



6. Class Culture & Rules

Spotlight on
Supporting Autistic
Girls and Gender
Diverse Students
at School

Neuroaffirming tips and strategies to support autistic girls and gender diverse students with class culture and rules:

- Be proactive in creating an inclusive and neuro-affirming classroom culture which facilitates whole-class acceptance of diverse ways of learning, communicating, moving and connecting. Working as a class to embrace all forms of diversity is a powerful way to provide an environment where all students feel safe and supported.
- Many autistic students feel more secure when they understand the 'why' around classroom rules and expectations. Providing rational explanations can help them to make sense of and relate to what is being required of them.
- Engage all students in the class in developing your class rules and allow opportunities for the rules to be revisited (noting that classroom culture can be dynamic and will likely evolve as the school year progresses).
- Consider what unwritten rules or systems are being applied in your classrooms. Ask yourself, are these things really needed? If so, make them concrete.
- Be clear and consistent in your classroom expectations and say what you want to happen. Many autistic students prefer direct language and may not understand idioms, metaphors or figurative language. For example, if you say "your desk is messy", they may not pick up on the implied meaning that you would like them to clean it.
- De-stigmatise the use of accommodations in your classroom by allowing all students to recognise their needs and access supports with dignity.
- Be aware that many autistic young people are motivated by a strong sense of social or personal justice. This can lead to them questioning, or alternatively, policing class rules.
- Remove compliance-based motivation and reward systems in the classroom. These systems typically focus on rewarding compliance, enforcing neurotypical norms, and seeking to change external behaviours without addressing the reasons behind the behaviour. Neuroscience tells us that these systems do not support intrinsic motivation, student wellbeing, or genuine engagement.