**Communicating effectively with students with disability**

Dylan Alcott (00:03):

Hi. I'm Dylan Alcott and I'm here with some of my colleagues from Get Skilled Access to share with you some key tips and insights on best practice for communicating effectively with students with disability, both in and out of the classroom. One of the key issues for students with disability is effective communication, and more importantly, having great communication with their teachers. The thing to remember is it is important that students with disability are not treated differently to the rest of the class as it can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of the student. Australia has 20% or 4.5 million people with either a physical or non-physical disability. Australia wide, 9% or 1 in 10 school students have a disability, and of those, 4% or 1 in 20 have a severe or profound disability. Based on these numbers, all teachers will require further education to prepare to teach, interact, and work with students with disability now and in the future.

Benn Pettingill (01:04):

As a person who is blind, the way teachers interacted with me played a vital role in my success and enjoyment at school. I was in a unique position that I acquired my disability when I was in year 10, so my experience at school was both with and without disability. My teacher treated and communicated with me equally, and had open conversations with myself and my parents on the best way to communicate and teach me, which resulted in a great all round experience. Even I thought getting the highest maths marks in my class, being blind was highly unlikely, but thanks to great teaching and communication, that's exactly what happened.

Andrew Negrelli (01:39):

I'd say I like interactive learning, well, one-on-one, just me and the teacher. I like being in the classroom with all the other students as well, because it makes me feel included. Because I've got a disability, it takes me a bit longer to do my tasks, but I'll get it done eventually.

Elvin Lam (02:08):

I'm deaf. I use Auslan as my primary language. The other languages I use are English and Cantonese. I moved to Australia from Hong Kong, but only had limited knowledge of Auslan and English. It was a very challenging time for me, particularly in my first day of school. It didn't matter that I had interpreters and note takers, I still had to learn English and Auslan simultaneously. It was very difficult for me working with my hearing classmates through school time. What really helped was my teacher organising most of my classes, having interpreters and communicating with them and my classmates. I had more confidence, which meant I could ask the teachers any questions which really helped with my learning.

Bryce Pace (03:12):

I hid my disability in secondary school, because I was afraid of how I would be treated. But I had nothing to be afraid of, as my secondary school was very inclusive. They allowed me to thrive and find my own path, and I was treated just like every other student. And if I needed any extra support, my teachers and I would sit down and discuss how they could assist. Communication is key. If you're unsure of how to support a student with a disability, don't be afraid to ask.

Kate Doughty ([03:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=vWkSlMtIZv8gMuByzexGSEQsYb60BMQde2an6zunlSNBIGE-11A4sTzNCl-x6ZsGmhzQ-DR9f9TwAuNMY23jPCcCOTk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=222.47)):

Like able-bodied students, bullying can be an issue and even more so for someone who has a disability, especially out of the classroom. I experienced bullying in grade three where a kid asked me, "Where's your hook?". I knew that the teachers were people I could easily talk to, so that's what I did. Being able to talk to the teachers I was able to easily resolve the situation. So, with teacher knowledge awareness and the ability to feel confident in talking to me, as well as communicating with other students about my disability, I found that when similar situations occurred throughout my school life, I was able to easily resolve them.

Shelley Matheson (04:22):

In my earlier years of PE classes I was relegated to scoring positions or simply watching other students. I'm a keen athlete and I was devastated to sit on the sidelines. But the teachers I had, they didn't know how to include me, they never asked me what I'd like to do, they just didn't know how to involve me. When I was in year nine, I had a teacher that insisted that I get involved and made sure that every activity had something that I could participate in. He was great at thinking outside the box, pushing me to be involved, but he didn't make me feel like I was different from everyone else.

Kate Doughty (04:58):

As you've seen and heard, teaching students with disability can be a non-event if you follow a few simple guidelines. Effective communication with both student and their families is key. Don't assume anything, ask the student. Work with the student’s needs both in and out of the classroom. A school is a snapshot of the community, so look to outside influences and practices to assist students with disability.