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**Utilizing an Occupational Therapy Perspective to Develop a Business Plan for a
Neurodiversity Affirming Special Education School**

by

Jillian Turner

A Capstone Project Presented to the
FACULTY OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DOCTORATE

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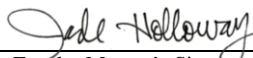
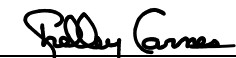
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Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD)

The Capstone Final Paper is the final product that the OTD students need to complete to report his/her Capstone Project and his/her Capstone Experience.

Student's Name	Jillian Turner
Degree Sought	Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD)
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Program	Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD)

We, the undersigned, recommend that the Capstone Final Paper completed by the student listed above, in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements, be accepted by the Georgia State University.

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With love & appreciation,

Jillian Turner

Abstract

The neurodiversity movement, a transformative force in education, challenges pathologizing views and advocates for the recognition and celebration of neurodivergent individuals. Originating as a social and civil rights movement, it has evolved with increased awareness, influential figures, and core principles emphasizing acceptance and inclusivity. Despite successes in awareness, professional development, and inclusive policies, challenges persist, including limited awareness, insufficient training, and social stigma. Ongoing areas of improvement involve comprehensive training programs, increased resources, and promotion of inclusive assessment practices. The movement's impact extends beyond education, shaping societal perceptions and policies. This literature review highlights progress and emphasizes the ongoing need for neurodiversity principles in creating inclusive educational environments. After a thorough literature review was performed, it has been found that occupational therapy (OT) practitioners can fill a gap in this area. The goal of this capstone is to fill the gap by developing a business plan for neurodiversity-affirming schools that can serve as a tool for OT practitioners. This project's methodology takes place in three phases: the pre-development phase, the development phase and the review and revision phase. Development of this capstone project builds upon OT scholarship and practice in this area, while also laying a foundation from which to explore the role of OT in neurodiversity affirming program development.

KEYWORDS: neurodiverse, neurodiversity, autism, adhd

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Background:

Through the exploration of the neurodiversity movement, a shared goal was noted surrounding the need for the development of neurodiversity-affirming schools. The people who will be actively involved in this initiative are self-advocates, educators, and experts in the field willing to honor all neurocognitive functioning and stop the rejection of neurodiversity movement in education practices. With limited neurodiversity affirming practices in the schools, the challenges for neurodivergent students can only be resolved through innovative thinking and application. Under the circumstances, change is requested as a matter of necessity to establish inclusive spaces where neurodivergent strengths and perspective can be fully recognized and embraced. This means developing inclusive ideals to the environment whereby neurologically different students are recognized and setup to succeed.

Purpose & Research Question:

Research Question: What are the most effective components of a strengths-based special education school for neurodivergent children?

Problem Statement:

The lack of clarity on effective components of strengths-based education for neurodivergent children impedes the development of neurodiversity-affirming schools.

Purpose Statement: This project aims to develop a business plan for establishing neurodiversity-affirming schools and a comprehensive guideline to inform therapists and school staff about best practices.

Specific Aims:

1. Design a business plan for the establishment of neurodiversity-affirming schools.
2. Ensure the business plan informs therapists and school staff about best practices supporting neurodivergent students.
3. Incorporate principles of disability justice, community-defined evidence practice, and lived-experience-informed practice into the business plan and guideline.
4. Prioritize empowerment by incorporating the voices of neurodivergent individuals throughout the planning process.

Methods:

The research methodology used was multifaceted and performed to thoroughly investigate the process of the establishment of neurodiversity-affirming schools. An in-depth observation was conducted at The Hirsch Academy, which characterized itself as a neurodiversity-affirming school. The review of business materials was comprehensive and included participation in various business meetings where decision-making processes were discussed. This included a comprehensive analysis of data and reports on income, insurance coverage, health problems, and demographic reports of the targeted area supported the ability to connect the community's needs and planned services. The review of literature was also concluded collaboratively with self-advocates and staff to understand needs and goals for output.

Furthermore, staff support helped to review existing systems and perform a SWOT analysis to identify the key internal and external factors. The chosen methodology aimed to provide a holistic view of the landscape and opportunities and challenges for the establishment of neurodiversity-affirming schools.

Outputs:

The output for this capstone is a substantive business plan. The business plan outlines the strategic processes of creating neurodiversity-affirming schools with an elaborate mission and vision statement, curriculum design, infrastructure considerations, inclusive policies, and a holistic sustainable model that covers funding among other aspects. This business plan's purpose is to conceptualize the entire process of establishing educational environments centered on learning practices that are neuro-divergent friendly. The outputs will be living resources that will continue to develop through feedback, collaboration, and involvement of all stakeholders, opening paths to creating neurodiversity-affirming schools and setting the pace in global inclusive education.

Significance & Impacts:

The anticipated short-term contribution of the project is to develop an infrastructure for establishing neurodiversity-affirming schools. It is expected to provide a blueprint for creating such schools and promote a more inclusive education system.

Furthermore, the long-term outcomes of the project will spread further than promoting such schools separately. This initiative will help expand the entire educational sector's priorities. By positioning neurodivergent people's voices and needs first, the framework aims to fill the gaps that are currently in the education realm and provide an environment for positive outcomes for students who are considered neurodivergent. Therapists, school staff, and educators are

invited to take part in establishing and/or contributing to neurodiversity-affirming schools and incorporate neurodiversity-based best practices as stakeholders in the transformative process.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity, a term first made popular at the turn of the 21st century, is also a new paradigm that drastically changes how humanity perceives the neurological variation between individuals (Pellicano & Houting, 2021). Unlike the mainstream medical model that pathologizes conditions such as autism, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and other related neurological differences, the neurodiversity paradigm is completely different (Walker & Raymaker, 2021; Dwyer et al., 2022). Neurodiversity rejects the idea that such variations should be seen as disorders requiring treatment or even normalization (Happé & Frith, 2020). On the basic level, neurodiversity argues that individual ways in which people's brains operate is simply a natural and inevitable expression of human diversity. It considers this perspective as an alternative to the dominant deficit mode of view, the medical model (Pellicano & Houting, 2021).

The neurodiversity movement is a diverse set of perceptions and movements that fundamentally challenge the mainstream perception that pathologizes and stigmatizes people based on their neurological differences (Singer, 2017). Its fundamental focus is recognizing the natural human diversity manifested in neurodivergent people, and it does so by recognizing their unique strength when seen from this new lens. Understanding neurodiversity is not only an intellectual exercise but an essential step toward building a societal view that values all types of people regardless of the way their brains function.

This literature review aims to explore the body of work surrounding the neurodiversity movement, including its background, fundamentals, opinions, and impact on different aspects of society (Walker, 2012). By reviewing relevant academic articles, research, and other significant literature, the goal is to build better knowledge about how the neurodiversity paradigm evolved and its implications for education, the workplace, and the general attitude in society. Given the significance of understanding neurodiversity in modern society, this is an important area to review.

Historical Roots and Key Developments

The historical background of the neurodiversity movement emerged in the late 20th century, shaped by changing perceptions of neurodevelopmental diversity and increased dissatisfaction with the medical model. Due to recent developments in the 21st century, the political landscape of the movement has transformed. By reflecting on subjective experiences, academic discussions, and online activity, the neurodiversity movement has gathered critical momentum to challenge prevailing views and work towards creating a more inclusive society that understands and accepts the various forms of human neurological diversity presented in the world (Singer, 2017).

Several critical contexts and key figures contributed to the occurrence of the neurodiversity movement. Prominently, the term neurodiversity was first defined by Australian social scientist Judy Singer, who self-identified as autistic, coined the term neurodiversity in the late 1990s. In 1998, Judy Singer published the essay “Why Can’t You Be Normal for Once in Your Life?”, coining the term and laying the foundation for the rebirth of neurodiversity while challenging the pathologizing of neurodevelopmental differences (Singer, 1998). Judy Singer’s foundational work led to further debates and discussions regarding the desirability of the term,

reframing the current discourse about neurological variations, and questioning the tendency to pathologize autism and other related areas (Pellicano and Houting, 2021). In the early 1990s, autistic self-advocate Jim Sinclair published the essay “Don’t Mourn for Us”, urging the public to stop considering autism as a childhood tragedy and concentrate on raising awareness and acceptance of autistic lives (Sinclair, 1993). Temple Grandin, an autistic author, professor, and advocate, has played a crucial role in raising awareness about autism and challenging stereotypes, bridging the gap between neurotypical and neurodivergent perspectives (Montgomery, 2012).

In the late 20th century, we witnessed a broader societal shift away from the medical model. The neurodiversity movement was rejecting the normalization or cure of neurodivergent conditions and instead advocating for their recognition as natural aspects of human diversity (Pellicano and Houting, 2021). Aligned with the broader disability rights movement, the neurodiversity movement embraced concepts of self-advocacy, empowerment, and inclusion (Pripas-Kapit, 2019).

Moreover, the International Conference on Autism 2003 highlighted the importance of making room for neurodivergent voices in discussing their own experiences (Pellicano and Houting, 2021). In 2010, Thomas Armstrong published a book entitled, *Neurodiversity: Discovering the Extraordinary Gifts of Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, and other Brain Differences*, that listed the positive aspects of neurodivergence and why such diagnosis has historically been misrepresented (Armstrong, 2010). Finally, since the 2000s to the present, legislative and policy advocacy have sought to influence education, employment, and societal understanding and inclusion on neurodiversity due to the growing internet and rise of online communities that made connection and activism more feasible (Oliver, 1996; Swain et al., 2003). For example, in 2006,

a group of inclusive individuals founded the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network and started to promote the voices of autistic people and include them into policy and other relevant discussions (ASAN, n.d.).

Collectively, those factors led to an increase in public awareness with neurodivergent experiences, valuing them, and normalizing them since social norms were challenged. Finally, the neurodiversity movement is adapting to the modern world and working towards a more open and understanding society, accepting all types of people. These individuals and organizations have significantly contributed to the development of the neurodiversity movement, which is now promoting acceptance and inclusion.

Core Principles and Beliefs of the Neurodiversity Movement

The fundamental core principles and beliefs of the neurodiversity movement constitute an ideological framework that opposes conventional neurodevelopmental conditions views. Ultimately, the movement is based on the idea that neurodivergent individuals should be recognized, valued, and celebrated for their uniqueness as a fundamental aspect of human diversity. As a result, conditions such as autism, ADHD, and other neurocognitive differences may be conceptualized merely as natural human variability. These principles are particularly opposed to prevailing pathologizing attitudes that have long subjected neurodivergent people to stigma and exclusion in society (Masataka, 2017; Patten, 2022).

The primary precept of the neurodiversity movement is the concept of understanding and acceptance. In this context, campaigners argue that neurodivergence should not be seen solely as a medical issue or a shortage orientation model but instead as a unique perspective-based perspective. The hope is that fostering a perspective that recognizes and appreciates the

distinctive viewpoints and abilities of neurodivergent people will aid in the creation of a more accepting and well-informed cultural mindset (Murthi et al., 2023).

Furthermore, it dismisses the widespread view of a single normal or neurotypical experience. Instead, it is recognized that there are various methods to engage and relate to the world, each with strengths and weaknesses. Critical to these principles is the allowance of neurodivergent-oriented professions, which encompass methods people with diverse neurotypes interact with in various settings. This might include autistic performance, ADHD-regulated attention, and sensory processing perspectives (Kashefimehr et al., 2018; Heffron et al., 2019; Holler et al., 2021; Sheth et al., 2021; Shore et al., 2020).

Critiques and Debates on Implementing Neurodiversity Principles

Despite provoking discussions and advocating for neurodivergent self-understanding and acceptance, the neurodiversity movement is a subject of many controversies. One criticism of the neurodiversity movement is that the movement risks the oversimplification of the complex, multifaceted difficulties of individuals diagnosed with neurodevelopmental disabilities (Nelson, 2021). It is claimed that just focusing on defining the differences as a simple variation does not support targeted intervention when necessary.

Another criticism is the potential exclusion of certain voices, especially those with more serious conditions, from the movement's framework (Russell, 2020). The analysis through a critical perspective is based on the contra-medicalization of neurodiversity (Chapman & Bovell, 2022; Kapp, 2019; Kreck, 2013). Neurodiversity criticizes the medical model and questions why this model is still used when considering how we base the diagnosis of these individuals. This framework also raises concern over giving consent, especially among persons who cannot effectively communicate (Russell, 2020).

The educational context is filled with criticism such as low awareness among educators, resistance to change, resource constraints, sticking to the traditional method, social stigma, and inconsistency in the implementation of neurodiversity practices across school systems (Acevedo & Nusbaum 2020; Clouder et. al, 2020; Smagorinsky, 2020). These criticisms create a broad and multifaceted frame that may create an imperfect framework in the neurodiversity movement. The discussion should be perfectly nuanced to achieve a balance between celebrating neurodiversity and overcoming unique challenges.

The Importance of Neurodiversity Affirming Programs & How This Falls Within Occupational Therapists' Scope of Practice

Children with varying neurotypes transition into adulthood where their sense of self will have been partially molded by their educational experiences. Misunderstanding neurodivergent individuals' needs at a young age can impact their transition into adulthood. It has been found that individuals with learning disabilities struggle with underemployment and have a higher exposure to the criminal justice system because of inadequate education in childhood (Aro et al., 2018). This problem can be traced back to how the American education system does not understand neurodiversity, as it designates students as typical and atypical learners (Aro et al., 2018; Smagorinsky, 2020). With this lack of understanding, those labeled atypical are not given adequate, high-quality education. In many American public schools, students with atypical cognitive performance are commonly isolated from their peers. Americans lack the fundamental right to education, and it is considered permissible to provide every child with an unequal education if it is deemed, according to their standards, that they have made acceptable progress (Vishwanath, 2020). This deficits-based approach does not allow the child to capitalize on their

strengths. Providing the same educational standards for all students maximizes every student's potential. This approach promotes neurodiversity. This approach acknowledges that not maximizing the child's capabilities harms the individual students and can impact society when they transition to adulthood (Ball, 2018).

Being a student is considered a child's primary occupation; the school system is formative of who they believe they are and become. Right now, neurodiverse students are not receiving equal educational opportunities that promote their physical and mental health and well-being. According to AOTA (2016), school-based occupational therapists use meaningful activities (occupations) to help children and youth maximize participation. Occupational therapists address physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and sensory components as they apply to academics, play and leisure, social participation, self-care skills (Activities of Daily Living or “ADLs”), and transition/work skills in the school setting. It falls within occupational therapy’s scope to ensure a child is receiving a strength-based educational experience. To ensure the strength-based approach is met, activity/environmental analysis is performed, along with modifications to reduce the barriers to participation (Dallman et al., 2022). Occupational therapists can take advantage of the crucial need for neurodiverse individuals to be understood in an educational setting (Dallman et al., 2022). We can pursue leadership roles and develop educational programs that foster the child's ability to succeed outside societal constructs.

Current State of Educational Programs for Neurodivergent Individuals & How Occupational Therapists Can Take an Innovative Lead in Building Neurodiverse-Affirming Schools & Programs

Many schools follow the medical or behavioral model, which is used to determine whether kids are eligible for special education services. These models measure a child's

behavioral and intellectual ability with standardized testing compared to neurotypical peers (Courchesne et al., 2019; Courchesne et al., 2015). Believed standards for normal neurological functioning categorize individuals falling within these standards as neurotypical, while neurodivergence describes a deviation in mental or neurological functioning from the perceived typical, despite standardized testing procedures being the same for both groups (Pellicano & haunting, 2021; Marnell, 2023). There is no presumed competence of the child in this model. As more research comes out for neurodivergent individuals, we see that students need accommodations and testing not molded around the neuro-typical brain (Pryal, 2023). When testing with accommodations was presented to neurodivergent children, they met the testing standards or excelled beyond (Courchesne et al., 2019; Courchesne et al., 2015). Often, without proper accommodations to meet many neurodivergent children's needs or abilities, they are taught in classrooms below their proper intellectual level without consideration of their capabilities (de Schipper et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2023; Meilleur et al., 2015). Capitalizing on their strengths while assessing them can lead to a better educational experience for these students (Dunn, 2017). For neurodivergent students, meeting the students where they are and defining their needs before developing an academic program is crucial. Their occupational performance as a student relies on their social-emotional well-being, including relationships with teachers (Smagorinsky, 2020). Throughout educational research, it is noted that when schools prioritize and value relationships, developing agency, students begin to understand and manage their behavior in a more regulated manner. When schools create inclusive environments, and finally when inclusive teaching strategies become embedded, academic outcomes and participation is improved (Mirfin-Veitch et al., 2020). Classroom interventions that included play activities,

building interpersonal relationships, and special programs showed a statistically significant improvement in students' executive functioning (Naples, 2019).

Knowing this information can guide program development at the classroom and school levels. The regular misunderstanding of the neurodivergent student population by academic staff highlights the need for improved training, particularly through the involvement of self-advocates in the neurodivergent community (Patten, 2022). We can move towards the universal design learning approach as we recognize everyone as having unique needs. Through research, it has been found that universal design implementation can help students who have difficulty feel supported academically (Clouder et al., 2020). Some neurodivergent students believe that if universal design could be mainstreamed, it could benefit all students, which would avoid labeling and segregation of differently-abled neurodiverse students (Clouder et al., 2020).

Occupational therapists often take a strengths-based approach by promoting clients' strengths to help them be as functionally independent as possible. With this in consideration, there is a role for OTs (Occupational Therapy) as leaders in program development in supporting the strengths of neurodivergent individuals. With the creation of guidelines reviewed by autistic advocates, staff and specialists (that could include OTs) should be able to develop better educational programs and schools that cater to the needs of neurodivergent students (ASAN, n.d.; Marnell, 2023; TNC, 2022b). Understanding the skill sets and training staff need to support neurodivergent individuals can in turn support students root their education based on strengths. From a neurodiverse-affirming standpoint, you can build confident and capable children who will believe they can flourish without fitting into standardized norms (Clouder et al. 2020; Smagorinsky, 2020).

Future Directions and Areas for Further Research

As future research directions in neurodiversity also promise discoveries, they can significantly expand on the current model, and new findings can lead to better outcomes for neurodivergent individuals. The study of long-term educational effects that encompass academic success and post-secondary studies may enable intervention. Teacher training programs for inclusion that focus on neurodiversity may lead to changes in classroom management and school climate.

Other areas for development include neurodivergent mental health and employment experience and their intersectionality. Moreover, it is also vital to explore the role of the parents, the experiences of neurodivergent children in higher education, and the influence of advocacy efforts on societal perceptions. Research on the community and the justice system's interaction with neurodiversity, the integration of neurodiversity principles into safeguarding design and utilizing new technologies for diverse requirements is also necessary. These activities are all designed to improve understanding, develop inclusive behavior, and promote a framework for supporting neurodiversity.

Conclusion and Summary

Finally, neurodiversity opens a multilayered tapestry of historical and modern contexts, beliefs and implementation ideas, challenges, reshaping education, and possible developments. Throughout history, several milestones point at a unique path of evolution of the neurodiversity movement. It became widely recognized at the end of the 20th and only recently went mainstream, with organized efforts to introduce new ideas and arrangements in society. The key beliefs and principles based on learning to accept and understand neurodivergent people, rejecting traditional deficit-based ideas and implementation of inclusive approaches. However, there are wide-ranging challenges at all levels, as implementation is impossible because of

limited professional awareness and insufficient training and subsidies, while integrating different schools and universities is challenging due to social stigma. Education achieved better valuations in terms of awareness, professional awareness, and more technology-friendly, but it has a long way to develop and improve.

Future directions highlight new areas where more research and practice are necessary to promote generations of neurodiverse people towards maturity. These areas range from long-term education, training, teacher education, mental health, work, and multi-faceted community involvement. Ultimately, understanding the complexity of the situation and advocating for neurodiversity is the task for everyone.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Site Description: The Hirsch Academy

Located in Atlanta, GA, the Hirsch Academy shines as a landmark of inclusive education, dedicated to encouraging the growth of specialized skills through a comprehensive method. The Hirsch Academy is one of the industry pioneers in neurodiversity-affirming methodologies in practice while integrating more customized education and well-rounded provision into special education. The central precept of The Hirsch Academy is to allow neurodiverse students to flourish actively and feel supported to be themselves. Inspired by the tenets of justice, inclusion, and differentiation, the school aims go beyond practical success and prolonged satisfaction for its students.

Students Served

Hirsch Academy aims to serve a diverse population including individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, sensory processing

disorders, and other related neurodevelopmental differences and mental health conditions. Hirsch Academy recognizes each student possesses strengths, difficulties, and varying styles of learning. With this knowledge, their student body is provided with comprehensive education tailored to meet everyone's need.

Program Offerings

Hirsch Academy's program is multifaceted program designed to address the needs of neurodivergent learners. The holistic program includes academic instruction, social/emotional development along with therapeutic interventions. The Hirsch Academy's curriculum is carefully developed to foster holistic growth and academic success.

Academic Instruction:

The school's academic curriculum is characterized by its flexibility, individualization, and evidence-based practices. Utilizing a strengths-based approach, educators provide differentiated instruction techniques to accommodate diverse learning profiles and maximize student engagement.

Therapeutic Interventions:

In collaboration with multidisciplinary teams, the Hirsch Academy offers a range of therapeutic interventions aimed at supporting students' social, emotional, and sensory development. Occupational therapy and counseling services are seamlessly integrated into the academic environment to address the diverse needs of students.

Capstone Business Plan Development

The main goal of this project is to create a business plan, based on the input and feedback of occupational therapists and self-advocates, for opening schools that provide affirmation on the concepts of neurodiversity. There is a demand for such a product, because educational institutions are not developed based on affirming neurodiversity. The business plan reflects all stages in the opening of schools on neurodiversity. It serves as a steppingstone to implement best practices in fostering a neurodiversity-affirming environment within educational institutions.

Business Plan Development Process

The development process comprised three primary phases: the pre-development phase, the development phase, and the review and revision phase. More specifically, in the pre-development phase, I conducted a needs assessment, reviewed the literature, and researched the best practices, and the desired area of concern. Regardless, throughout the process, I increasingly integrated critical research and evidence-based practice to achieve a facilitating school culture.

In the development phase, I included categorization of strategies into a business plan to help in developing and sustaining neurodiversity affirming schools. The business plan outlines how to incorporate curriculum implementation and staff training in creating a conducive inclusive learning environment for all. Review and revision involved obtaining critical review from a panel that included mentors, critical support, and self-advocates. The overall project's timeline involved crucial milestones for each phase to ensure a systematic and holistic development process.

The next step is to share the business plan with relevant bodies such as policymakers, self-advocates, and other stakeholders. The following is a statement of methodology, guiding principles, and the development's trajectory action that this section sought to achieve.

Outline of Neurodiversity-Affirming Business Plan

The business plan is a detailed document developed to attain the goal of the establishment of neurodiversity-affirming schools and guidelines for all therapists and school staff. It is designed to include a strategic framing that features the executive summary, market analysis, business model, operations plan, marketing strategies, and an implementation plan. This business plan will prioritize the establishment of inclusive education and curriculums for all neurodivergent students and the accompanying services. The EMPOWER Model, disablement and rehabilitation models, and the special service characteristics support the realization and implementation of neurodiversity-affirming activities to uphold inclusive education and rehabilitate neurodivergent people.

Outline for the Development Phase of the Neurodiversity-Affirming Business Plan

I. Executive Summary

- A. Overview of the Business Plan
- B. Mission Statement
- C. Vision Statement
- D. Goals and Objectives

II. Introduction

- A. Background of Neurodiversity-Affirming Schools
- B. Rationale for the Business Plan

- C. Significance of Neurodiversity in Education

III. Market Analysis

- A. Target Audience (Neurodivergent Students and Their Families)
- B. Competitor Analysis
- C. Demographic Analysis
- D. Trends and Opportunities in Neurodiversity Education

IV. Operations Plan

- A. School Structure and Staffing
- B. Curriculum Development
- C. Inclusive Teaching Practices
- D. Support Services for Neurodivergent Students

V. Marketing and Outreach

- A. Branding and Positioning
- B. Outreach Strategies
- C. Community Engagement
- D. Awareness Campaigns

VI. Business Model

- A. Funding and Financial Projections
- B. Partnerships and Collaborations
- C. Risk Management

VII. Implementation Timeline

- A. Phases of School Establishment
- B. Key Milestones

- C. Launch and Rollout Strategy

IX. Conclusion

- A. Recap of Business Plan
- B. Call to Action

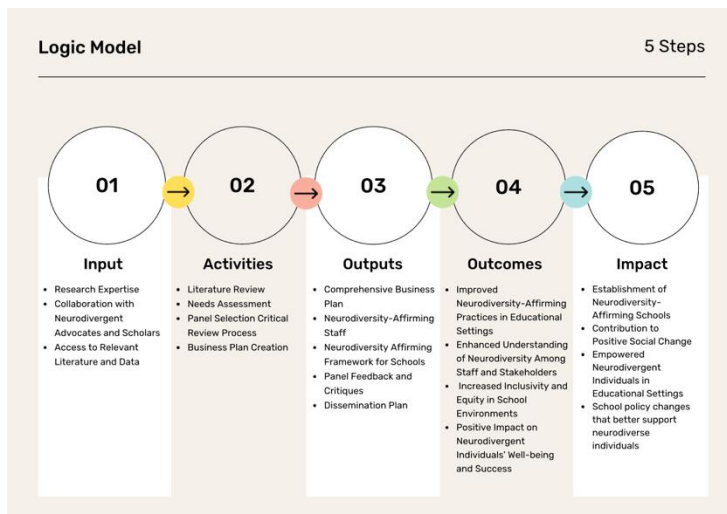
Plan for Critical Review

The third phase of the Neurodiversity-Affirming Business Plan project is review and revision. The current stage is critical, as it takes a comprehensive approach to gathering feedback to ensure the quality of the project. The panel, which includes capstone committee members, neurodiversity-experts, self-advocates, and professionals from different fields, is designed to assess the quality of the project thoroughly. The feedback process is supported by a critical review questionnaire specifically developed for the current review. The questionnaire is cautiously developed to cover several aspects, including project organization, accuracy, relevance, and validity. The questionnaire combines fixed responses and free response to ensure nuanced evaluation. The questionnaire provides participants with fixed responses ranging from ‘shows satisfactory (3/3)’, ‘needs improvement (2/3)’, ‘unsatisfactory (1/3),’ and an additional space to leave comments for a more detailed response. Some frameworks such as the AGREE II reporting checklist and the Evidence-Based Practice Process Quality Assessment that supports the quality and standard form overall assessment were considered in developing the critical appraisal form. Please refer to Appendix A: Critical Appraisal Form and Appendix B: Short Answer Form Questionnaire for more detail.

Logic Model

The development of the Neurodiversity-Affirming Business Plan was steered by a logic model that was adapted from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s framework for action-oriented planning. The logic model, as shown in Figure 1, considers inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts in a systematic way to help plan the project on creating a business plan that will contribute to actualizing neurodiversity-affirming schools. The inputs into the project included the expertise of the student researcher, collaboration with neurodivergent advocates and scholars, relevant literature and data, and the support of the capstone committee among others, in addition to the time invested in project preparation and implementation. The primary output of the project is a completed business plan aimed at establishing and promoting neurodiversity-affirming schools. The outcomes to be achieved include increased use of effective neurodiversity-affirming best practices in schools, increased knowledge and awareness about neurodiversity by school staff and other stakeholders, enhanced inclusion and social justice in the school context, and an overall positive implication for the well-being and academic success of neurodivergent students.

Figure 1



Conclusion

The current project is designed to develop a full-scale business plan to meet the urgent need for neurodiversity-affirming practices in educational settings. Based on the fundamentals of the neurodiversity movement, the project presents a business start-up that supports the development of neurodiversity-affirming schools and creates practical guidelines for therapists and other staff in schools for best practices in this area. Three phases of research, stakeholder interviews, and literature reviews were organized into a comprehensive methodological approach. The result is an effective resource compliant with the pre-discussed principles of the neurodiversity movement designed to help create a strength-based educational environment.

Chapter 4: Output for Program Development in a Neurodiversity-Affirming School

In the process of establishing a neurodiversity-affirming school, the program's design and implementation are pivotal for fostering an inclusive and supportive environment. This chapter delineates the schedule, curriculum framework, integration of movement, and necessary training to actualize the ethos of neurodiversity affirmation within the educational setting.

Schedule

The time schedule of the neurodiversity-affirming school involves the following: a day will be shortened by one hour and three-quarters from a typical school day and will begin at 9:15 and end at 3. This way, the schema considers neurodivergent learners' needs and aims to ensure maximum engagement and decrease fatigue. Academic blocks will last for 45 minutes, which will contribute to shorter periods for students to focus on one area of content. Additionally,

frequent breaks for physical movement will also be scheduled throughout the day. Daily fitness and yoga will be a part of an average school day, complemented by weekly swimming and hiking for kinesthetic learning.

Curriculum

The main component of the neurodiversity-affirming curriculum is combining core academic subjects with elective fields that correspond to the students' wide range of interests and learning styles. The basic curriculum is condensed into 45-minute segments that meticulously cover all the necessary subjects, including math, language arts, science, and social studies. Such a system permits comprehensive learning while at the same time allowing students the necessary “taking a break” time during its lessons. However, learning does not end there, as students are encouraged to take philosophy and other elective courses that actively shape one’s intellectual area. It is through a rich network of electives that the school validates individuality, talent, and passion in its students, creating a culture of respect and mutual empowerment.

Movement Integration

Understanding the symbiotic relationship between physical movement and cognition, the neurodiversity-affirming school will include physical activity in the students’ routine. Movement breaks after regular intervals of academic instruction help revive the mental faculties and stabilize the senses. Such a variety of physical activity helps in creating an ideal set-up for learning among neurodivergent students. Fitness lessons and yoga classes, both to be taught every day, optimize health and emotional balance. Eventually, neurodivergent individuals will develop the resilience and self-regulation skills necessary for fitting in with different

environments, such as the school compound. In addition to these daily activities, the students will also have weekly excursions, such as swimming and hiking, which allow for movement and sensory experience in real settings. These types of firsthand experiences also create a sense of connection to the environment, essential for holistic development.

Training and Seminars

Training, seminars, and professional development are integral components ensuring the successful implementation of the neurodiversity-affirming approach. Specifically, seminars related to neurodiversity, sensory support, social-emotional learning, and co-regulation raise educators', support staff's awareness, and provide them with knowledge to create the conditions for an inclusive educational process.

Additional seminars relevant to neurodiversity, such as assistive technology and trauma-informed practices, will further support meeting students' needs. Thus, the school invests in consistently effective training and professional growth to pursue school-wide empathy, understanding, and equity. In conclusion, the program development output is a thorough treatment schedule, curriculum framework, movement integration aspect, and targeted training program. Facilitated through holistic individual conditions, the neurodiversity-affirming school aims to help neurodivergent students succeed academically and socially.

The Business Plan

In conclusion, the business plan for a neurodiversity-affirming school covers a wide range of elements that constitute a comprehensive model. The business plan includes the business model, business structure, staffing, and operational strategy. The model is made up of

value proposition, revenue streams, customer segments, and cost structure. The business structure is composed of legal and organizational frameworks, key personnel profiles, and staffing plan, considering the diversity of the student body. Lastly, it has a comprehensive operational strategy, including facility management, production processes, inventory, and quality control. The marketing and sales strategy have market analysis, branding, customer relations, and sales. Financial forecasting and risk mitigation demonstrate the school's business model sustainability and its risk survivability. The information will help guide the implementing principles of developing a neurodiversity-inclusive facility to make academic achievement more equitable and inclusive. See Business Plan in Appendix C for more information.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Impact

Important Results and Outputs in Context of Research Question

The framework developed for neurodiversity-affirming schools is an important and original contribution to OT and educational literature. By utilizing information from the literature review and contributions from other existing programs, this project helps to bridge a critical gap in literature on how to build a supportive learning environment for neurodivergent students. The framework offers an outline for educators and other stakeholders, and it equips them with tools necessary to learn, accept, and celebrate neurodiversity within a school.

From an OT perspective, the framework is consistent with the profession's philosophy by helping promote inclusivity and participation. It also speaks to the need for OT principles to inform best practices in education and recognizes that the occupation of being a student is fundamental to well-being, engagement, and participation, and it is particularly vital for students with learning differences. Finally, the focus on creating positive environments and nurturing

strengths is aligned with OT's emphasis on well-being and the importance of a holistic view of health.

Impacts

The commitment to the neurodiversity-affirming framework in an educational setting in the short term will bring immediate results. This includes more awareness and knowledge about neurodiversity on the part of educators who will also offer adequate support to neurodivergent students and establish inclusive learning environments. Thus, integrating neurodiversity principles in classroom activities, educational policies and school culture implies that educators can meet the diverse needs of neurodivergent students. Further, systemic change will be achieved through this process.

The goal is for schools to continuously implement the proposed business plan and framework through professional development opportunities and partnerships with self-advocates and other stakeholders. As such, the neurodiversity-affirming practices will be integrated within school policies, programs, and curricula. In return, such a move will not only benefit neurodivergent students but will also foster an environment of diversity, equity, and inclusion across the entire school.

Long-Term Impacts

The long-term implementation of the neurodiversity-affirming framework will have lasting impacts on students' self-worth and the development of new programs. Neurodivergent students who are supported by neurodiversity-affirming schools will have improved academic success, self-esteem, and quality of life. By allowing neurodivergent individuals to thrive in learning environments, the framework will foster success that could have positive ripple effects throughout their lifetime and help ensure inclusion in society. Additionally, the framework's best

practices and lessons learned can be used to create other frameworks in which similar programs could be integrated in the education system, hence, societal transformation.

Limitations

While a neurodiversity-affirmative approach to education has many possibilities for implementation and may have far-reaching implications, there are some limitations to this framework. Chiefly, the needs and preferences of neurodivergent individuals may be too diverse to easily prevent them from fully forming these students. Secondly, there will be resource limitations, institutional boundaries, and overall resistance to change in many educational institutions that could prevent a wide-scale implementation of social concepts of neurodiversity. Overcoming these limitations will heavily rely on advocating for systemic change and forming collaborative and inclusive frameworks that would benefit all students.

Sustainability Plan / Implementation Plan

Training Needed for Professionals

To ensure successful implementation of the neurodiversity-affirming framework, ongoing training and professional development opportunities are essential for educators, therapists, and other stakeholders. Training programs should focus on enhancing understanding of neurodiversity, cultivating inclusive teaching practices, and fostering collaboration among multidisciplinary teams.

Generalizability

While the neurodiversity-affirming framework is developed with specific considerations for educational settings, its principles and strategies are generalizable across diverse contexts. The framework can be adapted and tailored to meet the unique needs of neurodivergent

individuals in various settings, including healthcare facilities, community organizations, and vocational programs.

Train the Trainers

To facilitate scalability and sustainability, I would recommend utilizing a “train the trainers” model supporting educators and therapists in their institutions to independently share new neurodiversity-affirming approaches. Through training local champions to transfer knowledge and practice skills, this approach is easy to replicate and further sustain at different sites and territories.

Conclusion

To conclude, the neurodiversity-affirming school framework and the approach to its development and implementation have profound implications for occupational therapy practice and the educational sector in general. The focus on the promotion of inclusion, understanding, and support for neurodivergent students closely aligns with OT’s holistic approach to health and well-being. In the future, extensive collaboration, advocacy, and innovation are required to develop neurodiversity-affirming practices further and ensure that all students learn in an inclusive environment.

Please see Appendix C & D for Learning Objectives & Supervision Plan

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Appendix A

Critical Appraisal Form

S = Satisfactory

NI= Needs Improvement

U= Unsatisfactory

#	Guidebook Contents	Expectations	Response
1	Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies project as an evidence-based practice project/guide Indicates the connection to OT practice Succinct and relevant title 	
2	Introduction/Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly describes role and scope of OT Clearly describes population and background information of condition (Ch 2) Identifies occupational impact and implications for OT services 	
3	Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies and supports rationale of project with evidence Clearly elaborates on the purpose and need for project Problem and purpose are supported by evidence and is relevant to OT practice 	
4	Application to Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defines OT theory and connection to project Utilizes the most applicable theoretical model/frame of reference to guide project Correctly utilizes and applies OT theory to population and project 	
5	Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thorough explanation of project plan and process Methodology for guidebook development is accurate and supported by evidence Consistency between envisioned and implemented methodology of project Literature review and data collection are replicable, and process is clearly identified 	
6	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly identifies and categorizes interventions Selects and explains relevant interventions within the scope of OT OT intervention is established and supported through evidence Interventions are holistic, client-centered, and goal-oriented 	
6a	OT Process and Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly identifies and elaborates on the OT process and tools utilized in mental health and SUD settings Selects relevant and accurate evaluation/reevaluation, treatment, and discharge planning tools and resources Provides examples of tools and applicability to population/setting 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project process and structure is easy to follow and replicate 	
6b	Activity/OT Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes the intervention/activity thoroughly Activity and plan for session is clearly described Intervention/activity supports client-driven outcomes, incorporates selected OT theory, and complements the 12-Step Program 	
6c	Supports and Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly describes condition limitations and supports to occupational goals (performance and participation) Consideration of supports and barriers are accurate and relevant to population/client 	
6d	Targeted Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills are clearly identified and addressed accordingly in intervention/step Skills are relevant and commonly addressed in OT intervention for individuals with SUDs. Skills correlate with section and intervention contents 	
6e	Goals/Outcomes Addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals/Outcomes are clearly identified and addressed accordingly Goals are client-centered and S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely) and follow the OT goal COAST format (client, occupation/activity, assistance level, specific condition, and timeline) 	
6f	Activity Modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considers relevant modification/alternatives and thoroughly explains recommendations to accommodate various client-specific conditions Recommendations are achievable and accessible 	
7	Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides prospective steps that are supported by evidence and within the scope of OT practice Envisioned steps are thoroughly explained and rationale for each implication is relevant 	
8	Other Resources and Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides resources, tools, and references that support the development and understanding of the project Resources and tools are accessible and enhance knowledge necessary to support the development of the project 	

Comments (optional):

Please provide any necessary comments pertaining to the Guidebook Short Answer Form above.

Appendix B

Short Answer Form Questionnaire

Organization of Project

Comments: _____

Relevance of Project Content

Comments: _____

Quality of Literature/ Supportive Evidence

Comments: _____

Comprehension and Readability

Comments: _____

Clarity of Project

Comments: _____

Applicability to Population/Profession

Comments: _____

Appendix C

Business Plan for NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy

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I. Executive Summary

Vision Statement: Our mission is to lead the cause of the rights and the dignity of all Neurodiverse learners, creating schools where every learner is respected and included to their full potential.

Mission Statement: Neurodiversity is our core principle. We recognize and respect the unique strengths and viewpoints of each learner. Through the development and dissemination of new, Neurodiversity-inspired educational and assessment practices and tools, we promote and engage the unique strengths, viewpoints, and needs of every Neurodiverse learner. We are more than inclusively accommodating; we cultivate reason, appreciation, and empathy in schools and learners worldwide. We fight for the human right to fair access to education and lead evidence-informed programs. To ensure that Neurodiverse people flourish in an educational environment, growing to their full potential.

Organization Structure: Our school is a 501(c)3 organization, which means that it is a non-profit school devoted to promoting neurodiversity and creating inclusive settings for students. Non-profit organizations are primarily concerned with their mission, rather than making a profit. This format enables our school to focus on the needs of students, support experimental approaches, and fight for equal access to education. We wish to create a difference in the field of education, based on our dedication to the community, respect for the rights of neurodivergent individuals, and desire to make a difference.

Services Provided: Neurodiverse Horizons operates on the calendar common to many schools of 10-month school years. Services include education resource provision, professional development workshops for educators and school personnel, and consultations on organizations' overall implementation of neurodivergence-affirming philosophies.

Leadership: Our leadership team brings experience in occupational therapy and other therapeutic practices, education, and advocacy for inclusive neurodiversity acceptance. Decisions about this company's business direction are made by the company's board of directors.

Location: Atlanta, GA; however, services currently available in other parts of the country via virtual consultations and digital training made accessible to schools.

Financial Information: Tuition forms the primary funding source for our operations, supplemented by grants, private donations, and partnerships with educational organizations dedicated to aiding neurodiversity-affirming practices in schools.

Projected Growth: We anticipate steady growth in demand for our services, aiming for a 10% annual increase in outreach and impact on educational practices nationwide.

II. School Description

Neurodiversity-driven Need: NeuroDiverse Horizon Academy identifies the urgency surrounding necessary reforms for neurodivergent education and is deeply challenging mainstream paradigms tinged with ABA language and medical model lens. These traditional lenses are framed using deficits and encouraging neurodivergent students to discourage behaviors so they may be excluded from academic life (Courchesne et al., 2019; Courchesne et al., 2015). It is important to outline that around 15-20% of the world's population is neurodivergent and many of these individuals face extreme difficulties and obstacles in the academic world that was not designed for them (Pellicano & haunting, 2021; Marnell, 2023).

At NeuroDiverse Horizon Academy, there is a persistent emphasis on strengths rather than deficits and behaviors are recognized as a form of communication that should be responded to appropriately. We would like nearly half of our staff to be neurodivergent, and we also have a unique perspective where inclusivity, connectivity, safety, and programming link to a fully robust curriculum. The Common Core curriculum, given within the scope of classes in STEAM, philosophy, blog writing, and neuroscience, provides power and inspiration for students allowing stimulating hard work and increasing critical thought and self-advocacy.

Our institution serves as a model of Neurodiversity Affirming education, standing among fewer than ten such schools globally. We actively engage with educational institutions and communities nationwide, sharing our neurodiversity-affirming paradigm to reshape the narrative of neurodivergent education (de Schipper et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2023; Meilleur et al., 2015). With the neurodivergent population steadily increasing, estimated at over 50,000 children in Metropolitan Atlanta alone (CDC, 2023), we recognize the urgent need for transformative solutions.

As the number of students in special education continues to rise, reaching almost 7.3 million in the 2021-22 school year, our institution remains dedicated to challenging barriers to success for neurodivergent students nationwide (NCES). Our mission extends beyond Metro Atlanta and the East Coast, aiming to redefine neurodivergent education for generations to come. By fostering an environment of presumed competence and embracing the unique strengths of each neurodivergent learner, we strive to create a future where all students have access to the transformative power of education.

Population Served: Neurodiverse Academy serves individuals from the neurodivergent spectrum, including ASD, ADHD, dyslexia, and related neurological variations, living in the greater Atlanta area. Our programs serve children and adolescents in K-8th grade, as we understand that people face different challenges and require varying levels of assistance at any given stage in their lives (Davidson et al., 2019; Lawson et al., 2021). The assessments will be conducted in diverse settings that examine aspects ranging from social interactions to academic difficulties, allowing for the implementation of interventions that address the specific learning terms.

Competitive Advantage: Our school is home to a diverse, inclusive, and highly professional team of educators, occupational therapists, consultants, and other specialists in the field. While traditional educational approaches focus on a learner's limitations, our school adopts a neurodiversity-affirming perspective, recognizing that there are strengths and capacities within every brain that enhance the learning process (Anderson et al., 2020; Davidson et al., 2019). Our thoughtful approach is sensitive to the diverse sensory, cognitive, and emotional needs and profiles of neurodivergent students and provides customized education services that enhance self-esteem, self-determination, and meaningful participation. By prioritizing awareness and inclusivity, our school strives to set a new standard of educational quality in the field of neurodevelopment.

III. Market Analysis

Size of the Market: The demand for specialized educational services tailored to neurodivergent individuals is steadily increasing as awareness grows about the unique challenges they face (Anderson et al., 2020; Davidson et al., 2019). Within the greater Atlanta area, encompassing Fulton County, there exists a significant population of neurodivergent individuals requiring support. According to recent data, approximately 25,000 individuals in Fulton County are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), with similar prevalence rates for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia (CDC, 2023). Moreover, the prevalence of neurodivergent traits is expected to rise, necessitating increased access to specialized services (Davidson et al., 2019). Neurodiverse Academy anticipates serving a fraction of this population directly; however, we aim to consult with schools in the area and across the country to develop similar models and expand the reach of neurodiversity-affirming educational interventions.

Customer Segments and Buying Patterns: Neurodiverse Academy caters to neurodivergent students from kindergarten through 8th grade, with classrooms designed to accommodate 4-5 students per class. As a specialized educational institution, our primary focus is on providing tailored learning experiences for neurodivergent individuals. Given the unique nature of our educational model, Neurodiverse Academy operates as a private institution, relying on tuition fees as the primary source of funding.

The demographic profile of the metro Atlanta area, with a median household income of \$77,635, suggests a viable market for our services (United States Census Bureau, 2022). Families seeking specialized educational programs for their neurodivergent children, along with individuals interested in supporting inclusive educational practices, constitute our target customer base. Our school offers personalized, evidence-based interventions aimed at promoting academic growth, social-emotional development, and independence among neurodivergent students.

Neurodiverse Academy's usual enrollment is within the school year, and most families subscribe to a more extended academic partnership for their students. These programs are designed to meet the diverse needs of neurodivergent students, from full-day programs to regularly scheduled two to three-hour sessions, and our varied scheduling preferences are specifically designed for our clientele (Davidson et al., 2019). Neurodiverse Academy's student-to-teacher ratio has always been preserved to allow personal attention and meaningful training.

Competition and Barriers to Entry: There are few existing specialized educational services for neurodivergent in the metro Atlanta area. Although several general education schools provide services for children with learning difficulties, none of them has one specialization in the special needs of neurodiverse. The overall environment is reasonably competitive, with several schools operating for some time. These schools offer programs or approaches that compete with our offerings. To stand out, our strength-based, neurodiversity-affirming philosophy will be at the forefront of our marketing. The prime differentiator would be Neurodiverse Academy's holistic education philosophy that aims to address the needs of all neurodivergent students. Some of the barriers to entry include development costs, competition from existing educational institutions, and low recognition of the benefits of neurodiversity-affirming education. We can overcome these barriers by implementing aggressive marketing strategies that will include reaching out to communities and constant reaffirmation of the benefits of diversity.

IV. Organizational Structure & Management

Division of Responsibilities: The governing board will oversee strategic direction and governance, while the administrators will manage day-to-day operations and instructional leadership. Clear lines of accountability will ensure effective management and oversight.

Board of Directors:

- **Chairperson:** The Chairperson leads the board meetings, sets the agenda, and ensures that the board operates effectively to fulfill its duties and responsibilities.

- **Treasurer:** The Treasurer oversees the financial management of the school, including budgeting, financial reporting, and financial planning.
- **Secretary:** The Secretary maintains records of board meetings, handles correspondence, and ensures that all legal requirements are met.
- **Education Advisor:** The Education Advisor provides insights and guidance on educational policies, curriculum development, and instructional strategies to align with neurodiversity-affirming principles.
- **Community Liaison:** The Community Liaison fosters relationships with parents, students, staff, and external stakeholders to promote collaboration and community engagement.
- **Legal Counsel:** The Legal Counsel provides legal expertise and guidance on matters related to compliance, contracts, policies, and risk management to ensure that the school operates within legal boundaries and protects its interests.

School Administration:

- **Executive Director:** The Executive Director provides visionary leadership, oversees the overall operation of the school, and ensures adherence to the school's mission and values.
- **Director of Operations:** The Director of Operations manages the day-to-day business functions of the school, including facilities management, human resources, and logistical coordination.
- **School Counselor:** The School Counselor provides emotional and academic support to students, conducts individual and group counseling sessions, and collaborates with teachers and parents to address students' needs.

Academic Team:

- **Academic Coordinator:** The Academic Coordinator develops and implements the school's curriculum, oversees instructional practices, and supports teachers in creating inclusive learning environments.
- **Lead Teachers:** Lead Teachers are responsible for designing and delivering instruction, assessing student progress, and fostering a supportive and engaging classroom environment.
- **Academic Regulation Specialists:** Academic Regulation Specialists play a crucial role in supporting students' regulation, while also focusing on developing executive functioning skills such as organization and time management. They also work closely with students to provide individualized accommodations that support academic success.
- **Reading Specialist:** The Reading Specialist designs and implements literacy interventions, assesses students' reading abilities, and provides targeted instruction to support reading development.
- **Art Specialist:** The Art Specialist designs and facilitates creative art experiences, promotes self-expression, and integrates art into the curriculum to enhance learning and engagement.
- **Movement Specialist:** The Movement Specialist develops and implements movement-based activities, promotes physical well-being, and integrates

movement breaks into the daily schedule to support student attention and regulation.

Each role plays a crucial part in creating a nurturing and inclusive learning environment where neurodivergent students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Collaboration among the board, administration, and academic team ensures that the school operates efficiently and effectively to fulfill its mission of providing neurodiversity-affirming education.

Human Resources Plan:

The Staffing Plan identifies that NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy will require a dedicated team of educators, therapists, and support staff to address the needs of a diverse student population. An organizational chart will provide information on the reporting structures and key positions. The goal in hiring will be based more on the individual's willingness to learn and accept neurodiversity versus their educational background.

Organizational Plan outlines

Key Qualifications of School Leader: The initial school leader will have strong expertise in special education, instructional leadership, and substantial experience understanding neurodiversity.

Recruitment Plans: The expectation is that the recruitment strategy will aim to attract well-qualified administrators, teachers and aides, and staff sharing mission values. The focus will be placed on relationships with universities and professional organizations to attract personnel.

Staff Feedback and Evaluation: Comprehensive feedback and evaluation mechanisms will be implemented to support professional growth and ensure high-quality instruction and support services.

Job Descriptions:**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** - Full-Time Position \$70,000**Reports to:** Board of Directors**Degree Required:** Masters**Public Relations and Fundraising:**

- Represent Neurodiverse Academy to local, regional, and national organizations, building relationships to educate about our program.
- Forge partnerships with businesses and organizations supporting our students/families, seeking sponsorship opportunities and guest speakers.
- Coordinate strategic fundraising efforts, collaborating closely with the Director of Finance and Operations and the Board.

Awareness, Education, and Community Outreach:

- Host biennial conferences, fostering community partnerships and forums with professionals, parents, and educators.
- Lead social media platforms to educate the community, coordinate presentations, and develop marketing materials.
- Conduct school tours, participate in parent nights, and oversee promotional activities.

School Structure, Organization, and Development:

- Maintain high visibility within the school, overseeing recruitment and retention efforts for staff and students.
- Recruit professionals for staff development, explore relationships with self-advocates for guidance and oversight.
- Supervise the Academic Coordinator, schedule tours, and attend all board meetings.

Personnel and Family Relations:

- Manage personnel decisions in collaboration with the Academic Coordinator, ensuring adherence to Neurodiverse Academy's values.
- Facilitate training protocols that align with our mission and values.
- Communicate with parents, provide support, and lead brainstorming sessions to address challenges.
- Participate in the interview process for prospective students and parents, recommending admission decisions.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS- Full Time Position \$50,000**Reports to:** Board of Directors**Degree Required:** Bachelors**Human Resources and Administrative Duties:**

- Develop and maintain human resource policies and procedures in compliance with legal requirements.
- Collaborate with the Executive Director on hiring processes and distribute employment contracts to staff.

- Conduct staff orientation and training on school procedures.
- Maintain personnel records, including leave and time records, for staff and substitutes.
- Manage student records and emergency information sheets.
- Coordinate parent conferences and school communication.
- Assist with scheduling and coordination of substitute teachers.
- Oversee the daily operations of the school office, including telephone calls, visitor screening, and carpool assistance.
- Maintain school literature and communication materials.

Facilities Management:

- Supervise the maintenance of the school's grounds.
- Ensure compliance with safety codes and regulations.
- Oversee maintenance and service contracts with providers.
- Coordinate campus master planning and capital campaign requirements.
- Develop and maintain preventive maintenance schedules.

Risk Management and Safety:

- Ensure compliance with health and safety codes and regulations.
- Monitor safety systems and conduct fire and emergency drills.
- Conduct risk management analyses and maintain appropriate insurance policies.
- Advise the Executive Director and Board of Directors on safety and legal matters.

Financial Duties:

- Manage tuition billing and accounts receivable.
- Order and maintain supplies and materials within budgetary constraints.
- Oversee classroom and therapeutic discipline budgets.
- Assist with fundraising events and grant applications.

ACADEMIC COORDINATOR - Full Time Position \$50,000

Reports to: Executive Director

Degree Required: Masters

Curriculum Development and Oversight:

- Develop, refine, and organize academic, movement, and communication curricula.
- Establish record-keeping systems and facilitate information sharing among staff.
- Ensure compliance with accreditation requirements and educational standards.
- Coordinate professional development and supervision for staff and interns.
- Conduct training sessions for parents/families and coordinate staff development.
- Collaborate with the Executive Director to create new programs for the community.

Student and Staff Scheduling:

- Create individual and master student schedules based on student needs and staff expertise.
- Design policies and protocols to support the school's mission.
- Order materials necessary for implementing individualized academic curricula.

- Supervise assistant teachers and interns, if applicable.

Parent and Community Relations:

- Oversee a designated group of students/families.
- Communicate regularly with parents, providing updates and reminders.
- Conduct parent conferences and meetings to discuss student progress and program content.
- Participate in the interview process for incoming students and assess learning needs.

Outreach and Training:

- Participate in community outreach events and provide training and consultations to schools and organizations.
- Stay informed about the latest research and attend conferences, workshops, and seminars.
- Coordinate and support staff and families in understanding and implementing AAC/FC in the classroom and at home.
- Design innovative supports for learning and communication tailored to individual student needs.

LEAD TEACHER- Full Time Position \$40,000

Reports to: Academic Coordinator

Degree Required: Bachelors

Duties:

- Model positive, non-judgmental attitudes and foster strong relationships among staff, students, and families, aligning with our Mission and Core Values.
- Stay responsive to notifications and updates, actively engaging in seminars, meetings, and school events.
- Implement our core philosophies and educational standards, integrating sensory integration, motor skills support, and communication access best practices.
- Develop and implement academic curricula tailored to each subject taught in the classroom, ensuring alignment with student needs.
- Coordinate with staff to set and update student goals throughout the year, preparing progress reports and assessments promptly.
- Manage classroom materials, including ordering and maintaining resources essential for academic curricula.
- Oversee classroom operations, including attendance tracking, supervision of assistant teachers or interns, and ensuring classroom organization and upkeep.

Relationship with Families and Students:

- Oversee designated student/family groups, serving as the primary contact and facilitating communication with parents, Academic Coordinator, Executive Director, and School Counselor as needed.
- Conduct parent conferences to discuss student schedules, goals, and progress, fostering parent involvement in academic and social-emotional growth.

- Participate in student assessments and interviews, collaborating with the Academic Coordinator and Executive Director in the enrollment process.
- Scheduling Students, Staff, and Supports:
- Develop plans for student support during struggles or dysregulation, working closely with the Academic Coordinator and Executive Director.
 - Create and maintain individual student and master schedules, coordinating with staff input and adjusting as needed.
 - Collaborate with lead support to organize holiday celebrations, prepare for absences, and manage substitute teacher arrangements.

Community Outreach:

- Contribute content for yearbooks and social media platforms, showcasing Hirsch Academy approaches, staff, and student achievements.
- Participate in staff and parent training sessions and outreach opportunities with schools and organizations to share expertise and insights.
- Pursue ongoing education through research, literature review, and attendance at relevant conferences and workshops.

ACADEMIC REGULATION ASSISTANT- Full Time Position \$35,000

Reports to: Academic Coordinator

Degree Required: Associates

Duties:

- Assist teachers in implementing individualized academic curricula tailored to each student's needs.
- Implement Neurodiverse Academy's core philosophies, integrating social/emotional thinking, sensory integration, motor skills support, and communication access best practices into daily activities.
- Participate in the procurement of materials necessary for implementing academic curricula, ensuring students have access to essential resources.
- Provide hands-on assistance to students, including regulatory, communicative, sensory, and motor support, as directed by teachers.
- Execute academic plans under the guidance and supervision of Lead Teachers and the Academic Coordinator.
- Attending parent conferences to support student progress and maintain open communication with families.
- Stay informed and responsive to communications from administration, staff, and parents, ensuring timely and professional responses.
- Actively engage in school events, seminars, and training sessions, contributing to ongoing professional development.
- Pursue additional education and training opportunities, staying abreast of the latest research and best practices in neurodiverse education.

- Adhere to school policies, regulations, and all relevant statutes and ordinances governing school operations.

MOVEMENT SPECIALIST- Full Time Position \$35,000**Reports to:** Academic Coordinator**Degree Required:** Associates**Duties:**

- Foster a positive, non-judgmental environment among staff, students, and families, aligning with our Mission and Core Values.
- Stay responsive to notifications and updates, actively engaging in seminars, meetings, and school events.
- Collaborate with Academic Coordinator and Movement Specialist Lead to design individualized wellness plans promoting lifelong appreciation of movement.
- Plan movement sessions to develop gross and fine motor skills while fostering peer connections.
- Provide structured sessions with tailored modifications and variations to meet student needs.
- Support student and school goals collaboratively with staff and contribute to class activities as required.
- Maintain session notes for supervision meetings, grant programs, and end-of-year progress reports.
- Assist in material procurement and attend parent meetings and education sessions as necessary.
- Participate in meetings with Academic Coordinator and colleagues to review sessions and brainstorm ideas.
- Collaborate on scheduling classroom and recess activities to support student needs.
- Provide content for social media platforms to showcase our Academy's approaches, staff, and student achievements.
- Participate in staff and parent training sessions and outreach opportunities with schools and organizations.
- Pursue ongoing education through research, literature review, conferences, workshops, and seminars.

Information for Non-Salaried Contract Workers

Starting from year one, independent contractors will be compensated at a rate of \$18 per hour for substitute roles, while specialists will receive \$50 per hour for their services. This pay structure applies to all independent contractors engaged by the business.

V. Services Provided/Product Line

At our neurodiverse-affirming school, we offer a comprehensive array of services designed to empower the neurodivergent population, as well as educators, administrators, and policymakers in establishing neurodiversity-affirming practices within educational settings. Our specialized interventions are tailored to meet the diverse needs of neurodivergent individuals.

Services at our school include:

Development of Neurodiversity-Affirming Programs: NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy aims to foster academic achievement, social-emotional development, and self-advocacy skills in neurodivergent students.

Staff Training and Professional Development: The continuous feedback and evaluation processes will also inform professional development initiatives and instructional improvement efforts.

Curriculum Design and Adaptation: We select curricula that prioritize differentiation, multisensory learning, and real-world application, ensuring alignment with academic standards and the diverse learning needs of our students.

Inclusive Teaching Strategies and Classroom Interventions: We also utilize a range of strategies and interventions to support students with diverse aptitudes, learning profiles, and prior educational experiences.

Adapted School Calendar and Schedule: The school calendar and daily schedule are designed to optimize learning opportunities, promote routine and predictability, and individualized learning plans. School starts at 9:15 am and ends at 3 pm.

Transformative Education

Innovative Approach: Our academy offers a transformative educational approach that challenges traditional paradigms and emphasizes strengths over deficits.

Inclusive Environment: Students experience an inclusive environment where behaviors are seen as forms of communication, and learning differences are met with tailored support and accommodations.

Comprehensive Curriculum

Interdisciplinary: Include core subjects as well as electives like STEAM, existential and critical philosophy, creative writing, yoga, running, mindfulness, and neuroscience.

Individualized: Students study personal neurology and preferred senses to better achieve success in both academic and personal life.

Community Engagement and Advocacy

Educational Impact: NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy extends its influence by actively engaging with educational institutions and communities, promoting neurodiversity-affirming practices.

Advocacy: We advocate for systemic change to address the barriers faced by neurodivergent individuals in traditional educational settings.

Addressing Prevalence and Risks

Raising Awareness: We tackle the rise in the number of neurodivergent students entering school and, through advocacy, increase the concentration of increased awareness.

Supportive Environment: The overarching goal of the school is to establish a secure and cooperative setting in which neurodivergent students can succeed in academics, socializing, and lived experiences. NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy is dedicated to reimagining the discourse on neurodiversity and enabling each student to hit his or her full potential in a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Our multidisciplinary approach enables educators to create inclusive settings that support all neurodivergent students. We create extensive program outlines, develop resources that fulfill the tenets of neurodiversity, and produce training workshops for educators. We collaborate with people with neurodivergent partners and community to guarantee that they guide our actions. As specialists in building lessons, we have built curricula that cater to varied learning techniques while ensuring engagement.

VI. Facilities Plan

Space Needs:

At NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy, we understand the importance of adequate and amenable space for all our students and staff. Our facilities plan will incorporate the following considerations:

Classroom sizes: Each classroom will have at most five students at any given time to allow for a low student-teacher ratio and individualized instruction. All the rooms will have ample space with soft lighting and plain walls colored to the same color to suit the students' sensory needs. The walls will also be soundproofed to minimize distractions and noises and provide a conducive learning environment.

Therapy rooms and sensory spaces: Our facilities will also have therapy rooms and sensory spaces to meet the learners' unique sensory and therapeutic needs. They will have calming colors, soft lighting, and soundproof walls. The rooms will have automatic handwashing stations, suitable for motor autonomy and hygiene.

Outdoor facilities – Outdoor play is part of our learning philosophy, and we value having an amenable and safe outdoor play area for all our learners. We prioritize the development of a safe and inclusive outdoor play area that encourages physical activity, social interaction, and sensory exploration.

Capital Costs:

NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy has conducted a comprehensive evaluation of capital costs associated with facility development, including:

Technology: We will allocate resources to proper technology infrastructure to facilitate interactive learning experiences and the integration of various assistive technology devices. The technology will include smart boards, installation of computers, and several other communication devices to suit each student's individual needs.

Furniture and Equipment: Our facility will also be installed with adaptable furniture to accommodate various learning styles and sensory needs. This will include soft seats and equipment, adjustable desks, and several sensory-friendly furniture to ensure all students are comfortable in the classroom.

Facility Renovations: We will also perform all necessary modifications and renovations to ensure facilities meet all safety, accessibility, and functionality requirements. This may include repairs on the HVAC systems, lighting fixtures, restroom facilities to make them sensory-friendly, and other soundproof mechanisms to prevent auditory distractions.

Financing:

NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy is committed to securing financing for a permanent facility through a multi-faceted approach, including lease options, grants, partnerships, and fundraising efforts. By prioritizing the unique sensory needs of our students and ensuring equitable access to facilities, we aim to create an inclusive learning environment where every student can thrive.

VII. Marketing and Sales

Our approach to marketing and sales centers around building meaningful connections, fostering trust, and highlighting the unique value proposition of our neurodiverse affirming school. We recognize the importance of reaching our target audience effectively and communicating our commitment to providing an inclusive and supportive educational environment for neurodivergent students.

Targeted Outreach: School staff establishes a targeted outreach connection through personal individual interaction correspondence efforts with parents, educators, greeters, and all community stakeholders who share our vision of accepting neurodiversity in education. The targeted outreach aims to educate, inform, and update the sensitivity of our neurodiversity-affirming school ideal and how we provide comprehensive supportive learning educational services to the neurodivergent.

Community Engagement: We get engaged in the community with information sessions, events, and workshops. School staff sponsors several open house information sessions for parent education and other family members to create a collaborative partnership with various family communities in the location. The primary objective is to allow families to learn about alternative programming and access to seek more information about the sensitivity of neurodiversity.

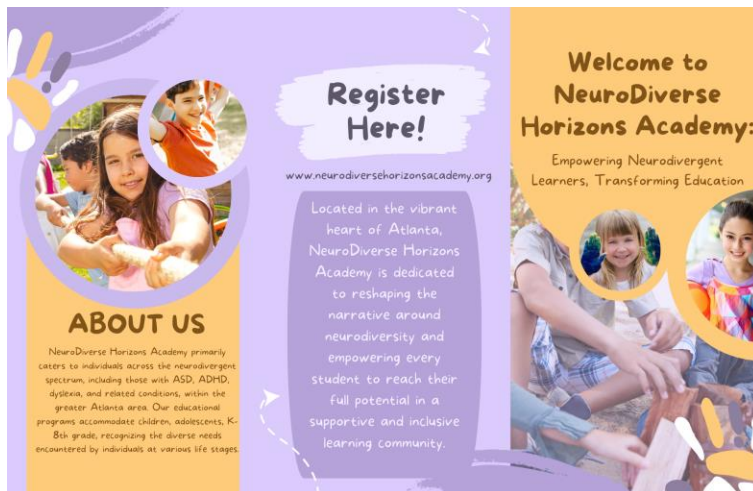
Digital Marketing: Establishing a digital online presence is a sustainable approach to achieving our Strategic Goal. School staff engages with our school social platform that uploads direct success and informational stories about a neurodiversity-affirming educational approach.

Partnership and Referral Networks: Establish referral networks and partnerships with local health facilities, therapists, and advocate groups.

Parent Ambassadors Program: School staff-sponsored champion ambassadors receive the essential knowledge to share with the community how to advocate for neurodiversity.

Marketing Collateral and Material: Our school develops marketing and promotion materials that communicate effectively about the needs school provide upon contact.

Marketing Brochure



What makes us Special

At NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy, we are committed to delivering comprehensive and inclusive educational services tailored to the unique needs of neurodivergent learners. Our mission is to create a world where neurodiversity is celebrated, and individuals of all neurocognitive profiles can flourish in their academic pursuits and personal growth.

Unlock Your Potential at NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy

Services Provided:

We offer comprehensive services aimed at empowering neurodivergent students and supporting educators in establishing inclusive practices within educational settings. Our services include:

- Neurodiversity-Affirming Programs
- Staff Training and Development
- Curriculum Design and Adaptation
- Inclusive Teaching Strategies
- Adapted School Calendar

Population Served

NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy primarily caters to individuals across the neurodivergent spectrum, including those with ASD, ADHD, dyslexia, and related conditions, within the greater Atlanta area. Our educational programs accommodate children, adolescents, K-8th grade, recognizing the diverse needs encountered by individuals at various life stages.

VIII. Funding Requests or Grants

Swot Analysis

Strengths: Our school has several strengths, including:

Tailored Educational Approaches: Our school facilities offer tailored interventions and individualized assistance to ensure that neurodivergent students receive the necessary assistance.

Holistic Educational Philosophy: Our school uses a holistic approach to ensure that neurodivergent students receive help not only with their education but also focus on their environmental, emotional, and social needs to ensure their holistic development and well-being.

Evidence-Based Practices: Our school follows established practices and offers research-based support, which is proven to improve academic performance and quality of life for neurodivergent students.

Comprehensive Support Services: Our school utilizes assessment, curriculum development, staff development, and a variety of other facilities to cover the diverse needs of neurodivergent students and their families.

Flexible Learning Environment: Our school is an independent school, which means that learning methods can easily adapt based on the strengths and weaknesses of individual students.

Expert Educators: The staff of our school contains educated professionals in neurodiversity and inclusive education.

Weaknesses:

Limited Collaborative Opportunities: Our facilities do not form multidisciplinary settings, which can't guarantee high levels of collaboration with specialists and the overall effect of support.

Tuition-Based Model: Our services operate under a tuition model, which means that some families may not have sufficient financial resources for their children.

Awareness and Referral Issues: Our school and its educational activities may have limitations in awareness and exposure, which can reduce the number of referrals and community collaboration.

Opportunities

Educational Outreach Programs: The events such as workshops and seminars can raise general awareness about the issues related to neurodiversity.

Opportunities: Establish partnerships with schools, advocacy groups, and community organizations to expand our referral network, improve outreach efforts, and promote collaborative approaches to addressing neurodiversity challenges.

Utilize online learning platforms and virtual classrooms to maximize our present network by providing both remote learning opportunities and enhanced accessibility to students in distant or underserved areas.

The growing recognition of neurodiversity and the demand for inclusive education indicates a rise in specialized education provided, which can be capitalized on by expanding services and diversifying the offered curriculum.

Threats:

In conclusion, it should be noted that limited, insufficiently standardized educational guidelines and practice across different neurodiversity support providers could lead to growing public misconceptions and make the implementation of evidence-based interventions and practice more difficult.

Special education schools and therapists could be named as direct competitors to reduce the uniqueness of services offered.

The shortage of staff with the required qualifications to provide such education may limit demand and consultation opportunities.

These factors include starting levels of recognition and awareness, which tend to be rather limited.

Such schools are impacted by public acceptance or demand and may be vulnerable to unexpected lethargy and dropout.

IX. Business Goals

Increase enrollment and retention rates

Specific: To increase enrollment by 20% within the next academic year and maintain enrollment rate to not fall below 90% in the next academic year.

Measurable: The specifics will remain measurable as it can be measured via enrollment numbers monthly and retention rates quarterly.

Achievable: It is possible to achieve as the school would conduct a market survey on where to target and develop a marketing plan and focus on the already retained students for a retention program.

Relevant: It is relevant as enrollment growth will provide sustainability, and retention keeps students in the school over the years thus increasing the school reach.

Time-bound: The school will enroll the student and make sure the retention rate does not fall from the 90 mark in the next academic year.

Enhance Program Offerings and Curriculum Development

Specific: Establish curriculum development teams to review, enhance current, and develop new programs.

Measurable: Review and enhance 80%, or rather 10 programs that would be developed within two years.

Achievable: It is possible if resource mobilization and recruiting staff will assist as the partnership in the program expansion.

Relevant: It is relevant to the school as the target development will meet the needs of the students whose demand is growing and will bring competition to the mainstream schools.

Time-bound: This will be achieved when the first academic year resumes and when two years elapse, by the end of two years, the school program offerings will have risen to three.

Increase Staff Diversity and Professional Development

Specific: This objective aims to recruit and retain neurodivergent educators and specialists as a result.

Measurable: A 15% increase in the number of neurodivergent members of staff within three years.

Achievable: The recruitment efforts and continued professional development programs that foster an understanding of neurodiversity and best practices into the recruitment and retention goals make this objective achievable.

Relevant: A greater percentage of genetically diverse educators and specialists will enable educators to understand and meet their neurodivergent students' needs more effectively.

Time-bound: Make a 15% increase in genetically diverse members of staff in the next three years.

Enhance Community Engagement and Advocacy

Specific: Strengthen community partnerships and advocacy efforts to promote neurodiversity awareness and inclusive education practices.

Measurable: Host at least six community events annually and work with a minimum of five advocacy groups or policymakers per year.

Achievable: Create a community engagement strategy and partner with local organizations and policymakers with interests that are consistent with the school's mission.

Relevant: Community engagement is critical to spreading awareness and gaining support for neurodivergent students.

Time-bound: Achieve the targeted number of community events and advocacy work annually.

Facilities and Infrastructure Improvement

Specific: Enhance facilities and infrastructure to create a safe, accessible, and stimulating learning environment for all students.

Measurable: Complete in the next two years all priority facility improvements and renovations recognized through facility assessments.

Achievable: Allocate resources and funds to facility construction, technology upgrades, and adaptive tools.

Relevant: Enhance infrastructure will facilitate the school's mission to build a supportive environment.

Time-bound: Propose all priority facility improvements and renovations by the next two years.

This proposal is relevant to the organization goals and objectives. This is because measuring and assessing impact is critically important for strategic decision-making, as well as adding value to work processes and taking part-time programs to the next level. This framework is intended to be

time-bound. This means that the assessment framework must be implemented, and tracking must begin in the next academic year.

X. Financial Projections

5-Year Financial Plan (See Attached)

Forecasted Proposed Budgets						
	28/29 Budget	27/28 Budget	26/27 Budget	25/26 Budget	24/25 Budget	
Income						
Contributed Support						
Individual Contrib.	\$ 25,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 8,000	\$ 5,000	
Foundation Grants	\$ 21,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 10,000	
Total Contributed Support	\$ 46,000	\$ 38,000	\$ 27,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 15,000	
Earned Program Revenue						
Tuition	\$ 875,000	\$ 770,000	\$ 700,000	\$ 525,000	\$ 350,000	25 Students / 22 Students / 20 Students / 15 Students / 10 Students
After-School	\$ 34,000	\$ 34,000	\$ 32,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 19,000	
Student Applications	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,500	\$ 4,000	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,000	
Total Earned Program Revenue	\$ 960,000	\$ 846,500	\$ 763,000	\$ 578,500	\$ 372,000	
School Events	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	
Conferences/Consultations	\$ 6,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,000	
SBA Loan					\$ 200,000	
Total Income	\$ 968,000	\$ 853,500	\$ 769,000	\$ 583,500	\$ 576,000	
Expenses						
Payroll & Wages						
Salaries & Wages	\$ 700,000	\$ 600,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 410,000	\$ 375,000	
Payroll & HRA Benef	\$ 4,300	\$ 4,200	\$ 4,100	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000	
Staff App/lunches	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,000	
Total Payroll & Wages	\$ 704,300	\$ 604,200	\$ 504,100	\$ 416,000	\$ 379,000	
Contract & Professional Expenses						
Accounting	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,600	\$ 2,200	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,500	
IT	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,200	
Substitute Teachers	\$ 3,800	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	
Other Contractors	\$ 75,000	\$ 70,000	\$ 65,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 45,000	
General Office Expenses	\$ 33,000	\$ 31,500	\$ 30,500	\$ 30,000	\$ 28,322	
Special Event Expenses	\$ 3,100	\$ 2,900	\$ 2,700	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,000	
Classroom Materials	\$ 14,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	
Occupancy Expenses	\$ 121,000	\$ 118,000	\$ 115,000	\$ 110,000	\$ 100,000	
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	
Total Expenses	\$ 961,400	\$ 848,900	\$ 739,200	\$ 571,500	\$ 522,322	
Total Expenses	961,400	848,900	739,200	571,500	522,322	
Total Net Change in Assets	\$ 6,600	\$ 4,600	\$ 29,800	\$ 12,000	\$ 53,678	

Income Projections

NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy will have a variety of revenue streams that will ensure that its programs are fully operational and promote continuous growth in the next five years. The academy, therefore, aims to use strategic financial planning to ensure that the use of both contributed support and earned revenue supports its high-quality, neurodiverse-affirming education. The school, therefore, intends to use contributed support, such as individual gifts, foundation grants, restricted gifts, tax-exempt income, to strengthen the school's revenue base. Immediately, the organization will also use earned program revenue, such as tuition and after-school programs fees, and other earned revenue, to support its income generation. The academy's estimates also show progressive increase in student enrollment, a clear indication of its commitment to enrollment expansion in addition to a viable financial framework.

Income:

NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy will start with enrollment for 10 students in the first year and gradually increase to 25 students by the fifth year.

Earned Program Revenue:**Tuition:**

First-year income: \$35,000 (per student) * 10 (enrolled students) = \$350,000

Second-year income: \$35,000 (per student) * 15 (enrolled students) = \$525,00

Third-year income: \$35,000 (per student) * 20 (enrolled students) = \$700,000

Fourth-year income: \$35,000 (per student) * 22 (enrolled students) = \$770,000

Fifth-year income: \$35,000 (per student) * 25 (enrolled students) = \$875,000

After School Program Income:

First-year income: \$1,500 (per student) * 5 (enrolled students) = \$7,500

Second-year income: \$1,500 (per student) * 7 (enrolled students) = \$10,500

Third-year income: \$1,500 (per student) * 10 (enrolled students) = \$15,000

Fourth-year income: \$1,500 (per student) * 11 (enrolled students) = \$16,500

Fifth-year income: \$1,500 (per student) * 13 (enrolled students) = \$19,500

Description of Debt and Equity**Debt:**

Debt involves borrowed funds acquired from external sources with the commitment to repay the principal amount plus interest over a specified duration. Our institution, NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy, intends to leverage debt as a financing mechanism to support its operations, expansion, and investment needs. We plan to secure loans from financial institutions and private investors, enabling us to access additional capital while retaining ownership and control.

Specifically, we are pursuing an SBA loan of at least \$200,000 to cover our developmental expenses. This SBA loan option offers a fixed interest rate of 2.25%, and we anticipate repaying the loan within a three-year timeframe (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2023).

Additionally, we will actively seek grants tailored to school startups, such as those offered by organizations supporting educational initiatives, state education departments, and philanthropic foundations. We aim to secure a minimum of \$20,000 annually from multiple grants, especially during our initial three years until we breakeven.

Please refer to the debt (liabilities) section in the Balance Sheet provided below for detailed

information on our debt obligations.

Equity

Equity signifies ownership of shares in a company, typically held by founders, investors, or shareholders. Equity financing entails selling a portion of the company's ownership in return for capital investment. Although NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy acknowledges the potential of raising equity capital by issuing shares to investors or collaborating with venture capitalists or angel investors, we presently do not have any equity partners.

While we remain open to potential partnerships with venture capitalists or angel investors in the future, our current objective is to maintain 100% ownership within the company. Please refer to the equity section in the Balance Sheet provided below for further details on our equity status.

First-Year Costs

Start-up Business Costs: Variable Costs		
General Office Expenses	\$28,322	Rent, utilities, office supplies, furniture, computer equipment, software licenses
Special Event Expenses	\$2,000	Event venue rental, catering, decorations, promotional materials
Classroom Materials	\$10,000	Textbooks, workbooks, art supplies, educational games, manipulatives
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$3,000	Staff training and development: \$1,000 Marketing and advertising: \$1,000 Insurance and legal fees: \$500 Transportation and travel expenses: \$500
Total First-Year Variable Costs		\$29,822.00

Start-up Business Costs: Fixed Costs		
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Category	Amount	Details
Payroll	\$375,000	Salaries for full-time and part-time staff, including teachers, administrators, and support staff.
Benefits	\$4,000	Employee benefits such as health insurance, retirement contributions, and other perks.
Staff Appreciation	\$1,000	Funds allocated for recognizing and appreciating staff members' contributions.
Accounting	\$1,500	Fees for accounting services, including bookkeeping, tax preparation, and financial reporting.
IT	\$1,200	Costs associated with IT infrastructure, including software licenses, maintenance, and support.
Substitute Teachers	\$3,000	Payments for substitute teachers to cover staff absences and maintain classroom continuity.
Other Contractors	\$45,000	Payments to contractors for specialized services such as therapists, consultants, or guest speakers.
Occupancy Costs	\$100,000	Expenses related to the physical space, including rent, utilities, maintenance, and property taxes.

Total First-Year Fixed Costs	\$525,700.00
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Cash Flow (See Attached)

Cash Flow Statement for NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy	<i>28/29</i>	<i>27/28</i>	<i>26/27</i>	<i>25/26</i>	<i>24/25</i>
Cash Inflows					
Contributed Support	\$46,000	\$38,000	\$27,000	\$20,000	\$15,000
Earned Program Revenue	\$960,000	\$846,500	\$763,000	\$578,500	\$372,000

School Events	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Conferences/Consultations	\$6,000	\$5,000	\$4,000	\$3,000	\$2,000
SBA Loan					\$200,000
Total Income	\$1,014,000	\$891,500	\$796,000	\$603,500	\$591,000
Cash Outflows					
Payroll & Wages	\$706,800	\$606,700	\$506,600	\$416,000	\$380,000
Contract & Professional Expenses	\$97,100	\$79,300	\$74,800	\$69,500	\$50,000
General Office Expenses	\$33,000	\$31,500	\$30,500	\$30,000	\$28,322
Special Event Expenses	\$3,100	\$2,900	\$2,700	\$2,500	\$2,000
Classroom Materials	\$14,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Occupancy Expenses	\$121,000	\$118,000	\$115,000	\$110,000	\$100,000
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Total Expenses	\$978,000	\$853,400	\$745,600	\$641,000	\$573,322
Net Cash Flow	\$36,000	\$38,100	\$50,400	\$37,500	\$17,678
Beginning Cash Balance	\$0	\$36,000	\$74,100	\$124,500	\$162,000
Ending Cash Balance	\$36,000	\$74,100	\$124,500	\$162,000	\$179,678

XI. Analysis of State-Sponsored School Choice Program(s) in Georgia

Approval Entity:

NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy recognizes the significance of participating in state-sponsored school choice programs to expand educational opportunities for neurodivergent learners in Georgia. As such, we will engage with the state department of education as the approval entity for our participation in these programs.

Projected Timeline:

To ensure timely approval and seamless integration into state-sponsored school choice programs, NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy has established the following projected timeline:

NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy has established the projected timeline below.

Application Preparation 6-12 Months: Our team will prepare the requisite documentation and materials needed for submission to the state department of education. These will include details regarding our school's mission, curriculum, qualifications of our faculty, facilities, and educational approach.

Internal Review 4-6 Months: Before submission, our leadership will review the entire application to ensure that it is accurate, complete, and in line with the requirements by the state department of education.

Submission of Application 3-4 Months: We will submit the application for approval to the state department of education at around three or four months to the scheduled opening. Our submission will allow us enough time to meet all components of the application, collect all the required information or documents in support of our application.

Review and Evaluation 2-3 Months: The state department of education will receive our submission and will be required to review and evaluate our application for participating in state-sponsored school choice programs. Through this process, the department assesses aspects such as academic standards, financial stability, degree of organization, and level of adherence to state regulations.

Communication and Follow Up 1-2 Months: Our Academy will communicate with department to answer any questions and provide forms of documentation needed to understand our qualification.

Approval Notification 1 Month: After receipt of our application, we expect to get a notification informing us of the status of our application. In the case of approval, we shall complete the remaining forms to formalize our participation in state-sponsored school choice programs and communicate the development to our stakeholders.

Known Opportunities in Georgia:

NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy recognizes several opportunities within the state of Georgia that can further support our mission to provide quality education to neurodivergent learners:

Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program: This scholarship program provides eligible students with disabilities the opportunity to enroll in participating private schools, especially targeted schools for neurodivergent students. Through this program, NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy will be able to offer its prospective learners, whose families need alternatives of education for their children, the option to be financially assisted.

Georgia Tax Credit Scholarship Program: The program encompasses individual and corporate tax credit for donations to qualified Student Scholarship Organizations, which, in turn, fund scholarships for eligible students to attend chosen private schools, including the ones designed to address neurodivergent categories of students. This source of funding may stimulate the quantity of scholarships provided by Neurodiverse Horizons Academy.

Georgia Educational Expense Credit: To families with educational expenses, Georgia provides educational expense recordings for students enrolled in a qualified private school. NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy plans to use the opportunity as one of its promotional tools for educating families and providing facilities but the services associated with them at a reduced price.

XII. Network Growth Plan

NeuroDiverse Horizons Academy's (NHA) vision extends beyond the doors of any one institution and into a horizon of school networks dedicated to neurodiversity affirming education. Our Network Growth Plan outlined strategic goals to reach, connect education and privilege growth.

Independent Governance Structures: As we expand into a network of schools, each institution will support a unique governance structure designed to meet its distinct community's needs and priorities. Decentralizing decisions about administration, learning frameworks, and resources will allow NHA-Network schools to prioritize our core values and mission.

Sustainable Funding Models: A cornerstone of our Network Growth Plan is building sustainable funding models to further the growth of each school in the network. We will identify polyvalent sources of funding that include public funding, private contributions, grants, and partnerships with philanthropic organizations and community stakeholders. By creating funding bio diversities, we will easily budget during times of economic insecurity.

Replicable Instructional Practices: Our Network will succeed by sharing models of excellence in NHA learning. Framing tools, guidelines, and professional development will open opportunities to obtain the best and most collaborative practices in network schools. The NHA network seeks to grow the care of courses and programs for this pilot project, identified only by learned sections, students, and another diverse result composing learner acquired careers.

High-Quality Education: Our network will increase access to high-quality education for students identified only by learning departments, students, and another diverse result composing learners throughout the United States. By growing NHA strategically and collaboratively, we will grasp the underserved and bridge learning department students' intricacy acquisitions.

Collaboration and Best Practices: Collaboration is our primary goal. NHA will strive to surpass our expectations, collaborate with like-minded institutions, advocates, research groups and policymakers to make neurodiversity learning more acceptable.

XIII. Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is a core value at Neurodiverse Affirming School. Our commitment to quality assurance means that every member of our school community will receive the support and care they need to grow and thrive. All of our staff and educators are expected to respond promptly and appropriately to student, parent, and colleague concerns and feedback. If a student or parent feels dissatisfied about any aspect of their experience at our school, they are free to express their concerns through feedback forms or by speaking directly with the involved parties.

If an issue or conflict is reported, our protocol directs the involved parties to report the issue to the appropriate supervisor, and an incident report must then be filled out. Incident reports are submitted to school leadership, including the director, who work with the involved parties to complete a Plan of Action to address the issue and prevent it from occurring in the future. Furthermore, we believe it is important to keep our students and families in the loop regarding the outcomes of such meetings.

Our commitment to quality also extends to the evaluation of our staff members. All of our employees must undergo a performance review to determine how well they are serving our school's mission and values. Performance reviews are conducted within the first three months of employment and regularly thereafter and are based on feedback from all involved parties. These parties include students, parents, clinical directors, and administrative staff. We stand ready to support any employee who needs to develop a corrective action plan to improve their performance.

Employee Reviews:

Performance Review Template

Name:

Job Title:

Date of Last Evaluation:

Today's Date:

Skill & Efficacy

The extent to which the employee demonstrates appropriate knowledge of profession, uses evidence-based interventions, educates clients, manages classroom, and communicates effectively with clients, caregivers, coworkers, etc.

Rating:

Notes:

Productivity

The extent to which the employee meets all outlined productivity standards.

Rating:

Notes:

Professional Behavior

The extent to which the employee displays appropriate interactions with clients & staff, follows dress code, and ethical standards/procedures of the clinic.

Rating:

Notes:

Safety

The extent to which the employee follows outlined safety procedures in the workplace and exercises care and caution with children.

Rating:

Notes:

Attendance & Punctuality

The extent to which the employee reports to work on-time & as scheduled and provides appropriate notice for absences as outlined in the employee handbook.

Rating:

Notes:

Employee Comments/Concerns: _____

Supervisor Signature:

Employee Signature:

XIV. NeuroDiverse Horizon Academy Policy and Procedures

NeuroDiverse Horizon Academy supports the creation of a diverse and equitable workforce, ensuring uniform opportunities for all applicants and employees. We also abide by the rules of the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and prohibit any discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or genetics. Employment at NeuroDiverse Horizon Academy is governed by the employment at-will policy, which allows for discharge with or without cause.

Application and Pre-Employment A detailed job application is completed by all applicants seeking employment. A background check is required to determine if applicants meet minimum qualifications. Candidates must also demonstrate good-standing professional references by submitting letters of recommendation from their previous employer. The director of the academy is also in charge of reviewing the applications.

Hiring and Employment Applicants chosen for interviews are emailed and assessed by the director of the academy, the office manager, and the staff therapists. Successful applicants are then hired, and a 60-day probation period begins. All employees are guided to diligently read and understand the NeuroDiverse Horizon Academy Employee Handbook. New hire orientation begins by distributing the handbook to employees on their first day as employees and reviewing the contents of it in a meeting that specifies the academy's values, roles, and administration. During the 60-day period, there will be a review and answers to any question provided.

Policy on Risk Management

Our mission at NeuroDiverse Horizon Academy is to promote high-level education within a secure and nurturing environment span to incorporate risk management means that are proactive. Such proactive measures entail identifying, assessing, and addressing potential risks for our youth and staff and other stakeholders. We understand the environmental factors that are under our control and have developed policies to ensure the safety of our students. Compliance with License and Other Health Guidelines

All staff shall comply with all the federal and state laws and education regulations. This includes obtaining the relevant licenses where applicable and adhering to the due protocols on education and any other guidelines as provided by the relevant authority.

Infectious Disease Module

Due to the nature of infectious diseases and spread through communicable means, all staff will be provided with an infectious disease module that will increase awareness of potential spread measures and the best prevention and containment measures during outbreaks. This also includes a clean hand washing and equipment sterilization regimen to minimize spread possibilities. The staff shall always follow the best infectious disease spread prevention and containment measures.

Safety Measures

Because our school is a secure part of our community, we use access control to ensure that everybody who is inside has an approved code. All persons have a specific code, and it is crucial we never pass the code on to someone. Our offices are secure, and this helps our children secure within their study environment.

HIPAA, FERPA & Confidentiality As per regulations established under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, all members of staff hereby are directed to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of student records and protected health information. Training concerning the established protocols is delivered to all employees, enabling them to handle sensitive information and administer it following ethical standards and legal parameters. Moreover, training focusing on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act will also be instated to ensure a deeper understanding of parent–institutions' relations concerning their child's educational trajectory.

Medical Emergency Preparedness NeuroDiverse Horizon Academy prioritizes the well-being and safety of its students and members on staff and translates it into cultivation and promotion of

training in emergency awareness and response culture. Staff members are trained in medical emergency protocols, including CPR/BLS certification and allergy awareness. The staff members trained are competent in addressing a medical emergency because they have the knowledge and skills to act promptly and appropriately during an emergency that could serve as the AED is readily available in school.

Statement on Liability NeuroDiverse Horizon Academy recognizes the need to minimize liability exposure related to educational processes and is determined to conduct its professional operation with the highest possible level of responsibility and professionalism. To further reduce potential harm, staff members are comprehensively covered with professional liability insurance that ensures financial cover and defense against claims related to appropriately performed actions. The school demonstrates its commitment to the creation of a healthy and crime-free environment by following established policy and procedure and established law through the employee handbook.

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