





A RethinkEd National Webinar:

Strategies to Amplify Neurodivergent Student Voice and Agency

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Presenter



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Objectives

- Understand definitions for neurodiversity-affirming practices and anti-ableism
- Understand the benefits and importance of student voice and agency in education
- Learn strategies to amplify and boost student agency in schools

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Agenda

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- Review neurodiversity and neurodivergence
- Review the importance of anti-ableist neurodiversity-affirming support

- Learn about agency and the benefits of student agency
- Hear from our guest speaker

- Learn six strategies to support and bolster student agency in the classroom and at school

- Question & answer session with our neurodiverse expert panel

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• **Neurodiversity & Neurodivergence**

Neurodiversity refers to the naturally occurring variation in brains from person to person

Neurodivergent (ND) is an umbrella term which describes variation in some brains and an identity for folks with brain variation

Some Examples of Neurodivergence

- ADHD • Autism • Bipolarism •
- Cerebral Palsy • Dementia •
- Down Syndrome • Dyscalculia •
- Dysgraphia • Dyslexia •
- Dyspraxia • OCD • Parkinson's •
- PTSD • Schizophrenia •
- Synesthesia • Tourette Syndrome •



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Anti-Ableism

Anti-Ableism refers to the theories, actions and practices, including language norms, that are used to counter ableism.

We can be anti-ableist with the language we use.

Anti-ableist and neurodiversity-affirming language empowers students.



Anti-ableist language:


- Embraces
- Affirms
- Models inclusivity
- Advocates for inclusive practices
- Empowers

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Neurodiversity-Affirming Support

- Providing support to **neurodivergent** individuals with the understanding that
 - neurodiversity is natural
 - an individual's differences are not deficits and don't require "fixing"
 - Focus on inclusivity, not conformity



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Discussion Question RethinkEd

What does **"agency"** mean to you?

What does it mean to **have agency**?

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Agency

The "capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power"


Merriam Webster Dictionary

"The idea that people have the capacity to take action, craft and carry out plans, and make informed decisions based on a growing base of knowledge."

Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation

"The feeling of control over actions and their consequences."

Frontiers in Psychology

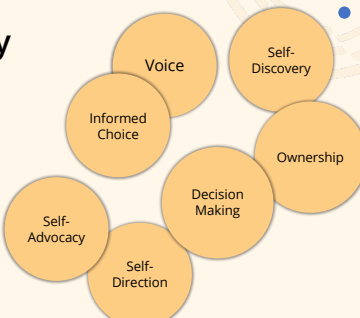


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Student Agency

- Students should feel they have agency in their education and their school day
- A lot of the school day is dictated by teachers and adults
- Presume competence



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Benefits of Increased Student Agency

Passion Purpose Inclusion Involvement

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Importance of Student Agency

- Without agency students may
 - Lack purpose
 - Increased confusion
 - Increased indecision
 - Decreased feeling of choice

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Strategies to Build Student Agency


- Use student-centered learning approaches to amplify student voice and choice
- Create leadership opportunities
- Establish trauma-safe classrooms
- Ensure shared ownership in the classroom
- Empower students as members of their learning team
- Seek, reflect, and respond to student feedback


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Personalized Learning


- Educational approach
- Centers students
- Customize learning to each student's **strengths**



Planning



Learning & Implementation



Assessment



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Student-Centered Strategies to Amplify Student Agency

Provide clear expectations and the pathway to mastery 

Foster curiosity and welcome inquiry 

Provide sufficient information to understand and make informed choices 

Choice of learning spot


Interest surveys

Self-monitoring

Representation and input choices

Expression and output choices

Self-Assessment & feedback

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Create Leadership Opportunities

Opportunities to lead help to empower students



- Collaborative activities
- Clubs & extracurriculars
- Classroom layout redesign
- Class/School jobs, ex.
 - Sanitation expert
 - Field trip safety coordinator
- Passion projects

Encourage expansion of this leadership at home and in the community

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Trauma-Sensitive Classrooms

What is perceived as traumatic is influenced by the event as well as the person's response to the event

More than two thirds of children report at least one traumatic event by age sixteen

Trauma can:

- Disrupt development of brain, nervous system and immune systems
- Impact physiological stress responses
- Negatively impact learning, critical thinking, problem solving, and emotional regulation

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Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom

Promoting Safety & Predictability

Build Connections & Relationships

Support Self-Regulation

Foster Self-Advocacy & Empowerment

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Reflection & Discussion

Using student-centered learning

I feel confident I am building agency by...

Creating leadership opportunities

I plan to focus more on building agency by...

Ensuring a trauma-sensitive classroom

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Ensure Shared Ownership in Classrooms

Ensure students feel a sense of ownership in their learning spaces

Sense of ownership in classrooms and learning, can tap into

- Responsibility
- Leadership
- Motivation
- Enjoyment
- Engagement
- **Agency**




Create opportunities for **input** and **choices** with:

- Classroom rules
- Daily routines
- Physical classroom layout
- Lesson planning
- Learning methods & participation styles
- Student-led discussions & forums
- Conflict resolution

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Team Involvement



- Every student has a team of folks who support them as they go through school
- Some students have bigger teams than others
- These educational teams make really big decisions that directly impact the student
- Encourage students of all ages to be part of their education team

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Student Involvement – Supports & Meetings

Supports	Meetings
<p>Students can be involved in providing suggestions and feedback around</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifications • Accommodations • Interventions • Implementation procedures • Crises Response and Emergency protocols 	<p>Invite students to their planning and IEP meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare ahead of time • Outline choices for engagement • Encourage, support, reinforce participation • Involve the student in goal setting conversations

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Seeking Feedback from Students

- Ensure students know the goal of giving feedback
- Ask clear and open ended questions
- Can be anonymous
- Provide multiple ways to give feedback
- Seeking feedback regularly throughout the year increases
 - Engagement
 - On-task behavior
 - Access to education
 - Student-teacher relationships

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Responding to Student Feedback

Listen	Reflect	Act
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen openly Consider your ego Prepare for negative feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for patterns Seek to understand Engage in perspective-taking Acknowledge the negatives Reinforce yourself for the positives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep the good going Change up the not-so-good Meet 1:1 with students Reinforce students for providing feedback

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Reflection & Discussion

Ensuring classroom ownership is shared

I feel confident I am building agency by...

Empowering students as team members

I plan to focus more on building agency by...

Seeking and responding to feedback

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We Feedback RethinkEd

We would love and appreciate any feedback you have for us.

Please feel free to use the link in the chat to provide us with feedback for today's webinar.

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