

Planning Successful Transitions: Top Tips for Parents



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.



Overview of session



- Leading with vision and sharing your child's strengths and gifts
- Embracing your natural authority
- What to look for in an inclusive school
- Building a relationship and planning for inclusion
- Avoiding common pitfalls
- Tips for specific transition points



"A collaborative approach to transition planning has helped Cooper have a smooth start to high school". Deb, Cooper's mum



Top tips for pursuing school inclusion



Clarify your vision and practise sharing your child's strengths

Learn about inclusive education

Plan – document what you want and anticipate challenges

Know that it is never too late – inclusion does not have an expiry date!



What is a vision?



A “vision” is simply our hopes and dreams of an imagined future

It works as a “compass” – keeping us on track so we can move towards our goals and dreams

Encourages us to aim high

Allows us to act out of hope, not fear

Provides a picture that can motivate us and enthuse others



Why vision matters?



To craft the good life, we need to do the hard work on clarifying and sustaining our vision, of what we want, not what others tell us are the limits of what is possible.

If we try to choose in a vacuum, not knowing what it is we really want, others will choose for us.

Jeremy Ward,
parent advocate





Prepare a profile or document on your child



Write down your vision



List their strengths



List interests



List who is important to them



Communicate your priorities – what they are working on



Communicate how to bring out their best and what doesn't work

Remember visuals can tell an effective story!



Ella



Ella
Vision Statement

We believe Ella will live a life of purpose, filled with rich experiences. We envision our daughter in relationships that are genuine and meaningful. We see her gaining employment in the areas of her strengths and interests. Our expectations and hopes for her future are the same as for our son: to be content in what they choose to do and accepted for who they are.

Strengths

- Social
- Resilient
- Problem solver
- Highly empathetic
- Great sense of humour
- Loves music and dance
- Learns from peers
- Follows routines
- Is fiercely independent
- Loves to help.

What doesn't work

- Rushing me
- Raising your voice
- Too many words to explain things
- Asking questions with no wait time.

I love:

My family, dancing, singing, reading books, sand play, painting, drawing, colouring in, cooking and my dog Rosie!

What works for me

- Routines
- Peer modelling
- Visual routine
- Specific praise
- Wait time
- Observing then participating
- Feeling valued and accepted

What I'm working on

- My expressive language
- Using gentle hands and feet
- Asking for help
- Fine motor skills
- Literacy and numeracy skills.

“She is outspoken, strong, and brave.”

Deb, Ella's mum

Crafting the good life...

Vision



Eliza



Ben

Our **vision** is that Ben will have a career based in his own unique interests and strengths.

Our **hope** is that he will be surrounded by a community of people, who appreciate him as a person and values the contribution he makes.

His High School experience will immerse him in every opportunity in a valued way, so he has the social skills and connections for a successful life after school.

We want Ben to leave school at the end of year 12 with the academic skills and confidence he needs to pursue his goals.



What makes sure Ben feels comfortable in class, and around the school grounds?

- Visual timetable in his diary: Ben likes to know what is going to happen in his school day, have warning the day before of any changes to regular routine, including to things like lunchtime, assemblies or special events
- Checklist of each lesson: list of activities and work to complete
- Knowing how to get help, and who to ask; deciding when he gets help
- Noise defenders: noise-cancelling headphones
- Option for a break when he needs it

What are his challenges?

- Spelling and handwriting.

What engages Ben the most for learning?

- YouTube videos
- Group work
- Technology

What are Ben's strengths?

- Confident with technology
- Great typist
- Learns how to use apps and assistive technology very quickly

How can Ben best show what he has learnt?

- Typing, circling multiple choice responses, or giving verbal answers



Leading with vision and gifts and contributions



*Some stories enhance life;
others degrade it.
So we must be careful
about the stories we tell,
about the ways we define ourselves
and other people.*

Burton Blatt



The power of a positive introduction



Video by CRU with Lindie Brengmann

This will be put on CRU's YouTube channel shortly.

Please visit: [youtube.com/user/communityresourceunit](https://www.youtube.com/user/communityresourceunit)



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 is Inclusive Education?



Inclusion is being **physically present and fully participating** in the **same classroom** as peers for the **same proportion of time**; **socially belonging** and **immersed in the same curriculum**.

It requires the provision of **necessary supports** and **adjustments** so the student can **learn, contribute** and **participate** socially alongside one’s peers.

Physical Inclusion



Social Inclusion

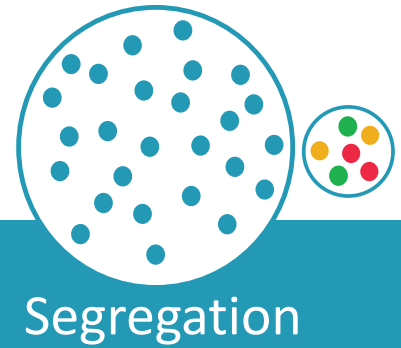


Curriculum Inclusion





What does Inclusive Education look like?



Is inclusion conditional?



There is no pre-requisite for being included – at any age or stage.

Inclusion is not about being “ready” or “keeping up”.

EVERY child has the right to be included.
Every child CAN be included.





Liam's inclusion has never been about his development, academic abilities, speech, behaviour or "readiness".

The only criterion that any child should have to meet is being of school age.

Mother of Liam (age seven)



The "readiness" myth –
social vs medical model

This video can be found here: [youtube.com/watch?v=F-H9DRrTocc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-H9DRrTocc)



The Department of Education commitment is that students across Queensland can:



attend their local state school or education centre and be welcomed



learn in a safe and supportive environment, free from bullying, discrimination or harassment



access and participate in a high-quality education and fully engage in the curriculum along-side their similar-aged peers



achieve academically and socially with reasonable adjustments and supports tailored to meet their learning needs.

Source: Department of Education



Inclusive Education is not new or untested!



50 years of international/peer reviewed research confirms inclusive education is best educational practice – best for students with disability, for other students, and for our community!



Australian Senate Report (2016) –
“weight of evidence is firmly on the side of mainstream education”.



ALANA (2016) review of 280 Studies from 25 countries –
“clear and consistent evidence that inclusive educational settings can confer substantial short and long term benefits”.



The right to inclusive education is also enshrined in the UNCRPD.



Choosing a school



Which school will assist your child to be known and to grow up with their neighbours and/or brothers and sisters?

Walk around the school – how do you feel?

Research – other parents, school website, My School website

Consider your child's social/physical/academic strengths and needs

Where would your child go if they didn't have a disability?



Clarify your priorities; no school will have everything you want



Possible indicators of inclusion



Is there an interest in your child as a unique individual?

Do staff talk about HOW things can happen, not IF?

Do you get a sense of a culture of openness, professional learning and collaboration?

Are there already signs of embracing diversity?

Are there many opportunities for students to participate and "shine" – or only a focus on academics or elite sport?





Traps



- ✓ Going where you are directed
- ✓ Going to a school with a higher proportion of students with disability
- ✓ Choosing on the basis of “resources” and numbers of specialist staff
- ✓ Putting too much emphasis on a key individual e.g. a welcoming Principal (if that doesn't permeate the culture)
- ✓ Focusing only on the size of the school.
- ✓ Using only one way to gain knowledge of the school e.g. My School
- ✓ Going against your gut feelings
- ✓ Giving every opinion equal weight – other parents may value different things



Tips for first conversations with school



Try to be confident and clear about what you want – but don't overwhelm with demands



Don't be apologetic about seeking inclusion – remember your child will contribute to the school



Model a solution focus – share what works



Don't talk deficits and be careful not to overwhelm with information or reports!



This is the start of building a relationship – speak with enthusiasm and positivity





There is a balance between overpreparing and underpreparing!



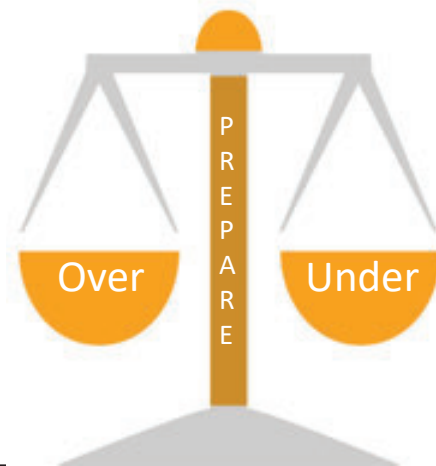
Don't share problems with the school – without some “solutions”

Prepare to be a member of the school community

Try to visit the school regularly but don't spend too much of the previous year “in transition”

Think ahead about intentionally building friendships e.g. local/school activities and valued roles.

Build your child's confidence rather than letting them pick up your worries



Consider tricky times e.g. unstructured lunchtimes. Ask other parents and come up with some suggestions.



Tips for prep entry



Share your child's strengths, what they are learning and their contributions

Share your vision – practise sharing it!

Be careful what you ask for – beware unintended consequences

Talk less about hours of support and more about what helps your child learn and feel safe

Ask about the goal of support and reasonable adjustments

Ask about any habits of withdrawal or segregation



Our local school HOSE told me that they would not give Matt more than 5hrs support a week and that we should put him in special school (even though he did not meet the criteria!)



Fortunately, our experience at another school was completely different.

The Principal asked a lot of questions about our expectations.

He reassured us that he would seek the funding to ensure they met their educational obligations and my son's personal support needs – and they would try their very best to meet all of Matt's needs.

There have been a few little things during his Prep year but they've been addressed and corrected immediately.

I couldn't be happier with the school.

Matt's mum



For us/me the most important thing for Oscar's inclusive education is that the ALL staff (teachers, aides, principals etc) presume capacity, know about reasonable adjustments and have adequate training in best practice school community inclusion.

The difference between the first school we spoke to and our current school, is that the first kept saying

"we aren't saying no [but] we need you to understand we can't provide the support required to make adjustments and provide inclusion for your son".



The current school has been welcoming.

They are willing to learn, willing to adjust and willing to allocate funding to provide an inclusive educational journey.

Oscar's mum



In the beginning, I thought my son needed withdrawal for one-on-one or lots of aide time but now I see how those things took him away from his peers.

While there is still sometimes extra adult support in the class, there are many other ways to foster my son's participation, learning and belonging, so he is a full and valued class member

Mother of John (age 7)



Tips for moving to high school

Anticipate challenges – renew your vision

Don't let the primary and high school plan the transition without you and your child

Watch unhelpful assumptions (e.g. focus on "life skills")- spell out your expectations

Be realistic about high schools e.g. less opportunity for parent involvement and communication

More people to interact with can be a positive – and a challenge

Use your detective skills to get to know the culture of the school





“High school seemed scary at first but has brought all the same amazing benefits and highlights for my daughter as it did for her older sister.

Different teachers for different subjects, being surrounded by teenagers talking about teenage ‘stuff’, have all brought on great growth and independence in our girl.

Going into high school, I was a better advocate and more practised at those ‘tricky’ conversations.

*Mother of Georgia
(Age 13)*

And we are really seeing wonderful opportunities opening up because of the work we’ve put into including her in a regular school community”.



Questions to ask:

Are classes streamed or mixed ability?



Will your child be offered the same subject choices, regular classes and timetable?



Will your child be segregated for any part of the school day and where?



What is the model of support?





Year to year transitions



Keeping a few key relationships may be important



Share what is important to your child – and progress



Shower outgoing teachers with appreciation and enlist them in transition – if you trust their messages



If facing unhelpful assumptions/practices, be clear with your vision, share your one page profile, and try to link the incoming teacher with someone who has supported your child well



Work with your child's key contact (e.g. "case manager") and/or a trusted school ally



Moving schools including special to regular



Ask about what support the department can provide?

Remember it is your child's right to be at their local school



Prepare a script to negotiate any barriers or negatives that are expressed to you by family and education staff



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



Planning for the senior years – understanding QCE



Start thinking about this at the end of year 9, decisions start getting made through the SET plan in Gr 10

Discuss interest areas with your child they can do Certificates in hospitality, gardening etc

Think about work experience

Prepare for assumptions about what paths are open to students with disability – but feel reassured that increasing the number of students receiving a QCE is a DoE priority.



Summary tips

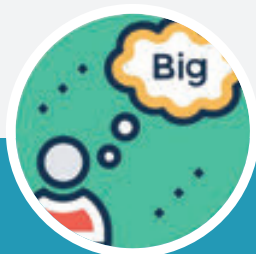


Lead with vision and gifts – not problems

Be careful what you ask for – learn about inclusive practices

Making inclusion work in the class or finding resources is not your responsibility – don't apologise

Share knowledge of your child in a warm, non confrontational but assertive way





"I persevered, determined to learn more to see how inclusion was possible, because my conscience wouldn't allow me not to!!

When Cate's siblings asked why Cate went to a different school – every answer I gave felt weak and untruthful – I was compromising the right of all my children to experience their schooling years together.

Now when all three walk through the same school gates together in the same uniform - it is a powerful feeling of completeness."

Mother of Cate (age 11)

DREAM
BIG



Q and A



Nathan
Education Stakeholder

Q. ≡
A. ≡

Inclusive Education

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Expanding Ideas; Creating Change

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