

Interview Transcript with Laythan Branam Destewart

- Question: Please tell us your name, age, disability
 - Answer: My name is Laythan Branam Destewart I am 17 years old and I have Autism.
- Question: Describe your operating system
 - Answer: My operating system is like Microsoft (Chromebook) because I communicate differently than others. Some people have an Apple or Android operating system, I am (think) very black and white.
- Question: When you're feeling frustrated or overwhelmed related to your disabilities what villains do you portray? When you are feeling good and empowered, what heroes do you portray? How can this help people understand you?
 - Answer: I portray myself as Dobby from My Hero Academia. He can have a cold shoulder and doesn't like to listen to his boss. When I am having a bad day, I have a hard time communicating.
 - Answer: When I am feeling good, I portray myself to be like Kirishima from My Hero Academia. He sees the good in people and has good morals and ethics. I also relate to Deku from My Hero Academia because he is willing to learn. This can help people to understand me because when I am in a bad mood, I don't care about consequences or others feelings. When I am in a good mood, I am able to understand right from wrong.
- Question: What are some things in school settings, field trips and/or afterschool programs that have been really hard for you because of your disability?
 - In school I need more resources during class, more than most students. If I do not have aids for some classes, I have trouble following along during class. On field trips, if I can't have an aid having a buddy or and adult near by helps me stay on task.
- Question: What are supports from teachers, program staff, and other students that have helped you with your disability?

- My aids at school help me with hard school subjects. They help explain questions and assignments to me. Some peers who know about my disability help me to use my tools and help me with social skills.
- Question: What makes you a leader and what are things that kids who don't identify as having a disability can learn from you?
 - Answer: I believe I am a leader because I know how to stand up for myself and others. Other people can learn from me by learning to advocate for themselves and for others.
- Question: Name an incident that you were able to overcome despite your disability?
 - At drill practice, I got very uncomfortable and overwhelmed because there was no a/c and it was very hot (humid). I had a hard time concentrating and I almost had a meltdown. I used my tools and called my supports, and I was able to finish out the day.
- Question: What do you want people to know in schools or programs about supporting BIPOC kids with disabilities?
 - I want people to know to be patient with people with disabilities. Provide us with reassurance and support. Please include us and don't treat us differently.
- Some things that others can do to make us feel more comfortable.
 - Show interest in our likes and hobbies.
 - Be patient with us while having conversations.
 - Give us space if we ask for it.
 - Be Literal when speaking to us (black and white thinkers have trouble with gray concepts humor, sarcasm, slang, ect.)
 - Allow us to fiddle and move around when talking. (This is called stemming and can look real awkward)
 - Don't force us to make eye contact with you.
 - Ask us our form of communication. (text, email, verbal, chunked down, step by step, one at a time instructions).
 - Ask permission before physical contact. Respect our personal space. (Remind us to ask for contact as well like hugs and let us know if we

are to close to your bubble as we sometimes don't understand personal space).

- Always be respectful to us. (we may be awkward but we know when people are disrespecting us or mocking us.)
- We need time to transition (visual reference the Sloth in Zootopia that works at the DMV) <https://youtu.be/HHKwnUa3txo>
- We may get excited and wrapped up in a certain subject.
- Include us in activities and don't treat us different. (Yes we may have accommodation but ultimately we are trying to do or experience the same things you do).
- My environment has an effect on my mood.
- Sometimes I may have trouble asking for help. (I may not have the words, understand what help looks like, or might be too overwhelmed to think to ask for help).
- Sometimes I need reassurance and support.
- I need help with understanding instructions (Example: stir the butter is an instruction in a recipe. I will stir the block of butter in a circle in the middle of the bowl with the other ingredients on the side of the bowl instead of stir/mixing it in or folding it into the mix).
- Every person with Autism is unique. (We do not check all the boxes. I was a late diagnosis because I did not present the way many Autistic kids do, and I can mimic people pretty good).
- People with Autism usually have repetitive behavior patterns. This includes routines and habits good and not so good. (We call it the broken record in our home because it takes a long time to learn a tool or a skill set and before it is mastered it feels like a broken record. This can be hard on people who support us because it can appear as if we aren't trying, listening, or caring. What is commonly called defiance and rebelling is often not the case with us and others with mental, cognitive, or intellectual disabilities).