DARLENE MCLENNAN: Okay. Hello, Kia ora. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Darlene McLennan. I'm the Manager of the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training, or ADCET for short. I just want to start by acknowledging that I am on Lutruwita, Tasmanian Aboriginal land, and in the spirit of reconciliation, ADCET respectfully acknowledges the Lutruwita nations and also recognises the Aboriginal history and culture of the land, and I pay my respects to elders past, present and to the many Aboriginal people who did not make elder status. I also want to acknowledge all the countries participating in this meeting and also acknowledge their elders and ancestors and the legacy to us and to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this webinar today.

We have live captions happening within this Teams meeting and you can find your captions in the caption button, hopefully, in the Teams. We are also now just putting a OneNote link into the browser so you can actually access your captions into OneNote.

Today we're excited to host this webinar around Microsoft. It's something that we get a lot of requests for to understand and to look at the accessibility of Microsoft and how we utilise it. In that, we decided to do this session in Microsoft and that's kind of led to some challenges, so that was why we were a little bit late starting. We have been using Zoom for about seven years now, so getting used to the Microsoft platform and also this platform is actually based in our host provider's area, so we kind of had a few things locked down that we were kind of struggling to ensure. So please bear with us. If we have any glitches or any challenges throughout this webinar, we are working with Conor, our presenter, to make sure it's as accessible as possible and that you get to access it fully. But please bear with us if we have some challenges throughout.

So, as I said, today's webinar is Microsoft. It's called Microsoft Accessibility 101. It's being presented by Conor McHoull. Conor is a Microsoft Education Success Manager from New Zealand, and also overseas Tasmania in that. It's really exciting to have Conor with us. We've had a couple of conversations with Conor about how we can meet the needs of the sector in understanding the accessibility component of Microsoft. So this is just the first webinar of a series. In the presentation Conor will seek your advice on what do you want to know more about, and we will host some other sessions going forward.

The session will go for around 45, 50 minutes and then we will have some question time. We encourage you to put your questions in the Q&A box but also, like we've done in our previous webinars, if you want to chat with each other please feel free to do so in the chat box, and also if you want to acknowledge what country you're coming from today.

If you have any technology difficulties, you can actually email admin@adcet.edu.au. I'm laughing because it would have been nice if we could actually email ourselves with some of the technical challenges we've had this week in regards to this. But, yes, it's great. We also will be playing along on Twitter, so if you wanted to have a look at ADCET, that would be great, and you can Tweet along with that.

Just before I start, I just want to acknowledge the great team that I work with. This has been a challenging week to set this up and I really commend Jane and Darren and Kylie in supporting us to get this happening, and also Microsoft and Conor in supporting us to make this happen. It's great to learn new things, but sometimes also increases the grey hair count that we have on our heads. So, yeah, but it's good and fingers crossed we continue to have a successful session.

All right. Now, without further ado I would like to hand over to you, Conor. And I hope you all enjoy this presentation. And I will come back at the end and do the Q&A. Take care. Thanks, Conor.

CONOR MCHOULL: Perfect. Kia ora, everybody. Give me one second. I'm just going to try and share my screen here, get my presentation going. Awesome. And there I am. Kia ora. Welcome. I am really excited to be here but before I kick off, I just want to do a check to make sure that you can see my slides and hear me okay. If you can, just give a little thumbs up through the react button. Look at that, too good.

Awesome. So this is me. My name is Conor McHoull, and I am the Education Success Manager for Aotearoa in New Zealand and I also support Tasmania in my role. So on the screen is a QR code. You can scan that if you wish and you will get access to my contact details or there's a short link there, an Aka.ms/conorm. That will bring up my hi hello contact details where you can get in touch with me.

So I am a middle-aged male. I have short black hair. I have brown eyes and I am coming to you from my home office here on the beautiful north island of Aotearoa. Really excited to be here with you today.

In this session we are looking at Accessibility 101 with Microsoft. And there is a really great quote here, and this comes direct from our Microsoft accessibility page, and this is something that I think is really, really important, and that is there are no limits to what people can achieve when technology reflects the diversity of everyone. And that's a really powerful statement when we are thinking around providing an inclusive and supportive classroom which meets the diverse needs of our learners, right?

So I'm an ex‑classroom teacher. I was teaching in the K to 12, so primary intermediate space for around 9 years. So before I kick off into this session, I do just want to preface that my role with Microsoft is around providing professional development and digital growth for teachers. The accessibility piece is an additional role that I've taken on, because it's an area that I'm passionate about. I am ADHD. So my life experiences and my lived experiences as a learner will vary differently to those who have other, you know, cognitive or visual disabilities, and I acknowledge everybody here on this call who works or is someone who, you know, is living with one of these disabilities.

And the reason I have taken this on is because I believe in this statement and I believe that all students deserve an equal playing field, right? So when I'm talking today, I want to just make it known that I'm not an expert. I am merely someone who wishes to learn more, become more supportive as an individual and as a trainer, but also someone who wants to take all of the knowledge and try and empower other people. So when I'm talking today, you know, I might not have all the answers, I might not get it 100%. This is still an area that I am looking to grow my professional capabilities in but it is something I'm really passionate about, and I believe in its importance. Hence why I've taken it on and I really want to try and help promote inclusive learning.

So while I kick off, I'm just going to flick to the next slide here. Sorry, I will go back. When we are talking accessibility, we're talking about providing an opportunity for students in any educational setting regardless of ability, income, language, location and identity. So we don't want to look at it, I guess, limiting our audience.

When engaging in the classroom, a lot of the time and up to ‑ and these stats are all taken from reputable sources ‑ up to 50% of instructional time can be lost in managing students' needs including assistive technology. That's a lot of time taken out of the classroom and out of valuable teaching time. So through Microsoft tools and support we want to try and look at reducing that time loss through ease of access tools and by looking at not only making these tools or the features that I'm going to cover today for those who need it but for everybody. I think that's a really important point. And this is one I've spoken around with other teachers and other institutions. These tools and features I will cover off in this high level 101, these aren't tools which are only for those learners who might have a learning disability, but these are for everybody. And by using these and knowing what's available for all learners, we level that playing field and then it becomes a normal tool, right, and it's not a separate tool. And that's what's important, when we are using these, we're highlighting that it's normal and reducing that stigma.

And so when we're looking at a classroom ‑ and if you think to maybe some of your lived experiences or maybe some conversations, virtually 100% of schools in Australia and New Zealand have students with identified learning difficulties enrolled. And that's the current climate and that's where we need to embed our time and know that in some way there is someone who is impacted in your classroom who needs some additional support. And so we need to try and normalise these tools. An inclusive approach, exactly right. And this is where 20% of students in Australia and New Zealand schools require inclusive education support.

Approximately 25% of Australian students are from a language background other than English. So we've got students with an accessibility perspective, so a learning need, but also, you've got students as well who might need additional language support so all of these tools come together to support in one way or another.

Now, when we're talking accessibility, we're talking building a foundation for success. So inclusive education tools. This helps us to provide a personalised ‑ or helps students with a personalised curriculum or a personalised approach to their curriculum, I should say, because we can increase student experience and reduce their stigma; we can allow our educators to be more empowered to engage their learners; and we can help institutions build reputations that are positive places that promote diversity and inclusion. And that's the place that we want to get to, right? We want that inclusive approach. We want to level the playing field.

Through Microsoft tools, that is something that is in‑built into all of our product features. And as I start to step through this high level approach, what will become apparent is that a lot of these tools are so easy to switch on, and the conversation needs to be around normalising them because people who, you know, might not be living with a learning disability, in some way or another will probably find their day slightly easier by using some of these tools as well.

Now, accessibility technology, there is a lot of areas where we can promote inclusion, right, and when we're thinking of a classroom, we are looking at being responsive to a range of accessibility. So we've got your learning or cognitive disability. So students in classrooms who might have dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. Visual, so vision, low vision, blind, colourblind, hearing, people with mobility support, neurodiversity as well as mental health. And Microsoft really works or strives to cover off or support a whole range of these. Now, I put a link here ‑ and I will come back to this once I get into my demo side of things, but this short link here, aka.ms/accessibility, this is a one‑stop hub for all Microsoft accessibility support, and you can see on the screen here what's really handy is that it's broken down into different categories. And within each of these categories ‑ so vision, hearing ‑ each one has links to specific tools within that category to support students and to support classroom engagement. So, for example, if you go into the vision tab there are lots of different tools, videos, resources and support for students who might have a visual impairment and to provide educators with the resources to support that too, but I will come back to that in my demo.

So when I'm talking inclusive classroom, we are talking a range of different tools to support. And there are tools to support reading, writing, math, speaking and listening. And, you know, targeting or supporting accessibility isn't done through one of these; it's done through utilising and understanding all of the tools at our disposal and using a plethora of these to support students in the classroom.

Now, as I mentioned at the start, my background is in K‑12, so primary‑intermediate. And when I'm talking about students, I'm talking education as a whole, so tertiary as well. And I think it's important to note that all of these tools and all of the support that I will look at, the key is scalability. So all of these tools can be scaled to support any kind of learner or any age bracket that you're working with. So as I'm talking, I will try and highlight case points for tertiary, as I know that that's the majority of this cohort, and this is the demographic of this conversation. But the key word is scalability. So these tools can be used across the education sector.

Now, when we take the Microsoft 365 for education product stack or the product architecture, it's kind of layered in an approach to support a whole classroom or the whole network as a whole. So if I start at the bottom here you can see we have our core components and these are the foundations of our Microsoft products. And this starts with platform management and security. So within these there are accessibility tools in‑built. But as we start to go up our architecture slide, we have different solutions at different levels that we can turn on and turn off. And as I go through, I will unpack a little bit around how each one can support.

So accessibility solutions starts with things like Immersive Reader, Translator, the use of Narrator, voice typing and live captions. These are some of the base accessibility tools which we have. These accessibility tools are, in one way or another, all implemented and included in our instructional tools. So at the base level of everything that students would be using, there are accessibility solutions embedded into the Microsoft tools to support that inclusive classroom. And then another level up from that we have our learning accelerators. And as the name suggests, these learning accelerators are a way to accelerate learning. So all of the accessibility tools are then layered through these learning accelerators too.

As I start to break down these accessibility tools, we will look at a really high level and then towards the end of the slide or the end of the presentation I have a form which I will give you guys the code to fill out, and that will help shape the topic of conversations for the next accessibility series. I want these to be proactive. So I want these sessions to be really targeting the needs that you, as attendees, are seeing or wanting to get more information on rather than something that I've curated and sort of dictated that these are what the sessions are going to be about. So I will let you guys have a bit of a say in shaping the next sessions based on where the biggest need for support is, so we can cover some of those later.

Now, this comes back to our accessibility and inclusion. So these are our base tools. And I'm going to give a demo of Immersive Reader with voice typing, narrator and the translator with live captions very soon to show you how all of these can be used within a tertiary setting, for note taking, for transcribing, especially for those students who, you know, might have a visual impairment or hard of hearing as well. And then we will start layering in some of those other accessibility tools.

Then we have our instructional tools, and these are the ones that students will be using on a day‑to‑day basis. We have our Teams Education, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint. These are the ones where students are going to be creating their work, right, whether it's an assignment, whether it's a slideshow, whether it's a video, right, through Microsoft Stream. There are applications that have Microsoft accessibility tools embedded. One of the biggest ones that students in a tertiary setting would probably use on a day‑to‑day basis would be Microsoft Word, right. So understanding the tools that are layered within there would probably be a really good base for providing that foundational support because once you have an understanding of those tools, like I said, they're kind of augmented through all of the other different applications. So my demo very soon is going to take place in a Microsoft Word, and then I will show you how they are all layered through.

And then we have our learning accelerators. Now, these learning accelerators ‑ the term "learning accelerator" is relatively new. This has come about after we had the Microsoft Future of Learning seminar session in early March. This really looked at taking the products that are available and putting them in an easy-to-understand way so educators know what tools are available and under kind of what foundation or what heading. So we have foundational. So we have reading progress and reading coach. Reading progress and reading coach. Now, reading progress and reading coach is a tool which would help to enhance students' reading abilities. And the great thing with that is that's got Immersive Reader fully in‑built into it, and math progress and coach has all the accessibility tools built in too.

I'm going to jump ‑ this one here, Office Lens ‑ and I had a ‑ before I kicked off this session, I hadn't included this but then I had a comment come through around what would be a tool that I would recommend students in a tertiary setting would be like a go‑to tool, and Office Lens is one that I would highly recommend and that probably hasn't had much of a focus or an emphasis put on it as a tool for educators. Now, I've played around with this myself. And when I'm speaking around the case study for this, I've actually used this ‑ so my niece ‑ my niece is 14 years old. She has experienced her schooling with dyslexia as well as Irlen Syndrome. So she's had a bit of a tough time. She has been my sounding board for some of these tools and I've worked with her on her homework and home learning, and Office Lens was one that I had surprisingly a lot of uses for and one that I really advocate for.

Now, Office Lens ‑ and what I like about this is when we are talking tertiary, we're talking older students, and predominantly they all would have access to a cell phone or a device or a tablet in one way or another. This tool is really great for students on the go, right? You might be popping in and out of different classrooms, different lectures and the such. So students can have access to Office Lens on their phone. Now, I'm just going to ‑ this isn't going to play ‑ hang on one second ‑ I'm going to start this video. And hopefully you guys can hear the sound. If not, if you can't hear the sound, that's fine.

DARLENE: No, sorry, we can't.

CONOR: That's fine. So what we are seeing here is an example of a student taking a picture on their phone through the Office Lens app of some text from a textbook. And what this does, especially for students with a visual impairment, they can take the text, they can take a photo of it, they can export it to OneNote, One Drive, Word, PowerPoint and then they can open it up in Immersive Reader. What they can do in Immersive Reader is they can then toggle the different functions to play the text aloud. When they are playing it aloud they can change the output, so they can translate it to their native language, they can change the colour background, they can change the font sizing. So they can really customise and tailor that to support their needs. And I love that it's really accessible on the go. So you are not having to be tethered to a device. Students can use this to take a photo of a whiteboard, of a slide on a projector, and Office Lens will convert that into text which they can upload into a Word file, and then they can also access it in Immersive Reader. So there's a heap of great use cases for Office Lens.

I can see some comments coming through. "Works great inside of the OneNote app as well." 100%. So students can snap things on the go, from textbooks, from, you know, whiteboards, upload to OneNote, open up Immersive Reader, customise it to suit their learning needs. This is probably my go‑to app when I'm talking accessibility, Office Lens and Immersive Reader. Cool.

I'm not going to talk too much around reading progress and reading coach, purely for the fact that these tools ‑ I'm really looking at sort of highlighting a high-level overview, before I get into my demo. Now, reading progress, these are tools embedded in Microsoft Teams which ‑ let me switch back to my pointer here ‑ are designed to help students build confidence and improve reading fluency. So you might have students with a cognitive disability, maybe slower processes, maybe they need some time to help unpack words, maybe it's dyslexia. There's a range of different texts inbuilt into Reading Coach and Reading Progress and you can also upload your own PDF or Word text for students to read.

What it does is they will read the passage of text to the camera, and using AI technology it will listen to them read and they can complete their reading tasks and assignments independently. And it will listen and provide feedback to the educator on students' fluency trends, right? So it will listen and auto detect their pronunciation, their words per minute, and it will flag and highlight areas that as an educator you might not necessarily pick up but you can store and save and reflect on around supporting students through education insights.

Now, this is a really powerful one for classroom teaching but as an accessibility tool it also has its uses as well. So you can give students that confidence to go away and complete their learning and that's a big one with accessibility. And when I've worked with students around this, a lot of their learning has been accelerated simply through confidence. And that comes back to that inclusive classroom approach. If we're empowering students to feel confident through their work, through these tools and that confidence level rises, we start to see a shift in a lot of their academic trends as well. And enabling them to become confident is by levelling the playing field with these tools that are available. So reading progress is a great one.

All of these links and all of the supporting documents and resources I will have and I will attach to the slide and I can share that out. So if you wanted to go and find out anymore around any of these tools, these are all linked to Microsoft Learn Pathways, and you can go and complete those pathways to earn a badge or a certificate around, you know, these tools, accessibility, as well as getting some additional resources and lesson plans on how you can support students in the class.

These are some snippets here of teacher voice. So it's like having 20 extra teachers in one classroom. And when I'm talking reading coach, this one is really powerful when ‑ and I can just see here Sarah has put a comment around practising oral presentations. Yes. I have seen this used in examples for speeches, for example, oral presentations. So students can upload their Word document or their PowerPoint slide ‑ sorry, their PDF text and then they can practise through reading coach as well. So they can present it to the camera, they can start to practise that eye contact and practise, you know, doing this individually. And then they get real‑time feedback as well and as a teacher you can then provide feedback.

But there's another tool coming up which is just as important and really good for helping with oral language, and that is speaker coach. And this one is relatively new in some of the product features that are being rolled out. And I can see here PowerPoint ‑ you guys are on to it, I love it. So speaker coach is a really powerful oral language support tool. So this is found within PowerPoint and Teams for education meetings and it provides students with real‑time individualised feedback on their public speaking skills. So if I had this on ‑ and I've done this in the past and it's quite ‑ it kind of throws you off a little bit when you've got this on and you notice how many times you say "um" or how many times you stutter or pause on a word, but it's a really great tool in helping students work through that confidence or work through those ranges of emotions as they are developing their oral language skills. So as they are presenting ‑ and I can show a live demo of this very soon ‑ what it does is as soon as they finish presenting they get immediate feedback and coaching. And you can see behind my big noggin here, different indicators here, so words per minute, were you speaking too fast, were you speaking too slow, was your pitch and tone ‑ you know, do you need to vary them for audience engagement. So there is tools in‑built into these to support not just accessibility in terms of visual and hearing, but also for oral as well, oral language and presenting, and confidence is a huge one. So speaker coach is another really, really important tool.

And here Mike Thomas, "Speaker coach is a light bulb tool for a lot of students. The ability to practise and get real‑time feedback is where it really helps students and even us as adults." And this is a quote that I really like, and I go back to my comment at the start about normalising these tools. As a presenter and, you know, an educator as well, I still get nervous when doing a presentation and it's about showing students that even as adults we are still learning, we're still lifelong learners, and that these tools are here even for us to use. If we normalise that and show that we are all on this learning journey together, you know, and normalising that, students will use these whether they need it or not; whether they are someone who has a disability or needs these tools for support, it's there, they can use it. They can get that feedback. They can use it to help themselves grow, and I think that's a really important part, is that even us as adults, we can use these tools as well.

And one of the other learning accelerators ‑ and this is the second to last one that I will talk about ‑ is Search Coach. Now, this Search Coach tool hits a couple of different accessibility needs. This is built into Teams. And this is a search system which will help students to identify online resources. Now, this one is probably more leaning towards a teaching and learning tool, but it's got some good accessibility features in‑built into it. So, again, behind it is AI technology. But behind that as well is the Microsoft Accessibility Tool. So we can use Immersive Reader, we can take the information, we can put it on to a Word document and we can then, you know, use it to be read back to us, we can translate it. But Search Coach, it will filter content from certain domains, file types or operators, so when you are working with tertiary students conducting an assignment, you can direct them to this place to get reputable information from sources that are accurate and that are trusted. And then, like I said, they can take that information and know that it is being used in the accessible tools features as well. I appreciate the people that have to drop off. I apologise if I'm boring you. But, yes, the presentation is being recorded. So thank you for popping along.

Cool. And this is another ‑ so this teacher here, Matthew Cooke, I actually met him. So he's a teacher from Aotearoa down here. He's from Napier Boys High School. I actually went down and worked with him. They were what was a pilot school. So Microsoft in Seattle, the big mothership, they for some reason decided to include Napier Boys in this pilot program of Search Coach. They actually sent a film crew from Seattle out here to do some work and film some of the students using Search Coach and some of the teachers and how it works in their classroom. And even though it's a high school, a lot of the students that were participating in this were year 12 and 13 students, so they were looking at transitioning into tertiary education. So a really good tool to help students validate their information.

And the last one that I'm going to talk about in a sort of high-level review is Reflect. Now, Reflect on its, I guess, initial ‑ I guess when you see it for the first time, it can look a little bit kidsy, a little bit primary school with the fluffy monsters. It's designed in a way that it is predominantly used in a primary intermediate setting. But it's a good tool to sort of highlight around the SEL, right. So looking at emotional support or mental health, getting students to have a place or a safe space where they can come together and kind of share their emotions, build self‑awareness and empathy and develop an emotional granularity by expanding their vocabulary. And so through the Reflect tool, as an educator you can set up a place that is safe, students can't see what other students are reflecting, right, so you can actually have different levels of, I guess, security there, so you know that students are safe and that their feelings or responses aren't going to be shared out to the rest of the class.

But as an educator, it gives you the ability to build that safe place for students and give them a space to feel like they have the support from the educator, right. And whether that's primary, intermediate, high school or tertiary, it doesn't matter. You know, as a student and even as an adult, feeling like we are being heard or that we have a place to express ourselves is just as important no matter where you are on your educational journey. So this is a really great tool to start utilising or understanding how you could implement it into your practice. From a primary school perspective, that's done in a way through animated feeling monsters. So it's a little bit more kidsy, they are fluffy little monsters and students can use AR, or augmented reality, to play around in the classroom. But, again, that scalability I was talking about, you can scrap the monsters part but use the SEL, the emotional learnings and use that reflect check‑in for a higher level of, you know, classroom need as well.

So scalability is really important in these tools. And I always like to highlight that as well. So no matter where you are, there is a use case for some of these. As someone who is an advocate for mental health, I love this tool and I have seen it used in many ways. And all of the ways I've seen it used have been successful in one way or another. And again, you're not going to get every student buying in and you are not going to get every student say, "Man, this is awesome." You are going to get those kids ‑ students, tertiary students, who might not buy in. That's fine. It's not for them. It's for the ones who do buy in and do use it as a tool to help them with their academic studies. So whether you are using this and you've only got one person engaging in it, that's one person who is obviously feeling like this is for them, right, and that's what it's about. If we can just help that one person, we are on the right path.

So another quote here from Head of Digital Pedagogy, Steve Cracknell from All Hallows School in Brisbane, Australia: "Reflect allows the students the opportunity to be self‑aware of how they're currently feeling in that learning space. For the students, it's simply a question of pick your emoji and qualify it with a word or a statement." That's it in its basic form. It's just an outlet for people to express their emotions and feel like they're being heard.

Cool. All of the tools that I've just spoken about, all of those tool’s feed back into this part, Education Insights. And this is an AI tool which sits in behind Teams, and as an educator it is invaluable. This Education Insight will help you understand how your students are interacting across your team. How they are engaging, when they're engaging, what learning needs are being identified, and how their academic progress is trending. So all of the tools, Reading Progress, Immersive Reader, Office Lens, whether students are engaging in Reflect, all of that is fed back into Education Insights. And this gives you the information as an educator to help guide your thinking and to help students with their academic trends from a single dashboard.

I will give a little bit of an overview of that as well, but what it does in the back end is it might toggle and say, "Hey, student X opens a Word document and only looks at it for a short amount of time before closing it." Or "Student X has been late to class four days this week", or "has disconnected from an online call or has been late." Right? And on the ‑ I guess from a one‑off experience or from a one‑off, if you are seeing a student is late and you are not tracking that, you don't have that data or that metric to kind of delve deeper into that pastoral care to try and understand where that support is needed for that student. And when you scale all of those things down and you are able to see all of these different trends you might be able to make, I guess, a judgment call, "Hey, maybe this student needs some extra support."

And then you can start unpacking that a little bit more. Does this student need some extra support because of, are they struggling with some of the learning, are they experiencing or struggling with a disability, are they finding it hard to read all the text that I'm putting up as an educator. So all of these education insights in one way or another build up to help us understand from a pastoral perspective if students are struggling with accessibility. And that's a really key piece too. Not just having someone come in and say they have a learning disability, but as an educator being able to potentially help those students who might not have identified that or might not have wanted to disclose that as well.

So when we can see what it is they are struggling with our teachers can intervene and provide that additional support and that sums up nicely what I was throwing out into lots of different words there.

Cool. So I'm at a bit of a pause, a bit of a demo phase. Now, I am keen ‑ I'm very cognisant of time, so I can see that we've got about 5 minutes, 10 minutes left in our session. What I'm going to do is I'm going to jump into a very quick demo of Immersive Reader and some of the base level accessibility features in a Word document and then I will start looking at wrapping up. So what I'm going to do is I'm just going to stop sharing my screen for a second. So please bear with me. And I am going to share my screen here. Cool. So hopefully you guys can see this text. And if you would be so kind as to maybe give me a thumbs‑up in the chat so I can see that ‑ perfect. Lovely. I saw a few. Some people are still awake, that's good.

So what I have here is a document which a student has written and this is ‑ I've taken from a demo account from my fake school in Microsoft Teams. And this is a large piece of text on plain white paper. And for some students this is overwhelming, especially students who have an accessibility or a learning disability, sorry. This is a lot of information on a page which can be quite hard to read. So a couple of base level tools that are in‑built, down the bottom here ‑ and I will just point out I'm using Microsoft Word Desktop App for this particular demonstration. I'm going to switch to Microsoft Word on the web very soon. But this is Microsoft Word Desktop.

Now, down the bottom here of my page you can see a little bar here. This is automatically an accessibility check which happens on a Microsoft Word document in a desktop app. So I can click this to get some more information. Even though it's plain text on a white background, it's noted that there are no accessibility issues and people with disability should not have difficulty reading this document. Now, if you need more additional information about how it decides this, there are some links to follow. But it's basically said that the text is all nice, there's no obvious accessibility issues.

However, everyone has different needs, right, so I'm going to go ahead and open ‑ actually, what I might do is demonstrate a couple of other tools here first before I jump out of here. Again, when working with Microsoft Word, there are some tools here on the right‑hand side you can see at the top under "voice". I might have a mobility issue, right, a mobility impairment. I might not be able to make full use of my keyboard. So I have the ability to dictate my words and it will write down what it hears. Full stop. Delete. Undo. That's weird. It doesn't want to ‑ there are different commands. And if you go into the ‑ sorry, yes, I can zoom in a little bit more. The text isn't as important I guess as the tools I'm using.

Now, when using these voice features, dictate and transcribe, you do have different phrases that you can say. So you can make better use of the recording. Obviously, editing is really important as you're writing. We make mistakes all the time and the backspace key is probably one of the most used buttons on my keyboard but we can use the word phrases to undo or delete sentences just using our voice. So that's a really powerful tool. And I've used this in the class as well. I've had students who can turn on dictate while the teacher is talking. So it can dictate using the microphone from someone else talking. You can also transcribe.

Now, using transcribe you can change your language. So it would do its best ‑ and, again, it's not always perfect, it does its best, to listen in on what is being said, and then you can upload that recording and it will do its best to transcribe that into text which will then be put into your document.

So I am just giving a demonstration of transcribing words. And it will do its thing. It will save it to your One Drive first. Depending on the text as well, it can take a little while. But I have the ability to adjust the text, I can add it with the speakers, with timestamps or with speakers and timestamps. Now, I'm going to adjust the text. And here ‑ it's kind of chopped my words because I put it right in the middle of it. It's already put my transcript and also linked in the recording so I can ‑ I don't think you can hear that ‑ but it will then give you the ability to listen back as well. So there is some really, really good use tools there. Then we've also got the ability to read aloud. So you can get students to take a text, whether it's a PDF, they can export it to a Word document, and they can transcribe or read aloud there. Is transcribe only available in Office online or on local in stores? So transcribe is also on Word online. The dictate is also for the online. But when I was playing around with it earlier today, I had better success with the desktop version. And when I say, "better success", the uploading of the transcribe was faster which is weird because if you are doing it online, you would think it would go quick. As well as when I was dictating and I was saying things like "undo" and "delete", it did it then and I had a little bit more success, right? But those tools are included in their web‑based version. So those are some of the, I guess, voice options.

Another really good one that I will just highlight is the editor. And this is really for ‑ this is a really good one for students who might have or struggle with some cognitive disabilities. Dyslexia is a really great example for this. So by hitting editor, I can change the tone of my writing, right, and it will use AI to then kind of determine your text and give you an overview of any issues or refinements that you might need to take. So I've got this set as formal. It has identified four spelling errors. So, again, spell check, really important for ‑ I use spell check all the time. I don't need to justify the use of spell check. But then you have editor, right. So you can change your spelling. It also gives an overview of grammar, so structuring your sentences. But then it starts getting down into some more in-depth refinements, clarity, conciseness, punctuation conventions. But then you can also run some similarity checkers too. So you can check to see if, you know, maybe some text is plagiarised or that kind of stuff as well. Then there is some document insights. So this might take a little while as well. But, again, you can break it down into words and characters and all that kind of stuff.

Will the dictate function work over a forum like this? Yes. To be honest, I haven't tried it but I would imagine that if you have Word open right now with dictate and I was talking and you had me on speaker, then yes, it would pick up and dictate based on my voice. But you could also transcribe it as well. So you could then record ‑ you could record me or record this video, which it is, and then you can actually upload your own transcribed audio. So there is a couple of different options. Thank you for those people who are having to jump. I appreciate I'm heading over time a little bit.

So that's a couple of quick tools. Now, I'm just going to switch into this one on the web. So just give me one second here. And I'm just going to open up my demo account. And one last thing that I'm going to highlight is Immersive Reader. Just very quickly, I will just Zoom in a little bit. Like I was saying, this is a lot of text on plain white paper. Now, using Word online I can click the view tab. And right here is Immersive Reader. This is in‑built into Minecraft, this is in‑built into Forms, into Teams. This is everywhere. If I go into aka.ms/disability, I will just bring this up. I will go back to here and I will come back. Within the Immersive Reader pane it will open it up into a view that is fully customisable. Now, some of you might have experienced Immersive Reader but this is a tool which I can't stress the importance enough of how much this can change a student's experience with text, right? So very quickly we have the ability to read aloud. So by clicking play. But we can also change the voice selection and speed as well. But you've got three toggles at the top here. And these help us to change the visual features of the text. So we can change text size, we can change the spacing of words.

Now, the other really important one is we can change the font, and Comic sans is the next best choice when it comes to text for dyslexia. There is a roadmap integration plan to include open dyslexia font, and that will be coming in the future but for now Comic sans is noted out of these ones as the next best for dyslexia support.

Then for those who might have Irlen Syndrome, you are able to change the colour of the background. This is great whether or not you have Irlen Syndrome or you just want to change it so you're not having that eye strain of looking at white page, you have the ability to change that. But then we have the ability to break it down even further. So we can break it up into syllables. We can highlight parts of speech, turn these on, toggle all the labels, right? So not only are we highlighting parts of speech but for those whose English is second language, you know, you have already opened up the learning to them. We can take that a step further as well. And I'm just going to disable those. We have the ability to ‑ and this is great for ADHD. Myself, I turn this on all the time. We have line focus. So we can really filter out the noise surrounding text and help students as they progress through. That's just a quick example.

But then also one of the last features I'm going to show we have the ability to translate this whole text either by word, so I can go through and click different words with a visual picture description, or I can go ahead and translate the whole text into that language. And when I click play it will also then read aloud that text in that language, and there are a stack of languages to choose from. So there are a lot of ‑ there is a lot of support there. Then there is Reading Coach, which is a new feature, and I won't get too in depth into that now just because I'm very cognisant of time.

DARLENE: Mentioning time, sorry, Conor, we have hit the end time.

CONOR: I will just stop my screen.

DARLENE: I know you are wanting people to fill in a questionnaire of the next steps. Is that ‑ ‑ ‑

CONOR: Yes.

DARLENE: So for those who are having to leave ‑ I know a lot of people have meetings right at 2.

CONOR: We will share it out.

DARLENE: Yes, we will share it out and just be aware this webinar is being recorded. If you have to leave, we understand and we will keep recording, and feel free, Conor, if you do want to add a little bit but we actually also have a captioner so we need to be on time as much as possible.

CONOR: Yeah, no, completely. Look, thank you all for attending. And I apologise for running over. It's a lot to cram into a short session, hence why I'm really keen to run some follow‑ups. Like I said at the start, I want these to be, I guess, influenced by your needs or what you are seeing as important sort of learning area for you. So what I'm going to do is just in a second, I will flick through my last slide. Has that come up? There we go. So I will put the link in the chat but there is a QR code there. Once you scan that or put that link in, there's a couple of questions for, I guess, guiding my workshops for next time. So if you wouldn't mind taking a few seconds to do that, that would be fantastic.

DARLENE: That's brilliant. We've also put the link in the chat a couple of times so people will be getting to that. Thank you, Conor, it's great to know this is only just the beginning because there is an overwhelm of information and hopefully some people have some time to go and play now because it's always exciting to have that next step of actually playing with it. I really appreciate your time. It's great to understand more and more about the accessibility tools that are coming online with Microsoft. And we did it. Well done, team. Well done, Conor, we presented in Microsoft Teams. We survived.

CONOR: Anyone can do it.

DARLENE: Yeah, definitely. Thanks everybody for joining us. It's fabulous to see everyone. I think we had over 100 at some stage, so absolutely brilliant. And we look forward to the next one. Take care.

CONOR: Thank you, guys. Bye, bye.