

The Neurodivergent Classroom

5 Strategies for Inclusive Teaching



teachthespectrum.com

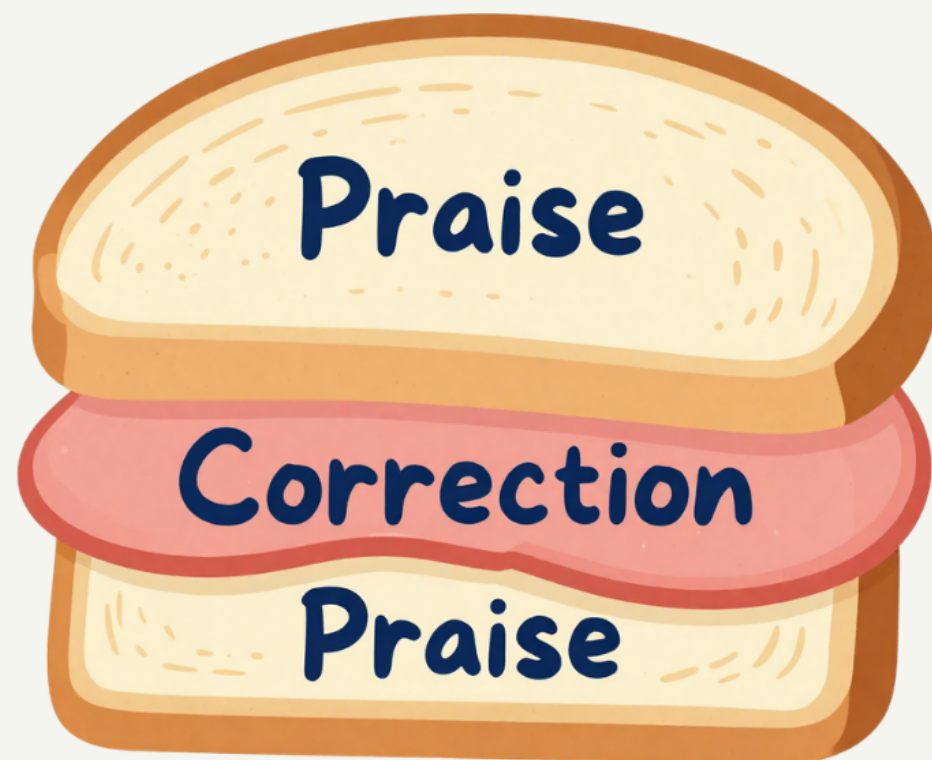
1. Lead with the Sandwich Technique 🥪

The most effective way to give feedback?

Praise. Correction. Praise.

"I love how focused you were on that problem. Next time, let's try raising your hand instead of calling out. But I can tell you really want to learn -- that's awesome."

It keeps the student regulated and receptive.



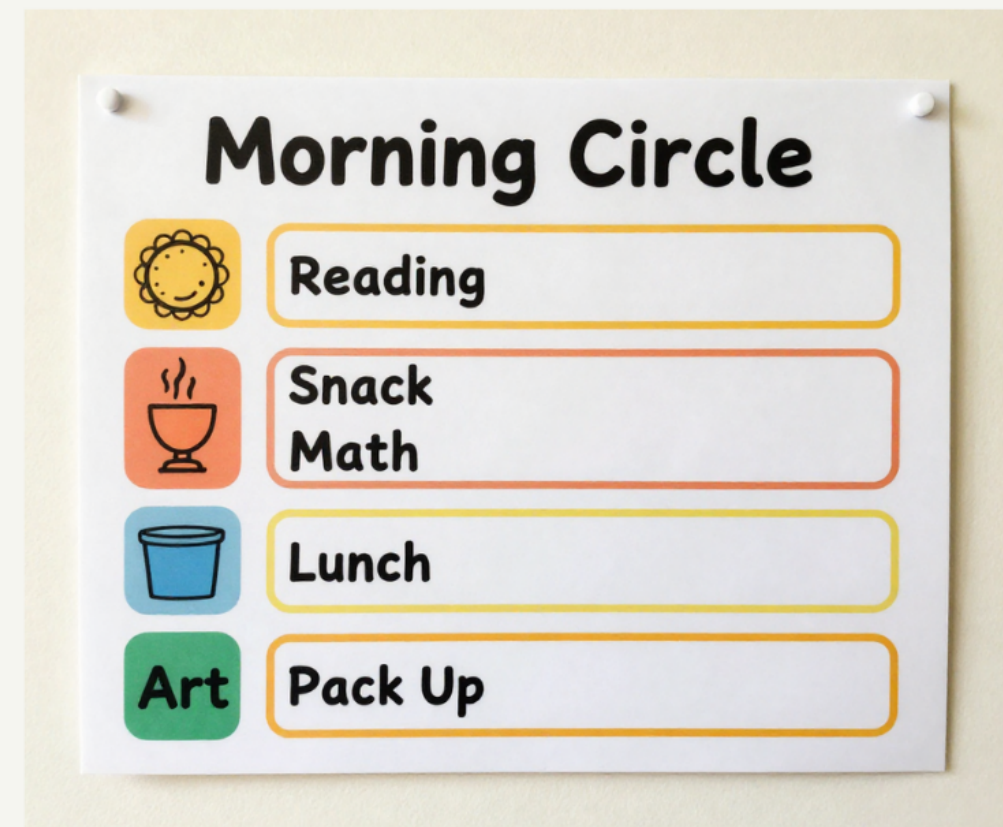
2. Use Visual Supports -- Always

Visual supports aren't optional for neurodivergent students -- they're essential.

They help with:

- Processing information
- Understanding language
- Navigating physical and social environments

Try this: Use a visual schedule on the board or at each student's desk. Clear, predictable, no surprises.



3. Teach Social Skills Explicitly

Don't assume. Teach.

Neurodivergent students often miss the unwritten rules of social interaction. Write them out. Role-play them.
Use Social Stories:

"When I need help with my work, I will try not to yell out. I will raise my hand and wait quietly."

Structure your Social Stories:

- Descriptive sentences (who, what, where, when)
- Perspective sentences (how others feel)
- Directive sentences (what to do instead)

Rule of thumb: One directive sentence for every 2-5 descriptive/perspective sentences.

Example Social Story: "Asking for Help"

When I am working and I don't understand something, I might feel confused. (Perspective)

Other students are working quietly at their desks. (Descriptive)

My teacher helps students who raise their hands. (Descriptive)

When students yell out, it can distract others from their work. (Perspective)

When I need help, I will raise my hand and wait quietly. (Directive)

4. Create a Calm Environment for Executive Function

Executive function lives in the frontal lobe -- and it improves in calm environments.

What helps:

- Extra processing time (count to 10 before expecting a response)
- Partner-picking support
- Alerts before changes in routine
- A calm-down corner or regulation space with sensory tools

Remember: Self-regulation is an internal thermometer. For many neurodivergent students, that thermometer runs differently. Give them the tools to check it.



5. Teach the Way They Learn 🧠

"If they can't learn the way we teach, we teach the way they learn."

-- Dr. Ivar Lovaas

Every student has strengths and challenges. Your job is to build the strengths while supporting the challenges.

The autism spectrum is not linear -- terms like "high functioning" and "low functioning" are harmful and outdated. The Maori word for autism is Takiwatanga -- meaning "in his/her own time and space."

Embrace that.



Want to go deeper?

Alan offers professional development workshops like "The Neurodivergent Classroom," autism life coaching, and educational advocacy.

✉ teachthespectrumla@gmail.com

🌐 teachthespectrum.com