

Communication with School



Community
Resource
Unit Ltd.

Expanding Ideas; Creating Change

Building a Foundation for Partnerships



Overview of session



Community
Resource
Unit Ltd.

Expanding Ideas; Creating Change

- Brief review of inclusive education: what and why
- Legislation and framework supporting consultation and engagement
- Building a collaborative relationship
- Communication and advocacy tips
- Using your vision and building your skills as a parent advocate
- Goal setting for inclusion and partnerships



*Hi! I'm Nathan.
Let's look at
Inclusive Education*



Who is CRU?

CRU exists to support the development of leadership and authentic change which enhances the possibilities for people with disabilities to belong to and participate in community life. It aims to:



Challenge ideas and practices which limit the lives of people with disabilities and;



Inspire and encourage individuals and organisations to pursue better lives for people with disabilities.

What is the Families for Inclusive Education Project?

Families of students with disability will be clear, informed, confident and connected to work as respected and valued partners and advocates.

Activities:

- Individual consultations
- Workshops and webinars
- Development of resources (case studies, newsletters)
- Development of peer support networks



*Hi, I'm Nathan.
Let's talk about
Inclusive Education*





Why inclusion?



It's my human right



It's based on evidence



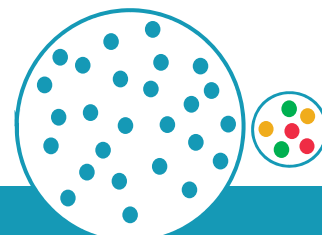
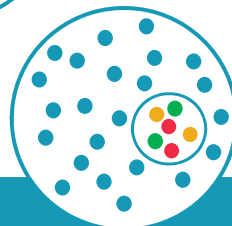
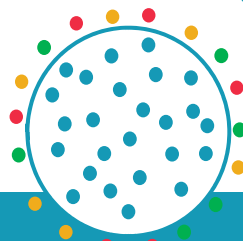
It's supported by law



It's best for me and for everyone



What does Inclusive Education look like?



Exclusion

Integration

Segregation



What are the features of an inclusive classroom?



Present and participating in the regular classroom alongside same age peers



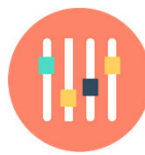
Socially belonging and participating in the full life of the school



Teacher takes responsibility for learning and student able to access and participate in the Australian Curriculum



High expectations and a focus on the authentic student experience (not a parallel education)



Reasonable adjustments are made as needed, UDL and/or differentiation routinely used



Cautious and targeted use of teacher aide assistance with use of other models of support (e.g. group work with peers, visual supports)



“Attended many many meetings to keep my daughter in the classroom with her peers participating in regular curriculum...Felt at times angry, frustrated, determined, focused, helpless, thrilled...’on guard’ most of the time.”

Parent advocate





What is reasonable to expect under the Disability Standards for Education?



The Disability Standards for Education apply to:

An icon showing a hand pointing to a document labeled 'Enrol' on a circular background.

Enrolment

An icon showing three raised hands on a circular background.

Participation

An icon showing a person wearing a graduation cap with hands held out, on a circular background.

Student support services

An icon showing a red octagonal 'STOP' sign on a circular background.

Elimination of harassment and victimisation

An icon showing a circular collage of educational symbols like a globe, microscope, and books, with 'CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT' written in the center.

Curriculum development, accreditation and delivery

There is an expectation of consultation



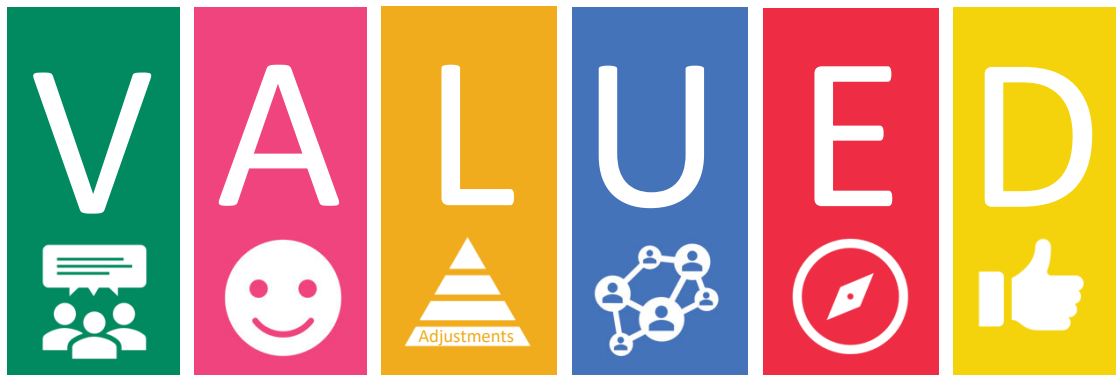
Parent and Community Engagement Framework



Source:
Department of Education
 Queensland Government



Type in CHAT:
Think of a collaborative relationship



Being a **valued** partner –
What does it **look** and **feel** like?



When teachers say this we hear?



Principal:

Have you thought about going back to work?

Parent:

She thinks I'm an anxious mother with too much time on my hands.

Teacher Aide:

She was really tired when she came in this morning.

Parent:

We never go out because of her difficulties with fatigue, we never do the things other families do, when we do you have a go at me! You're telling me off.

Teacher:

His teacher aide reads with him, I have 29 other children in the class to think about.

Parent:

The teacher doesn't see my child as her responsibility.

Source: Hodge, N. and Runswick-Cole, K. (2017)



When teachers say this we hear?



HOSES:

You are not entitled to a Rolls Royce service. We have limited resources that we must allocate fairly.

Parent:

You are a greedy, pushy, selfish parent.

Teacher:

I know he's lashing out but that is what children with autism do.

Parent:

You don't see my son, you don't recognise him as an individual.

Office receptionist:

(hand over the phone so slightly muffled). It's Mrs Smith on the phone, are you in?

Parent:

The whole office thinks I'm a problem.

Source: Hodge, N. and Runswick-Cole, K. (2017)



When parents say this teachers hear?



Parent:

At your school, some of the children with disabilities are getting bullied

Principal:

You don't value any of the work I have been doing on Positive Behaviour Support.

Parent:

Have you followed up on the changes on my son's ICP that we talked about at the meeting?

HOSES:

This parent doesn't think I am doing my job properly or working hard enough.

Parent:

I will bring in all of my research on Fragile x Syndrome.

Teacher:

She doesn't think I have the skills or care enough about her son to do my own research.



When parents say this teachers hear?



Parent:

I want to discuss my child's progress (in the first week of school)

Teacher:

You don't think I'm teaching your kid properly.

Parent:

I want to know how you're planning for my child's individual needs.

Teacher:

This parent's already decided that I am a teacher who doesn't see all children as individuals.

Parent:

My child is autistic, you will need to give him breaks, provide everything visual, don't overwhelm him, make sure he has friends, don't make him angry, don't be loud...

Teacher:

This parent doesn't think I know anything about teaching children with autism.



Good Sentence Starters

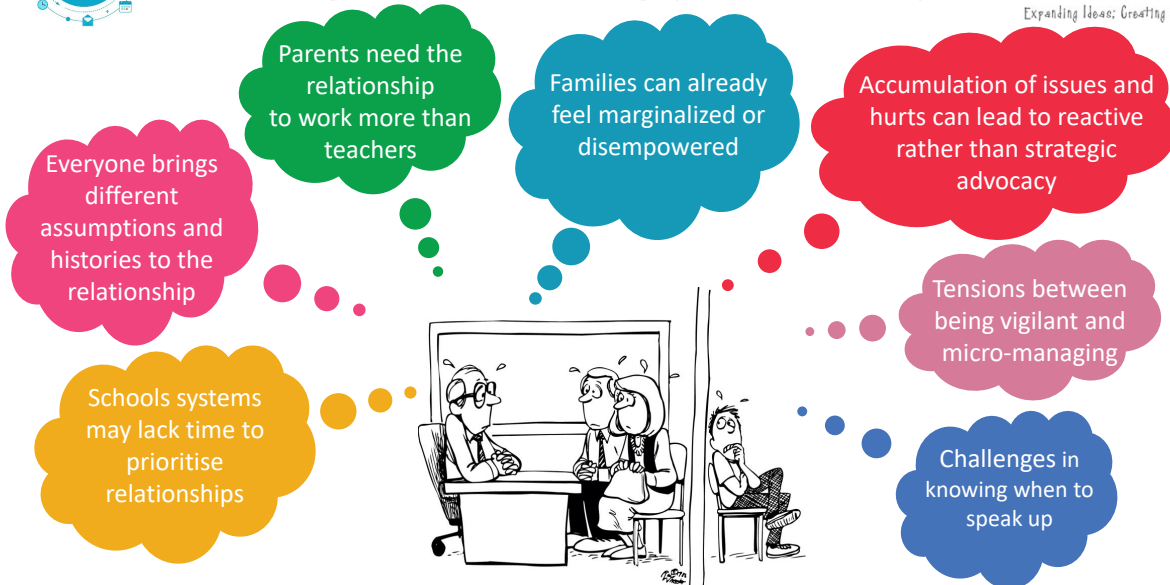
adapted from '8 Sentence Starters to Use When Talking to Teachers'
by Geri Coleman-Tucker, Understood.org



- ✓ Could you help me to understand...? (curious approach)
- ✓ What was the goal of the assignment? (leading to creative problem solving, and finding a way your child could work towards that goal)
- ✓ It seems as if she has a harder time doing ___ when ___ (non-judgemental)
- ✓ I've noticed something that works for my child is when... Could there be opportunities for that to happen in class?
- ✓ Have you considered?...or I am wondering if...
- ✓ Her ILP provides her with ___. How does that look in the classroom?
- ✓ How can I help or support what you are trying to achieve?



Challenges in building partnerships





Embrace your natural authority as a family member



“Make two lists - In the first column, list all the people who have been constant in the life of your son or daughter. In the other column, list all the people who have come and gone over the same period.

Your first list will [likely] be short, naming your family members ... perhaps a few faithful friends or ‘extended family’.

Margaret Ward

These are the people who can even begin to claim some authority in your son or daughter’s life. The other list will be enormous and frighteningly irrelevant”.



What helps you to become a valued and effective partner?



Establish how you will communicate and work together



No right amount of contact – good place to negotiate. Trial and review.



Don’t agree straight away if unsure



Don’t ambush the school



Use the formal processes – don’t escalate unwisely



Take the “curious” approach



Solve problems by thinking creatively



“Don’t try to micromanage the school – it will end badly. Catch the big fish. Don’t complain about everything you are unhappy about.”

Matt’s Mum

Play.
Learn
Grow.
...together



“Being prepared for meetings and thinking about what information I can provide about Sophie has been really important.

I have mostly found teachers very open to my input but I do try to be well prepared, to keep an eye on what I want from the process for Sophie and also modelling a positive approach.

It took a while for me to break the habit of focusing on Sophie’s limits but while I don’t deny the challenges, I do see my role as keeping the broader picture in view -

*Mother of Sophie
(Age 13)*

That Sophie is a student with the same need to participate, learn, have friends and be challenged.”





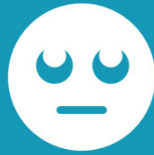
Building your skills for more effective communication and collaboration-



Aggressive –
likely to be attacking, labelling, overstating the facts, speaking in absolutes, cutting other people off, bossy, angry and even intimidating



Passive –
understating, avoiding the tough conversations, withdrawing, apologizing, giving in, talking little or just agreeing.



Assertive –
firm, polite, clear, respectful of self and others. Takes responsibility for own opinions.



How can you learn to communicate assertively?





Communication tip:



'I' statements are made up of four parts:

"I feel/think ..."

Taking responsibility for your own feelings and opinions

"when I see/my son/daughter experiences ..."

Stating the situation that is a problem

"because ..."

What it is about the situation or its consequences that you don't like?

"I would really like it if ..."

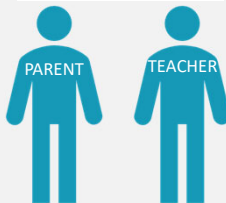
Offering a preferred alternative or compromise

"I feel worried when I see that my son is withdrawn from the classroom for one on one support because I fear that he will be seen differently and become less connected to his class and peers."

"I would really like his support to be provided in the regular class and in a way that connects him to his classmates and preserves his identity as an independent learner."



Tips for tricky conversations



Plan the conversation

Relate back to an inclusive vision

Use sentence starters





Setting goals to work effectively with your child's school



- ✓ Focus on a small number of things you want to change
- ✓ Use your vision to prioritise and clarify
- ✓ Think strategically about who can make changes and how they may be open to your messages
- ✓ Take your time to plan rather than being reactive (most of the time)
- ✓ Draw upon a support network to plan
- ✓ Know you can't influence everything, but you can contribute to building a positive school culture.



Home Activity: Planning more effective conversations





“Write an email but DON’T send it straight away. Address it to yourself so it doesn’t go to the school. The next day when you have calmed down, read it again and if you need to, make it less confrontational and seeking a cooperative approach to address the issue. This has worked really well for me. I get my anger out in the email but I don’t send it for another day or two until I have calmed down.”

Oscar’s Mum



Opportunities at these times of remote learning@home



Developing a better understanding of the curriculum



A chance to learn more about how your child engages best with learning



An opportunity to notice further interests and strengths of your child



Gaining insight into adjustments (or lack of) that are needed, and therefore suggestions moving forward





Tips for remote conversations and collaboration with school



Balance kindness and empathy with advocacy role



Treating people well is usually the best path to successful advocacy



Model a solution focus – share what works



Remember teachers are feeling overwhelmed too so be mindful of only contacting with demands



Relationship still matters, maybe even more when conversation is happening 'online'



Keeping on track...



A) Returned to our vision for Will



B) Noted what our key hope for Will at this time ~
For Will to have a smooth transition back to school



C) Noted what most likely required for this to be achieved ~

-Keeping myself calm so I can provide a supportive environment over the next 3 (or possibly more) weeks.

- Keeping Will positive in regards to learning.



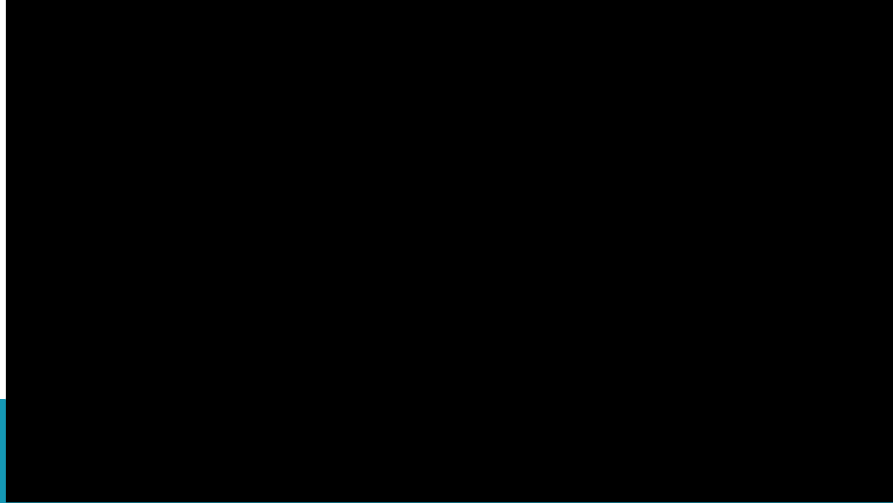
- Finding ways to keep him connected with his class.



*To live a life filled with learning, joy and companionship.
To feel productive, included and valued each and every day.*



Advocacy tips from parents



Home Activity: Individual Reflection



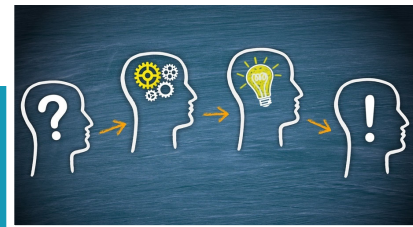
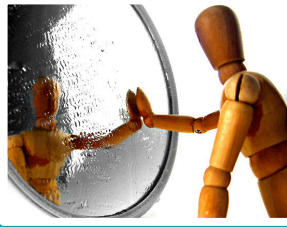
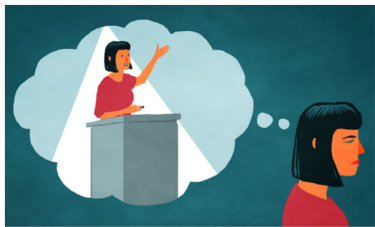
What is one unhelpful habit I want to give up?

What is one helpful habit I want to continue to build upon?

What is one “tricky” conversation that I would like to rehearse?

What is one thing in my communication that I want to improve?

What is one thing I can DO to keep learning and developing my skills?





The best advice I can give is to stay connected to people who value your goals and who will support you in pursuing your dreams. For me, knowing other parents who were choosing inclusion and were a little further down the track has been gold.

Mother of John (age 7)



Top tips for school partnerships



Clarify your vision and practise sharing your child's strengths

Learn about inclusive education

Plan – document what you want, anticipate challenges and practice being assertive

Connect with peer support to hear positive stories – knowing inclusion is possible will help you be a stronger advocate!



“At the end of the year she (the teacher) was as teary as we were – so grateful for the opportunity to learn.

She left the school sometime after but became a strong advocate for inclusion at a different school.

It seemed testament to the importance of being prepared (as a family) to hang in while people learn.”

Cate’s Mother

DREAM
BIG



Q and A



Nathan
Education Stakeholder

Q. ≡
A. ≡

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Expanding Ideas; Creating Change

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