Neurodiversity & Implications for Educators: Part I & II

Objective #1: Use the Autism Understanding Tool for Introspection and Evaluation (AUTIE) provided on the last page of this handout to reflect on how your personal and professional beliefs about autism align with the medical model and the neurodiversity paradigm.

A. What is one statement you agree with?

_____

B. What is one statement you disagree with?

_____

C. What is one statement you are unsure about?

_____

Objective #2A: Specify one way you could center your Neurodivergent client's perspective in your own practice?

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_____

Objective #2B: Name at least 1 new Neurodivergent creator and consider how you might incorporate such resources in your work:

_____

_____

Objective #3A: After watching the video, Carly's Café, identify one environmental factor at each of the following "levels" that are shaping Carly's communication and engagement.

Cultural Messaging:

_____

Structural:

_____

Interpersonal:

_____

Neurodiversity & Implications for Educators: Part II

Objective #3B: Rewrite this summary of classroom observations to highlight the role of the environment:

"John required hand-over-hand support to engage in art activities. He showed limited interest in peers and often did not answer the teacher's questions. He pushed buttons on his AAC without clear indication of meaning."

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_____

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Objective #3C: Rewrite this summary of classroom observations to integrate Autistic perspective:

"John's para reported that he often elopes from the classroom. Specifically, the para reported that John is stuck on trying to run into the gym. For a couple weeks before that he was stuck on trying to run in the bathroom because "he likes to mess around with the air dryer.""

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Objective #4A: Draft an IEP goal for John:

_____

_____

_____

Objective #4B: Redraft your IEP goal for John to center student perspective/priorities & specify key environmental supports:

_____

_____

_____

The Autism Understanding Tool for Introspection and Evaluation (AUTIE)*

Item #	AUTIE Item	5 = strongly agree	4 = somewhat agree	3 = neither agree nor disagree	2 = somewhat disagree	1 = strongly disagree
1	Autism is challenging because of other people and how the world is set up.					
2	The idea of "normal" is a problem.					
3	When it comes to autism, I tend to think of people as either autistic or non-autistic.					
4	I would not be the same person if I didn't have autism.					
5	Support for autistic people should focus on changing the environment (e.g., people's attitudes, the way the world works).					
6	Autism is a natural difference in how brains work (i.e., neurological diversity).					
7	If I need information related to autism, I would ask other autistic people.					
8	Autism is challenging because of its characteristics (e.g., restricted behaviors and poor social skills).					
9	Autistic traits are neutral or positive.					
10	I think of being *normal* as a good thing.					
11	I prefer to use words like "autistic," "autie," or "aspie" when it comes to autism (e.g., use identity-first language).					
12	When it comes to autism, I think of people as either autistic or normal.					
13	I would be the same person if I didn't have autism.					
14	Support for autistic people should focus on skills they need to improve (e.g., social & speech skills).					
15	Autism is a neurological disorder.					
16	If I need information related to autism, I would ask non-autistic professionals.					
17	I prefer to use wording like "person with autism" or "they have autism" when it comes to autism (e.g., person-first language).					
18	Autistic traits are negative.					

* This table is modified from DeThorne, L., Pierce, K., Rang, M., Schafer, S., VanRyswyk, K., & Angulo Jiménez, H. (2024). I have a different perspective as I am working through this: Speech-language pathologist reflections on autism. Topics in Language Disorders, 44(1), 25-43.

Neurodiversity Paradigm: (Sum of items#1-7,9, & 11) / 45 =   ___% alignment

Medical Model: (Sum of items #8, 10, 12-18) / 45 =   ___ %alignment

Environmental Audit Guide

Observer:
Context:
Date & Timeframe:

This observational guide is designed to help examine and document contextual factors that are shaping a person's communication and engagement. The guide organizes the environment into 4 different layers based broadly on the bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and corresponding forms of ableism (Nario-Redmond, 2020) as operationalized in Vidal et al., 2023).

1. Cultural Messaging
   - Look at verbal and nonverbal messaging through the environment (e.g., posters, focus of praise/correction, focus of attention, who is represented and who isn't) to consider what and who is valued?

2. Structural
   - Consider how the environment is constructed (e.g., physical access, seating arrangements, means to engagement, sensory landscape)

3. Interpersonal
   - Describe the frequency and nature of interactions (e.g., who? How often? Valence? Synchronous? Reciprocal? Prolonged? Egalitarian/hierarchical?)

4. Internal
   - What does the individual appear to be experiencing/feeling about themselves?

References

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development* (pp. 993–1028). Wiley.

Nario-Redmond, M. R. (2020). *Ableism: The causes and consequences of disability prejudice*. Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119142140

Vidal, V.G., Wachholtz, D.P., Mattie, L.J., & DeThorne, L.S. (2023). It takes a community: How environmental systems construct (in)competence in autistic peer interactions. *Language, Speech, & Hearing Services in Schools, 54*, 63-81.