



Promoting Autism Awareness



AUTISM INCLUSION TEACHER INITIATIVE

World Autism Awareness Day is April 2nd

Since 2007, the United Nations has observed this day to affirm the rights and freedoms of autistic people. Today we have moved beyond raising awareness to promoting acceptance and appreciation of autistic people and their contributions to society.

Below are some considerations around respectful ways to raise awareness and promote acceptance and appreciation. To be inclusive when referring to an autistic learner, you can understand and respect their identity by recognising their unique strengths and abilities. Celebrate and affirm your learner however they choose to identify. We have presented the preference of the majority of the autistic community, however we encourage you to use respectful curiosity to learn and affirm each individual preference.



We use the infinity symbol to represent autism.

The infinity symbol also represents neurodiversity and the infinite ways of being. It can symbolise the infinite potential and possibilities. The continual loop represents the continual need for support, understanding and acceptance.

We avoid using puzzle pieces as they can suggest that autism is puzzling, or needs to be solved, or that autistic people need to fit in.



We use rainbow or gold to represent autism.

Rainbow represents the spectrum, diversity and that all colours are included. Gold represents value and worth. The chemical symbol for gold is Au.

We avoid using blue, as it represents the stereotype that it's more common in boys. The 'light it up blue' campaign is associated with an American organisation that wanted to fix or cure autism. Many people in the autistic and autism communities avoid associating with this.



Try using identity-first language and avoid diagnostic terms.

'Autistic student' is an example of identity-first language, versus 'student with autism'. Autism is a valuable and important part of someone's identity, which is why many people prefer to use identity-first rather than person-first language.

Try using terms such as 'autistic' and 'autism'. ASD is a diagnostic term. Unless you are specifically talking about a diagnosis, autism is not seen as a disorder. Similarly, we recognise that everyone's ability varies between every area of living. This is a dynamic view of functioning, versus describing someone as a high or low functioning autistic.



We are inclusive.

Attending education, having needs and engaging in interests is something that everybody has and does. Having a disability might make those things different, but not special. Inclusive education is a fundamental human right of all learners (UNCRPD, 2016).