

Agenda Item Details

Meeting	Mar 21, 2024 - Regular Meeting
Category	2. Meeting Opening - 7:00 p.m.
Subject	2.07 Neurodiversity Affirmation Week Proclamation
Type	Action
Recommended Action	That the School Board approve the Neurodiversity Affirmation Week proclamation

NEURODIVERSITY AFFIRMATION WEEK PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, neurodivergence is a biological fact and the neurodiversity movement is a civil rights movement that emerged from social justice efforts and social science research beginning in the 1990s;

WHEREAS, every person on our planet is neurodiverse as we all think, behave, feel, perceive, and learn in different ways that are unique to each individual due to their identities and experiences, all of these different ways of being and functioning are value neutral, meaning that there is not one 'better' or 'right' way;

WHEREAS, within the neurodiversity perspective, there are neurodivergent ways of being in which an individual's cognitive functioning is different than society's perceived "typical" or "most commonly occurring" means of functioning, and is associated with diagnoses such as Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, auditory processing disorder, PTSD, and more;

WHEREAS, since a strengths based approach to ADHD, autism, and other related diagnoses is better than the medical, deficits-based approach, the neurodiversity movement favors a strengths-based model that also recognizes that society's current norms, beliefs, and structures can create barriers to access and affirmation for neurodivergent individuals;

WHEREAS, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an estimated 15-20% of the world's population exhibits some form of neurodivergence, driven by both genetic and environmental factors, and many successful and famous people, such as Emma Watson, Travis Kelce, Simone Biles, Richard Branson, Carl Sagan, Daryl Hannah, and Billie Eilish, are neurodivergent;

WHEREAS, this neurodiversity equity work is about building mindsets that drive our language, address biases, promote spaces of belonging, and center human variability at the forefront of our decision-making processes and actions;

WHEREAS, Fairfax County Public Schools is committed to ensuring equitable access to a quality education for all students by universally designing instruction and educational environments, employing a Neurodiversity Specialist, the first in the nation for K-12 school divisions, lifting up neurodiverse staff members, recognizing that there are different ways of being in our schools and communities, affirming the abilities and unique strengths of every student and staff member, presuming competence, promoting positive self-concepts and identities, and ensuring spaces and school communities do not require students to "mask" their unique individual characteristics or assimilate to participate.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Fairfax County School Board renews its commitment to creating neurodivergent affirming schools and hereby proclaims March 18-24, 2024 as Neurodiversity Affirmation Week in recognition of the cognitive brilliance that every student brings to our system, schools, and communities.

Motion & Voting

That the School Board approve the Neurodiversity Affirmation Week proclamation

Motion by Rachna S Heizer, second by Melanie K Meren - Vice Chair.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yes: Ilryong Moon, Seema Dixit, Sandy B Anderson, Ricardy J Anderson, Mateo Dunne, Karl V Frisch - Chair, Melanie K Meren - Vice Chair, Marcia St John-Cunning, Robyn Lady, Ryan McElveen, Kyle McDaniel, Rachna S Heizer