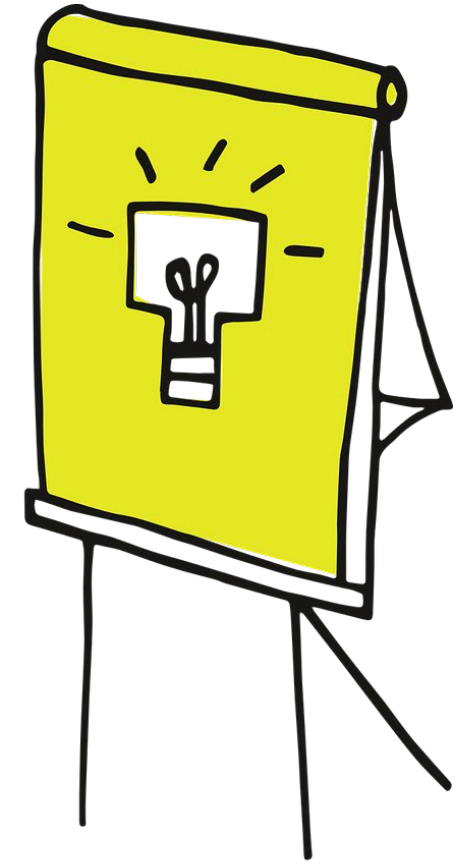
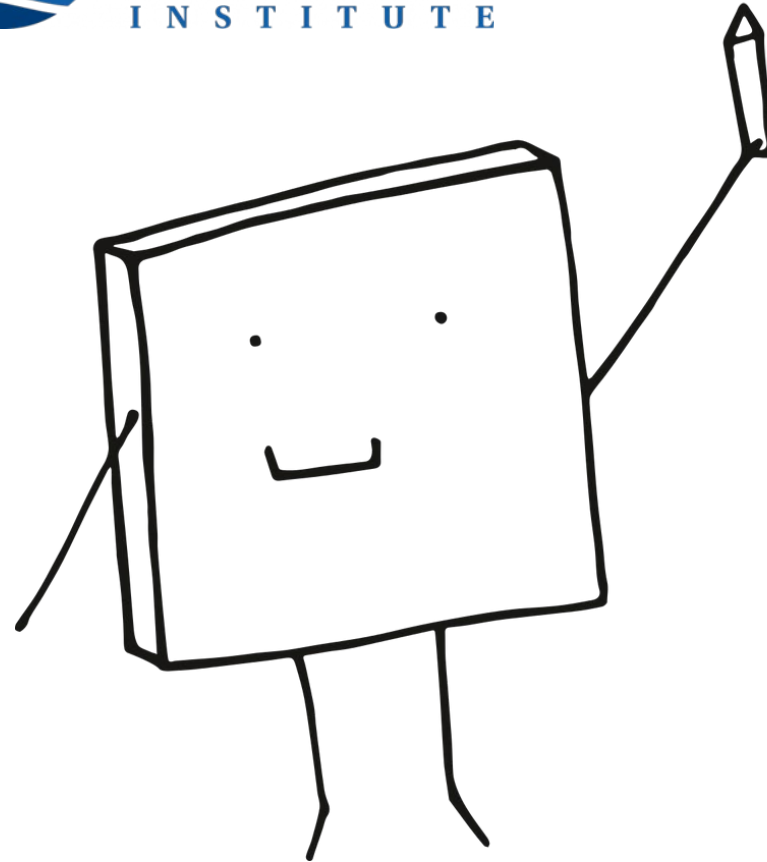


# Teaching Neurodivergent Students: Pedagogical Practices to Include All Students



Sara Sanders Gardner  
Neurodiversity Navigators Director,  
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Trainer, Autistic at Work LLC



# Agenda

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Class & Campus Climate

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Designing Curriculum to Include Neurodivergent Students

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Identify Your Current Practices and Share Experiences

---

Tools for Inclusive Design

---

Group Work



"WHEN A FLOWER  
DOESN'T BLOOM YOU FIX  
THE ENVIRONMENT IN  
WHICH IT GROWS, NOT  
THE FLOWER."  
Alexander den Heijer

# Class & Campus Climate

Creating a Supportive & Accessible Environment





## Your Mask First: Community Care

Sara Sanders Gardner 2022. Use only with permission.





# Is it Skill or Will? Or something else?

Changeable: How Collaborative Problem Solving Changes Lives at Home, at School, and at Work

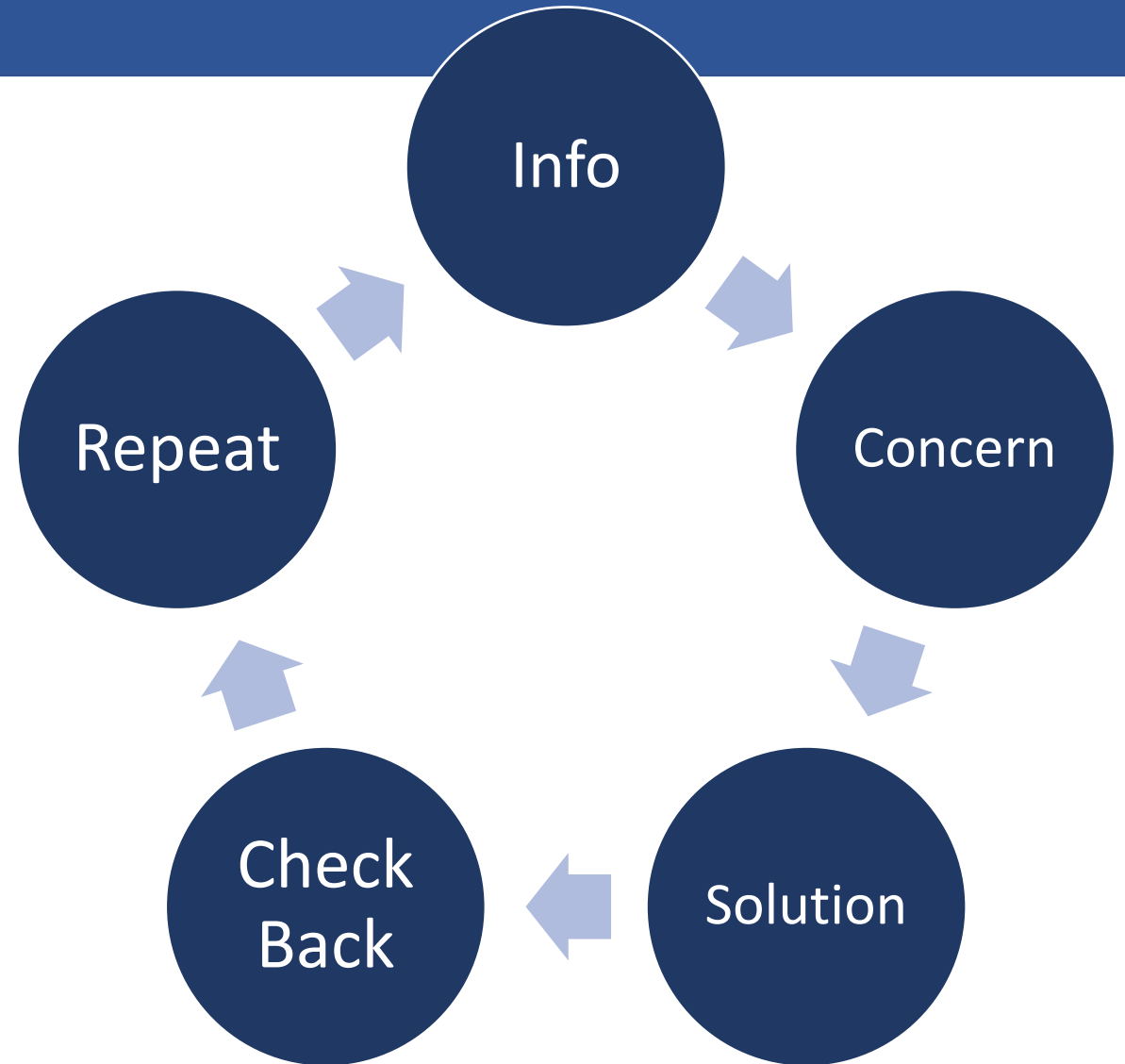
by J. Stuart Ablon, Ph.D.



# Collaborative Problem Solving

## Three Steps

1. Gather Information
2. State Concern
3. Brainstorm Solutions
4. Circle back to follow up





## The Role of Power and Privilege

- Societal markers and lived realities determine access to resources
- People who are perceived to belong to privileged groups are rewarded for their group memberships while others are disenfranchised and subject to regulation and violence
- The role of intersectionality

(Castañeda & Peters, 2000)

# Addressing Intersectionality & Power

- Age
- Disability
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Social Class
- Sexual Orientation
- Indigenous Backgrounds
- National Origin
- Gender

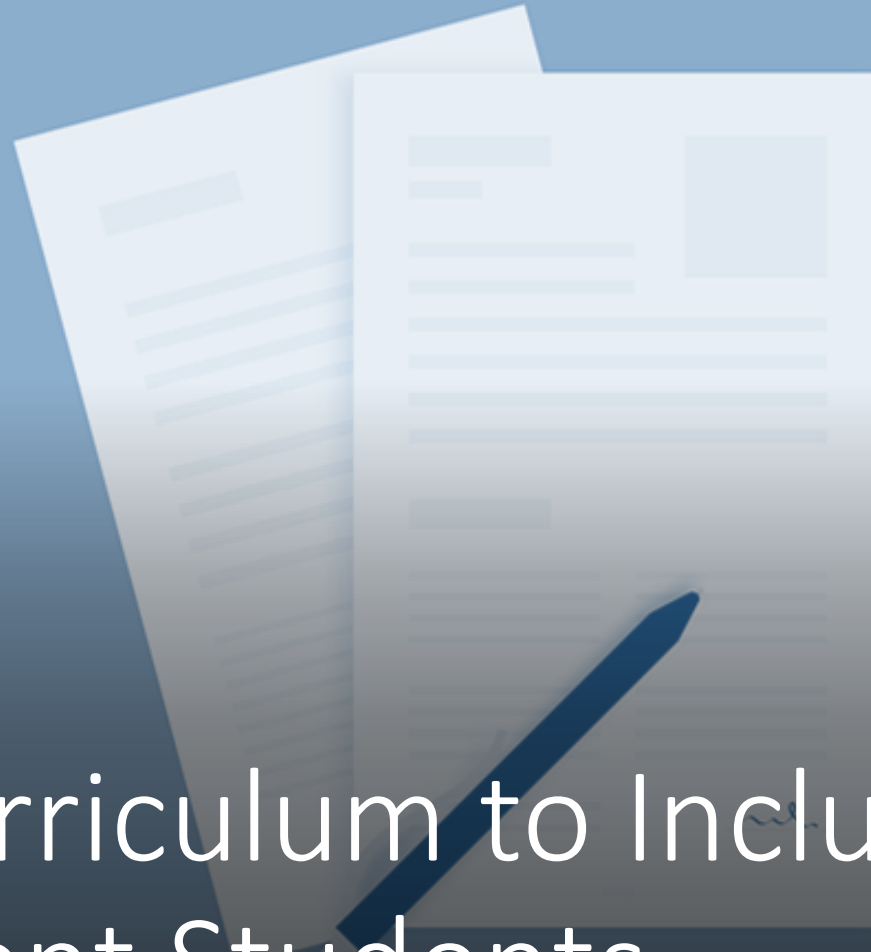






# Class Agreements

- Asking & answering questions
- Use of technology
- Students' treatment of each other
- Leaving & entering class
- Discussion Boards
- Others?



# Designing Curriculum to Include Neurodivergent Students

Design from the Margins to reach all students



# In My Classroom I...



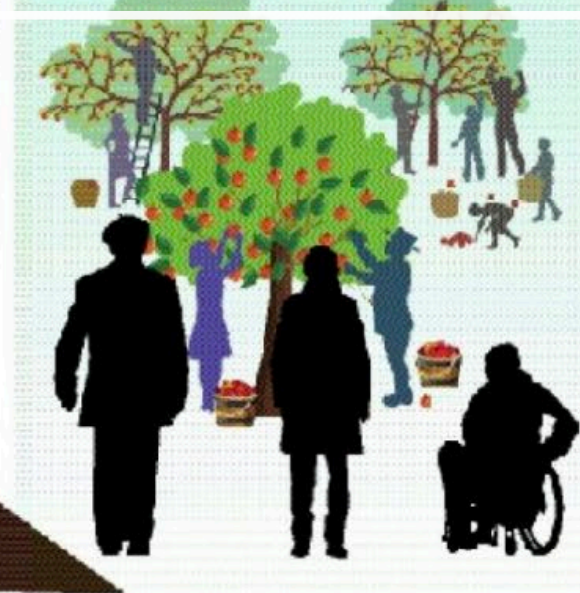
## EQUALITY

Treating everyone  
the same.



## EQUITY

Giving each person  
what they need  
to be successful.



## JUSTICE

Eliminating barriers  
so that everyone  
can succeed.



## INCLUSION

Creating environments in  
which everyone can be and  
feel welcomed, respected,  
supported, and valued to  
fully participate.

# What does Inclusion mean for you?

## Students Need

- Knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm
- Challenge and engagement
- Support for barriers, autonomy

## Faculty Considerations

- Build in support & challenge
- What do you want students to know, do, and care about?
- What are the barriers?
- Present content in multiple media and use graphic supports
- Provide choices for engaging in materials
- Provide options for expressing information



PRESENT  
INFORMATION



ENGAGE



EXPRESS



# Who needs inclusive design? Everyone!

Inclusion needs aren't  
limited to disability.

People run into access  
barriers for many reasons.

Proactive design means  
everyone can contribute  
and be part of the class.





# Designing to Include All: Breakout

- **Pedagogy:** how is your course designed?
- **Syllabus:** what have you included and why?
- **Engagement:** how do you accomplish this?
- **Assessments:** what have you built in, options, flexibility, other?

## Breakout Rooms

- ✓ Join one of the rooms that you would either like to contribute to or learn about
- ✓ 10 minutes sharing ideas – take notes!
- ✓ Then share in larger group





Minimize Barriers, Maximize Inclusion: Share Out

Sara Sanders Gardner 2022. Use only with permission.



# Anxiety

- Factors to consider
  - Trauma & Triggers
  - Difference between Preference and Need
  - Encouraging Student Growth
- Course Design
  - Building in scaffolding
  - Public & Private options
  - Other?





# Tools for Inclusive Design

Plain Language, TILT, Structure & Flexibility, Choice, More



# Language & Stress



# What is Plain Language?

“A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended readers can readily find what they need, understand it, and use it.”



# Example

## Before

The student applicant should be sure to be on time, and submit an official copy of his or her transcript, two letters of recommendation from professors, a statement of financial need, and a short biographical statement to our grants' office by April 15

## After

To apply, submit the following items to our grants office by April 15:

- An official copy of your transcript
- Two letters of recommendation from professors;
- A statement of financial need; and
- A short biographical statement.

Email to: [grants@office.us](mailto:grants@office.us) *OR*

Fax to: 555.555.5555



# Example: Typical



Hi John! I had such a great time talking with you today – what a blast! I hope you had fun too! I’m really looking forward to seeing you next week; can’t wait to talk about your cat again and maybe see some pictures!

I said I would send you the information about the project, so that’s what I’m doing. You can find everything you need on the class site, under “policies.” We’ll be digging into that at our next class – I know everyone will want to know your thoughts!

See you next week!

# Example: Plain Language



Hi John,

Here's how to find the information you'll need for our meeting on Weds, 11/3 at 2 p.m.

1. [Sign in](#) on our class website
2. Then, go to [Policies](#) module
3. There, you will find a folder for your group, labeled **"Policy Defenders"**
4. You can add your notes there or bring them to class.

We're all bringing our ideas about how to do this work; it's new to everyone.

Looking forward to seeing you next week, learning your thoughts, and seeing cat pics!

# TILT- Transparency in Learning and Teaching



Providing transparent information to students on the purpose, task, and criteria in an assignment or activity



## Transparent Assignment template

**Purpose:**  
Skills,  
Knowledge

**Task(s):**  
Defining the  
specific  
task(s)

**Criteria:**  
What does a  
well-done  
assignment  
look like?  
Rubric,  
samples

Links and  
needed  
materials



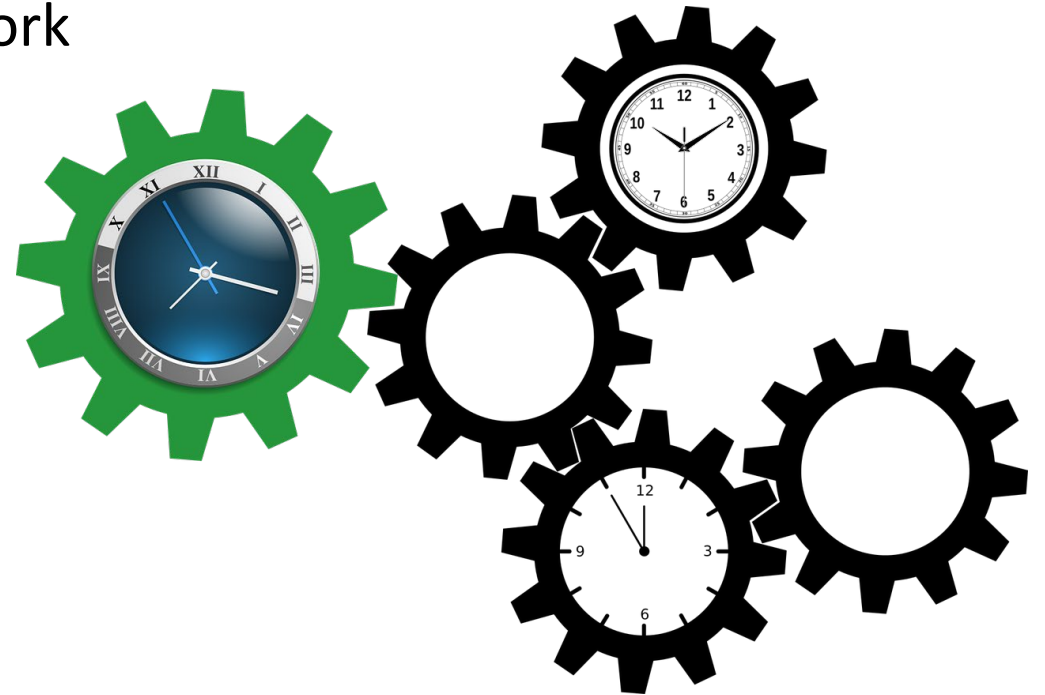
# Structure & Flexibility

## Provide structure

- Support students in understanding why it's important to work through assignments regularly
  - Learning material, builds on previous work
  - Your time and energy
  - Classmates' time and energy

## Practice flexibility

- Allow for late work without penalty
  - Provide guidelines
  - Allow exceptions
  - Believe students



# Learning Management System

- Use it!
- Modules to organize materials into weeks or another format
- How are you using it?



canvas  
BY INSTRUCTURE



## Other Core Practices

- Use student names & pronouns
- Meet with students one-on-one
- Monitor progress & intervene



# Group Work Considerations

- Allow for both self-assigned and faculty-assigned groups
- Provide structure
- Set expectations and teach teamwork skills
- Assign or give choice of roles
- Provide class time for group work
- Set interim deadlines
- Support communication
- Check in with groups
- Allow anonymous group feedback



# Most important consideration

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Everyone in your class (and in your life) is an individual with their own personal story, barriers, and needs.

Creating an accessible environment will support and welcome everyone!







## Start, stop, keep:

# Discussion Questions

- What would you like to start doing based on what we've talked about today?
- What would you like to stop doing?
- What are you already doing that's working well for all your students?

# Resources

- [Universal Design for Learning in Higher Ed](#) (Animated Introductory Video)
- [CAST: UDL at a Glance](#)
- [Design from the Margins](#) Belfer Center, Harvard Kennedy School
- [Creating a Supportive Classroom Climate](#) Eberly Center Tutorial
- [Plain Language UK](#)
- [Plain Language US](#)
- [TILT Transparency in Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Discussion Board Assignments: Alternatives](#)
- [Best Practices for Designing Group Projects](#)

