



## LILIE, LLC Course Information

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*\*More detailed course curriculum, including graduate level, alignment with standards, culturally responsive practices, assessments and resources, can be provided upon request*

**Title of Course:** Empowering Neurodivergent Learners: Inclusive Instruction and Advocacy in Special Education

### Course Description:

Education should support and uplift every student, including neurodivergent learners, by embracing their strengths and unique ways of learning. This course empowers educators with research-backed strategies to create inclusive, strengths-based learning environments where all students feel valued, understood, and supported. Through engaging discussions, hands-on applications, and real-world case studies, participants will explore culturally responsive teaching, accessible classroom practices, and strategies for fostering meaningful family partnerships. The course also provides tools for addressing systemic barriers and advocating for equitable educational experiences. Whether you teach in a traditional classroom or an alternative setting, this course offers practical approaches to enhance student engagement and promote lasting, positive change. Join a community of educators committed to equity, inclusion, and creating learning spaces where neurodivergent students can truly thrive.

### Instructor Consultation and Interaction

The course is an asynchronous online course that is available for instructor and student participation 24/7. The four-week duration of the class is broken down into four weekly sections each comprised of lecture in the form of instructor created articles and content, web links to academic and professionally reviewed articles in the discipline of general education, and instructor created discussion questions which are, in and of themselves, formative assessments to determine the extent to which the enrollees have comprehended and mastered the skills and information and begun to apply it to their personal teaching practices. The answers to these questions are the basis for the class interaction, as enrollees are required to respond to each other within the classroom.

### Proof of Course Completion

LILIE, LLC is committed to assuring that enrollees fully participate in and receive the educational benefits provided by the course. Enrollees must demonstrate participation by making detailed postings designed to foster dialogue among colleagues and instructor that reflect the content, skills/ strategies learned and assessments covered in course. These enrollee postings must be made six times each week, in separate sessions, and including a minimum of 4 academic posts and at least 2 peer-peer comments of others' postings and possible shared assignments. Enrollees are required to submit a detailed reflective feedback n in combination with the archived work. Attempts to falsify record or discussion board entries will result in denial of credit and a report to the enrollee's employer.



**Scope & Sequence/Weekly Topics and Objectives**

**Session I**

<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<p>Educators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze autism and neurodiversity through an asset-based framework that highlights student strengths and potential.</li> <li>• Critically examine the role of race, culture, and systemic bias in autism identification, diagnosis, and educational support.</li> <li>• Evaluate and challenge implicit biases in the identification, instruction, and support of neurodivergent students.</li> <li>• Design and implement culturally responsive, inclusive instructional strategies that affirm autistic students’ strengths and identities.</li> <li>• Develop equitable learning environments that center neurodivergent students’ needs, agency, and strengths.</li> <li>• Apply research-based best practices to create classroom spaces that are inclusive, supportive, and adaptable for autistic students.</li> <li>• Understand the goal and philosophy of creating Brave Learning to be applied throughout course and within their own educational settings</li> </ul>
<p><b>Topics</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fundamentals of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and neurodiversity in education.</li> <li>• Goal &amp; Philosophy of Brave Learning</li> <li>• Cultural and racial influences on autism diagnosis, identification, and access to services.</li> <li>• The impact of systemic inequities and disproportionality in special education.</li> <li>• Implicit biases in autism identification and support—recognizing and addressing personal and institutional biases.</li> <li>• Asset-based approaches to instruction, accommodations, and student engagement for neurodivergent learners.</li> <li>• Culturally responsive teaching practices that affirm autistic students’ strengths and diverse communication styles.</li> <li>• Building equitable and inclusive learning environments that foster student success and self-advocacy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Application to Instruction &amp; Student Learning</b></p>	<p>Creating a classroom where autistic and neurodivergent students feel truly seen, valued, and supported starts with shifting our perspective. Instead of focusing on deficits, educators will explore autism through a strengths-based lens, recognizing the unique abilities and potential of every student. Along the way, they’ll reflect on how biases—both personal and systemic—shape identification, instruction, and student experiences, and they’ll develop more inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices.</p> <p>A key part of this journey is Brave Learning—an approach that invites open dialogue, embraces vulnerability, and encourages continuous reflection and growth. In this course, educators will learn how to foster Brave Learning spaces in their classrooms—places where students feel safe to express themselves, challenge ideas, and engage in meaningful discussions about identity, inclusion, and advocacy. By implementing these strategies, autistic students will not only receive the support they need but will also feel empowered to fully participate in their learning in a way that honors their communication styles and individual strengths.</p>

	<p>When educators commit to Brave Learning, they cultivate a culture of belonging—one where students gain confidence, deepen their engagement, and develop the self-advocacy skills they need to thrive. Through self-reflection, firsthand narratives, and research-based practices, educators will break down barriers, build authentic connections with students and families, and become strong advocates for long-term equity in their schools and communities.</p>
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**Session II**

<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<p>Educators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critically evaluate and refine instructional approaches to support executive functioning, sensory needs, and diverse communication styles.</li> <li>• Apply culturally responsive teaching practices that affirm autistic students' identities and promote self-advocacy.</li> <li>• Develop and sustain collaborative partnerships with families from diverse cultural backgrounds to create inclusive learning experiences.</li> <li>• Shift from a deficit-based to an asset-based pedagogy that moves beyond accommodations to proactive, inclusive instructional design.</li> <li>• Analyze and apply the role of language in shaping neurodivergent students' identities, ensuring affirming and empowering communication in the classroom.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Topics</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strength-Based Instructional Strategies for executive functioning, sensory needs, and diverse communication styles</li> <li>• Affirming Identity Through Language and avoiding deficit-based labels</li> <li>• Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices for neurodivergent learners</li> <li>• Communication and Social-Emotional Learning Supports for autistic students</li> <li>• Family and Community Partnerships to support neurodivergent learners</li> <li>• Inclusive Pedagogy that moves beyond accommodations to proactive instructional design</li> <li>• Final Project Introduction</li> </ul>
<p><b>Application to Instruction &amp; Student Learning</b></p>	<p>This week has educators focus on shifting from simply accommodating neurodivergent students to creating truly inclusive, strength-based learning environments where autistic students feel valued, capable, and supported. By focusing on affirming identity, refining instructional strategies, and strengthening family collaboration, educators will gain practical tools to foster engagement, self-advocacy, and academic success for neurodivergent learners. Students will benefit from classrooms that celebrate their strengths, provide meaningful opportunities for participation, and support their executive functioning, sensory, and communication needs in ways that build confidence and independence. At the same time, educators will have the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching practices, biases, and school policies, gaining deeper insight into how they can create more equitable and responsive learning spaces. Through hands-on application, peer collaboration, and research-based strategies, participants will develop a clear action plan for making lasting changes that ensure their classrooms not only accommodate but truly empower neurodivergent students.</p>

**Session III**

<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<p>Educators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine the historical and systemic inequities in autism education, particularly their impact on autistic students of color.</li> <li>• Critically evaluate the overrepresentation of minority students in special education and analyze how systemic biases influence assessment, placement, and disciplinary actions.</li> <li>• Formulate and implement culturally responsive advocacy strategies to challenge inequities in special education policies and practices.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply strategies that center student and family voices to create inclusive, affirming learning environments for neurodivergent students.</li> <li>• Analyze Indigenous perspectives on disability and neurodiversity and their implications for culturally responsive special education practices.</li> <li>• Develop classroom strategies that integrate inclusive instructional practices, early intervention supports, and representation in educational media to foster belonging and accessibility.</li> <li>• Empower autistic students by fostering self-advocacy skills, leadership opportunities, and peer-supported inclusion within school communities.</li> <li>• Continue to develop and demonstrate Brave Learning</li> </ul>
<b>Topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequities in Special Education</li> <li>• Culturally Responsive Advocacy</li> <li>• Centering Student and Family Voices</li> <li>• Indigenous Perspectives on Disability and Neurodiversity</li> <li>• Implementing Inclusive Classroom Strategies</li> <li>• Early Intervention and Inclusive Support</li> <li>• Teaching/ Learning Protocols</li> </ul>
<b>Application to Instruction &amp; Student Learning</b>	<p>This week’s curriculum is about more than just learning—it’s about taking real, meaningful steps toward creating classrooms where neurodivergent students feel valued, supported, and empowered. Educators will dive into the systemic inequities that have long shaped special education, particularly the ways in which autistic students of color have been disproportionately impacted. As they explore these challenges, they will also examine practical, strengths-based strategies to create more inclusive, accessible learning environments that affirm neurodivergent students’ identities and needs.</p> <p>Through this exploration, educators will reflect on their own schools, teaching practices, and policies to identify areas where bias and inequities exist and, more importantly, implement strategies that foster real change. This includes integrating structured routines, sensory-friendly spaces, multimodal instruction, and alternative communication supports to ensure students can access learning in ways that work for them. Educators will also explore ways to empower neurodivergent students through self-advocacy and leadership opportunities while strengthening family partnerships to create a truly collaborative support system.</p> <p>By applying these strategies, educators will see measurable positive impacts in their classrooms. Students will experience reduced anxiety, increased engagement, and improved participation as predictable routines and sensory supports help them navigate their learning environment with confidence. Communication will improve as educators incorporate AAC tools and clear, direct language, ensuring that all students can express themselves effectively. Academic success will grow, as instructional approaches shift from one-size-fits-all methods to flexible, multimodal strategies that allow students to demonstrate their learning in ways that align with their strengths. Social inclusion will increase, with peer mentorship and structured supports helping students build meaningful relationships and a stronger sense of belonging.</p> <p>At the same time, educators will develop a deeper understanding of how to advocate for equitable learning experiences that prioritize the growth, confidence, and success of every neurodivergent student. By the end of this module, participants won’t just recognize inequities—they will have actionable, research-based tools to create lasting, positive change in their classrooms, schools, and beyond.</p>

**Session IV**

<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Educators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop sustainable strategies to support autistic and neurodivergent students in inclusive classroom settings.</li> <li>• Evaluate the impact of current teaching practices on neurodiverse learners and refine approaches through reflective practice.</li> <li>• Design individualized, strengths-based classroom supports that promote accessibility, engagement, and well-being for neurodivergent students.</li> <li>• Implement collaborative strategies to foster strong partnerships with families and caregivers to enhance student success.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze the role of school-wide initiatives and community partnerships in supporting neurodiverse students beyond the classroom.</li> <li>• Create professional development goals that integrate evidence-based practices for ongoing growth in neurodiversity-informed teaching.</li> <li>• Synthesize key takeaways from the course and apply them in a sustainable action plan for long-term classroom implementation.</li> <li>• Present and provide feedback for Final project</li> </ul>
<b>Topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable Classroom Strategies for Neurodiverse Learners</li> <li>• Reflective Teaching and Continuous Improvement</li> <li>• Building Strong Family-School Partnerships</li> <li>• Expanding Support Networks Beyond the Classroom</li> <li>• Action Planning for Sustainable Change</li> <li>• Final project Presentations</li> </ul>
<b>Application to Instruction &amp; Student Learning</b>	<p>The learning in this week’s course is designed to foster more inclusive, equitable, and supportive learning environments for all students. By engaging with neurodiversity-affirming, culturally responsive, and strengths-based approaches, educators will gain a deeper understanding of how to better meet the needs of diverse learners and remove barriers to their success.</p> <p>As educators reflect on concepts like authenticity, sensory inclusion, family engagement, and asset-based teaching, they will begin to recognize new ways to support student learning that go beyond traditional models. Exploring the impact of masking in neurodivergent students, for example, will help educators create environments where students feel safe to be themselves, leading to greater confidence, engagement, and participation in learning. Similarly, learning how to design sensory-inclusive spaces will give educators the tools to reduce distractions and discomfort that may otherwise hinder student focus and well-being.</p> <p>Beyond individual classroom strategies, this week’s learning also emphasizes the power of collaboration—between educators, families, and communities—to ensure that students receive holistic and consistent support. By strengthening these connections, students will experience learning environments that are more responsive to their unique needs, leading to better academic, social, and emotional outcomes.</p> <p>Through discussions, reflections, and peer engagement, educators will not only refine their own approaches but will also contribute to a larger culture shift in education—one that values every student’s strengths, promotes self-advocacy, and creates pathways for long-term success.</p>