

Media release

## Examining classroom practices for neurodivergent students

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### AERO releases new paper on teaching practices for Autistic students and students with ADHD

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) is continuing its work to strengthen inclusive teaching, with a new paper reviewing the current evidence base for classroom practices in supporting learning outcomes for Autistic students and students with ADHD.

The new discussion paper [Teaching practices to support Autistic students and students with ADHD](#), examines 53 studies spanning more than a decade to identify where evidence for a range of teaching strategies is strongest, where it is limited, and where significant knowledge gaps remain.

It reveals an uneven and underdeveloped evidence base with many studies examining multiple practices together, making it difficult to isolate the effects of individual approaches. This is particularly the case for classroom-based approaches for students with ADHD.

Within these limitations, the paper finds evidence supporting the use of explicit teaching with Autistic students, and some evidence suggesting that practices such as feedback, peer-assisted learning, rules and routines, use of visual supports, use of environmental adaptations and use of technology, often used in combination with each other, can support learning. Effectiveness depends on adjustments being made to frequency, duration and intensity to suit individual needs.

For students with ADHD, the available classroom-based evidence is particularly limited. A small number of studies provide emerging evidence for practices such as feedback and explicit teaching, with most findings relating to engagement and classroom participation, rather than direct academic achievement. There is limited evidence for the effectiveness of peer-assisted learning, and a lack of data on the effectiveness of rules and routines, use of visual supports, use of environmental adaptations and use of technology.

There is also an absence of available research on First Nations Autistic students and First Nations students with ADHD, highlighting the need for future, co-designed research in this space.

AERO CEO Dr Jenny Donovan said the new paper underlined the importance of building the evidence base for teaching practices to support neurodivergent students.

“Inclusivity is a cornerstone of high-quality teaching, and it’s important that we support teachers with evidence-based guidance on how to help neurodivergent students thrive,” she said.

“This review tells us that much more research is needed to give us a clear picture of what works in the classroom.

“While there are some clearer findings for Autistic students, particularly around explicit teaching, there are still significant gaps in research, especially for students with ADHD and First Nations students.

“Recognising these limits is a key finding of the paper and it points to where future research and evidence-building efforts should be focused.”

“AERO’s ongoing work, including a national teacher survey and targeted fieldwork, will help begin to address these gaps and support the development of future guidance for educators.”

To read the discussion paper, see AERO's [Teaching practices to support Autistic students and students with ADHD](#).

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## About Us

AERO is Australia’s independent education evidence body, established in 2021 and funded by the Commonwealth, state, and territory governments.

Our vision is to achieve excellence and equity in education outcomes for all children and young people through the effective use of evidence. AERO’s role is to generate high-quality evidence, make it accessible, and encourage the adoption and effective implementation of evidence into practice and policy.