



[FUTURE LEADERSHIP]

LEVERAGING STAFF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE.

LORRAINE CUSHING-KLÉBER
DR AMANDA BELL AM
LIAM KING



LEVERAGING STAFF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE

Lorraine Cushing-Kleber
Psychologist | Coach | Consultant

lorraine@northpsych.com.au
www.lorrainecushingkleber.com
www.northpsych.com.au

AHISA Conference 2024



ABOUT ME



STAFF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIONAND... HIGH PERFORMANCE

Questions.....

QUESTIONS

- How is your school currently supporting the one in five staff members who think, learn, process information, communicate and respond in different ways due to neurodiversity?
- What is your current approach and/or position on neurodiversity and neuroinclusion?
- What questions are coming up?

THE LENSE IS ESSENTIAL

Neurodiversity has been identified by numerous organisations as a significant strength and advantage.

When workplaces are designed for neurotypical staff, bias, exclusion and underperformance can occur.

Neurodivergence is an asset.

Neurodiversity as strategy.

SOME DEFINITIONS

- Neurodiversity
- Neurodivergent
- Neurotypical
- Neuroinclusive
- Neuroaffirming approach
- Neuroaffirming / Neuroinclusive language
- Identity first language e.g... 'Autistic person' 'ADHDeR'
- Neurodiverse profile
- ND

Language matters! Ask people their preferred terms and language.-

SOCIAL MODEL VS MEDICAL MODEL

- The social model of disability views 'disability' is socially constructed.
- The social model contrasts with the medical model of disability.
- In the medical model, 'disability' is a health condition managed by medical professionals. Individuals with disability are thought to be different to 'what is normal' or abnormal. 'Disability' is viewed as a problem of the individual and it may need treatment / fixing.
- A neuroinclusive approach acknowledges that neurodivergent traits are natural and normal variations in what it is to be human. With this lense, all members of a school community's cognitive differences are recognised, celebrated and nurtured.

NEURODIVERSITY CAN BE ADVANTAGEOUS

- Welcoming neurodiversity within your school staff means welcoming a diversity of talents, skills and cognitive styles, which can bring creativity, innovation and different perspectives to the classrooms, learning, teams and the school community.

BENEFITS OF HIRING AND SUPPORTING NEURODIVERGENT TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF

Bringing on board neurodiverse staff members can significantly benefit schools in many ways:

- Enhanced diversity, inclusion, belonging and psychological safety.
- Role models for students.
- Diverse, rich perspectives and contributions.
- Enhanced problem-solving, creativity and critical thinking.
- Increased productivity through a strong focus and dedication to work.
- Affinity for technology and willingness to learn can be advantageous in classrooms and enhance innovation.
- Loyal and dedicated employees.



A NOTE ON PARENTS IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

We should expect neurodiversity in the parent population.

Embracing parents through curiosity and compassion will be advantageous.

HOW MIGHT NEURODIVERGENT INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCE THEIR JOB ROLE AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES?



CHALLENGES OF NEURODIVERGENT STAFF IN YOUR SCHOOL?

- Recruitment? – Do they get hired?
- Support? – Are your leaders and line managers aware and supportive of neuroinclusive approaches?
- Communication? – Do they receive clear communication? Are their leaders and colleagues aware of communication factors?
- Judgement / perceived underperformance.
- Masking? – Are they allowed to unmask?
- Wellbeing and mental health.
- Noise/stimuli/sensory overwhelm? – Are there quiet spaces? Can they take movement breaks in meetings?
- Staffroom design?
- Progression / advancement.
- Disclosures
- ?

HOW CAN SCHOOL LEADERS SUPPORT NEURODIVERGENT TEACHERS AND EMPLOYEES THRIVE AT WORK?

- Best practice
- Neuroinclusive mission / intentional practice.
- Create caring communities, genuine ethos and culture for staff, students and parents
- Know your people – Listen and look for strengths and utilise the particular talents of each member of staff.
- Leadership awareness and development.
- Develop genuinely supportive line managers.
- Community and staff awareness.
- Neuroaffirming recruitment and onboarding practices
- Accommodations.
- Clear communication through multiple channels.
- Look for strengths, remain open and curious and utilise the particular talents of each member of staff.
- Adjust social expectations /quiet spaces / noise cancelling head phones, movement breaks, flexible working etc.
- ?



PROMOTING A NEUROINCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

- Leaders play a crucial role in creating the school communities and environment where neurodiverse staff can thrive.



Be Neuroinclusive!



THANK YOU

Lorraine Cushing-Kleber

**M.Ed. (Ed. Psych), Post. Grad Dip. Psych,
Grad Cert. Health Psych, B.Ed, Dip Counselling
Senior Consulting Psychologist**

Springett's Arcade Bowral, 2576 and 86A Pacific Highway, Roseville NSW 2069
Lorraine@northpsych.com.au

LINKS AND REFERENCES

- [Neurodivergent educators build connections but face unique challenges in Northwest schools – OPB](#)
- [Neurodiversity Is a Competitive Advantage \(hbr.org\)](#)
- <https://www.achieveability.org.uk/files/1586122571/e-journal-achieveability-neurodivergent-voices-april-2020pdf.pdf>
- [Home - auticon Australia](#)
- [Home - inclusionED Evaluation Hub \(qut.edu.au\)](#)
- [Social model of disability - People with Disability Australia \(pwd.org.au\)](#)
- [Transforming Allied Health: The 'how' of Neurodiversity-affirming Services - Reframing Autism](#)
- [Milton's 'double Empathy Problem': A Summary for Non-academics - Reframing Autism](#)
- *Milton, D. E. M. (2012). On the ontological status of autism: The 'double empathy problem'. Disability & Society, 27(6), 883-887.*
- [Neurodiversity in the workplace: Best practices for inclusion | BLG](#)



- *in 2017, Harvard Business Review called neurodiversity a “competitive advantage” in the workplace. I couldn’t agree more.*
- *Broadly, a neurodiverse workforce is more efficient and more productive, compared with more neurotypical teams. You don’t have to take my word for it; multiple research studies have confirmed this somewhat unexpected reality. Hewlett Packard found that neurodiverse teams can be up to 30% more productive, while a case study on JPMorgan Chase’s Autism at Work program suggests neurodiverse employees can be 140% more productive than their neurotypical colleagues.*

PANEL DISCUSSION



**LORRAINE
CUSHING-KLÉBER**

Psychologist



DR AMANDA BELL AM

Education Advisor
Future Leadership



LIAM KING

Education Partner
Fisher Leadership



[FUTURE LEADERSHIP]

THANK YOU

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT
FUTURELEADERSHIP.GLOBAL

