

## National Education Association Educator's Locally Led Book Clubs Focused on Disability Rights and Inclusion

The National Education Association (NEA) is expanding its Disability Rights and Inclusion (DRI) initiative through a local-level book club program to deepen member engagement and understanding of disability perspectives at the grassroots level. This innovative approach aims to raise awareness about the experiences of people with disabilities while exploring the environmental, social, and attitudinal barriers that impede true inclusivity and accessibility within local NEA affiliate communities.

### Who can participate in the NEA Locally Led Book Clubs?

The NEA Book Club is open to all members! This is a great opportunity for members to take what they learn and share key concepts about disability with their community.

### How do the NEA Locally Led Book Clubs work?

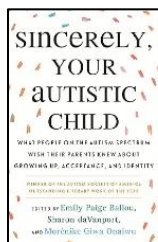
NEA members can register as book club leaders to organize local meetings, either in-person or virtually, focusing on disability rights and inclusion. The program provides up to 12 books and comprehensive online resources per local affiliate, empowering local leaders to facilitate meaningful discussions and create collaborative learning environments that advance understanding of disability rights within their communities.

### Where, when, and how will the Book Clubs meet?

Each local book club leader will share information about the book club and collaborate with interested members to identify meeting logistics, including the number of meetings and their duration, time, location, and format. The reading guide for *Sincerely Your Autistic Child: What People on the Autism Spectrum Wish Their Parents Knew About Growing Up, Acceptance, and Identity* is structured to complete the book study in three sessions. Local leaders can adjust the reading assignments, number of sessions, and other logistics to meet the needs of the local participants. The reading guides are available at [NEA.org/disabilities](https://nea.org/disabilities).

### ***Sincerely Your Autistic Child: What People on the Autism Spectrum Wish Their Parents Knew About Growing Up, Acceptance, and Identity***

By Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network



*Sincerely, Your Autistic Child: What People on the Autism Spectrum Wish Their Parents Knew About Growing Up, Acceptance, and Identity* offers authentic insights from autistic voices, guiding parents to avoid misconceptions and embrace their child's unique strengths. Unlike technical resources by professionals, this book provides firsthand perspectives to foster acceptance and celebration of autistic individuals. It also encourages educators to rethink practices and create more supportive, affirming environments for autistic students.

## **Reading Guide: *Sincerely Your Autistic Child: What People on the Autism Spectrum Wish Their Parents Knew About Growing Up, Acceptance, and Identity***

### **What NEA Leadership Competencies are addressed in this book?**

You will gain a foundational understanding of advocacy, communication, leading our profession, organizing, and social-emotional learning. Find out more about [NEA Leadership Competencies](#).

### **What are the main objectives?**

As you are reading this book, approach the content with the following objectives in mind:

- Gain authentic insights into the experiences of autistic individuals;
- Develop a more nuanced understanding of autism from firsthand perspectives; and
- Foster greater empathy, acceptance, and support for autistic people in our communities.

### **An Important Note Regarding Language Use for This Reading Guide**

This reading guide employs identity-first language, reflecting the book's assertion of autistic identity. This choice aligns with the preference of numerous autistic individuals who consider autism an integral component of their identity. It is crucial to recognize that the usage of person-first versus identity-first language is a complex and individualized matter. While many autistic adults favor identity-first language, preferences can vary among diverse groups and individuals. The selection of language can be influenced by factors such as age, personal experience, and cultural context. The debate surrounding language use is particularly nuanced within the realm of special education, where labels have historically been associated with deficit-based meanings. This complexity emphasizes the importance of respecting individual preferences and engaging in open dialogue about language use. For additional information on person-first and identity-first language, readers can consult the [Autistic Self Advocacy Network's resource on identity-first language](#).

### **Session 1: Part 1 Early Memories, Childhood, and Education, pp. 1–47**

(to be read before the first book club meeting)

#### **Pre-Reading Reflection Questions**

1. What assumptions do you currently hold about autistic children's early experiences and education?
2. How might an autistic child's sensory experiences differ from those of neurotypical children in educational settings?
3. What role do you think acceptance plays in an autistic child's development and educational experience?

## Post-Reading Reflection Questions

1. How have the authors' firsthand accounts challenged or changed your understanding of autistic children's early experiences?
2. What strategies discussed in the book could help create a more inclusive educational environment for autistic children?
3. Based on the insights shared in this section, how can parents and educators better support autistic children's unique learning styles and needs?

## Discussion Questions

1. What can you identify as three main themes across the experiences?
2. Based on the themes that you identified, what are lessons/takeaways that educators can learn? How can these be applied to teaching practices where you work or want to work?

## Next Steps

Read Part 2: Acceptance and Adaptation before the next meeting.

## Session 2: Part 2 Acceptance and Adaptation, pp. 48–129

### Pre-Reading Reflection Questions

1. What does acceptance mean to you in the context of autism, and how might it differ from mere tolerance?
2. How do you think societal expectations impact autistic individuals' experiences of acceptance and adaptation?
3. In the context of schools, what challenges do you anticipate autistic individuals might face in adapting to neurotypical environments?

### Post-Reading Reflection Questions

1. How have the authors' perspectives changed your understanding of acceptance and adaptation for autistic individuals?
2. What strategies discussed in this section can parents and caregivers implement to foster a more accepting environment for autistic children?
3. How does the concept of neurodiversity relate to acceptance and adaptation as presented in this part of the book?

To learn more about neurodiversity, check out Harvard Health Publishing's [What is Neurodiversity?](#)

## Discussion Questions

1. How have your ideas changed or been challenged in regard to supporting students labeled with autism?
2. What are ways that you might bring these different ideas for supporting students into your teaching/classroom/school?
3. How does your understanding of autistic identity, as opposed to a medical label of autism, influence your perspective on what support for autistic individuals should look like?

## Next Steps

Read Part 3: Intersectional Identity and Finding Community before the next meeting.

## Session 3: Part 3 Intersectional Identity and Finding Community, pp. 130–193

### Pre-Reading Reflection Question

1. How do you think various aspects of identity (such as gender, race, sexuality, and/or sexual identity) might intersect with autism to shape an individual's experiences?
2. What challenges do you anticipate autistic individuals might face when trying to find and connect with their communities?
3. How might societal expectations and norms impact identity development for autistic individuals with intersectional identities?

### Post-Reading Reflection Questions

1. How have the authors' perspectives changed your understanding of intersectionality in the context of autism?
2. What strategies discussed in this section can help create more inclusive and supportive communities/educational experiences for autistic individuals with diverse identities?
3. How does the concept of neurodiversity relate to intersectional identity and community-building, as presented in this part of the book?

## Discussion Questions

1. Based on the experiences shared in this section, what strategies can be employed to create more inclusive and supportive communities or educational experiences for autistic individuals with diverse intersectional identities?
2. Think about someone/group of people in your personal or professional life to whom you want to recommend this book (it could even be you!). Who is the person or group that you would recommend *Sincerely Your Autistic Child* to? Why did you select this person/group? What are some specific actions and/or changes that you would like to see?

## Next Steps: Take Action

Identify one or two ways you can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for autistic individuals in your school. Consider actions such as challenging assumptions, listening to autistic



**Disability  
Rights &  
Inclusion**

voices, implementing accommodations, educating others, encouraging self-advocacy, fostering community, reevaluating approaches, and advocating for policy changes. Your advocacy matters by helping to build a world where autistic individuals are genuinely accepted, valued, and empowered to thrive on their own terms.