

Neurodiversity is a term originally coined by Australian sociologist, Judy Singer, in the late-1990s. Neurodiversity has been referred to as

*"...the virtually infinite neuro-cognitive variability within Earth's human population.? It points to the fact that every human has a unique nervous system with a unique combination of abilities and needs."*

- Neurodiversity is the idea that there's natural variation in how people's brains work
- When we embrace neurodiversity, we accept, support and celebrate neurodivergent children and conditions such as ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder and Specific Learning Difficulties

## Things to consider when understanding neurodiverse students

- Develop an understanding of some neurodiverse conditions and name them: e.g. ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Specific Learning Disorder (dyslexia, dyscalculia), Tourette's Syndrome
- Develop a greater understanding of these conditions mentioned above by discussing and brainstorming myths and helping others correct misunderstanding about these conditions
- Recognise that neurodiversity is an umbrella term that refers to the diversity in brain functioning associated with a range of developmental conditions and experiences
- Understand how these conditions are assessed, such as specific DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for each and discuss some of the issues associated with making these diagnoses
- Understand how these conditions are not 'an exact science' and discuss some issues and difficulties when there are inconsistencies with ratings, opinions and views amongst parents, teachers, allied health professionals

## How we can make neurodivergent students feel more comfortable and accepted by their peers

- Let them know you are interested in researching their specific difficulties or condition
- Let them know that you understand that everyone has their own unique way of learning and that everyone has different strengths and weaknesses
- Help peers understand how and why certain adjustments and provisions may be given to a student and help clarify how this is not an academic advantage, rather a way that this student can perform at a level playing field
- Make sure you don't judge a student by their specific condition and help peers understand that their difficulties or neurodiversity is only one part of who they are as a person
- Understand that student's neurodiversity can change over time in relation to it's severity, duration, presentation assuming intervention
- Keep educating yourself and others regarding neurodiversity
- Recognise a student's specific strengths and not just focus on their weaknesses
- Be more accepting of different learning styles
- Be aware of the language you use when referring to students with neurodiversity or different ways of learning
- Challenge unhelpful attitudes
- Avoid assumptions
- Encourage and promote inclusivity

In order to assess if your child has some neurodiversity or specific learning style, the first step would be to have an assessment with an Educational Psychologist. This assessment would most likely include three components: IQ/Cognitive assessment, tests of academic achievement (literacy/maths) and parent/teacher rating scales investigating attention, focus, behaviour, anxiety, mood, and other issues.