	Higher intensity after routines/tools are established.
<b>Scared next</b>	Intense feeling after practice with intensity.
<b>Tired last</b>	Often easiest to recognize once students can do Calm/Not Calm.

### SECTION 2: IMPLEMENTATION

## DAILY ROUTINE (DETAILED)

First Waves works through brief, consistent daily practice. This routine should happen at the **same time each day** in the **same location** with the **same opening phrase**.

**Prompting rule:** Ask once, then prompt. These learners often cannot succeed with repeated verbal demands.

**Reinforcement rule:** Pair the routine with a predictable reinforcer (praise + token + preferred item/activity) so participation stays high.

## 1:1 FIRST, THEN GROUP (RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION)

For the most foundational learners, First Waves should be taught **1:1 first** (very short practice) and then practiced in whole-group for generalization.

**Why:** Many students cannot "identify a feeling" yet. They must first learn **Calm vs Not Calm** and learn that "Not Calm" means "my body needs support."

### Phase 1 (Weeks 1–2): Calm vs Not Calm + What Helps

**Primary target:** Student indicates **Calm** or **Not Calm** (any response mode counts).

**Secondary target:** When "Not Calm," student selects a support option.

## The Not Calm Menu (Start with 3 options)

- **BREAK** (pause demand / calm spot)
- **HELP** (adult co-regulation)
- **SQUEEZE CUSHION** (comfort squeeze tool)

**Standard tool (recommended):** Use one consistent, small, soft pillow in every classroom. Call it the **Squeeze Cushion**.

**Brutal truth:** Keep the menu small at first. Too many options creates guessing and reduces use.

### 30–60 Second 1:1 Micro-Lesson Script

1. Show 2-zone visual: "Check body."
2. "Calm or Not Calm?" (prompt immediately if needed)
3. If Not Calm: "What helps?" → point to 3-option menu
4. Deliver the option immediately (break/help/squeeze cushion)
5. Celebrate: "You listened to your body!"

**[STAR-DEPENDENT: prompts/data]** Track the student's prompt level using your classroom's existing system.

### Step 1: GATHER (30 seconds)

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**Purpose:** Signal that First Waves time is starting.

"Let's check our bodies!"

**Use the same phrase every day.** Consistency helps students predict what's coming.

✓ Do	X Don't
Use a visual cue (hold up "First Waves" card)	Start without warning
Wait 5-10 seconds for students to orient	Rush into content
Praise students who are looking/attending	Demand eye contact

### Step 2: SHOW (30 seconds)

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**Purpose:** Introduce this week's feeling.

"This is [FEELING]. [Feeling]. [Feeling]. [Feeling]."

**Say the word 3-4 times.** Hold the card where all students can see it. Point to the face.

- **For students with vision impairments:** Describe what the face looks like
- **For students using AAC:** Have the symbol ready on their device

## Step 3: BODY (1 minute)

**Purpose:** Connect the feeling to a physical sensation.

"When I'm [feeling], my [body part] feels [sensation]. Where do YOU feel it?"

**Model first.** Touch your own face/chest/hands. Then invite students to point to their own bodies.

Feeling	Body Script	Point To
Happy	"My face goes UP! I feel bouncy!"	Face (smile), whole body
Sad	"My body feels heavy. My eyes might cry."	Shoulders (slump), eyes
Mad	"My hands go TIGHT! My face feels HOT!"	Fists, face/cheeks
Scared	"My heart goes FAST! My eyes go BIG!"	Chest/heart, eyes
Tired	"My eyes want to close. My body is slow."	Eyes, whole body
Calm	"My body is soft. My breath is slow."	Shoulders, belly

## Step 4: NAME (1 minute)

**Purpose:** Students identify the feeling.

"Show me [feeling]!" or "How do YOU feel right now?"

**[STAR-DEPENDENT: prompt hierarchy]** Use the prompt style your team already uses (most-to-least, least-to-most, errorless teaching). If unsure, use this simple default:

Prompt Level	What It Looks Like
Independent	Student points/selects without help
Gesture	You point to the correct icon/card
Model	You demonstrate (touch card / select AAC) and student imitates
Partial physical	Light guidance toward the response
Full physical	Hand-over-hand/hand-under-hand as needed

## What Counts as "Naming"?

Student Response	This Counts!
Says the word	"Happy!" or approximation "hap" or "ha"
Points to card	Finger point, fist point, elbow point
Uses AAC	Selects symbol on device

Student Response	This Counts!
Eye gaze	Looks at correct card for 2+ seconds
Makes face	Imitates the feeling face expression
Body movement	Moves toward card/zone; turns body toward visual
Vocalization	Any intentional sound when card is shown

## Step 5: BREATHE (1 minute)

**Purpose:** One calming breath together.

"Let's take a belly breath. In... [pause]... breathe out... [pause]... Good!"

**JUST ONE BREATH.** For this population, multiple breaths can feel overwhelming. One breath is achievable. One breath is success.

### ✦ SEE NEXT SECTION

"Teaching the Belly Breath" has detailed instructions, alternatives, and accommodations for students who struggle with breathing exercises.

## Step 6: CELEBRATE (30 seconds)

**Purpose:** End with enthusiastic praise.

"You LISTENED to your body! You took a breath! That is AMAZING!"

### Match celebration to student:

- Verbal students: Enthusiastic words, high five
- Sensory-seeking: Big movements, clapping
- Sensory-avoiding: Calm voice, thumbs up, gentle smile
- Non-responsive: "You were here. You're learning. I'm proud of you."

# TEACHING THE BELLY BREATH

The Belly Breath is the **only** breathing technique in First Waves. Master this before adding complexity.

## Basic Belly Breath

1. Put your hand on your belly
2. Breathe IN through your nose — belly goes OUT
3. Breathe OUT through your mouth — belly goes IN
4. That's ONE breath!

# Teaching Progression (For Students Who Struggle)

If a student cannot do the belly breath, work through these stages:

Stage	What to Do	Success Looks Like
1	Just WATCH teacher breathe	Student looks at teacher during breath
2	Be NEAR during breath (no action required)	Student stays present, doesn't flee
3	Practice EXHALE only (blow bubbles, pinwheel, feather)	Student blows air out
4	Practice INHALE only ("smell the flower")	Student sniffs in through nose
5	Combine: "Smell the flower... blow the candle"	Student does both in sequence
6	Add belly awareness with belly buddy	Student notices belly moving

## The Belly Buddy

**WHAT IT IS:** A small stuffed animal (beanie baby size) placed on the student's belly while they lie down. As they breathe, the belly buddy "goes for a ride" — up when breathing in, down when breathing out. This provides visual feedback for students who can't feel their own belly moving.

## Alternative Breathing Supports

Challenge	Tool/Strategy	How to Use
Can't blow out	Bubbles, pinwheel, feather	Visual feedback — they see the result of exhale
Can't feel belly	Belly buddy, weighted lap pad	Tactile/visual feedback of movement
Can't sit still	Movement breath	Arms up on inhale, arms down on exhale
Refuses to participate	Parallel breathing	Teacher breathes next to student, no demand
Touch aversion (belly)	Hands on knees/thighs	"Feel your legs go up and down as you breathe"
Medical (trach, oxygen)	Visual breathing ball	Hoberman sphere expands/contracts — student watches

 **RED FLAG:** Some students have medical conditions that affect breathing (asthma, tracheostomy, respiratory issues). ALWAYS check with parents/medical staff before teaching breathing exercises. For these students, watching the breath may be the goal, not doing it.

# MATERIALS & PREPARATION

## Required Materials

Material	Specifications	Quantity	Prep Time
<b>Feeling Faces Cards</b>	8.5" × 11", cardstock, laminated	6 cards	30 min
<b>Body Map Poster</b>	24" × 36" or 18" × 24"	1 poster	15 min
<b>2-Zone Mat/Poster</b>	Floor: 24" × 18" min; Desk: 11" × 8.5"	1 floor + 1/student	45 min
<b>"I Feel" Choice Boards</b>	8.5" × 11", velcro-compatible	1 per student	20 min/board
<b>Squeeze Cushion</b>	Small, soft pillow (standardized)	1 per student	Purchase
<b>Belly Buddies</b>	Small stuffed animal, beanie-size	Optional	Purchase
<b>Weekly Videos</b>	60-90 seconds each	12 videos	Provided

## Preparation Checklist

- Print and laminate 6 Feeling Faces cards
- Print Body Map poster (or order printed version)
- Create or print 2-Zone Mat (floor size)
- Create desk-size 2-Zone cards (1 per student)
- Create "I Feel" choice boards (1 per student)
- Purchase squeeze cushions (1 per student + 2 extras)
- Optional: purchase belly buddies (for students who benefit)
- Test video playback on classroom device
- Identify daily routine time slot (same time each day)
- Designate First Waves location in classroom
- Print tracking forms (1 per student)
- Send home family letter (Week 1)

# VISUAL MATERIALS GUIDE

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This section describes what each visual material looks like. Use these descriptions to create materials or verify purchased materials match First Waves specifications.

## Feeling Faces Cards (6 Cards)

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**SIZE:** 8.5" × 11" (full letter size) — large enough for group viewing

**MATERIAL:** Cardstock, laminated for durability

**LAYOUT:** Simple face (circle with eyes/mouth), feeling word in large bold text below, solid background color

Feeling	Background	Face Description	Key Feature
<b>HAPPY</b>	Yellow #FFF9C4	Wide smile curving upward, open eyes	Smile goes UP
<b>SAD</b>	Blue #BBDEFB	Downturned mouth, droopy eyes, teardrop	Teardrop visible
<b>MAD</b>	Red #FFCDD2	Furrowed brow (V shape), tight mouth, clenched	Eyebrows make V
<b>SCARED</b>	Purple #E1BEE7	Wide open eyes (whites showing), open mouth O	Eyes very wide
<b>TIRED</b>	Gray #CFD8DC	Half-closed eyes, slightly open mouth, yawning	Eyes half-closed
<b>CALM</b>	Green #C8E6C9	Gentle closed smile, relaxed eyes, peaceful	Everything relaxed

## Body Map Poster

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**DESCRIPTION:** Simple outline of a child's body (front view, gender-neutral). Around the body, labels point to: HEAD ("thoughts"), EYES ("tears, wide open"), FACE/CHEEKS ("hot, red"), CHEST/HEART ("fast, pounding"), STOMACH/TUMMY ("butterflies, tight"), HANDS ("fists, shaky"), LEGS ("shaky, want to run"). Title at top: "MY BODY TELLS ME." Use arrows pointing from labels to body parts.

## "I Feel" Choice Board

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**DESCRIPTION:** 8.5" × 11" board with velcro strip at top and 6 feeling face icons (2" × 2" each) arranged in 2 rows of 3. Student removes icon and places on velcro strip to indicate current feeling. Title: "I FEEL..." with blank space after. Bottom includes small 2-Zone indicator (Calm | Not Calm) so students can also point to zone if not ready to select specific feeling.

# ADAPTATIONS FOR NON-VERBAL LEARNERS

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Students who do not use verbal speech can fully participate in First Waves. Success looks different — not less.

## Redefining Participation

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Routine Step	Non-Verbal Participation Options
GATHER	Orients to teacher, moves to designated spot, looks toward group
SHOW	Looks at card, reaches toward card, makes any vocalization
BODY	Touches own body (any part), allows hand-over-hand, looks at body map
NAME	Points, eye gazes, moves toward, places marker, activates AAC, makes face
BREATHE	Any respiratory change, watches others breathe, tolerates proximity
CELEBRATE	Accepts praise (doesn't flee), makes happy sound, smiles, flaps, rocks

## AAC Integration

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If students use AAC devices, add these symbols:

- All 6 feeling words (happy, sad, mad, scared, tired, calm)
- "I feel..." sentence starter
- Body parts (face, hands, tummy, chest)
- "Calm" and "Not calm" zone words
- "Breathe" or "Take a breath"

✓ **SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:** A non-verbal student who eye-gazes at the "sad" card for 2 seconds when asked "How do you feel?" has successfully named a feeling. Celebrate this.

## USING FIRST WAVES DURING DYSREGULATION

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First Waves teaches feelings during calm times. But what do you do when a student is *already* dysregulated?

# The In-The-Moment Protocol

<b>Step 1</b>	<b>PAUSE THE DEMAND</b> Stop whatever triggered the dysregulation. Remove academic demand. Create space.
<b>Step 2</b>	<b>NAME IT (for them)</b> <i>"Your body is telling you something. I think you might feel [mad/scared/sad]."</i> Don't ask — tell. Dysregulated students can't assess and answer questions.
<b>Step 3</b>	<b>VALIDATE</b> <i>"That's okay. All feelings are okay. Your body is doing its job."</i>
<b>Step 4</b>	<b>OFFER (don't demand) BREATH</b> <i>"I'm going to take a breath. You can join me if you want."</i> Then take a visible breath yourself. Don't require them to do it.
<b>Step 5</b>	<b>STAY PRESENT</b> <i>"I'm here. I'm staying with you."</i> Don't leave. Don't lecture. Just be present until they regulate.

## Scripts for Common Situations

### Student Arrives Already Dysregulated

"I see your body is telling you something big today. That's okay. You don't have to talk about it. I'm going to take a breath. You can just be near me."

**Then:** Skip the full First Waves routine. Just do one parallel breath and move on. Try again tomorrow.

### Student Becomes Upset During "Mad" or "Scared" Weeks

"Wow, your body is REALLY showing me what [mad/scared] feels like! That's actually learning! Your body knows this feeling. Let's take a breath together."

**Frame it as success:** They connected to the feeling. That's the point.

### Student Refuses to Participate

"That's okay. You don't have to [point/say/do] anything. You can just be here. That counts."

**Reduce demand:** Being present is participation. Don't force it.

 **RED FLAG:** If a student is in crisis (aggression, self-injury, elopement risk), SAFETY FIRST. Follow your school's crisis protocol. First Waves is for teaching, not crisis intervention.

## SECTION 5: ASSESSMENT & TRACKING

# PROGRESS MONITORING GUIDE

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First Waves uses simple, IEP-friendly progress indicators. We track **recognition** and **expression** — not mastery.

## When to Assess

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<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Week 1, Day 1 (before first lesson)</b>
<b>Weekly Check</b>	End of each week (Friday) — quick 2-minute probe
<b>Mid-Program</b>	End of Week 6 (after Mad) — full assessment
<b>Final</b>	End of Week 12 — full assessment

## Skills to Track

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<b>Skill</b>	<b>What Success Looks Like</b>
Attends to feeling card	Looks at card when presented
Recognizes feeling word	Points to correct card when asked "Show me [feeling]"
Shows feeling face	Imitates expression when prompted
Points to body	Touches face/chest/hands when asked "Where do you feel it?"
Participates in breath	Attempts to breathe with group (any effort)
Expresses current feeling	Selects feeling on choice board or verbalizes

## Rating Scale

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<b>1</b>	<b>Not Yet</b>	<b>No response, avoidance, or needs full physical prompt</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	Sometimes, with verbal/gestural prompt
<b>3</b>	<b>Got It!</b>	Consistently, with minimal or no prompts

**[STAR-DEPENDENT: data]** If your classroom already tracks prompt levels, replace the 1–3 scale with your existing prompt codes so First Waves data can live in the same system.

## IEP GOAL BANK

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Copy and adapt these goals for individual students. Adjust numbers based on baseline.

## Emotion Recognition Goals

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**Goal 1:** When shown a feeling face card and asked "Show me [feeling]," [Student] will point to/look at the correct card for 4 out of 6 feelings, across 3 consecutive sessions, as measured by teacher data collection.

**Goal 2:** When presented with 2-Zone Mat, [Student] will indicate (point, stand on, eye gaze) the correct zone (Calm/Not Calm) matching their current state, with 80% accuracy across 10 opportunities, as measured by teacher observation.

**Goal 3:** When asked "How do you feel?" during daily check-in, [Student] will select a feeling from their choice board for 4 out of 5 days per week, across 4 consecutive weeks, as measured by teacher data collection.

## Body Awareness Goals

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**Goal 4:** When asked "Where do you feel [feeling]?" [Student] will touch an appropriate body part (face, chest, hands, stomach) for 3 out of 6 feelings, across 3 consecutive sessions, as measured by teacher observation.

**Goal 5:** During daily check-in, [Student] will imitate the teacher's demonstration of a body cue (e.g., tight fists for mad, droopy eyes for tired) with 80% accuracy across 10 opportunities.

## Self-Regulation Goals

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**Goal 6:** When prompted with "Let's take a breath," [Student] will participate in a belly breath (inhale and exhale visible) for 4 out of 5 opportunities, across 4 consecutive weeks.

**Goal 7:** When experiencing mild dysregulation, [Student] will use a breathing strategy (belly breath, with or without prompt) to return to calm state within 3 minutes, for 3 out of 5 occurrences, as measured by teacher observation.

### SECTION 6: FAMILY & INTEGRATION

## FAMILY CONNECTION MATERIALS

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Students need consistency between school and home. These materials help families reinforce First Waves concepts.

### Family Letter (Send Week 1)

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*Dear Family, Your child is starting a new program called First Waves: My Body Tells Me. This program helps children recognize and name their feelings — an important first step in learning to manage emotions. Over the next 12 weeks, we'll learn 6 feelings: Happy, Sad, Mad, Scared, Tired, and Calm. Each day, we spend 5 minutes checking in with our bodies and practicing one deep breath. At home, you can help by:*

- Naming feelings when you see them: "You look happy!"
- Noticing body cues: "I see your hands are tight. Are you

mad?" • Taking belly breaths together All feelings are okay. We never shame feelings — we just name them!  
Questions? Please reach out!

## Home Practice Card

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**FIRST WAVES AT HOME — 1 Minute Practice** 1. "Let's check our bodies!" 2. "How do you feel?" (Show feeling cards or ask) 3. "Let's take a belly breath together." 4. "You listened to your body! Great job!" *REMEMBER: All feelings are okay. Just name it and breathe!*

## TROUBLESHOOTING

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Problem	Solution
Student won't look at card	Hold card near preferred item. Pair card with reinforcer. Accept proximity as success.
Student picks same feeling every day	That's okay! They found a word. Model variety: "I feel tired today!" Don't force change.
Student gets upset during mad/scared weeks	Frame as success: "Your body knows this feeling!" Use breath. Keep it brief. Celebrate.
Student can't/won't do belly breath	See Teaching the Belly Breath section. Use bubbles, parallel breathing, or just watching.
5 minutes is too long	Start with 2 minutes. Just SHOW + BREATHE + CELEBRATE. Build up over weeks.
Student elopes during routine	Don't chase. Let them go. Try again tomorrow with shorter routine. Presence is success.
Parent says it's not working	Redefine success. Show data. Progress may be attending for 2 minutes → 3 minutes.
Student is non-responsive	Continue routine. Being present is participation. Narrate: "I see you're here. That's learning."

## BRIDGE TO OCEAN ZONES

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After completing First Waves, some students may be ready for the full Ocean Zones curriculum.

### Readiness Indicators

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A student MAY be ready for Ocean Zones if they can:

- Identify at least 4 out of 6 feelings consistently
- Point to body location for at least 3 feelings
- Participate in belly breath without distress
- Express current feeling (with or without support)
- Attend for full 5-minute routine
- Tolerate 10-15 minute group activities

 **NO PRESSURE TO ADVANCE**

There is no requirement to "graduate" to Ocean Zones. Some students will thrive repeating First Waves 2-3 times. The goal is connection to their bodies, not curriculum completion.

## Concept Mapping: First Waves → Ocean Zones

First Waves	Ocean Zones
Calm zone	Blue Zone (Manny the Manta Ray)
Happy	Green Zone (Stella the Starfish)
Sad, Tired	Blue Zone (low energy)
Scared, Worried	Yellow Zone (Shelly the Seashell)
Mad	Red Zone (Crabby the Crab)
Belly Breath (1 breath)	16 breathing techniques

## CELEBRATION & COMPLETION

### Week 12 Celebration Ideas

Activity	Description
<b>Feelings Parade</b>	Each student holds their favorite feeling card and walks around room
<b>All the Feelings</b>	Review all 6 faces together — celebrate knowing each one
<b>Breath Circle</b>	Group belly breath — "We ALL know how to breathe!"
<b>Certificate Ceremony</b>	Present completion certificates individually (sensory-friendly option: quiet presentation)
<b>Photo with Feelings</b>	Take photo of each student with their favorite feeling card

# Sensory-Friendly Celebration Options

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For students who find group celebrations overwhelming:

- Quiet 1:1 certificate presentation
- Preferred activity as celebration (not party)
- Photo without group (just student + teacher)
- Take-home celebration kit for family
- Option to watch celebration from distance

## Completion Certificate Text

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**FIRST WAVES CHAMPION** *This certifies that \_\_\_\_\_ has completed First Waves: My Body Tells Me. They learned to: ✓ Recognize feelings in their body ✓ Name their feelings ✓ Take a calming breath* **They are a FEELINGS CHAMPION!**

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### **First Waves: My Body Tells Me**

*A Tide Pool Introduction to Ocean Zones*

Version 2.0

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