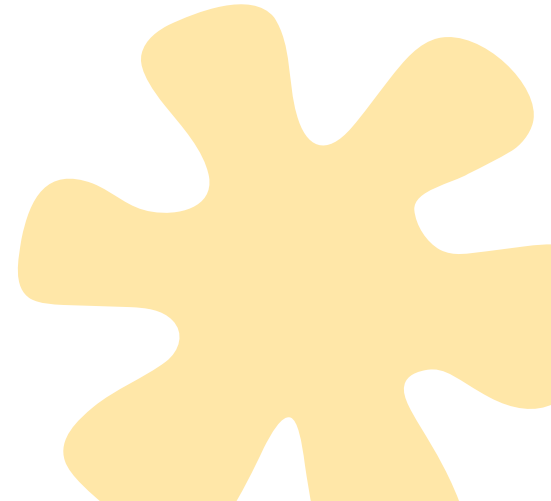


Disability Inclusion: Student Perspectives

A resource for teachers

Amaze spoke to students with a disability about their perspectives on disability inclusion in schools. Students were asked to describe their experiences at school and what factors contributed to an inclusive environment.

Students shared their perspectives on what makes an inclusive school.



Knowledge

Students reflected that not everyone has the same knowledge about disability in their school. This means that in some schools, disability is openly discussed, and accommodations are visible, but in other schools, this is not the case. Students suggested that all members of the school community, including teachers and students, should have access to more information about disability.


Plan for inclusion

Students reported that disability is not always thought of as 'part of the norm' in their school. Some felt their school was too big; therefore, it could be tricky to make friends with other students with disabilities or to join in. They reflected that introducing initiatives across the school can encourage conversations about disability and disability allyship. These initiatives included:

- Lunchtime clubs – Opportunities for structured socialising that support a range of student needs were mentioned. Examples included board game clubs, arts/crafts, and book groups.
- School camps – students reported that school camps were a great way to get to know students from other classes, grades, or campuses.
- Quiet activities – Students mentioned that opportunities to engage in quiet work or recess/lunch activities were an inclusive way to participate in learning and social activities.

Modelling inclusive practices

Disability allies are people who don't have a disability but can advocate for inclusion. Allies can be staff members, peers, or friends. This means that disability inclusion is shared across the classroom and school, and not solely placed on the student with a disability. It teaches the skills of inclusion such as:

- Remembering to use captions when watching videos
 - Normalising movement and rest breaks
 - Normalising the use of sensory tools, such as ear defenders, hats, and sunglasses
 - Using image descriptions for photos and graphics
 - Modelling inclusive language
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Student resources

Books are another way to introduce the topic of disability. Children and Young People with a Disability (CYDA) has a list of books rated by young people with disability. Adding books on disability to the school library is an excellent starting point.

Some young adult books explore disability or feature characters with disabilities:

- Sinead Burke – Break the Mould
- Dylan Alcott and Fiona Regan – Dylan Alcott Game On
- Leigh Bardugo – Six of Crows (Book 1)
- Asphyxia – Future Girl
- Cece Bell – El Deafo

There are a range of books available that explain autism and neurodivergence, many written by neurodivergent authors. Altogether Autism Takiwātanga has a list of Children's books about autism. For young adult readers, Australian Autistic authors are writing Autistic characters. They include:

- Kay Kerr - Please Don't Hug Me
- Anna Whateley - Peta Lyre's Rating Normal

Summary:

- Students reported that knowledge on disability is not always consistent across the school community.
- Planning for disability inclusion across school activities is essential for students with a disability.
- Modelling inclusive practices and sharing resources on disability across the school helps expand knowledge.

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