# Report of SPEVI Community of Practice - Online learning #2

By Melissa Fanshawe, SPEVI Secretary

We acknowledge and honour the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways of Australia and New Zealand and pay our respect to elders past, present and future.

<https://www.spevi.net/community-of-practice/>

Next meeting of SPEVI Community of Practice for online learning will be **June 5th 2020, 1pm AEST and 3pm New Zealand Time.** Topic: 'Back to Business: building online learning into our pedagogy”

The second SPEVI Community of Practice for Online Learning was held on Friday 8th May.

In what can only be described as ironic, as the host, I actually got kicked out of the Zoom room; fortunately I was able to sort it out with a workaround quickly – which was the topic of the day.

Unfortunately it meant our session did not record, however I took copious notes, which I hope accurately represent the conversation.

Firstly we discussed the opportunities that have arisen from online learning. Participants went into breakout rooms and shared the following back, grouped here by themes.

# OPPORTUNITIES

## Professional Development

* Accessibility - classroom teachers asking how to ensure accessibility of content
* Explanation – teachers having to use explicit wording when they verbalise instructions to all students, of benefit to students with VI. Simplification of instruction
* Technology – teachers and parents seeing value in students technology (slightly less uncomfortable with it)

## Curriculum Driven

* Adaptability – teachers seeing that things can be easily modified to make it work – e.g. online music lessons.
* Opportunities to move forward in a more inclusive way – with blended learning or what can I use to make that work?

## Student focused

* Some students happy with online learning (caution that this does not isolate them socially)
* Student led – many new experiences have been taken on and some students are actively looking at how they can learn new technology

(eg One student discovered the joy of email to keep in contact with friends, which may not have happened otherwise).

* Independence for students in their learning
* Learning workarounds to problems in technology
* More flexible with time
* Learning skills to socialise in online environment – e.g. Zoom as ALL students being explicitly taught this.

## Family

* Family see how the technology assists and how they can support this
* Families taking more notice in what has to be done
* Families who have been shy working through the school may have more opportunity to interact with specialist teachers.

We then went into different breakout rooms and discussed the challenges of being online and what workarounds have been used or could be used to aid inclusion of students with vision impairment in online learning.

# CHALLENGES & WORKAROUNDS

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| Issue | Workarounds |
| Accessibility |
| It was noted that a learning platform could be accessible, but there could still be inaccessible elements – e.g. zoom can’t see what is shared on screen  | * verbalising what is on the screen as best practice
* sending the PowerPoint to all recipients
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| Non – accessible platforms – Google classrooms, One Note | * advocate for accessible platforms
* student emailed work (access to learning)
* Student shown how to cut and paste the content into Word (learning to access) - agency
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| Technology – students may not have had technology (braille device, good internet) in their homes.  | * Schools have been providing equipment
* Families becoming more aware of how to use equipment and the importance it has for students (opened up discussion about technology and accessibility)
* Use of mainstream devices with built in accessibility
* Specialist teacher *may* be able to assist with technology solutions
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| Technology – for Specialist teachers – all students on different technology and have different expectations. Feeling lack of knowledge about specific tools | * Don’t need to know everything. There are great guides online and students can start leading some research into technologies to use.
* Student as technology problem solver
* This was also discussed in relation to learning new tools as Specialist teachers - such as zoom meetings for proofreaders and in communities of practice.
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| Pressure |
| Students under pressure to work independently  | * Strategies and routines for school
* Pathways for asking for help e.g. classroom teacher, Specialist teacher, parent
* Relaxation, mindfulness
* Adaptive technology support
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| Families overwhelmed | * Offer support and let them know you are available, no pressure.
* Additional NDIS support
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| Social Skills  |
| Many students with VI have social skills in IEPs. Concern that they are not having this and/or concerns for when students go back to school and need to interact.  | * Some groups reported increased conversations between their clients – e.g. a music group
* Explicit conversations around expectations in classroom as opposed to home.
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Our next meeting will be June 5th 2020, 1pm AEST and 3pm New Zealand Time.

Topic: 'Back to Business: building online learning into our pedagogy”

Melissa Fanshawe

SPEVI Secretary