

# Widening the Circle

## *Celebrating Neurodiversity in Faith Based Schools*

### **Focus Strategy:**

### **Planning for the Neurodiverse Learner**

Students with high incidence learning differences such as ADHD, dyslexia, and the autism spectrum, are present in every faith-based school! Some classrooms may have 4-5 students with learning disabilities that benefit from intentional lesson design for engaging instruction and assessment. Planning for engagement may seem difficult, however when educators prepare to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities, accessibility is increased and success is possible!

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### **Know the impact**

The impact of the neurological and/or biological learning challenges, and the traits that teachers see in the classroom are not choices made by the student. Knowing the educational impact of ADHD, dyslexia, and autism is necessary so that educators can select curriculum resources that are accessible. Students with ADHD will struggle with memory, taking notes, listening to lecture for long periods, and initiating independent work (among other things!). Dyslexia may impact memorization of math facts, understanding spoken language, and require additional time to decode text when reading. Similarly, autism may impact memory, language, and time management skills. Students may require intensive interventions to build these skills, however teachers can proactively plan for their success in the general education classroom.

### **Different yet similar**

ADHD, dyslexia, and autism each have unique traits and characteristics that present challenges as well as strengths for students at all grade levels. Accommodations for ADHD such as graphic organizers, visual supports, and chunking longer assignments are also beneficial for students with autism and dyslexia. When curriculum resources are considered while planning a lesson, a unit of study, or for an entire semester, teachers can select resources that meet the accommodations often necessary for neurodiverse learners and include them for all students. This planning promotes engagement during instruction and reduces the need to build in accommodations for a few students after the lessons are designed.

### **Resources:**

[Online templates for graphic organizers, exit tickets, and lesson plans](#)

[Printable graphic organizers](#)

[The National Center on Accessible Educational Materials](#)



## Accommodating to remove barriers

Neurodiverse students are frequently presented with barriers in the environment, lesson design, or the assessment tool in our traditional classrooms. Proactively removing barriers enables students to find success while also learning what works for their unique brains. Accommodations do not change the expectations or standard/ skill to be learned. When the traits that are inherent to the learning difference are accommodated, students can find success. For example, a student with dyslexia will struggle to spell words correctly; this is a trait specific to the learning disability. An accommodation to use spellcheck or for no points to be lost for misspelled words is appropriate because the errors are due to the disability.

Plan for all students!

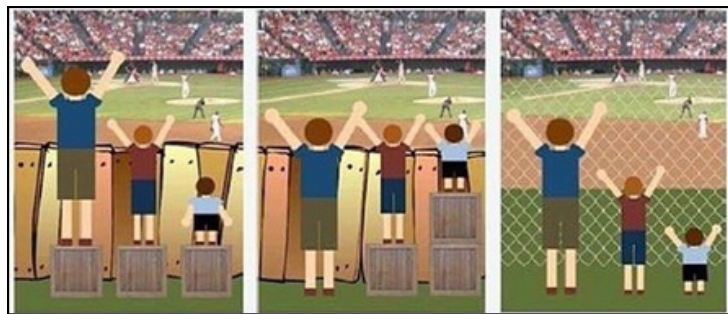
- Spellcheck for all students- depending upon the grade level and content area
- Provide feedback on drafts for correction of spelling errors

Students with autism and ADHD may have difficulty with initiating a task and managing time for a due date. Initiation and time management are skills that are inherent to ADHD and autism and therefore will need accommodating in the classroom.

Plan for all students!

- Describe how you would get started on a task or project and display a finished product whenever possible. Have students share how they will get started with a peer- speaking the plan out loud builds the strategy!
- Chunk longer assignments or projects into smaller parts, with multiple due dates when possible. This provides you and the students with check-ins to gauge progress.
- Use an analog clock to describe how many minutes a task should take, shading the plastic cover of the clock with an expo marker to illustrate the time. [View this video for demonstration.](#)

Planning for all students significantly reduces the time for building in accommodations for high incidence learning disabilities after the lessons have been planned! Be proactive in your planning and see how ALL students benefit!



## Parent Connection:

- Include the parents and student when considering the impact of the learning disability and the accommodations that are necessary for success.
- Provide accessibility resources for families to explore together and ask what the student uses at home for success.

