



Neurodivergent Education for Students, Teaching & Learning (NESTL) Toolkit

----- Case Study 2



Case Study 2: How to Make the Classroom Neurodivergent-Inclusive **| Dr Laura Seymour**

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The following recommendations are from Dr Laura Seymour's book Shakespeare and Neurodiversity (Cambridge University Press, 2025). We have also incorporated some of these suggestions in the earlier sections.

Make your classroom relaxed: explicitly encourage students to move in and out of the room as they like, wear headphones, stim and tic whenever they want. Offer items to fidget with (stress balls, pipe cleaners, string), put elastic exercise bands on chair legs for students to bounce their legs against. Take agreed breaks at various points.

Embrace the fact that students have different working and reading speeds. Rather than stipulating that a certain task 'should' take a certain amount of time, work out whether students need you to accommodate their working speeds better, or help them to work out how much they can get done in a particular time.

Offer a traffic light system of stickers, which people can stick on their clothes or laptop, to aid communication in class: green sticker means 'feel free to approach me and chat'; amber means 'don't approach me first, let me approach you'; red means 'I'm just here to listen, not chat'. Prepare for many students to select red by considering how you will feel comfortable with students' silence.

What stereotypes do you have in your mind about silent students (that they aren't engaged, perhaps? That they're thinking hard? That they dislike the class, or don't understand it?) and interrogate where those stereotypes and assumptions come from. Saying calmly, 'it's alright, we can sit in silence' can sometimes be enough.

Interrogate assumptions about intelligence (e.g. that spontaneous dialogue, remembering large chunks of text, and fluent reading of a chunk of text equal intelligence, whereas silence means a student is not engaged) and avoid basing students' grades or evaluations on these assumptions. Educators do not need to judge how intelligent their students are, but to facilitate their learning and engagement with course material (see works by Price; Goodey, and Dolmage for disability studies scholarship on 'intelligence').

At the start of a class or course of study, ask students to tell each other their preferred communication styles so that they can adapt to each other (e.g. 'I prefer verbal communication to written communication; unbroken blocks of text aren't accessible to me'). This can help you to prepare ahead when it comes to accommodating potentially 'competing' needs (like the need for drumming and the need for silence used as an example elsewhere in this section).

Fix 'access clashes' (where one student's access needs seem to clash with another's) in a compassionate way that avoids asking students to mask. For example, if a student needs to rap on the table to stim but it distracts another student, do not insist anyone stops stimming or magically controls their distraction levels. Instead try giving the stimming student a mouse pad or something soft to rap on that muffles the noise and enable students to sit where they like so those who are distracted by the rapping can sit out of eye and earshot of it.



For more detailed guidance,
examples, activities, and
case studies, see the full
[NESTL toolkit.](#)

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