

I submit that, based on my experience as a parent, all primary and secondary school teachers should receive comprehensive training in the following areas as they relate to the educational environment:

1. Neurodiversity (ASD, ADHD etc) - the needs of these children are still not adequately catered to in the teaching setting. Rules such as “quiet hands, listening ears, sit still” are incredibly debilitating for an ADHD child who needs to pace or fidget in order to listen. We need to open these kids up, get them moving, give them regular breaks, tap into their interests rather than try to suppress them which only makes things worse.

2. Giftedness - the needs of this group of children are very different from children who are simply high achievers. These children learn differently, need additional depth and extension and often need more agency over their own learning. Many gifted children are only given challenging tasks, as a reward for completing a simpler repetitive task first. This doesn't work for these learners, they will disengage and not complete the simpler or seemingly pointless work, which perpetuates a damaging cycle. Teachers, principals and the education system are still clinging to outdated information that children need to be learning with their age peers. There is so much evidence that indicates that this is not as important as other factors such as learning at an appropriate level for each individual child, and that interest-based peers are far more important than age based. This same outdated concept results in nearly all schools refusing to grade skip a child “because we don't believe in it here”, when a grade skip is exactly what a child needs, and indeed may have even been the recommendation of an Educational Psychologist who has assessed the child.

3. “Twice Exceptionality” (2e) - children who straddle both of the above categories are not catered for at all within our current education system. They need both disability support, and a deeper extended learning environment. This might look like a child stepping up 3yrs in maths task level, whilst being allowed more time than usual. Currently these children are either helped in one area or the other, which doesn't work.

4. Trauma informed support and learning. Behaviour is communication, yet we still tend to punish behaviour without any investigation in our schools. Detention for lashing out is an example. Again, there's a plethora of information available in this area. Even if teachers are just more aware, they could then seek appropriate support for both themselves and the child so that more trauma is not created. These kids often do far better with support, consistency, flexibility, kindness and encouragement than punishment which is proven to only create resentment.

Thank you.