

Overview of Next Level Collaboration Teacher Training Program

What is the Next Level Collaboration program?

Next Level Collaboration is an innovative, research-based program designed to support social capacity for children aged between 8 and 15 years old with social-emotional and neurological learning differences. The Next Level Collaboration program was co-designed with students with disability through Dr Matthew Harrison's PhD research and uses age-appropriate, commercially developed cooperative video games as a tool to teach collaborative teamwork skills. The program focuses on collaborative skills that are important for everyone to learn in life (such as asking for help and providing feedback) while using a strength-based approach and shared interest in video games to support engagement and motivation while fostering a sense of belonging.

The Next Level Collaboration program follows a consistent three-stage structure each session to maintain a sense of predictability for participants, with explicit teaching during Stage A, supported gameplay and coaching during Stage B, and a guided reflection during Stage C. During Stage B, the cooperative games provide a teaching tool for participants to practise the collaborative skills taught during Stage A by working together in an engaging, interest-based activity. The Next Level Collaboration program is particularly well-suited to neurodivergent children but any child who needs support developing social connection or teamwork skills can benefit from the program. Children who have felt socially isolated, been diagnosed with mental health conditions (including depression and anxiety), or experienced trauma have all found the program beneficial for their needs.

What is neurodivergence and neurodiversity?

The concept of **neurodiversity** considers differences in brain function between individual people part of natural variation between humans, rather than a 'deficit'. Our society has developed norms around what we consider 'typical' neurology, and people whose neurology falls within these norms are known as **neurotypical**.

The term **neurodivergent** refers to people whose neurology falls outside what we consider the 'typical' norms. People who are considered neurodivergent may have received a formal diagnosis such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or dyslexia, but many neurodivergent people do not have a formal diagnosis.

People who are neurodivergent might do things differently to those who are neurotypical because their brain works in a different way. An example of this is that some neurodivergent people need to fidget or move around to listen and process information most effectively. The Next Level Collaboration program **celebrates difference and diversity** while supporting participants to develop collaborative skills in a way that works best for them, without attempting make them behave in a "more neurotypical" way or change who they are.

What is the Next Level Collaboration Teacher Training program?

Next Level Collaboration currently runs in-person programs for 8-15 year old children, however the organisation has received significant interest from teachers, schools and other education providers who want to run similar programs within their school settings. Next Level Collaboration has developed a training program designed for teachers and other education staff who want to learn how to set up and run Next Level Collaboration sessions with students in their class and/or school. This training program provides in-depth instruction and resources for all aspects of the Next Level Collaboration program, including the research informing the program, setting up and conducting program sessions, target collaborative skills, and selecting appropriate video games and hardware. Next Level Collaboration Teacher Training participants will also have access to ongoing support and resources after the conclusion of the training program to continue building their knowledge running program sessions.

What does the Next Level Collaboration Teacher Training program offer?

The Next Level Collaboration Teacher Training program consists of 8 asynchronous online modules with a half-day in-person workshop to support online learning content and develop skills for running the program sessions. Each of the 8 online modules focuses on a different aspect of running the Next Level Collaboration program with interactive elements and multimedia resources to support a range of learning styles. The in-person workshop is conducted during prior to commencing the online modules and is designed to be an engaging, interactive learning experience where teachers can collaboratively work together and explore practical elements of running the program (such as the cooperative games and gaming hardware).

After the conclusion of the 8 weeks, teacher training program participants will have access to an online community of practice where they can discuss their experiences running the program and collaboratively share ideas. The online community of practice is designed to be an ongoing source of knowledge sharing, suggestions, and support from other teachers or education staff who are running the program in their schools. Community of practice members will also have ongoing access to a live resource bank with all the required resources for running Next Level Collaboration sessions.