

Telepresence Robots:

Making Space for Students with Serious Illness or Injury in their Schools

Using telepresence robots versus video conferencing is all about increasing the absent student's sense of agency and ensuring they have a physical presence in their classroom. Students can join their peers and be active in their class!



“It's basically like I am there, interacting. To be involved in the classroom and have that mobility to move around ... and not having to get people to move me, it gives a sense of freedom.”

Tom, Student

Side effects of missing school

- ☹ Disrupts friendships with peers
- ☹ Risks academic underachievement or failure
- ☹ Fuels anxiety and poor mental health
- ☹ Increases vulnerability to stressors or secondary illnesses
- ☹ Makes it harder to form and maintain relationships

Gilmour, M., Hopkins, L., Meyers, G., Nell, C. & Stafford, N. (2015)

Benefits of robot telepresence

- ✓ Increases classroom participation
- ✓ Addresses academic underachievement
- ✓ Eases anxiety between attendance and absence
- ✓ Builds school willingness to support the student
- ✓ Supports relationships and friendships

Missing School Inc. (2020). Australian National Telepresence Robot Service:

Why is robot telepresence better for students with serious illness and their schools?

- ✓ Provides better video and audio quality in a room than a tablet or laptop
- ✓ Allows hands-free handling in the classroom - no one needs to hold or turn the device
- ✓ Removes the need for teachers to set up call links, laptops, or tablets each time
- ✓ Joins remote student to the room like they're walking in at the start of class
- ✓ Allows the student to independently dial-in and gives presence with a single click
- ✓ Gives the student movement and agency on the same basis as their peers
- ✓ Ensures the student isn't forgotten or left out - they have a physical presence
- ✓ Moves around the classroom space, to group work, or events as agreed
- ✓ Looks up and down - as well as left and right - depending on work tasks
- ✓ Gives the student an ultra-wide field of view to see around the room
- ✓ Offers lightweight portability, and can fold for transportation
- ✓ Drives with glide technology for smooth motion and management
- ✓ Auto-docks for recharging in readiness for the next lesson
- ✓ Connects through simple mobile, tablet or desktop application
- ✓ Encrypts audio and video end-to-end for highest security
- ✓ Works with Google classroom or Teams - should not be replaced by them
- ✓ Eases arrangements between all parties using our Telepresence Inclusion Planner
- ✓ Uses our checklist for success to align procedures for dial-ins for hospital or at home
- ✓ Supported by MissingSchool's service model to minimise school management workload

Meeting the Education Standards...

Though they work well with robots, Google Classroom and Teams document house do not satisfy the student's need for teaching and social connection as part of their reasonable adjustment under the Disability Standards for Education.

Zoom, FaceTime, Teams and Google Meet are many-to-many video conferencing apps. In contrast, robot telepresence allows the student to have a place in the classroom and independently engage with others who are physically present (one-to-many, and many-to-one).