

Disability and Disengagement: What Flexible Learning Programs Reveal About Our Education System



Dr Jeff Thomas



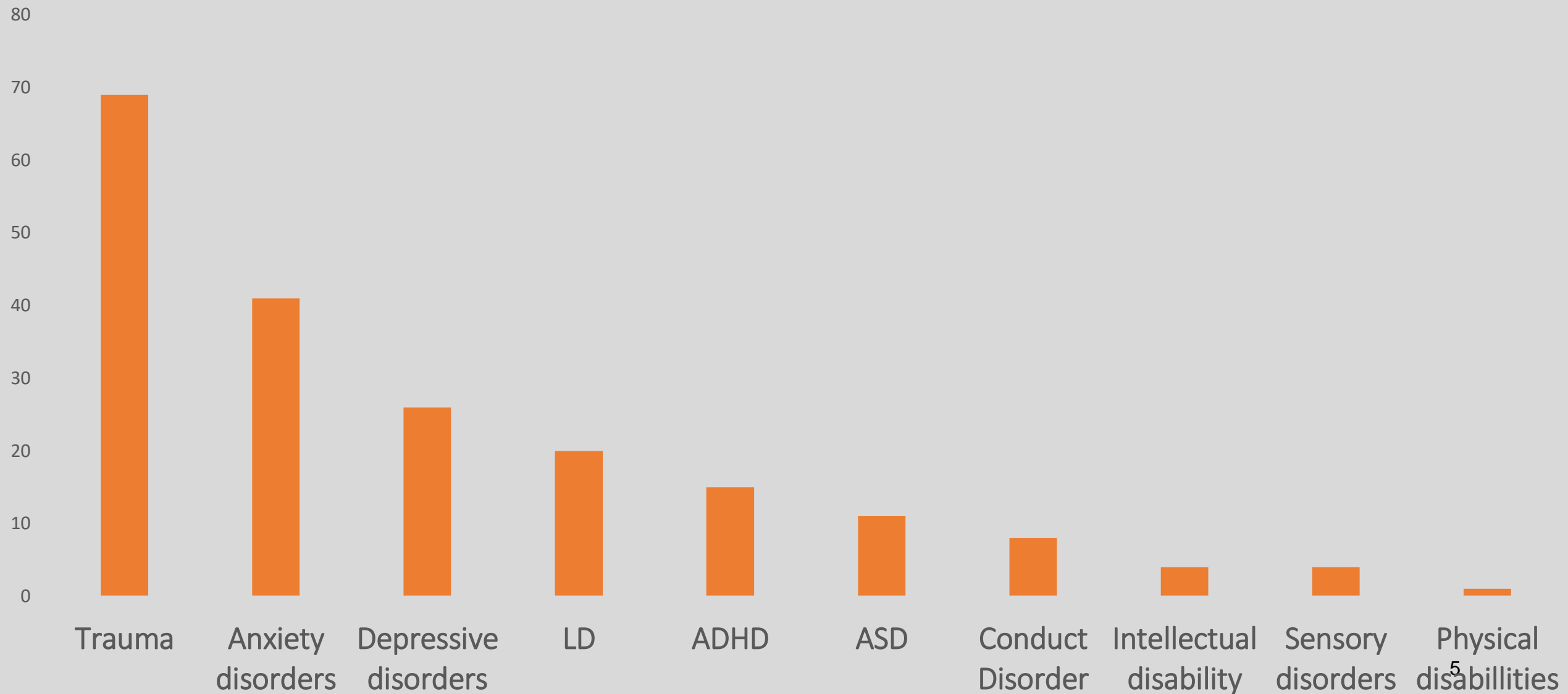


Jack

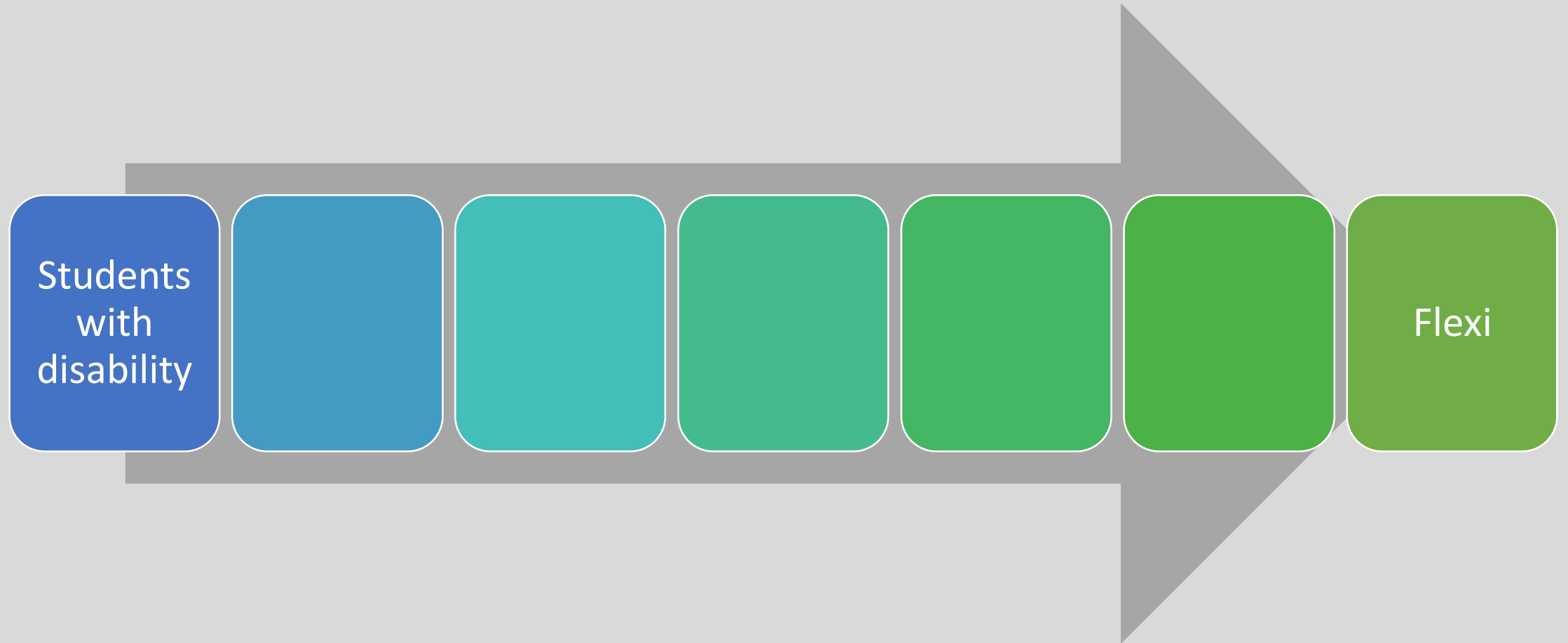


Tayla

Percent of Flexi student population (n=2069) with ten most common disabilities



Why do students with disabilities go to Flexi?



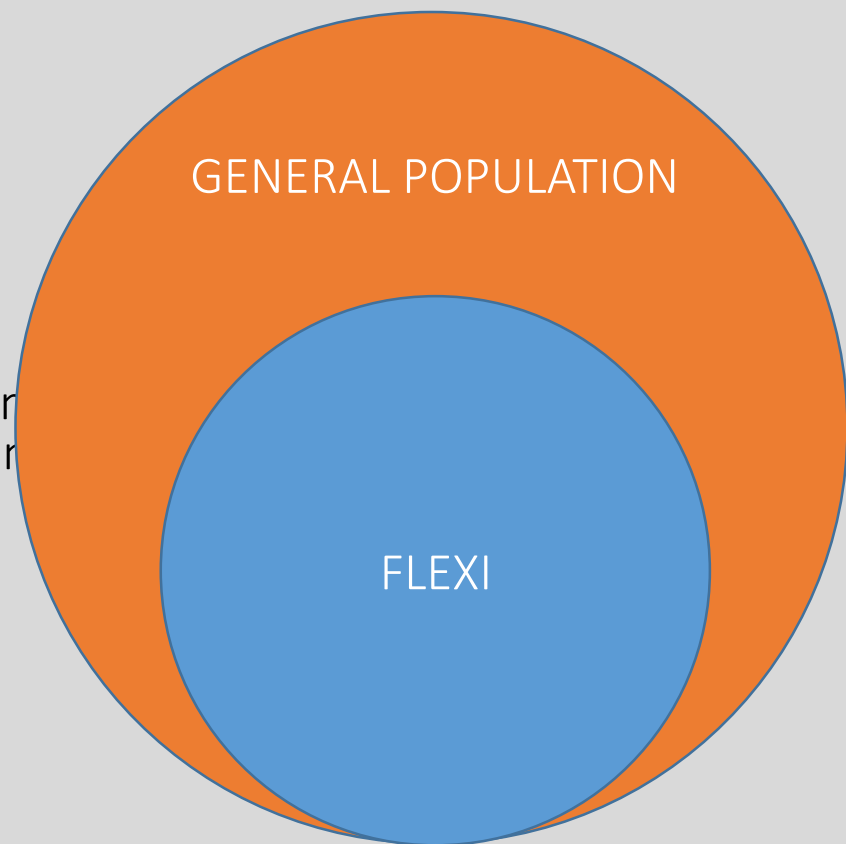
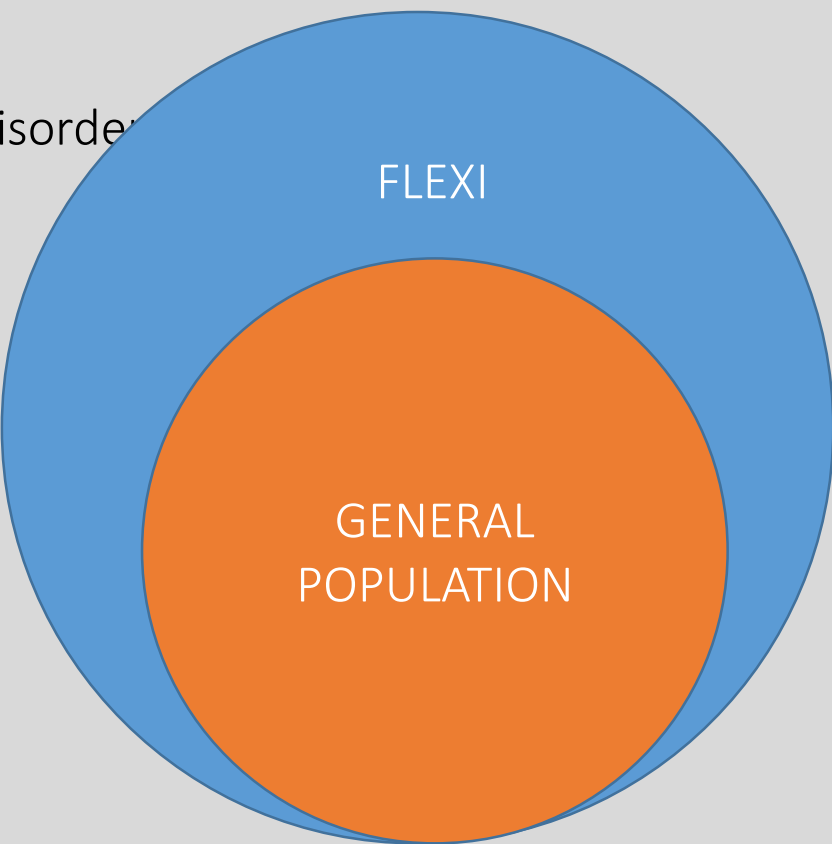
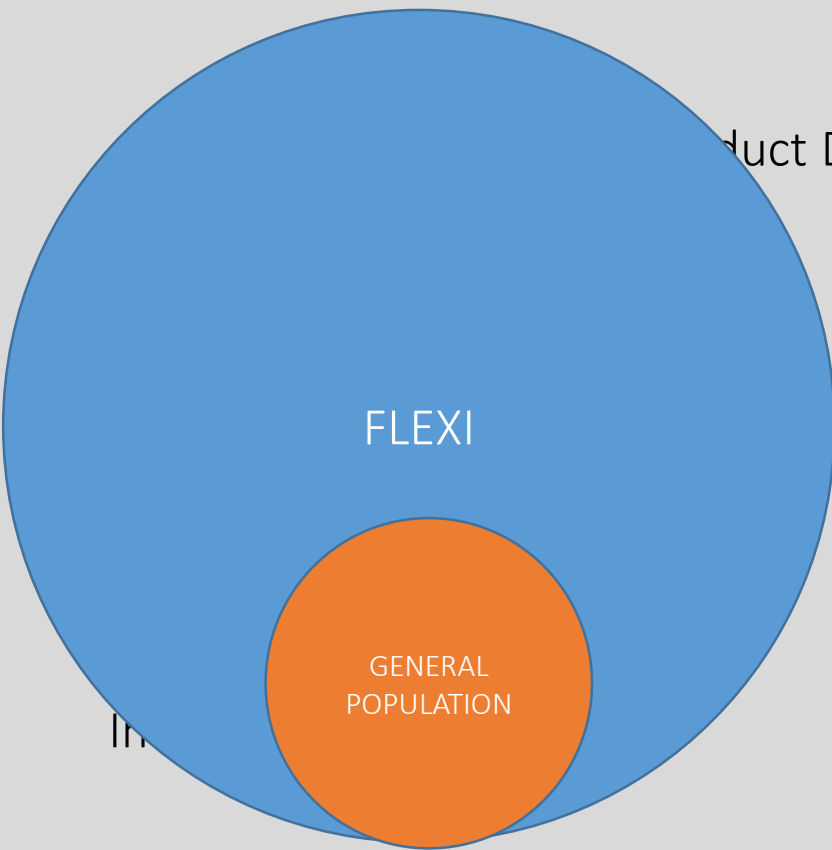
Group One: Very Overrepresented

Group Two: Overrepresented

Group Three: Not Overrepresented

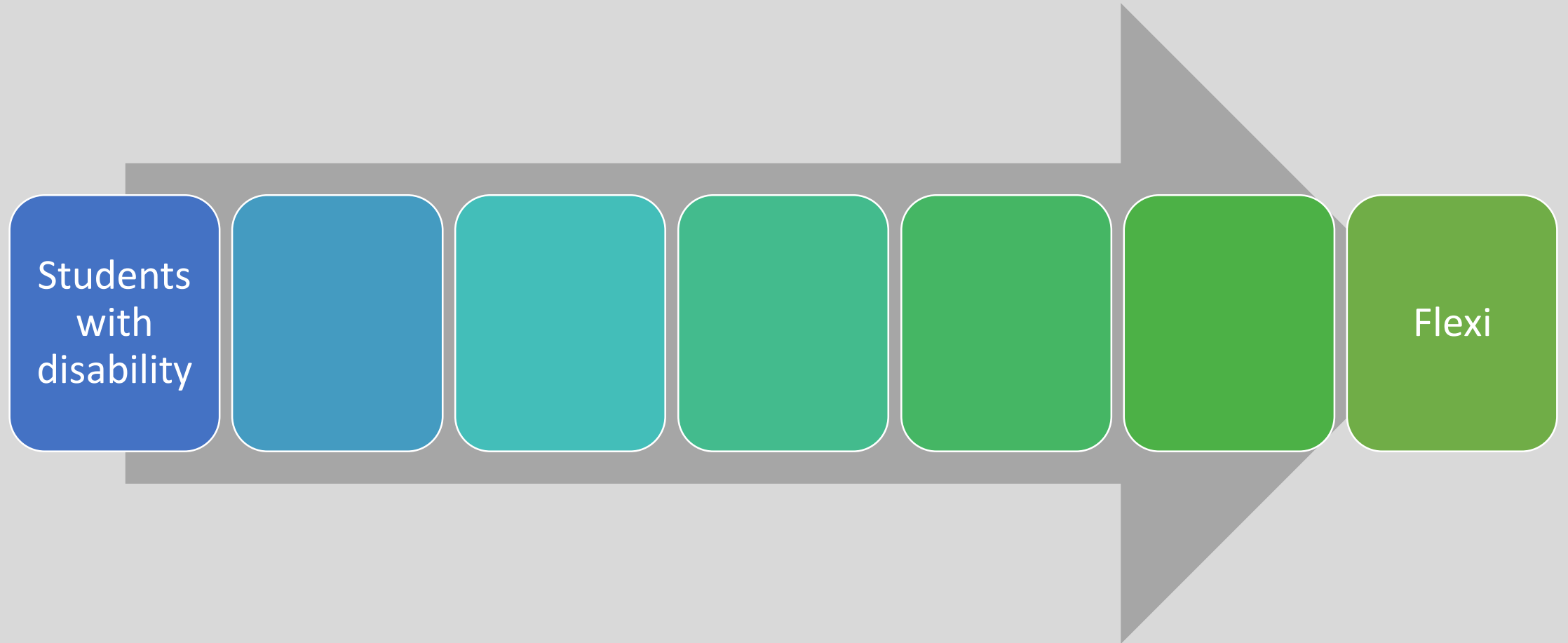
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Depressive disorders



some *specific*

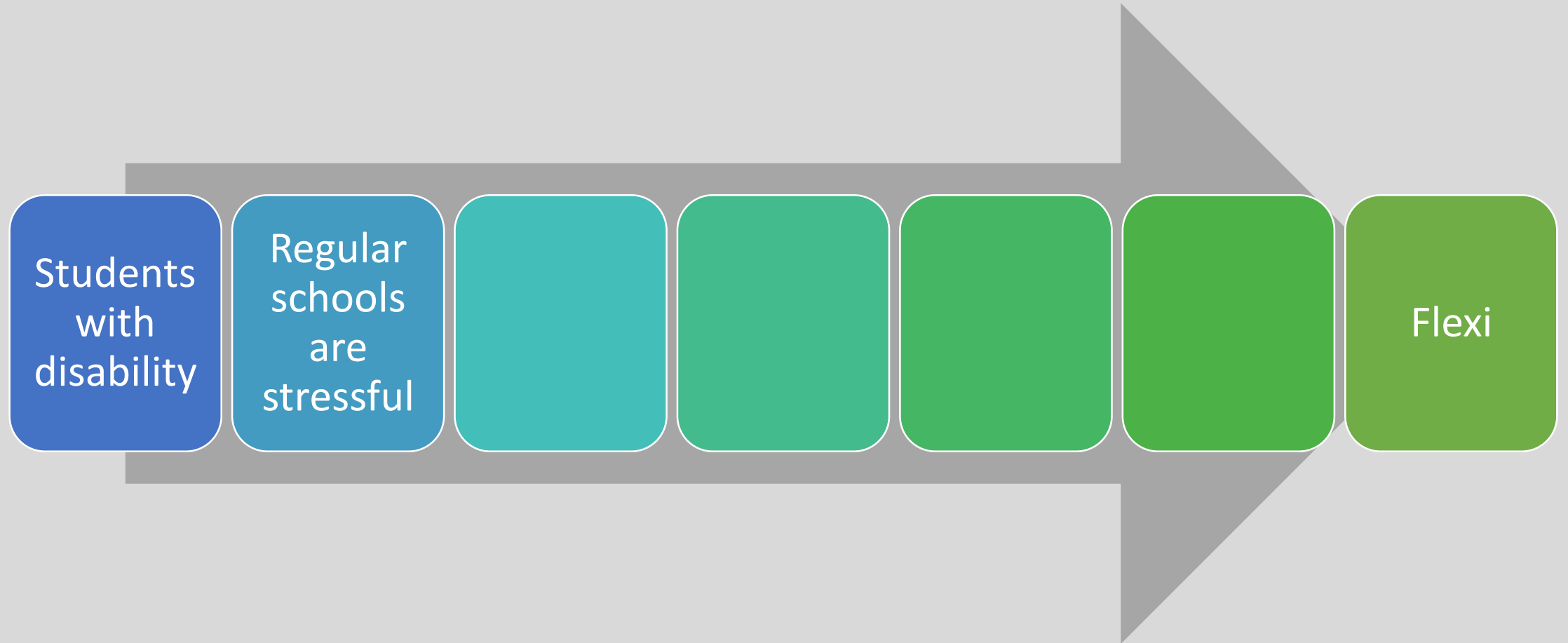
Why do students with disabilities go to Flexi?



IDEA ONE

Are regular schools are just
too stressful for these kids?

Why do students with specific disabilities go to Flexi?

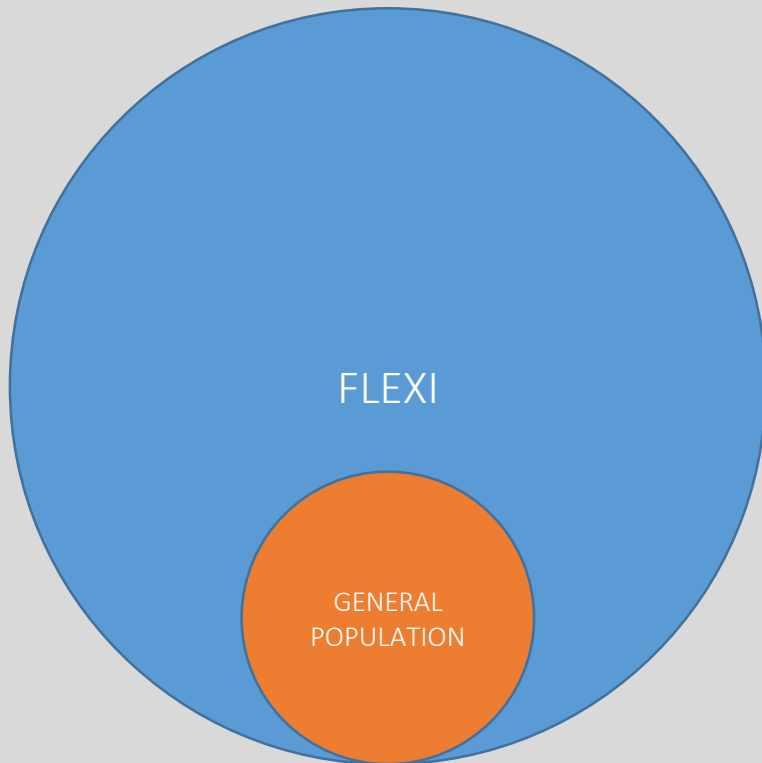


IDEA TWO

Is the 'lack of support'
due to funding issues?

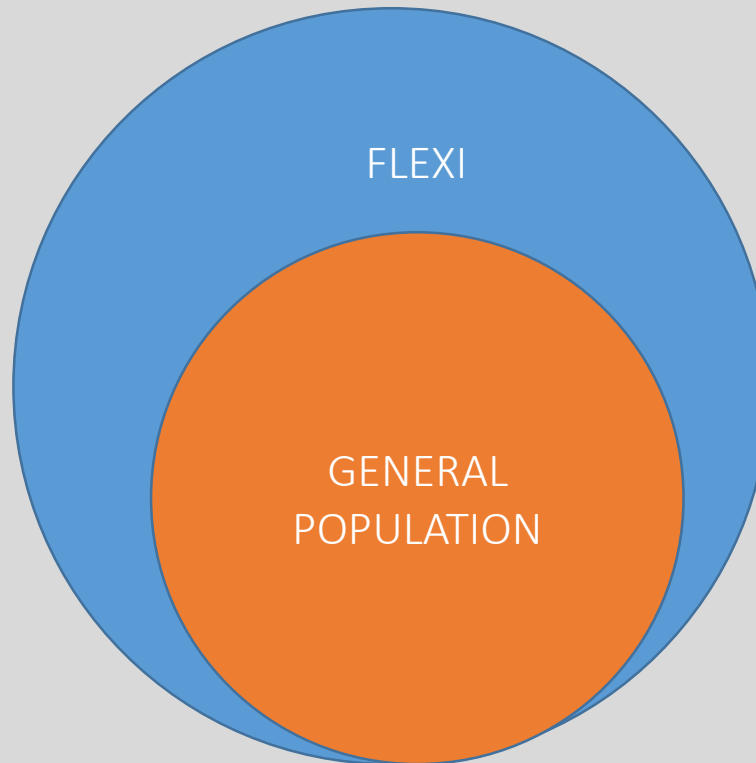
Group One

Trauma
Anxiety disorders
Depressive disorders



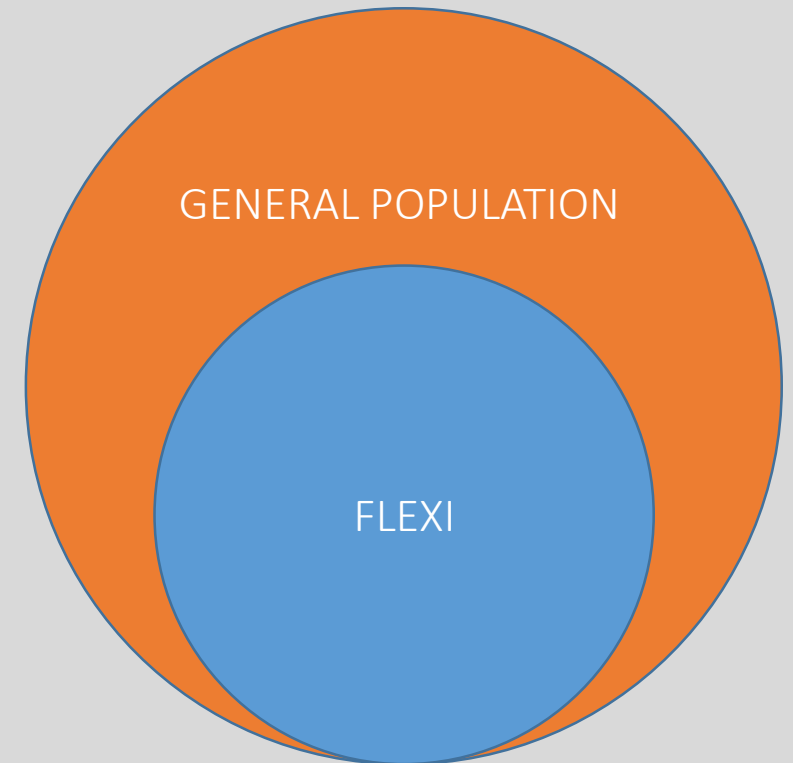
Group Two

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
Conduct Disorder
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Learning difficulties including Dyslexia

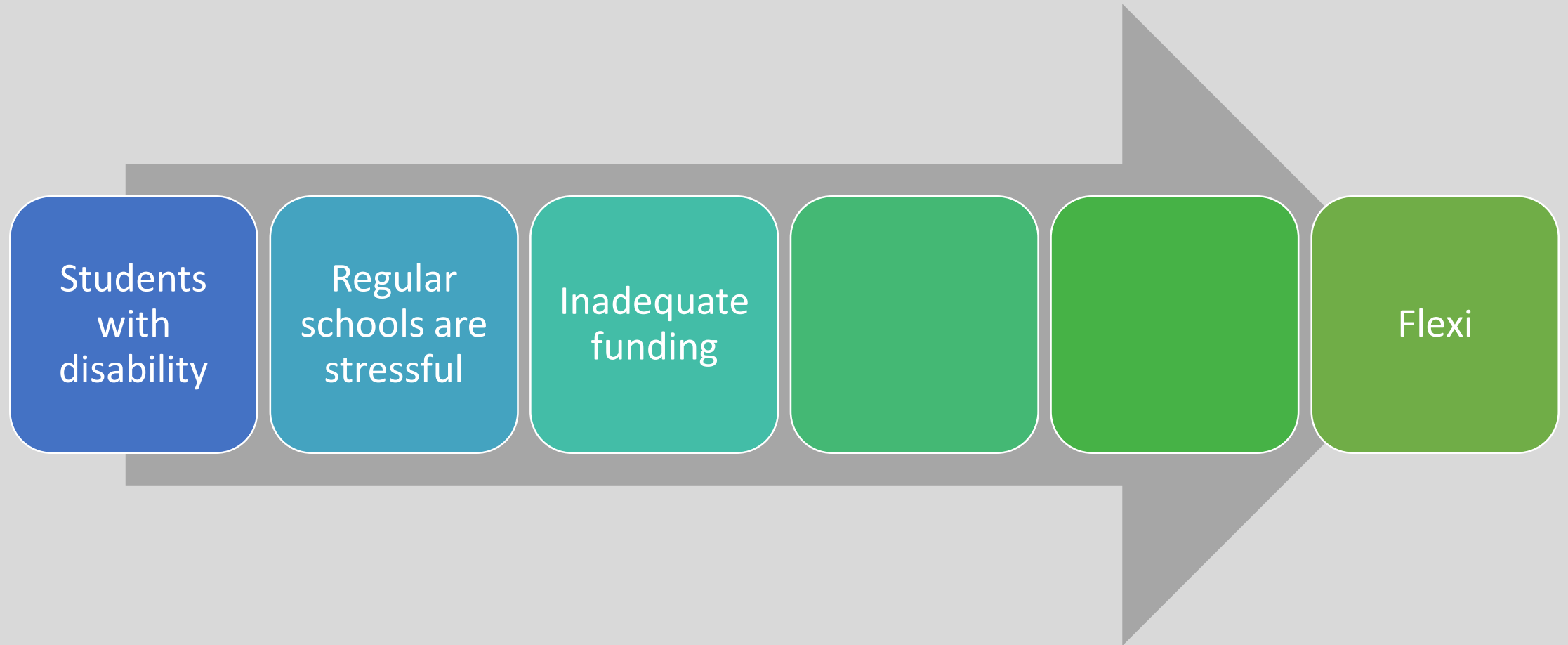


Group Three

Intellectual disability
Sensory / speech disorders
Physical disability



Why do students with specific disabilities go to Flexi?



“Most difficult” behaviours

- Avoiding doing schoolwork
- Disrupting the flow of a lesson
- Disengaging from classroom activities
- Talking out of turn
- Being late for class

(Sullivan et al., 2014)

ADHD Presentation

- Having difficulty organising tasks
- Constantly changing activity or task
- Being unable to sit still
- Excessive physical movement
- Being unable to wait their turn
- Acting without thinking
- Short attention span
- Being unable to stick to tasks that are tedious or time consuming
- Constantly fidgeting
- Being unable to concentrate on tasks
- Being easily distracted
- Appearing to be unable to listen to or carry out instructions
- Excessive talking
- Interrupting conversations
- Appearing forgetful or losing things

IDEA THREE

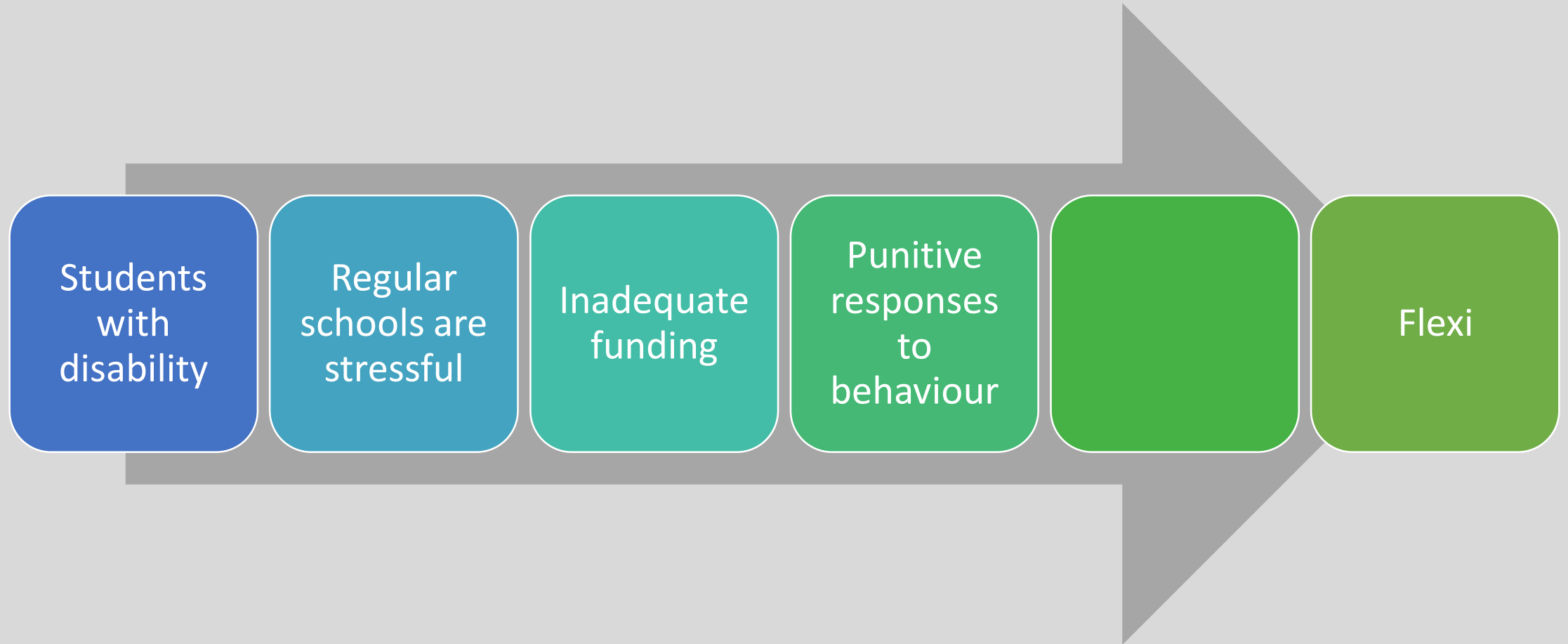
Do we respond to
'Challenging behaviour'
the wrong way?

3.2.1. The following behaviour constitutes unacceptable behaviour of a student and is to be included in a State school's policy that sets out the management of student behaviour:

- a) refusal to participate in the education program;
- b) disobedience of instructions which regulate the conduct of students;
- c) contravening school rules and policies (e.g. a student's failure to comply with the school dress code where the Principal determines that the failure is taken to be unacceptable behaviour);
- d) behaviour that is likely to impede significantly the learning of the other students of that school;
- e) behaviour that is detrimental to the health, safety or welfare of the staff or other students of that school;
- f) behaviour or actions that cause, or are likely to cause, injury to persons or damage to property;
- g) behaviour that is likely to bring that school into disrepute;
- h) behaviour that is likely to put a person at risk of harm;
- i) harassment or stalking;
- j) threatening behaviour;
- k) discrimination;
- l) bullying or cyberbullying;
- m) illegal behaviour;
- n) unsociable behaviour (e.g. offensive language);
- o) sexualised behaviour;
- p) occupational violence;
- q) any other behaviour that a Principal determines to be unacceptable behaviour



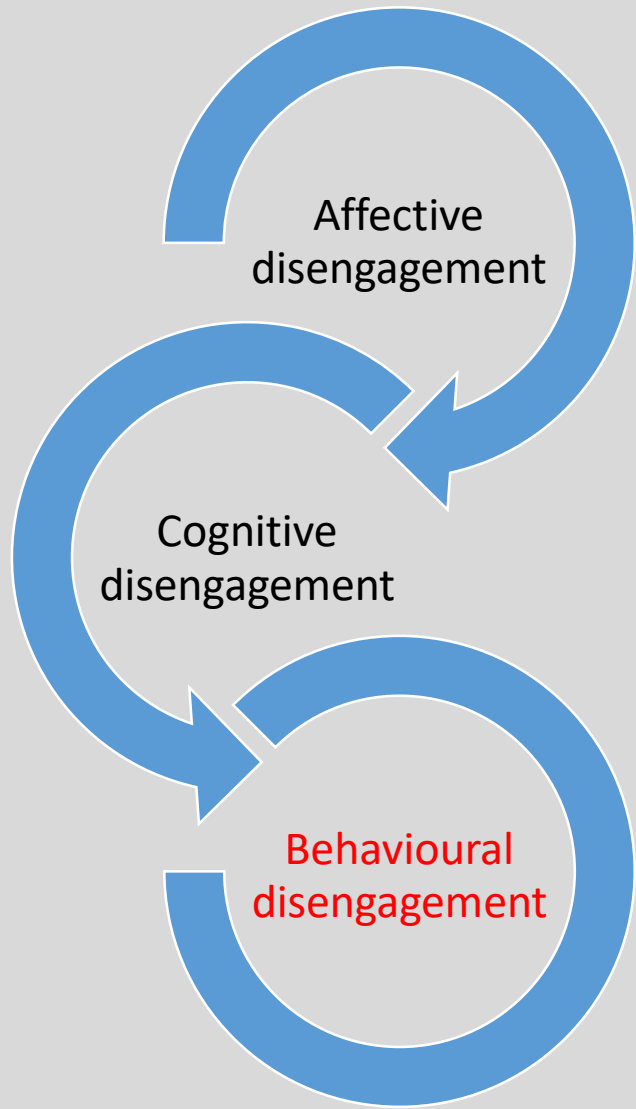
Why do students with specific disabilities go to Flexis?



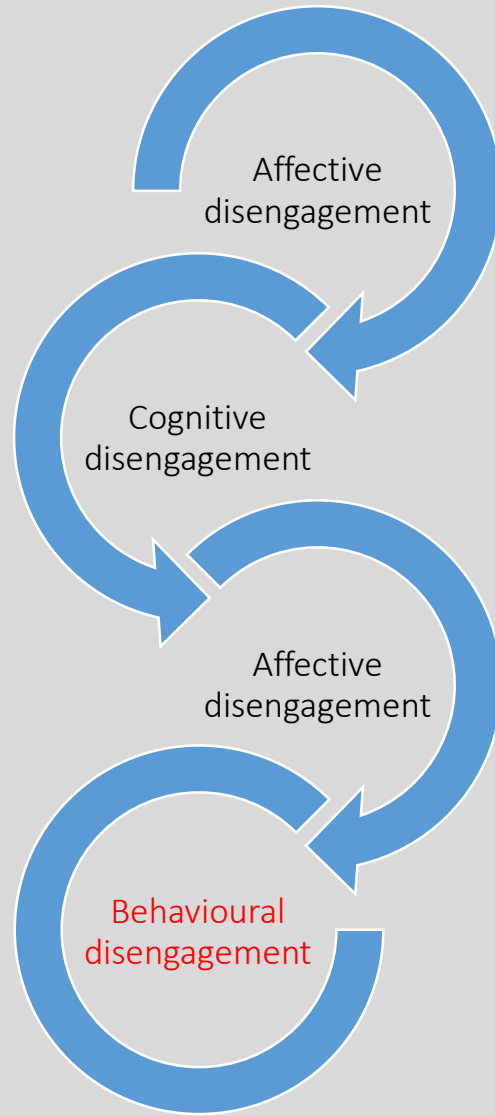


The graph consists of a thick red line with six segments. It starts at a high point on the left, drops to a local minimum, rises to a local maximum, then drops sharply to a lower local minimum, rises slightly, and finally drops again to its lowest point on the right, where it ends in an arrowhead pointing downwards and to the right.

Theory of engagement and disengagement



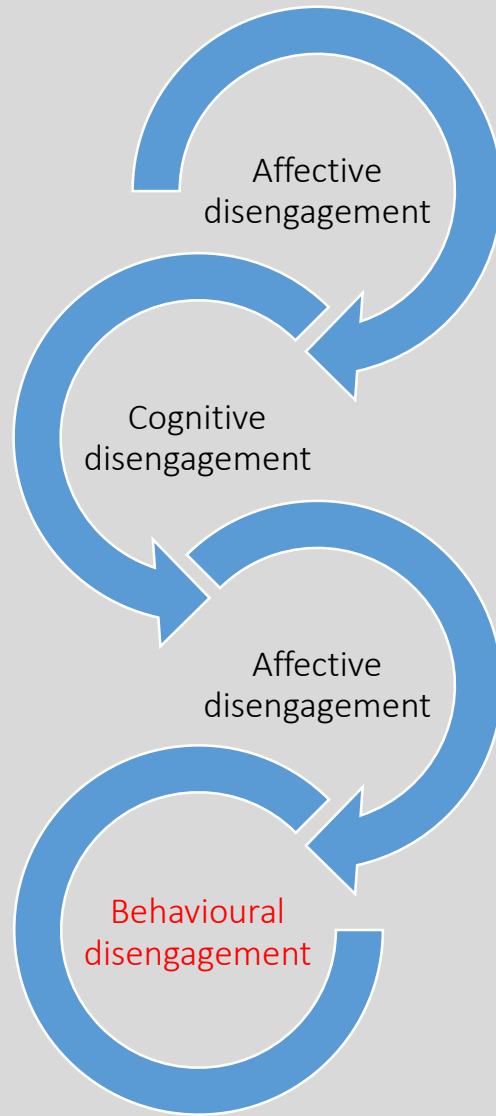
- How students feel about school
 - Sense of belonging
 - Enjoyment
 - Value of education
- How they think about themselves as Students
 - Goal setting
 - Willingness to engage
- How they act at school
 - Participation
 - Attendance
 - Conduct



Jack

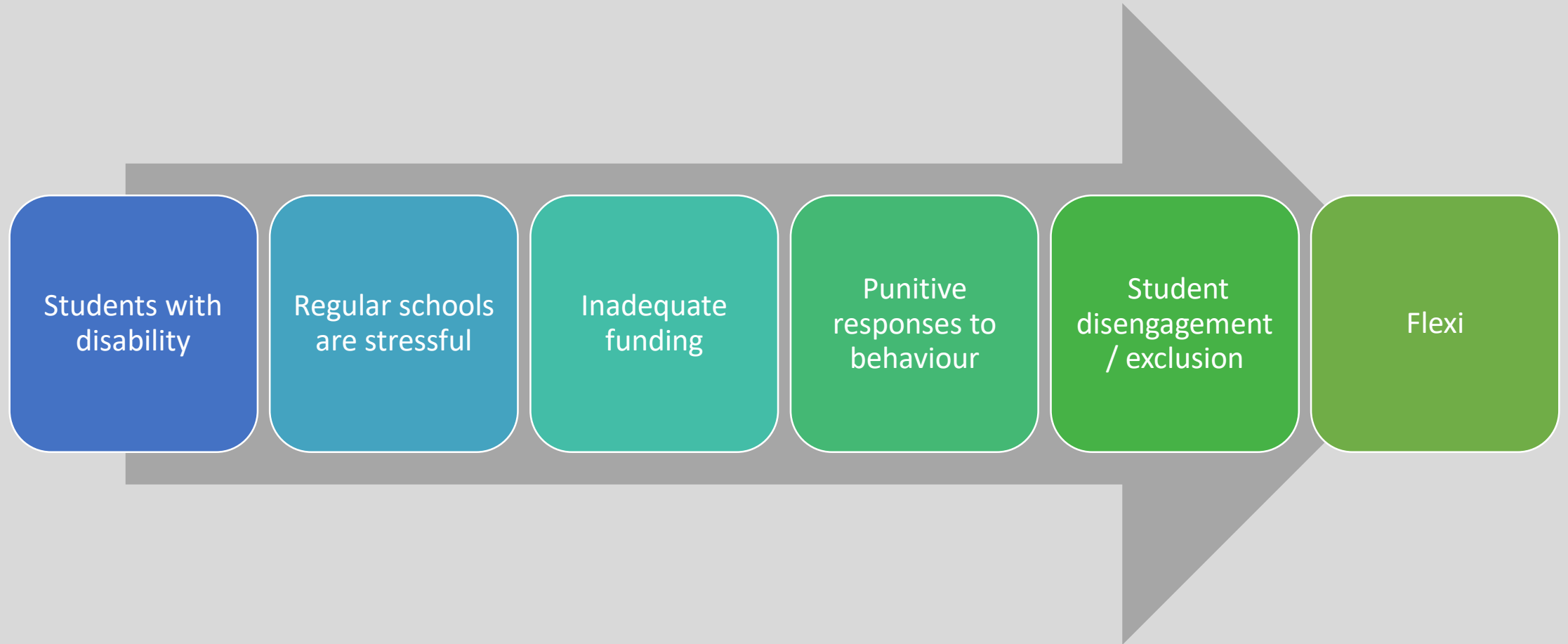
- Feels unsafe (Maladapted response to trauma)
- Feels misunderstood (gets into trouble)
- Misses out on learning (hyper aroused)
- Misses out on learning (sent out of class)
- Feels incompetent (because missed work)
- Feels unjustly treated
- Avoids participating
- Acts aggressively to teacher who is insisting on participation

Tayla

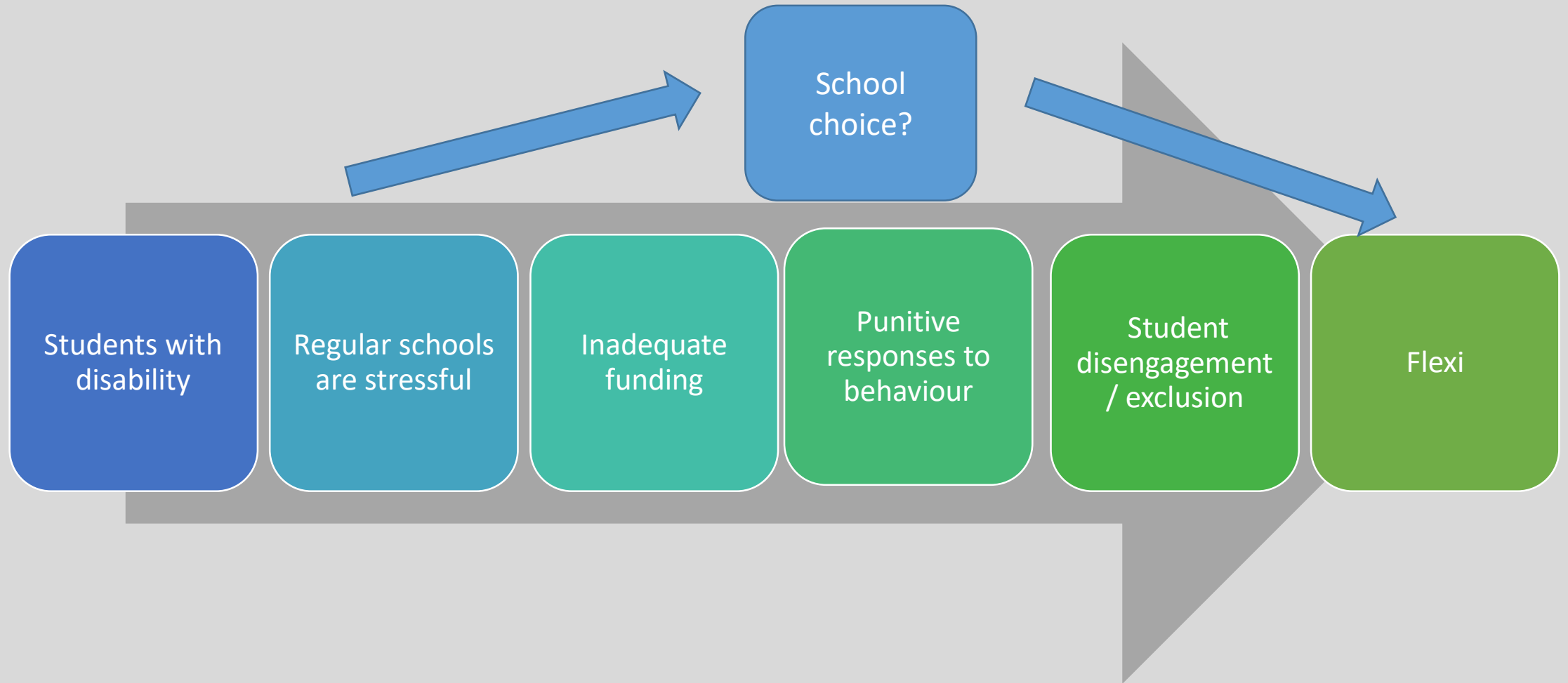


- Feels anxious around crowds (anxiety disorder)
- Feels misunderstood (gets into trouble for refusing to do work)
- Misses out on learning (because avoids classes where she is expected to participate)
- Misses out on learning (suspended for truancy)
- Feels incompetent (because missed work)
- Feels more anxious. “Everyone is watching me”
- **Skips classes, refuses to ‘join in**
- **Truant**

Why do students with specific disabilities go to Flexis?



Why do students with specific disabilities go to Flexis?



IDEA FOUR

Are student's choosing Flexis because they are specialist places designed for students with complex lives?

So what can we learn?

1. Are mainstream school environments are just too stressful for these kids?
2. Is the 'lack of support' due to Funding issues?
3. Do we respond to 'Challenging behaviour' the wrong way?
4. Are student's choosing Flexis because they are specialist places designed to work with students with complex lives?



Tayla



Jack

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