



## **NEA Locally Led Book Clubs Focused on Disability Rights and Inclusion**

Book club norms work best when members collaboratively develop guidelines that reflect their unique group dynamics and shared values. By discussing, adapting, and refining the suggested core norms, book club members can create a flexible framework that ensures respectful, meaningful dialogue while maintaining the group's commitment to mutual understanding and inclusive communication.

Review the suggested core norms below, then customize them for your local book club's use.

### **Suggested Core Norms**

#### **Create an environment where all participants feel welcome:**

- Be kind.
- Create a safe environment for sharing personal experiences.
- Listen without judging.

#### **Practice active and empathetic listening:**

- Listen to understand, not to respond.
- Allow members to complete their thoughts without interruption.
- Demonstrate genuine curiosity about others' experiences.

#### **Use inclusive and person-first language:**

- Respect individual preferences for language about disability.
- Avoid patronizing or infantilizing terminology.
- Be open to learning and correcting language use.

- Actively work to unlearn and avoid using ableist language such as “special needs” and “sped student.”

**Acknowledge individual experiences as valid:**

- Recognize that disability experiences are unique.
- Avoid generalizing or making broad assumptions.
- Respect each person’s personal journey.

**Commit to continuous learning:**

- Approach discussions with humility and openness.
- Be willing to challenge personal biases.
- View discomfort as an opportunity for growth.

**Make sure everyone can participate:**

- Provide multiple participation options, such as virtual and in-person.
- Accommodate diverse communication styles by using tools like the chat and closed caption functions in virtual meetings. Additionally, leaders should encourage speakers to turn on their cameras during virtual meetings and ensure that speakers are clearly visible during in-person meetings, which can be helpful for those who rely on lip reading.
- Make meeting spaces physically and digitally accessible by enabling live captioning in virtual platforms, offering multiple ways for participants to share their thoughts, sharing meeting materials in advance, and for in-person meetings, ensuring that there are accessible entries and exits as well as seating that is both accessible and adjustable.