“Hear my voice; the importance of self-advocacy for students who are blind or vision impaired”

Melissa Fanshawe
School of Education
University of Southern Queensland
This session looks at ways at which we can equip students with a vision impairment to feel confident in raising access issues with teachers, technology departments and schools to enable equitable access.
What is advocacy?

“Advocacy is promoting and defending a person's rights, needs and interests. Many people can speak up for their own rights, needs and interests, but some find it hard. Children with additional needs often struggle to speak up for themselves, or don't have the ability to do it” (Raisingchildren.net.au)
Why do we need to advocate?

In all images there are three people at a sports field. One tall, one medium, one short. There is a fence which prevents them from accessing seeing over it to watch the game. In the first image, each is standing on a box to enable them to see over the fence: they are all being treated equally. In the second image, the tall person does not have a box, the middle person has a box, the third person has two boxes: they are being treated equitably by providing different supports dependent on their needs. In the third image, the fence is removed and a mesh fence is put in to remove the systemic barrier.
Self-determination (ECC)

When should we advocate?
Access to curriculum

Figure 8.4: The Principle of Least Restrictive Materials (Stratton, 1990).

When should we advocate?

Access to environment
When should we advocate?
Access to social
When should we advocate?

Access to systems

When should we advocate?
Picking the battles

The Lighthouse keeper's Catastrophe by Rhonda and David Armitage
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KKf_JWOOCw

Supporting students to advocate

- Build confidence
- Support/Systems
- Politeness