

Grade 3-5 Neurodiversity Lesson Plans by Cocoon Corner

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Stanford Neurodiversity Project

Neurodiversity Concept

Time: 40 minutes

Day 1

- Core Message: Understanding that all human brains work differently and that cognitive diversity is natural and valuable.
- Summary: Introduces neurodiversity using accessible metaphors and the animated short *Some Brains*. Students take a mini animal personality quiz to explore their individual learning styles and celebrate how unique brain strengths enrich the classroom.

Summary

Materials

1. Large Chart Paper or Whiteboard + Markers (for whole-class Know-Wonder-Learn organizer)
2. Projector / Screen & Audio (to play the Some Brains - An Animated Short About Neurodiversity video)
3. Mini Animal Personality Test Worksheets (1 copy per student)
4. Pencils or Crayons (for students to complete their animal personality test worksheets)

Intro Questions & Term Breakdown (6 mins)

What is neurodiversity?

- NEUROlogy is the study of brains. A NEUROsurgeon is a doctor for brains. What do you think the "neuro" part of this word means?
- DIVERSE means having many different kinds of things together (like a garden with lots of different flowers, or a fruit bowl with different fruits). What do you think the "diversity" part of this word means?

As a class, students share ideas to fill in a blank **Know-Wonder-Learn organizer** on large chart paper or a whiteboard. It's okay if the kids aren't sure. Ask them to make wild guesses in order to peak their curiosity!

1

Video (5 mins)

Some Brains - An Animated Short About Neurodiversity (1:35)

2

Video Discussion & Metaphors (7 mins)

Questions to ask in a think-pair-share:

1. The video compares brains to things like race cars, cameras, and volcanoes (0:24, 0:30, 0:50). If your brain were an object, what would it be and why?
 2. Everyone has things they are great at and things they find a bit "tricky" (0:19, 1:17). What is one thing you find easy to do, and one thing you are currently working hard to get better at?
 3. Sometimes people experience the world differently—for example, finding loud noises or bright lights "too much" (1:06-1:12). How can we be kind and helpful to friends who might feel overwhelmed by things that don't bother us?
- Go back to defining neurodiversity if students did not understand it the first time

3



Day 1 cont.

Mini Personality Test (10 mins)	Worksheet attached here 4 Have students take a mini personality test with two initial options; then those two options branch into additional options that lead the student to a specific animal—a total of 5 possible resulting animals. If the worksheet options do not work, it is also written out below. 1. When you are playing a new game, what sounds more fun? 2. Playing it right away >> go to question 2a 3. Watching other people do it >> go to question 2b 2a. When you get a new toy, what do you do? 1. Start assembling right away >> go to 3a 2. Read directions or ask questions >> go to 3b 2b. When your teacher asks you a question, what do you do? 1. Think of creative ideas+ answers >> go to 3c 2. Think carefully about what you learned >> go to 3d 3a: What sounds more like you? 1. Moving and being active, like playing tag, you are a cheetah 2. Trying new things: you are a dolphin 3b: What sounds more like you? 1. I like keeping things neat and organized. You are a beaver 2. I like helping everyone work together >> you are an elephant 3c: What sounds more like you? 1. I like imagining new things: you are an owl 2. I enjoy helping friends: you are an elephant 3d: What sounds more like you? 1. I notice small details: you are a beaver 2. I enjoy learning new things: you are a dolphin
Final Class Synthesis (8 mins)	Synthesize that our brains have distinct, beautifully diverse patterns, and our community is stronger because of it. 5 • Use the following discussion questions ◦ Share out: what animal did you get? ◦ Did your friends get the same animal or a different one? Were you surprised by anyone's result? ◦ Why is it helpful to have a mix of different animals in our classroom? ▪ What would happen if our entire class were only Cheetahs or only Beavers? ◦ How can different animals team up?

Day 2

- Core Message: Recognizing that true fairness means providing specific support tailored to individual needs rather than identical treatment.
- Summary: Explores the distinction between equality and equity using educational media and class discussion. Students analyze real-world playground scenarios in pairs to brainstorm fair, inclusive solutions for recess play.

Summary

Materials

1. Projector / Screen & Audio (to play the [Equality, Equity, and Social Justice video clip](#); stop at 1:18)
2. [Sorting Structure Page](#) (1 page per group of 4-5 students)
3. [Sorting Cards](#) (1 set per group of 4-5 students; MUST BE PRECUT ALONG LINES)
4. [Sorting Activity Answer Key](#) (1 reference copy for instructor)

Check-in (5 mins)	Think-Pair-Share for the question: <i>What does it mean to be fair?</i> 1
Watch video (3 mins)	<u>Equality, Equity, and Social Justice</u> (stop at 1:18 to avoid higher grade level material) 2
Equal vs. Fair Discussion (10 mins)	Ask students about the opening scene with people on different levels. 3 Define that equity is the same as fairness. Ask the following questions to guide their thinking. • Does everyone have an equal block? ◦ Yes, of course • Is it fair for each? ◦ No, it's much harder for the child on the right. • This is the difference between equality (the first) and fairness (the second). Equality is when everyone gets the exact same thing, and fairness is when everybody gets what they <i>need</i>.
Sorting Activity (10 mins)	Students get to use what they've learned about fairness and equality in this 2 hands-on competition. • Divide kids into groups of 4-5. • Each group will receive one set of sorting cards, linked here. Pass out the cards face-down. • Hand out <u>one sorting structure page</u> to each group. Review the significance of each quadrant with the class. • Each group will sort the graphics into their appropriate quadrant on the sorting worksheet. If desired, this can be competitive – the first group to CORRECTLY sort their photos wins bragging rights. <u>Answer key linked here.</u> • Countdown from ten. At the end of the countdown, kids may flip over their cards and begin.

Day 2 cont.

5

Band-aid activity! This lesson is from Empowering Education ([here](#)). We recommend that instructors review the linked PDF before leading this lesson. Below is a summary of this activity.

- Call up the first volunteer. Ask them to tell the class what their chosen injury is.
 - Example injuries include:
 - a. I scraped my arm at recess (requires a Band-Aid)
 - b. I broke my arm falling off my bike
 - c. I have a really bad headache
 - d. A zombie bit me
 - e. Any other silly or realistic injury!
- Acting as the doctor, give everyone the exact same treatment by placing a Band-Aid on their arm.
- Repeat this for however many volunteers there are
- Lean into the absurdity of creative injuries!
- Defend your treatment choice by using the word "equal" and claiming that you are being completely fair because everyone received the exact same treatment.
- Students will refute, prompting the "aha moment," that equality does not necessarily indicate fairness.
- Wrap up the demonstration by asking what a truly "fair" doctor would do. Next, crowd source (once again) a definition of "fairness". Finally, ask the class if they want a "fair" or "equal" class. The answer should be fair.

Note: Instructors are encouraged to use stickers, imagination, or both as a replacement for Band-Aids.

**Demonstration
(15 mins)**

Day 3

- Core Concept: Humans communicate thoughts and feelings through many non-verbal modes.
- Summary: After a non-verbal greeting warm-up, students analyze visual cues in the silent film "Snack Attack". They explore diverse tools (AAC devices, picture boards) and build a class mind map capturing all the ways people connect beyond spoken words.

Summary

Materials

1. Projector / Screen & Audio (to display the Five Friendship Languages graphic and the Communication Modes slideshow)
2. Five Friendship Languages Graphic & Scenarios (displayed on screen for guided partner/class discussion)
3. Communication Modes Slideshow (to display visual examples of AAC devices, picture boards, and non-verbal communication tools)

Check-in (5 mins)

Ask students to turn to a neighbor to say "good morning" or "hello" without making any sounds or using spoken words.

1

Quick post-discussion question to ask students:

- What gestures did you use? (waving, smiling, high-fiving)
 - Emphasize the creative ways we have for communication

Five Friendship Languages and Scenarios (12 mins)

Five Friendship Languages

2

Display the **attached** graphic on a projector or screen. Say: "These are the five big ways that friends show love to each other." Briefly describe each friendship language with an example. Then, use the following question prompts for a guided class discussion.

Opening questions:

1. Which friendship language do you most like to RECEIVE from your friends?
2. Which friendship language do you most like to GIVE to your friends?



Day 3 cont.

Five Friendship Languages and Scenarios (12 mins)	3 Scenario work: - Let's pretend that your friendship language is giving hugs. You have a friend named Ann who doesn't like hugs. Should you show your love to Ann by giving her hugs? - No! - You have another friend named Dalia. You don't know if she likes hugs. What should you do before giving her a hug? - Ask if she likes hugs! - Dalia says that she doesn't like hugs, but you still want to want to show your love to Dalia. What should you ask Dalia? "What is your friendship language?" Dalia says that her friendship language is playing outside together. At recess, you play tag on the playground. What a good friend you are! Closing questions: - When we show our love to our friends, should we use OUR favorite friendship language or our FRIEND'S favorite friendship language? - Our friends! - If you don't know what your friend's friendship language is, what should you do? - Ask! - Why is it important to use our friends' friendship language? - So our friends feel happy, etc. - If the kids are stumped, ask, "How do our friends feel when we use their friendship language?"
Activity: Communication Modes (10 mins)	4 <u>Slides: Activity to show students different modes of nonverbal communication that different people may use</u> - Show students different modes of communication - Allow students to understand why certain people may require certain forms of communication. - Look at pictures and attempt to interpret what a person is trying to convey, even if they are communicating differently.



Applying Concepts

Time: 40 minutes

Day 4

- Core Message: Applying empathy, patience, and perspective-taking to build meaningful connections across communication differences.
- Summary: Analyzes Pixar's short film *Loop* to examine sensory processing, non-verbal cues, and communication barriers. Students complete a 4-stop reflection worksheet to practice stepping into a peer's shoes and identifying practical ways to foster mutual trust.

Summary

Materials (depends on which lesson chosen)

1. Projector / Screen & Audio (to play *Louis' Shoes* or the Pixar Sparkshort clip *Loop*)
2. Whiteboard + Markers (to write and review discussion questions and display the daily journal prompt)
3. Sidewalk / Blacktop Chalk (for students to draw welcoming symbols, inclusion phrases, and traced hands outdoors)
4. Lined Paper & Pencils (1 set per student, for writing the journal prompt reflection)

Videos about differences (5 mins)

[Louis' Shoes | Award-Winning CG Animated Short Film - FRENCH](#) **1**
[Louis' Shoes | Award-Winning CG Animated Short Film - ENGLISH DUB](#)

Analyze and Discuss (13 mins)

2
Take a few minutes to ask students to share their thoughts on the video.
Ask questions such as the following to guide them.

- Why were Louis's shoes so important to him?
- Why did Louis not make many friends?
- Why didn't he want to attend birthday parties, and why did others not want to invite him?

After these comprehension questions, transition to thinking beyond the video.
Ask students to imagine Louis being in their class.

- If Louis were in our class, what sorts of things would be difficult for him? What challenges would he face?
- Ask students for some other ways to be inclusive towards Louis.
- What are some things we could do to make Louis feel more welcome?

Outdoor Activity (15 mins)

- Take students outside with chalk and find a clean, available part of the blacktop. **3**
- Ask students to write down words and draw images that show how to be more inclusive and welcoming.
- Encourage them to be as creative as they can; draw images, write words and phrases, trace hands, etc.

You may do *Louis' Shoes* (above ↑) OR *Loop* (below ↓)



Day 4 Alternative

Guided Film Analysis (20 mins)	Pixar Sparkshorts: Loop Short Film on Disney+ (backup). 1 Play the video once in full and then watch a second time, pausing for analysis as necessary: • Pause & play: How do you think Renee sees Marcus at the beginning? ◦ In the middle? ◦ When they're stranded? ◦ When does Marcus talk to her, and when do they finally go back? • Pause & play: Why does Renee say she needs to go potty but then doesn't? ◦ Emphasize that she is basically playing a prank on Marcus to get what she wants – highlight this to make sure students understand that Renee <i>does</i> know what she wants and is only facing communication barriers. • Pause & play: What did Marcus do wrong in the tunnel when he reacted to Renee? ◦ What should you consider when you're with someone like Renee? • Pause & play: What do you think Marcus was thinking when Renee wouldn't stop hiding? ◦ What made him realize that he had to try something different? ◦ What did Marcus do right to get Renee to calm down?
Activity: "Loop" Themed Worksheet (15 mins)	2 Students will complete a journal prompt to develop their understanding of the short film. • Hand out lined paper and pencils • Write the following prompt on the board and review with the class: "Understanding someone doesn't always require words." Do you agree? • Give students 10 minutes to write a response. Aim for one sentence each. If kids finish one sentence, encourage them to explain their reasoning using examples from Loop and their own experiences. • Ask a few volunteers to share their responses.



Day 5

- Core Message: Committing to long-term classroom inclusion and celebrating neurodivergent strengths every day.
- Summary: Explores specific neurodivergent conditions (ADHD, Dyslexia, Autism) through age-appropriate educational videos and guided discussions.



Materials

1. Projector / Screen & Audio (to play the Neurodivergence video, What is ADHD?, What is Dyslexia?, and What is Autism? educational videos)
2. Large Poster Board or Chart Paper (1 sheet per classroom, to co-create the "Classroom Inclusion Pledge" poster)
3. Pens or pencils

Neurodivergence Lesson + Classroom Commitment (30 mins)	1 Begin by playing this video to define neurodivergence, pausing for discussion as prompted. When cued by the video, play the following videos and ask the discussion questions below. Here is the progression: 1. Play this video to the 5:06 mark, pausing as prompted. 2. Play this video: What is ADHD? (3:27) 3. Ask: "If Molly was in our class, how would we help her feel happy and supported?" a. Write down answers on the board. 4. Resume this video at the 5:06 mark. Pause again at the 6:03 mark. 5. Play this video: What is Autism? (5:00) 6. Ask: "How would we help someone with autism in our class feel happy and supported?" a. Add answers to the list on the board. 7. Resume this video at the 6:03 mark. Play to the end. 8. Play this video: What is Dyslexia? (Watch to 4:20) 9. Ask: "If Lola was in our class, how would we help her feel happy and supported?" a. Add answers to the list on the board. 10. As a class, complete the following sentence using the student-generated list: "As a class, we will help brains of all kinds feel happy and supported by..." a. The classroom commitment statement can either be a single sentence or a list of commitments. b. After generating the classroom commitment statement, ask each student to sign it. The commitment statement can either be copied onto a piece of poster paper to be hung in the classroom OR the instructor can take a photo of the board.
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