Autism Spectrum Disorders Interviews

File Name: Carly\_assistantprincipal\_ISP MP4

Duration: 05:48

**Video Transcript**

Video: Carly talking to interviewer

Graphic on screen:

**Carly, Assistant Principal**

**Inclusion Support Program**

Audio:

Start: 00.01

Tell us about your school

At our school we have 250 students and we are a regional school, we have about 20 students that are diagnosed, but we have children with all special needs at our school ranging from intellectual disabilities through to gifted education.

We have our Education Support Staff which we call Program Assistants because they support our teachers in providing an education program for all our students. We don’t tie our ES staff to students because we found it wasn’t as beneficial as being able to share that resource. We see our Program Assistants as a significant resource in our school and through that we make sure that they are able to provide support to groups of students as well as teachers, as well as areas; so learning areas whether it be Ps, 1-2s, 3-4s, 5-6s.

Tell us about your Inclusion Support Program (ISP)

We have an Inclusion Support Program at our school and our main aim is to build teacher capacity within our region and improve the outcomes for all students and we work with two spaces that we have got that we use with our students. Our students with special needs are able to access this space during the day for sensory breaks as well as any times where they may feel anxious or require some time out of the classroom or some occupational therapy we bring them up into the space.

We also have it open at lunchtime and all kids can access it. We have a range of kids come through. It’s actually really interesting to see the group of children that do consistently come through because it’s helped us identify possibly some needs in other students that we possibly hadn’t identified. I think the important thing is that it’s not just about having a diagnosis of autism. It’s actually a lot of kids have that sensory need and require time out from the playground or busy lunchtime things. So it’s been a great success for us.

We are about to start a coaching program with ours where we‘ll be coaching a group of teachers from our region that have a student with autism in their classroom and they will work on a program over a term, meeting for 3 hours every fortnight. They’ll be just looking at what autism is and how it impacts specifically on the child they have in their classroom. They’ll be able to discuss with their peers some of the strategies they have used, what’s worked, what hasn’t worked. They’ll be identifying goals and strategies that they will take back into their classroom to support their children with autism. It also involves the principal, so the leadership team of that school taking on and recognising the importance of managing and supporting these students in their school environment.

We’re also running a cooking program and a life skills program out of our Inclusion Support Program and again this just helps identify priorities for our kids on the spectrum and for some of ours it is posting a letter, it is knowing how to making a toasted sandwich, and is knowing how to make a bed. So we’ve identified all of those as well and have been able to implement them in our program.

The other side of it is we have professional development that runs out of our Inclusion Support Program. We have visiting teachers, visiting ES staff, we’ve even had visiting parents come and have a look at what schools are doing in the way of supporting students with special needs.

What outcomes have you observed since your ISP?

Some of the outcomes we have observed through our ISP program have been the importance of sensory breaks and the students coming up to this space and using the resources and going back to the classroom. They go back in refreshed; they’re ready to learn. We’ve also found using it at the end of the day with our students too before they go home, so again bringing them down to change that environment, that transition has been a huge aspect for us. Again being sensory we’ve found that we’ve been able to provide students with lots more sensory tools, so they can take them back to the classroom as well, fitballs, exercise balls. Taking them back into classrooms, kids have been able to roll on these while they’re reading a book. It’s certainly made our school a calmer place.

What benefits has the ISP delivered to your school and your school community?

It’s also boosted our knowledge and education in children on the spectrum and the range of things we are able to offer now has certainly increased. Our ISP unit has been able to provide a flexibility that we didn’t have before with professional learning. It’s enabled teachers from around our region to come and access professional learning to see things in practice, to see how things work and what it might look in their classrooms. It’s enabled other Program Assistants from other schools to come in and have a look. We have Principals from other schools come to have a look and really its about seeing a lot of the strategies for these kids on the spectrum are not whizz bang new technology, it’s not having a new big space. It’s actually just what’s happening at that classroom level.

Finish: 05:48