A Quality Matters Event

Q-Up for Digital Quality K-12

Book Study: Neurodiversity Affirming Schools

April 24, 2025

1:30 PM EDT

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Meet Your Presenter

Pam Shaw

Senior K-12 Quality Assurance Manager, Quality Matters
President, Illinois Association for Gifted Children
Vice President, Fremont District 79 Board of Education
Parent of Neurodivergent Young Adults

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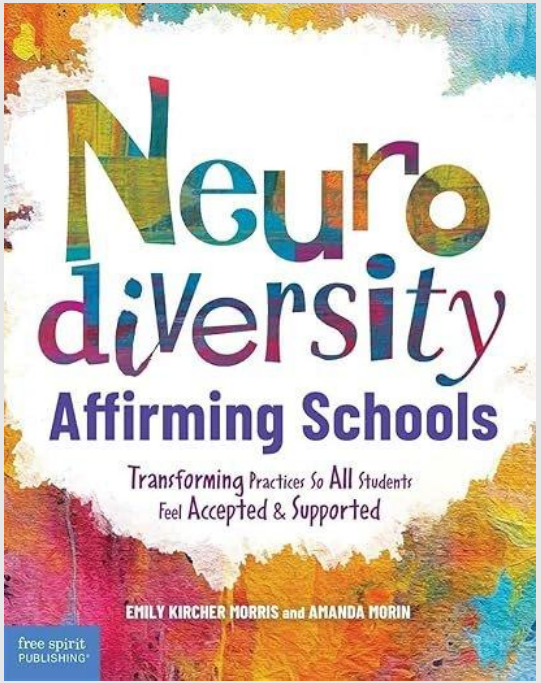
About the Book

Neurodiversity-Affirming Schools: Transforming Practices So All Students Feel Accepted & Supported

by Emily Kircher-Morris and Amanda Morin



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Prior Experience Check

- Have you read the book?
- Do you work with neurodivergent students?
- What is your experience with neurodiversity?

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About the Authors

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Amanda Morin

- Neurodivergent neurodiversity consultant
- Behavioral health specialist
- Writer & educator building accessible, empathetic spaces

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About the Authors

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Emily Kircher-Morris

- Host of The Neurodiversity Podcast
- Mental health clinician
- Navigated the educational system as a twice-exceptional (2e) student

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What is Neurodiversity?

- Variety and variability in human neurology
- Thrive in different environments
- All spaces that contain people are neurodiverse
- All people have nervous systems with varying needs and abilities

Image source: Wikimedia Commons: File:Pastel Neurodiversity Symbol.png

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Learner Variability

- All students have unique combinations of cognitive, emotional, social, and physical traits and skills
  - Results in unique strengths, needs, and experiences
- Can influence how students process and acquire knowledge
- Skills vary according to context

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What is Neurodivergence?

- Natural variation in the human brain in:
  - Socialization preference
  - Learning
  - Attention
  - Mood
  - Other mental skills

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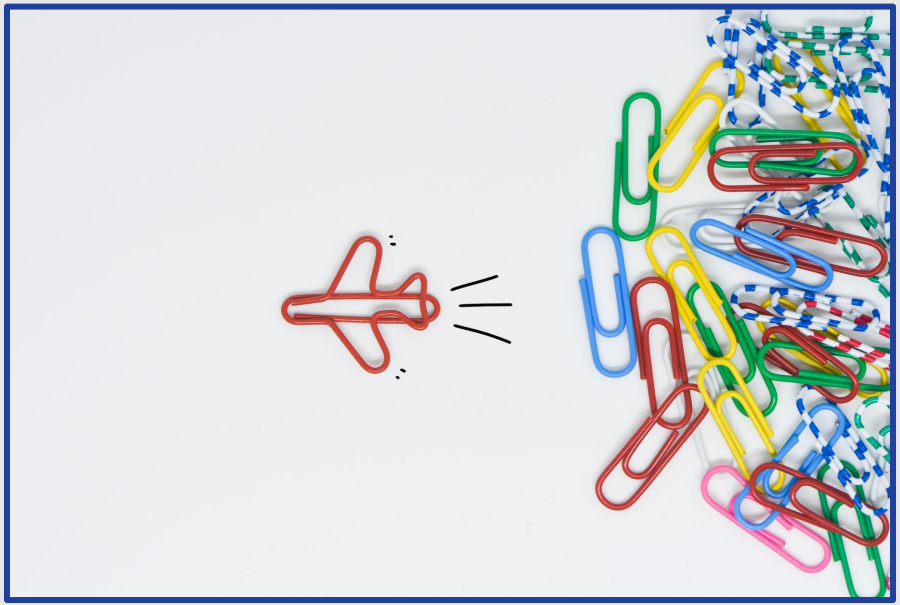
Examples of Neurodivergence



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Neurodiversity Affirming Schools

- Welcome neurodivergent learners to be authentically themselves
- Accept labels/diagnoses
- Normalize use of accommodations
- Involve and educate stakeholders in the school community
- Question the status quo when something isn't working for a neurodivergent student

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How can being neurodivergent influence a student's school experience?

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Universal Design for Learning

- A framework to create equitable access to learning
  - Multiple means of:
    - Engagement
    - Representation
    - Expression

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Which learners does UDL support? How might this look in practice?

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Neurodiversity-Affirming Communication

- Adopt more inclusive and compassionate communication frameworks
- Built on a foundation of flexibility and adaptability
- Accept and engage in diverse communication styles

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Examples of Neurodiversity-Affirming Communication

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How can you rethink communication to meaningfully engage with the neurodivergent learners in your classes?

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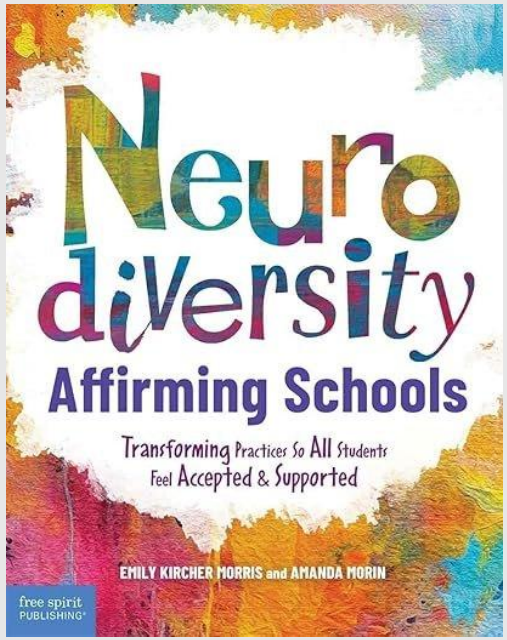
Embracing Neurodiversity

"It's time to embrace neurodiversity, not just as a concept but as a practice that empowers and uplifts every member of the school community. The future of education is inclusive of all neurotypes. And with your dedication, it can become a reality"



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