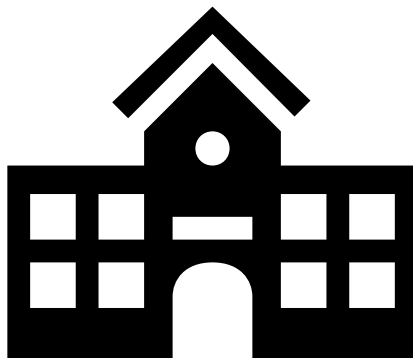


**Occupational Therapist's Guide:  
*Towards Neuroinclusive Schools***  
(2<sup>nd</sup> edition)



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(2024)

## General informations

### Main organizations that funded the project

- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2018-2022)
- Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (2023-2025)
- Guide update: Service de développement professionnel de l'Université Laval (2023-2024)

### Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the co-researchers who contributed to the various phases of the project:

- Mélanie M. Couture, professor at the School of Rehabilitation (Université de Sherbrooke)
- Chantal Desmarais, professor at the School of Rehabilitation (Université Laval)
- Christine Hamel, professor at the Faculty of Education Sciences (Université Laval)
- Élise Milot, professor at the School of Social Work and Criminology (Université Laval)
- Isabelle Préfontaine, professor at the Faculty of Education Sciences (Université Laval)

Thank you also to the many occupational therapists who participated in the communities of practice and helped us improve the guide with examples.

Thank you to Martine Gauthier, regional autism support worker for the Capitale-Nationale and Chaudière-Appalaches regions.

Thanks to Laurie Chabot for her help with an early draft of this guide, and to Sammy Lee Campagna for hrt help with the layout.

### How to cite this document

Grandisson, M., Rajotte, E., Chagnon, M., Chrétien-Vincent, M., & Thomas, N. (2024). *Occupational Therapist's Guide: Towards Neuroinclusive Schools (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*. <https://communautesinclusives.com/projets/pour-des-ecoles-neuroinclusives/>



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## **What is *Towards Neuroinclusive Schools* all about?**

*Towards Neuroinclusive Schools* is a new way for occupational therapists and other professionals to intervene in schools.

### **What is the aim?**

The aim is to support school teams in creating neuroinclusive schools.

### **What is a neuroinclusive school?**

- It's a school that celebrates neurodiversity, valuing it as an asset.
- It's a school that works to reduce the barriers faced by neurodivergent people in all the activities and environments of school life.
- It's a school that strives to create neuroinclusive environments and activities, supporting meaningful participation and well-being for all, including neurodivergent individuals.

### **Who can benefit?**

- Everyone can benefit from neuroinclusive activities and environments.
- The project has been developed with a particular focus on the strengths and needs of neurodivergent people, including students with autism.

### **Who are neurodivergent people?**

- These are people whose neurological profile differs from the established general norm (Ellis et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2022).
- This includes, among others, people with autism, attention deficit disorder (known as ADD or ADHD), language impairment, developmental coordination disorder, learning disability (e.g. dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysorthographia), giftedness, anxiety disorder, cerebral palsy, or Tourette syndrome.
- In schools, there are neurodivergent students and staff, and family members of students may also be neurodivergent.

## Why have we developed *Towards Neuroinclusive Schools*?

In schools, at least 15% of students are neurodivergent (Ellis et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2022). It's estimated that around 8% of children have different attention profiles (ADHD), that 3% are autistic, and that 6% have learning difficulties (Yang et al., 2022). These students represent a very significant proportion of students assigned a difficulty code in Quebec schools, while 34,388 students had received a code related to autism or language disorder in 2021-2022 (Gouvernement du Québec, 2023). However, the real situation of these students is underestimated; there may be more of them in the ranks (Ellis et al., 2023).

The school experience for many of these students is described as difficult, complex, and demanding (Horgan et al., 2023). They are at greater risk of low academic achievement and of being identified by teachers as having behavioural difficulties (May et al., 2021). In addition, many of these students are victims of bullying (Dillon & Underwood, 2012); are forced to change schools (Mitchelson et al., 2022); or become school dropouts (Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, 2022; Ministère de l'Éducation, 2021).

Neurodivergent students face numerous obstacles to participating fully in their school's activities, whether in the classroom, cafeteria, gym, playground, daycare, or during transitions (Able et al., 2015; Corkum et al., 2014; Grandisson et al., 2020; Lindsay et al., 2014; Saggars & Ashburner, 2019). Schools are not sufficiently adapted upstream to the strengths and needs of these students, with issues stemming from a lack of predictability and flexibility, changes in schedules or school practitioners, and lack of understanding of neurodivergent students' needs that characterize these institutions (Able et al., 2015; Corkum et al., 2014; Grandisson et al., 2020; Lindsay et al., 2014; Saggars & Ashburner, 2019). Given these challenges, and the lack of professional resources available, it's not surprising to find that the school practitioners who support neurodivergent students are more at risk of demonstrating a low sense of self-efficacy (Cappe et al., 2016; Ewe, 2019).

**It's essential to reduce the barriers to the participation and well-being of these students and to provide greater support to the people who receive them in the school environment: investments in inclusive education are needed** to break this vicious circle. Inclusive education is upstream education that takes into account the strengths and needs of the various learners (Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 2017; Gallant et al., 2022). It differs from an approach focused on the need to request and provide accommodations on a case-by-case basis for each student whose needs are not being met. Inclusive education calls for a rethinking of the physical, cognitive, and social environment to create conditions for success for a greater number of students.

## How was *Towards Neuroinclusive Schools* developed?

*Towards Neuroinclusive Schools* was developed in two cycles.

### Cycle 1 (2017-2021)

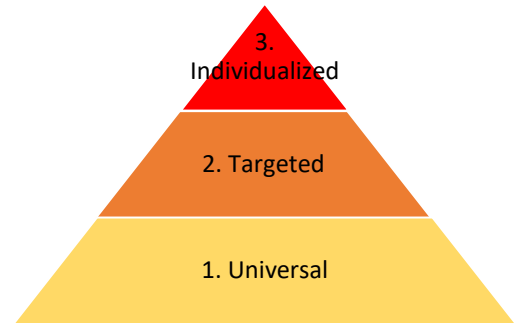
- Good practices for promoting the participation of students with autism in schools, as well as those related to the professional development of teachers, were consulted.
- The research team conducted focus groups with school practitioners and occupational therapists to identify concerns related to the school participation of students with autism, as well as their perception of winning strategies to improve the situation (Grandisson et al., 2020).
- The team also carried out a pilot project in an elementary school to gather the perspectives of school practitioners and members of the school administration team as to the most significant approaches for supporting the establishment of activities and school environments conducive to the participation of students with autism and their peers (Rajotte et al., 2022).
- Twelve occupational therapists trained to implement the model in their practice settings were consulted in relation to the facilitators and barriers encountered, as well as the main changes achieved in their practice (Grandisson et al., 2024, submitted).

### Cycle 2 (2022-2025)

- Following the evaluation carried out in Cycle 1, and with the new knowledge available in the field, the team decided to expand in an attempt to meet the needs of all neurodivergent students, not just those with autism, and to integrate neuro-affirmative practices.
- The team consulted the literature on the perspectives of neurodivergent individuals and their families in relation to the school experience.
- The team also consulted people with lived experience (Rajotte, Grandisson et al., 2024) to collaborate on the development of a new version of the neuroinclusive school model.
- A research project is being introduced in schools throughout the 2024-2025 school year to document the impact of *Towards Neuroinclusive Schools*.

## What are the foundations of *Towards Neuroinclusive School*?

- 1) The philosophy of inclusive education and multi-level response models:** Inclusive education is education considered upstream based on the strengths and needs of a wide range of students (Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 2017; Gallant et al., 2022). It's informed by a belief that all children should learn in inclusive environments (Vanderkaay et al., 2023). Multi-level response models are consistent with this philosophy, since they propose to 1) Undertake initial actions to reduce barriers for all; 2) Think about adaptations or targeted strategies for students for whom Universal Design for Learning (UDL) actions are not sufficient; and 3) Support a student more intensively only as needed (Vanderkaay et al., 2021).
- 2) Coaching approaches:** These approaches highlight the need for professionals to position themselves as facilitators of the process, not experts. Implementing such approaches in schools requires the development of egalitarian relationships between professionals and teaching or support staff involved in students' daily lives (Misuana et al., 2012). In particular, the team drew heavily on the Occupational Performance Coaching (OPC) approach (Graham et al., 2020).
- 3) Neuroaffirmative practices** have been drawn upon and adapted to the context of multi-level response models. The neurodiversity paradigm moves us away from the "good brain/bad brain" narrative and includes the understanding that autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions represent a necessary part of human diversity (Ellis et al., 2023). These practices invite us to celebrate neurodiversity, rather than trying to change the fundamental nature of neurodivergent people (Dallman et al., 2022; Sterman et al., 2023). They also call for soliciting people's views on the challenges to be met and the solutions to be prioritized.
- 4) Criteria for the effectiveness of a teacher's professional development activities** clarify how to foster changes in practice (Desimone, 2009). These criteria include alignment with needs and reality, support offered on a regular basis over a sustained period of time, active learning, collective participation promoting team discussions, and specific training content.



## What are the prerequisites for setting up *Towards Neuroinclusive Schools*?

**Prerequisite 1: An occupational therapist must be present in the school regularly and for a sufficiently long period to develop a relationship of trust with the team.**

- Example: one or two days a week throughout the school year.
- Regular, predictable contact helps build trust in and understanding of the school's culture. It fosters frequent interaction between the school team and professional staff to support the implementation of new practices.
- We suggest scheduling formal meetings, while leaving room for spontaneity and informal encounters.
- It's also important that the teachers and support staff involved spend time with the occupational therapist, both in the children's presence and alone from time to time.
- In studies, a minimum of one day per week per school is generally recommended for the implementation of multi-level occupational therapy response models (Camden et al., 2021; Wilson & Harris, 2018).

**Prerequisite 2: Management must be committed to mobilizing its team, and staff members must be motivated to work together to create an environment adapted to the needs of a wider range of students.**




- A management team committed to the project can provide neuroinclusive leadership to help create a neuroinclusive school.
- Schools with a large number of neurodivergent students, whether in regular or special classes, can be ideal environments for implementing this type of practice model.
- Imposing the project is generally to be discouraged; instead it's advisable to start with motivated people who will make others want to get on board.

**Prerequisite 3: The occupational therapist must have a clear mandate to support the school team in creating neuroinclusive activities and environments.**

- Implementation is facilitated when the school team understands the vast array of roles that occupational therapists can play and when the team can count on responses that meet the needs of a great many students (Grandisson et al., 2024, submitted)

## What distinguishes the way we intervene in *Towards Neuroinclusive Schools*?

The following table summarizes the approaches included in the practice model. It identifies the three key approaches of the *Towards Neuroinclusive Schools* model, whatever the profession, and then specifies how they are implemented in occupational therapy.

Approaches	How does the approach come into play in occupational therapy?
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Focus on creating a neuroinclusive school</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on <b>creating neuroinclusive environments and activities</b> that support meaningful participation and well-being for all, including neurodivergent students.</li> <li>• Prioritize <b>change for all</b>, opening the door to differentiation where necessary.</li> <li>• Promote <b>neurodiversity as an asset</b>, in particular by using and encouraging the use of positive terms.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Analyze the priority needs of people at the school</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work on <b>activities or contexts targeted as priorities</b> by people in the school to promote the well-being and meaningful participation of neurodivergent students and their peers.</li> <li>• Encourage <b>the input of neurodivergent individuals and families</b> in identifying priorities.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Promote team and individual coaching</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position ourselves as <b>facilitators in the process of</b> creating a neuroinclusive school, using a coaching approach to find solutions together.</li> <li>• <b>Collaborate with a variety of people</b> involved in the daily lives of neurodivergent students, not just teachers.</li> <li>• Encourage <b>the involvement of neurodivergent people</b> in analyzing situations and finding solutions.</li> <li>• <b>Offer team support</b> to encourage collaboration and mutual aid among people in the school who share the same need.</li> <li>• Offer <b>support tailored to</b> individual needs.</li> </ul>

## Focusing on the creation of a neuroinclusive school



### What does this mean for occupational therapists?

This approach involves

- Focusing on **creating neuroinclusive environments and activities** that support meaningful participation and well-being for all, including neurodivergent students.
- Prioritizing **change for all**, opening the door to differentiation where necessary.
- Promoting **neurodiversity as an asset**, in particular by using and encouraging the use of positive terms.

This approach ensures that the occupational therapist or other professionals focus on changing the school, not the students, and that occupational therapists concentrate on **modifying activities and environments**, rather than trying to get the student to adapt to them. In other words, it's a matter of rethinking the educational environment in which the student evolves to minimize obstacles to success, rather than asking the student to neuronormalize.

### Why is this important?

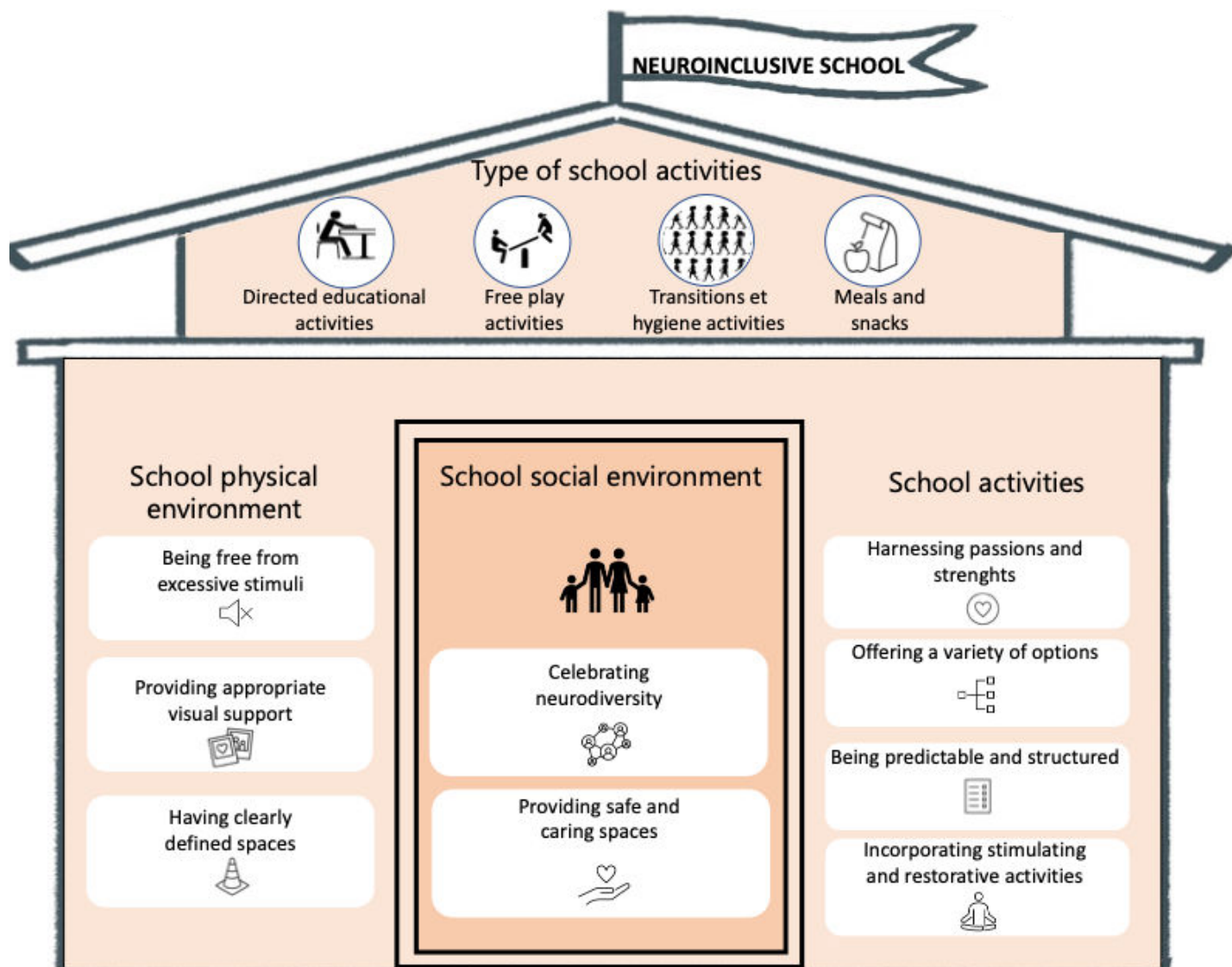
There are several reasons why the team is proposing to focus on creating neuroinclusive activities and environments in concert.

- This approach responds to the need for **specific content** for teachers' professional development (Desimone, 2009).
- The Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (2017) recommends aiming for inclusive education, i.e. **upstream-thinking education** that is supportive of a wide range of learners rather than providing accommodations on a case-by-case basis.
- Currently, many features of environments and activities are not aligned with the strengths and needs of neurodivergent students (Able et al., 2015; Corkum et al., 2014; Grandisson et al., 2020; Lindsay et al., 2014; Saggars & Ashburner, 2019).
- Occupational therapists are well-equipped to support the school team in encouraging students to participate in the important activities of their daily lives, by optimizing the match between students' strengths and challenges, the staff members' job descriptions, and the characteristics of the environment in which their duties are performed.

## How can we focus on creating a neuroinclusive school?

Neuroinclusive activities and environments are emphasized throughout the process.

1. **By proposing a neuroinclusive school project to the principal and school team:** Here, you specify that you'll focus on modifications to activities and environments, offering a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) perspective to benefit the greatest number of students. This can be done by sharing documents and videos about the project, or simply at a meeting.
2. **By offering activities to foster ownership of the neuroinclusive school project:** The goals of these activities can be to 1) raise awareness among students, staff members, parents, and administrators of the role each plays in making their school more neuroinclusive, and 2) foster ownership of the various characteristics of a neuroinclusive school. The idea is to build on respect and acceptance of differences.
  - These activities can take a variety of forms: reflective activities, training courses, video clips, conferences, dinner discussions, in-class activities, and the like.
  - They can be offered to a variety of people, including school teams, students, and families.
  - They should focus on cooperative learning, sharing experiences, and supporting the development of better understanding between people, whatever their neurotype. For example, this may involve educating people to validate their perception of what another person wanted to communicate: "I don't understand what you're trying to tell me" or "Can you explain how you see the situation?" By talking with and listening to each other, we can understand each other better.
  - These activities can be a great opportunity to showcase different ways of acting, communicating, and thinking. This diversity is an asset.
  - These activities can also raise awareness of the fact that we all have different ways of reacting to sounds, touch, and smells, for example.
  - They can also be used to share information about which terms to use and which to avoid when referring to autism, for example.
3. **By using the neuroinclusive school model as your guide:** This model proposes nine characteristics of activities and environments that support the meaningful participation and well-being of neurodivergent students and their peers (Rajotte, Grandisson et al., 2024) (see next page).
  - The model puts forward the need for a better match between the needs of neurodivergent students, the characteristics of the occupations performed, and the physical and social environments in which they take place.
  - The social environment takes centre stage to emphasize its importance. It includes the principal, school staff, other students, and families.



**Figure 1 : Neuroinclusive school model.**  
 Rajotte, Grandisson et al. (2025 : p.7)

## Tools for this section

Here are the suggested tools to help you focus on creating a neuroinclusive school. They are all available at the following link:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mIM2phChOCW\\_LXAVW\\_6aFCg66Ztbr3b?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mIM2phChOCW_LXAVW_6aFCg66Ztbr3b?usp=drive_link)

<b>Tool name</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Presentation of the <i>For neuroinclusive schools</i> project</b>	Brief written document explaining how occupational therapy is used in <i>For neuroinclusive schools</i>
<b>Neuroinclusive school video clip</b>	Narrated clip presenting the neuroinclusive school model (six minutes)
<b>Training template for use with school teams</b>	Training template (PowerPoint) and facilitation document for occupational therapists wishing to train their team members
<b>A tool for thinking about neuroinclusive schools</b>	A tool to support reflection on the characteristics of activities and environments that are favourable or unfavourable.
<b>A tool with examples of changes at school</b>	A tool to provide an idea of the types of changes that can be made in a school with regard to each of the characteristics of the neuroinclusive school model.
<b>Infographic on school terminology</b>	Infographic presenting the best terms to use when talking about autism - for school staff
<b>Infographic on preferred terminology for relatives</b>	Infographic presenting the best terms to use when talking about autism - for family and friends
<b>Scientific article on the neuroinclusive school model</b>	Scientific article explaining the development process of the neuroinclusive school model and describing the main supports for each characteristic. <a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/19411243.2024.2341643?needAccess=true">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/19411243.2024.2341643?needAccess=true</a>

## Analyzing the priority needs of the school population



### What does this mean for occupational therapists?

Above all, this involves identifying, in conjunction with school-team members, students, and families, the various needs to be worked on to make the most difference for students, including

- Working on **activities or contexts targeted as priorities** by the school population to promote the well-being and meaningful participation of neurodivergent students and their peers.
- Encouraging **the input of neurodivergent individuals and families** in identifying priorities.

To achieve this, it's important to pay attention to your biases and not to impose a neurotypical way of acting or being, or to encourage camouflaging autism or neurodivergence. This may mean not relying at all costs on a student's participation in every activity offered throughout the day. It may be a good idea to propose a student timeout and reset during certain periods.

**When considering** the type of activity or context to **prioritize**, people are first invited to take into account

- 1) the **concerns** of neurodivergent students and their families.
- 2) the potential **consequences** of not taking action (e.g. well-being, educational success).
- 3) staff **satisfaction** with student participation.
- 4) staff **motivation** to improve the situation.

### Why is this approach so important?

This approach acknowledges the importance of offering support to school practitioners that is consistent with their objectives, activities, knowledge, and beliefs (Desimone, 2009). The analysis of priority needs will therefore make it possible to work with the members of the school team on what they feel is most important to make a difference in the daily lives of neurodivergent students. In this sense, it helps clarify the concerns and priority needs of the school team, students, and families so as to improve the participation and well-being of neurodivergent students.

## How to analyze priority needs?

The occupational therapist's analysis of needs is carried out in **a dynamic and continuous way**, acting in collaboration with students or families, as well as at least one school practitioner. To define priorities, you can use the **following types of activities**, any or all of which can sometimes be difficult for neurodivergent students:

- 1) directed educational activities (tasks carried out alone or in groups in response to instructions and expectations).
- 2) transitions and hygiene activities (switching from one activity to another, navigating the hallway, dressing, grooming, and other hygiene-related activities).
- 3) meals and snacks (eating, managing personal belongings such as lunch boxes).
- 4) open activities and games: playing alone or with peers during free periods in the schoolyard, classroom, or daycare.
- 5) other activities (e.g. transport, outings).

You could also choose to work within the **various contexts of** the school, while encouraging a process of sharing among people with a range of perspectives (e.g. teachers and educators). For example, you could focus on the classroom, gymnasium, playground, hallways, bus, cafeteria, or daycare facilities.

This approach, like the others, can be actualized in a variety of ways. Here are a few ideas.

- 1- **Encourage individual reflection by school practitioners:** In which activities do neurodivergent students and their peers seem to encounter challenges in terms of participation or well-being? In which activities do these students have positive experiences?
- 2- **Solicit the perspectives of neurodivergent students and families:** School-team members who are in more regular contact with students and families can ask for their input. This can help identify priorities that will make a significant difference to their educational trajectory and make sense to those most affected.
- 3- **Observe students in various contexts and activities:** It's possible to observe student participation in school activities and analyze the barriers and facilitators in terms of the characteristics of activities and environments. These observations can be made in a variety of contexts, including classrooms, locker rooms, playgrounds, and daycare facilities. Feel free to take part in the activities and support the rest of the team during your observations.

## Tools for this section

Here are the tools we suggest to help you analyze the priority needs of the people in your school. They are all available at the following link:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yRypCbPoCv3G7Hj5u\\_7AaXX5sAkwI9gG?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yRypCbPoCv3G7Hj5u_7AaXX5sAkwI9gG?usp=drive_link)

<b>Tool name</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Priority reflection tool - for staff (option according to type of activity)</b>	A tool you can suggest to school practitioners to help them target a priority to work on together. <i>**Option favouring teamwork with diverse people</i>
<b>Priority reflection tool - for staff (option according to context)</b>	A tool you can suggest to school practitioners to help them target a priority to work on together. <i>**Option favouring consistency between what is asked of students and families and what is asked of staff</i>
<b>Priority reflection tool - for students and families</b>	Using this tool, you can suggest to school practitioners that they seek the views of families and students before setting their priorities.
<b>Training template (including questions)</b>	Training template (PowerPoint) and facilitation document for occupational therapists wishing to train their team members

## Team and individual coaching



### What does this approach mean for occupational therapists?

Occupational therapists setting up a *Towards Neuroinclusive Schools* project

- Position themselves as **facilitators in the process of** creating a neuroinclusive school, using a coaching approach to find solutions together.
- **Collaborate with a variety of people** involved in the daily lives of neurodivergent students, not just teachers.
- Encourage **the involvement of neurodivergent people** in analyzing situations and finding solutions.
- Offer **team support to encourage collaboration and mutual aid** among people in the school who share the same needs.
- Offer **support tailored to individual needs** (meetings, observations in real-life contexts, jointly planned and facilitated activities, modeling).

### Why is this approach so important?

Coaching encourages active learning on the part of school practitioners as they work with the occupational therapist and other members of their team to find solutions to a concrete challenge in their daily lives. It meets Desimone's (2009) criteria of coherence and active learning. It engages school practitioners in researching, testing, and evaluating practices that are more conducive to student participation. It can also give practitioners the confidence and motivation to experiment with new practices while feeling supported.

Team and individual coaching are complementary. Team coaching creates opportunities for collaboration between school practitioners involved on a daily basis and neurodivergent students, by sharing effective strategies and finding solutions to the challenges encountered. More specifically, it meets the criterion of effective collective participation (Desimone, 2009). Individual coaching, on the other hand, makes it possible to personalize the analysis and possible solutions to a more specific challenge experienced by a given person. It also facilitates supporting people in a way that makes sense to them (e.g., co-planning, co-facilitation, discussions). It's closely linked to the criterion of coherence in professional development activities and has been shown to be effective in reducing bias (Paluck & Green, 2009).

## How to coach... as a team?

1. **By thinking about the wide array of people to include in team coaching:** The aim is to persuade a variety of people from the school team to rally around a common goal. These people may be teachers (classroom teachers or specialists), daycare educators, or support staff (e.g. special education technicians or attendants). You can offer to join existing groupings (e.g., preschool team, class team, sector team, school team, multi-group meetings, clinical meetings with teams) to encounter people without adding supplementary formal consultations. You can also start team coaching with smaller teams, by including people linked to one or two classes, for example.
2. **By providing a safe space to support reflection and collaboration:** Team coaching focuses on interactions between team members. During meetings, you'll therefore facilitate discussions, collaboration, and reflection. To do this, you need to offer space for reflection; create a non-judgmental climate conducive to exchange; be open to listening; encourage self-determination; leave time for planning; pay attention to the process and dynamics of the group; and plan the activities and issues to be addressed, while remaining flexible.
3. **By planning team-coaching meetings in advance:** The aim is to schedule meetings in advance in everyone's agenda, while remaining flexible. Be realistic about the frequency and duration of meetings. Start small, for example an hour at lunchtime or 30 minutes after school. Involve management in exploring the possibility of release time for short team meetings and hold online meetings if this is feasible.
4. **By establishing priorities with the team:** You can start coaching by offering to facilitate a meeting to support school practitioners in identifying a type of activity through which they would like to prioritize improving the participation or well-being of neurodivergent students and their peers. Then, by focusing on the characteristics of environments and activities, you'll be able to support them in analyzing the elements that can facilitate or hinder meaningful participation and well-being for students.
5. **By holding follow-up team meetings:** At these meetings, you'll facilitate discussion and reflection among the people involved in order to encourage mutual support and collaboration. You can encourage team members to help each other overcome difficulties or share effective solutions.

## How to coach... individually?

1. **By building on the establishment of a relationship with school practitioners:** Take the time to understand the individual practitioners and their context and adjust to their needs to foster optimal collaboration. You can get involved with them in the school environment, for example, by offering help or participating in informal activities with the school team.
2. **By scheduling individual coaching meetings in advance:** The aim is to schedule meetings in advance in the practitioner's agenda, while remaining flexible. You can use an electronic tool to make individual appointments (e.g. Booking, Doodle). Send scheduled reminders by email.
3. **By personalizing the objective, analysis, and actions:** In the first individual coaching session, it's important to support the person in establishing a personalized objective based on the individual's context and reality. If individual and team coaching are combined, this objective will be in line with the priority agreed as a team. You'll then support the person in analyzing their particular context, to identify the elements of school activities and environments that promote or hinder the participation of the students they work with. You'll also support the person in establishing an action plan and identifying strategies that are consistent with their needs.
4. **By providing support in a variety of ways to suit the needs of the practitioner:** This can take the form of individual meetings, interactive interviews, observations (formal or informal), co-planning, or co-intervention, all developed by experimenting with strategies together. Support the practitioner's analysis by focusing on an activity based on the neuroinclusive school model.
5. **By holding individual follow-up meetings:** During these meetings, in collaboration with the practitioner, you'll evaluate the actions implemented and the evolution of the students' participation, to adjust the action plan if necessary. With the practitioner, you can identify a way of following up and sharing effective strategies (e.g., a follow-up tool, a duo-tang).
6. **By encouraging people to collaborate with neurodivergent students and families:** This strategy is adopted in order to identify priorities, to analyze detrimental and favorable elements by focusing on activities and environments, to identify and implement the action plan, and to follow up on this plan.

## Tools for this section

Here are the tools we suggest to help you coach people at school, both individually and as a team. They are all available by clicking on the following links:

Coaching:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ZRSBe13Lanh3yW\\_UXRr9u-A5PX\\_N\\_aOt?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ZRSBe13Lanh3yW_UXRr9u-A5PX_N_aOt?usp=drive_link)

Follow-up:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1lgf47uSk2\\_H5Gil7NVYsfEvpoQTqxEU0?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1lgf47uSk2_H5Gil7NVYsfEvpoQTqxEU0?usp=drive_link)

Tool name	Description
<b>Coaching template</b>	This template can give you ideas on how to run a coaching session with an individual or a team. It's based on the <i>Occupational Performance Coaching</i> (OPC; Graham et al., 2020) approach and the <i>Towards Neuroinclusive Schools</i> project.
<b>Tracking tool - staff</b>	You can suggest that the staff you're assisting record their trial runs with this tool, so that you can discuss them more easily at your next meeting.
<b>Tracking tool - students</b>	You can suggest to the staff you're working with that they use this tool to solicit the views of students affected by the changes to their educational trajectory. You could also undertake this procedure with the staff members.
<b>Tracking tool - families</b>	You can use this template to share the changes you've made with families.

## How can parents be involved in setting up *Towards Neuroinclusive Nschools?*

Parental involvement in their child's school life is essential for inclusion (Azad et al., 2021; Kennedy et al., 2022). With the aim of making schools neuroinclusive, the parent's role includes contributing to their child's awareness of differences. To do this, they must first be made aware that their child's school includes a vast array of students, all with their own strengths and challenges, and all with something unique to contribute. It's also important for parents to be cognizant of the winning strategies in place at school to promote the well-being and participation of all students. Here are a few ideas for involving parents in *Towards Neuroinclusive Schools*.

- Highlight the occupational therapist's role with an email to all parents.
- Make the rounds of parent meetings to present the role of the occupational therapist and the project to create a neuroinclusive school.
- Explain the project in a short video clip.
- Survey parents on their concerns about their child's well-being and participation in school.
- Offer workshops, video clips, or infographics to all parents related to a targeted need in the school, such as dressing independently for the outdoors or the importance of being role models for children in valuing diversity and accepting differences.
- Send a newsletter to parents on winning strategies to help their child accept and respect different ways of acting and being.
- Send an infographic to parents on which terms to use and which to avoid when talking about autism and other neurological differences.
- Inform parents by email when Universal Design for Learning (UDL) interventions take place in their child's classroom or share with them the winning strategies found for their child's group.

**To see all the tools available that you could use with families, please click on the following link:**

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/177zO5E474w6JgAG3EDyeHln2y49oYTcl?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/177zO5E474w6JgAG3EDyeHln2y49oYTcl?usp=drive_link)

## How to work with other professions?

According to a number of occupational therapists trained in recent years, it would be helpful if the model were known to the different members of the school's professional team. In their view, this would provide a shared vision and a common goal and would facilitate the rollout of the various *Towards Neuroinclusive School* procedures. Of course, the occupational therapist's contribution remains essential when it comes to implementing neuroinclusive environments and activities.

### Why is this collaborative approach important?

- Creating opportunities for collaboration among school-team members is a key element in the rollout of professional development initiatives (Desimone, 2009).
- Occupational therapy guidelines emphasize the importance of working collaboratively with individuals and groups to increase occupational opportunities (Egan & Restall, 2022).

### How can we achieve this goal?

- Introduce the neuroinclusive school model to other members of the school's professional team.
- Discuss the roles of each profession in creating a neuroinclusive school.
- Respect each person's professional scope of practice, not being afraid to promote your role in analyzing environments and occupations that can foster the well-being and participation of a wider range of students.
- Share your experiences of collaboration with the research team so that we can add more information on this topic.

## How does the project unfold over time?

*Towards Neuroinclusive Schools* requires a highly collaborative, iterative process (Figure 2). To give you a more concrete idea, we've provided a series of milestones. You could do one or more rounds of this process in a school year, depending on the number of people supported and the amount of time you have in the school.

The collaborative aspect is illustrated by the image of the group of people at the centre of the model. The image of the pyramid reminds us to prioritize changes for all, then differentiate or personalize only when necessary. The image of the neuroinclusive school model encourages us to focus on creating neuroinclusive activities and environments throughout the process. Each step is described on the following pages.



**Figure 2. Proposed process for implementing a *Towards Neuroinclusive Schools* project**

Adapted from Grandisson et al (2020 and 2024, submitted).

Image of the neuroinclusive school model Rajotte, Grandisson et al. (2025)

## Tools for this section

The tools mentioned on the following pages can all be found at the following link based on the steps suggested here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AZwSKktGewEmsvzSz1iehoGqdrkAdrYS?usp=sharing>

Step	Pathways	Tools
Establish your mandate and your relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present the project to principals and school teams: offer to act as a facilitator to support the school team in creating neuroinclusive environments and activities.</li> <li>Participate in school activities.</li> <li>Work with a variety of people in the school.</li> </ul>	Document introducing the <i>Towards Neuroinclusive Schools</i> approach Neuroinclusive school video clip
Identify priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe, listen.</li> <li>Suggest individual reflection on priorities.</li> <li>Suggest a team discussion to identify common needs.</li> <li>Offer individual meetings to personalize goals.</li> <li>Seek the perspective of families and students.</li> </ul>	Priority reflection tool - staff Priority reflection tool - students and families Coaching template
Analyze environments and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe, listen.</li> <li>Propose an individual reflection on the neuroinclusive school.</li> <li>Facilitate analysis by focusing on meaningful participation and student well-being.</li> <li>Solicit feedback from families and students.</li> </ul>	Reflection tool- neuroinclusive schools Coaching template
Take action to create a neuroinclusive school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan actions by prioritizing changes for all, while remaining open to differentiation where necessary.</li> <li>Give importance to the social environment.</li> <li>Act as a facilitator to support the actions of the school team.</li> <li>Offer a variety of support methods, integrating team and individual support.</li> <li>Encourage discussion and mutual support.</li> </ul>	Neuroinclusive school video clip Training template Examples of possible changes for each characteristic of the model Resources on preferred terms
Offer follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote questioning what works and what adjustments need to be made.</li> <li>Identify and celebrate positive changes in the school.</li> <li>Share the benefits and inspire, for example by installing a wall display of success stories in the staff room and taking advantage of extended team meetings.</li> <li>Review the situation with each administrative section at the end of the school year.</li> <li>Review your own practices.</li> </ul>	Tracking tool - staff Tracking tool - students Tracking tool - families Example of a review conducted with various administrative bodies Reflective practice tool - occupational therapists

## Conclusion

*Towards Neuroinclusive Schools* proposes a new way for occupational therapists and other professionals to support school teams. We invite you to propose a neuroinclusive school project to your principals and the school teams you work with. Ensure that you begin with the priorities of the people in the school, work as a team, and focus on creating activities and environments more conducive to well-being and meaningful participation for a wider variety of students.

If you would like to adopt a reflective practice and see how close your practice is to what is proposed in *Towards Neuroinclusive Schools*, we suggest you use [the reflective practice tool](#).

You can make a difference for neurodivergent students and their peers. Who knows...the transformations you bring about may even promote the well-being of others on the school team. We're all unique, and we all benefit from getting to know, understand, and accept each other!

Now it's your turn to act!

## To learn more

Visit the Inclusive Communities Lab website to learn more about this project and other ongoing projects.

<https://communautesinclusives.com/projets/pour-des-ecoles-neuroinclusives/>

Check out the articles we've written.

- Grandisson, M., Rajotte, É., Godin, J., Chrétien-Vincent, M., Milot, É., et Desmarais, C. (2020). Autism spectrum disorder: How can occupational therapists support schools? *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 87(1), 30-41. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0008417419838904>
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Easily find the Google Drive link where all the tools are available:

- [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pCf1OSm6T4Oti-D8m4nJqzk7q--P7S\\_8?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pCf1OSm6T4Oti-D8m4nJqzk7q--P7S_8?usp=sharing)

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