**BRG – CAST\_0001–Module 6\_Fnl\_MW Intvw Perf & Credits\_Transcript**

**Terry:**

Wow, what an incredible day. Thank you to all our panelists for their incredible stories and demonstrations. I think we have a much clearer understanding of accessible technology and its game changing uses. Now I'm going to invite Matthew Whitaker back to help us close out the showcase. But first, a little background information on this extraordinary young man. When he was just ten years old, this music prodigy opened for Stevie Wonder at the Apollo Theater, and he was invited to play for Stevie Wonder's induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Matthew entered Juilliard in the fall of 2019 as the first blind undergraduate student to join the Juilliard’s Jazz Studies program. It's my great pleasure to introduce Matthew Whitaker. So, Matthew, thank you for being here today.

**Matthew:**

Yeah, thank you so much for having me.

**Terry:**

You're very welcome. It's truly my pleasure and honor. Which pieces of assistive technology has been most a part of your life growing up in middle school and high school?

**Matthew:**

Um, well, I would say that what I had and what I still use to this day is my computer and I use various screen readers from JAWS to Narrator, NVDA and VoiceOver. And I'd say one other piece of technology that I used, especially when I was in high school a lot was my BrailleNote as well. **Terry:**

So what's been the most important, accessible educational material in your life growing up?

**Matthew:**

As far as education, I think one of the things that was very important was me getting everything transcribed in braille. So I had different braille books and one subject that was you know, difficult was math, because everything had to be transcribed, including the graphs. And sometimes my aide, when even like by hand, like to make different objects for me so I can understand the, you know, whatever the problem is or whatever. And I would say another tool that I used was the Perkins Brailler for brailling everything out.

**Terry:**

So they really played an even more critical part of your education for math, which is always a difficult subject for a lot of people.

**Matthew:**

Exactly.

**Terry:**

So considering all of the accessible materials that you use, like the BrailleNote and the VoiceOver, what advice would you give to students who use assistive technology and accessible educational materials?

**Matthew:**

I would say don't be afraid to experiment. You know, a lot of this technology since it's improving a lot, you know, you're able to tailor everything to your needs. And just always have fun when using this technology. It's available to all of us. You know, we just have to keep using it and learning about it. Don't be afraid to ask for transcription of stuff in braille. You know, don't be afraid to use braille displays.

**Terry:**

You hit the nail on the head. It's always really important to kind of speak up and ask for what you need.

**Matthew:**

Yeah.

**Terry:**

But importantly, having fun in what you're doing. So thinking back as you were growing up in school, in elementary or middle school, was there something that the teacher provided, a technology that really helped you in school to give you that confidence to do whatever you're doing today? **Matthew:**

I would say one piece of technology that I really started to love using was the BrailleNote, because I can use it for writing documents, writing emails, or doing whatever, like internet stuff.

**Terry:**

So, Matthew, what advice do you have for parents and early childhood educators who are reluctant to introduce braille literacy to their kids?

**Matthew:**

I wouldn't be where I am today without braille education. I would say for the parents, don't be afraid to, you know, let your child or your kids get into using braille and technology. So that way, you know, when they become older, you know, they have a head start they know what to do when, you know, different scenarios come. I think both technology and braille, both work together in many ways. For example, when I'm doing music, there is a code for braille music and I'm able to learn music that way, if I want to. But also, I would say, you know, just always keep working on your braille skills because there may be times when you are reading something and you have to know like what it says and yet to maybe just read out loud to the rest of the class. Yeah, once you practice with it, you know, it just becomes more easier to understand. And now looking back on it, you know, I realized that, you know, all that hard work was really worth it because I am able to travel all over the world with my music. And I've been endorsed by different companies, and I'm currently studying at Juilliard as well. So I'm very grateful.

**Terry:**

Well, Matthew, thank you again for being part of the ED Games Expo Special Education Showcase.

**Matthew:**

Thank you so much.

**Terry:**

Your story really amplifies the kind of game changing nature of accessibility, which is clearly illustrated by everyone featured in the earlier sessions today in the panels as well as the Q&A. And before we end, I know your a gifted composer and arranger who's already won the Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composers Award. Can you show us how you build a piece of music using assistive technology?

**Matthew:**

Yeah, definitely. I made this song a few days ago, actually, and it is specifically for this event. So I do use Logic Pro for recording everything. It is made by Apple. and I used different software sounds that are being played by my MIDI controller. And so I have all the tracks laid out. Right. So I just go through each track, so. By the way. Now, the reason why VoiceOver is saying all those numbers is because it’s just telling me, like where I'm at in the project, like what bar am I on, what beat. So... all together, here's the whole thing.

♪ (soft jazz: piano) ♪

**END**