

# **Connecting students with and without disabilities at school: An innovative disability awareness program**

## ***Preliminary outcomes***

A collaborative project between Department for Education  
& Flinders University

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# Background

- Importance of social inclusion for students with and without disabilities
  - Well designed Disability Awareness programs can improve:
    - Understanding/knowledge of disability
    - Attitudes towards people with disability
    - Acceptance of peers with disability
- (Lindsay & Edwards, 2013)
- Co-located schools with in SA
    - Does physically co-located schools provide more opportunities of social inclusion between students with and without disabilities?

# Aim of the project

To investigate the effects of disability awareness training, inclusive physical activity and social media use on social inclusion and networks between students with and without disability.

# Research Questions

- What effect does disability awareness and inclusive physical activity have on attitudes and interactions of students without disabilities towards students with disabilities?
- Does social media use training improve the social media use skills of students with disabilities?

# How are we doing this project?

Co-located mainstream and special school in Adelaide (R-12); Action Research

- Students with disabilities:
  - Parents consented
  - 6 students with varying disabilities
  - Aged between 11-17 years;
  - 4 males; 2 females
  - Can use speech for communication
- Students without disabilities:
  - Parents consented
  - Year 7 students; 9 students
  - Aged between 12-14;
  - 6 males; 3 females

# Data collection

- Data collected at key times throughout the project includes:
  - social media goals attained by students with disabilities
  - attitudes of students without disabilities before and after the disability awareness and inclusive physical activity

# Examples of social media goals

Over 2 school terms, the participant will learn to.....



....to video chat to family members using FaceTime



....be able to read emails/messages using screen reading feature

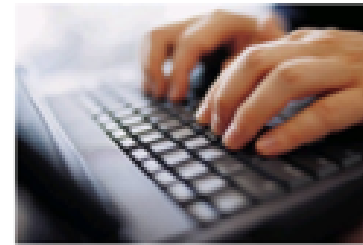


....be able to send messages and stickers via Monster Messenger to family members (mum, cousin)

# Social Media Use training

- RA is providing training at school
- iPad or tablet devices
- Cyber safety training
- One-on-one training- task analysis

Think before you type and double check before sending something to somebody online



Always keep your password a secret

Shhhh..





# Social media skills

- Excited and enthusiastic to learn Monster Messenger, email
- Technical knowledge and skills - easily learnt
- Need support with conversational skills e.g. how to respond to message from mum or sibling?

# Disability Awareness Sessions

## *Attitudes Towards Disability Questionnaire*

- Completed by students without disability first:
  - Connections (if any) with people with a disability
  - frequency of interactions with people with a disability
  - thoughts on having students with special needs in mainstream classes
- Disability Awareness sessions at mainstream school
  - Introduction to different types of disabilities
  - Simulation
  - You Tube clips



# Inclusive Physical Education

- 8 sessions – 4 completed so far
- Located within the special school (Gym, oval and playground)
- Structured small and large group activities; stations (e.g. bowling, cricket)
- Opportunities for students without disabilities to initiate play interactions with students with disabilities



# Outcomes so far ...

- Disability awareness training
- Inclusive PE
  - turn taking
  - encouragement
  - teaching & instruction
  - inviting to join in
- Supportive schools – teachers and Principals

# Some Challenges

- Recruitment
- Internet use restrictions at school
- Use of personal devices for social media use
- Monster Messenger App no longer available

# Where to Next?

- Project will continue in Term 4 and Term 1 of 2019
- Students with and without disabilities encouraged to connect online via Google Hangout –monitored and supported in Term 4
- Both groups encouraged to connect during summer break
- Attitudes survey administered again
- Pilot project to be repeated with other co-located schools within SA