March 15th 2016.

This experience came from my first day at my placement school. I was observing my mentor who was teaching a mixed gender year 10 Physical Education class. In this lesson the students were learning about common sports injuries, specifically, common knee and shoulder injuries within the context of Australian sport. The students began the lesson with a discussion about the topic and this was linked to the media article that would become the focus of the lesson. The students task was to read and summarise the article, then answer the teacher devised questions relating back to the article.

Firstly, I noticed that there was little engagement by the students. It was obvious that their prior knowledge of the topic was low and despite being in year 10, some struggled to read the article. It wasn’t that the article was particularly difficult, I later found out that 70% of the class were integration or EAL students and simply did not have the literacy skills required to complete the task independently.

My mentor spend substantial time working with each individual student to ensure that they understood the article and questions by using metaphors and demonstrations to enhance student understanding. This was clearly a demonstration of positive practice, but it left me considering whether the focus on the EAL and integration students left the mainstream students unchallenged and disinterested.

If this were my class, I might have shown a video prior to discussing the article to enhance student knowledge of the topic then split the class into mixed groups where the EAL/integration students could be mentored by their peers allowing me more time to oversee the whole class and provide extension work to those students who needed it.