

## USING OFFICE 365 TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN KINDERGARTEN

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Most of us who work in a kindergarten have probably had the experience of teaching students with special needs. Working with a group of children of different age usually demands from a teacher a lot of ability to adjust to diversity. When a child with special needs is included, the job is even more demanding.

As a kindergarten teacher, I work in a group of 18 children from three to five years old. One of them is deaf. The girl uses a hearing aid - cochlear implant - and has been using it since she was three years old. Though she does not have problems with hearing any more, she has problems with understanding and adjusting the noise within the playroom. Her ability of understanding is also weak. She is a positive and very sociable person, but she is easily disturbed by other children and their sounds. Therefore, using Office 365 enables a teacher to record and to share all the songs, finger plays and stories in order to provide qualitative materials available in any smart device from home, where no one can disturb a girl with the difficulties mentioned above.

Since we are the first Microsoft Showcase School in Slovenia, most of the teachers use tools within *the Cloud*, or as it is formally called *Office 365*. Therefore, the tools are also used in the kindergarten. I myself am obliged to teach children all the contents provided by the curriculum, besides English language as a second language. The idea of helping the deaf girl came out of the idea using the Cloud for second language early years acquisition.

The most important thing at early years second language acquisition is repetition, singing, using rhythm while acquiring new vocabulary and its phonetics and playing. Most of the job is done in the playroom, during day care. However, some of the materials, besides photos and videos are stored in OneDrive.

Besides OneDrive, OneNote is also used.

OneNote enables a teacher to capture all the ideas, videos, photos – materials, to organise them later on and what is most important share them in any way you like with anyone you like. Therefore, many videos, songs and finger plays in English are available in OneNote.

However, organising materials within the Cloud and sharing them with anyone you like, enabled us to provide some qualitative audio materials especially for the girl with the cochlear implant. Therefore, she can listen all the audio recordings at home, where no one can disturb her. Furthermore, she can mostly concentrate on the content of the recordings and has many more opportunities to be exposed to good linguistic pattern. Office 365 is therefore no longer used only within second language acquisition, but also within acquiring any other contents of the curriculum for children with special needs – in our case for a girl with the cochlear implant.

