



4. Group Work and Learning

Spotlight on
Supporting Autistic
Girls and Gender
Diverse Students
at School

Neuro-affirming tips and strategies to support autistic girls and autistic gender-diverse students in their group work and learning:

Be aware of the additional mental, sensory, and cognitive overload that autistic students experience when navigating the social interactions that occur during group learning. In sessions where autistic students are expected to collaborate and cooperate in a group setting, additional support or alternative approaches may need to be provided.

It can be helpful to facilitate the allocation of groups rather than asking students to get themselves into teams. This will help reduce the anxiety of not being chosen. Autistic students may also prefer to only work with peers they are comfortable with – this can help make the group-work a more positive, and less taxing experience for them.

If an autistic student is becoming too overwhelmed by the group learning environment, you may need to consider specific accommodations such as allowing them to work independently, with the option of rejoining the group when they feel ready.

Providing clear and structured instructions can help alleviate questions and anxieties around expectations when learning within a group setting. Breaking down tasks, providing visual aides, clear examples and set schedules and deadlines can all help.

Take a flexible approach to structuring group work for autistic students – e.g., allow them the opportunity to contribute within the group setting, but set them individual tasks for the assessment component.

The social demands of group work can be exhausting for many autistic students. They may require additional time to recover and reset after a group learning experience. Having a balance of group and individual work throughout the day can help.

Allocating the different roles within the group may also be beneficial. Many autistic students may prefer to be the 'note-taker', 'writer', or 'researcher,' especially if they are anxious about speaking in front of their peers. It can also help to provide clear guidelines of what the different roles within the group involve, what tasks can be completed individually, and what needs to be completed as a group.