"Shonkoff and Phillips define self-regulation as a child's ability to gain control of bodily functions, manage powerful emotions, and maintain focus and attention. The growth of self-regulation is the cornerstone of Early Childhood Development and is visible in all areas of behavior……..Self-regulation in early child development is influenced by a child's relationships with the important adult in her life." (L. Gillespie/N. Seibel, Young Child. July 2006)

Here at NCRC we use an all-school program called, "How Does Your Engine Run?™" This program was created to support children's development of self-regulation through consistent help from teachers, parents, and caregivers. The adult initially helps a child co-regulate through the use of sensory input, routines, strategies, and program vocabulary. Examples of how adults help infants and young children co-regulate include rocking babies to sleep (rhythmic movement) or holding them tightly (deep pressure) when they are frightened. As children enter elementary school, they begin to understand their own "unique sensory diet" and what they need to do to keep their body in the optimal state of alertness for learning and functioning in the world around them.

Starting Monday, September 30th, we will celebrate this program by having special activities throughout the school. We will discuss our engines in various ways. For example, race cars need to go to a "pit stop" to check their engines, fuel up, and get repairs to get back on the race track. The children will explore the "NCRC pit stop" and what happens to their engine speed when they chew fruit leather, listen to different types of music, practice breathing exercises, and use sensory tools in their classroom. Each class has a "break box" filled with tools such as fidget tools, weighted animals, and adapted seating. We invite you to stay tuned on the NCRC Facebook page and instagram (@ncrc_preschool) for glimpses of this fun week.

Our first goal at NCRC is to help children become aware of their "engine's (body) speed." We use the terms fast, medium, and slow, and tell the children what speed their engine should be in relation to the task at hand in an objective way to create awareness. For example, during circle time, a child's engine speed should be "medium," not too sleepy or too active to participate fully in the circle activities. At rest a child's activity level should be slow so their body can rejuvenate. On the playground, a child's activity level should be fast to get the physical exercise necessary to grow strong and healthy.

The second goal of the program is for the teachers to help co-regulate the children's engines by adding strategies throughout the school day, such as deep breathing to help slow them down, freeze dance to practice shifting between engine levels, or using sensory tools to help children get the inputs they seek in an effective and expected way.

Over the next few days, notice how your engine is running and think about the ways you instinctively try to regulate your state, whether it be chewing on your pencil or rocking in your chair. Think about what you do in the morning to wake up and get ready for the day, and what you do at night to decompress and get ready for sleep. Your body knows what it needs!

Note: "How Does Your Engine Run," ™ was adapted with permission of the authors for our preschool age children from the "Alert Program for Self-Regulation" developed by Mary Sue Williams and Sherry Shellenberger of Albuquerque, New Mexico.