

TRANSITION PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH DIVERSE NEEDS

Edited by Kate Scorgie
and Chris Forlin

Series Editor Chris Forlin

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES
ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

VOLUME 18

**TRANSITION PROGRAMS FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH
DIVERSE NEEDS**

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Series Editor: Chris Forlin

Recent volumes:

- Volume 1: Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties in Mainstream Schools – Edited by John Visser, Harry Daniels and Ted Cole
- Volume 2: Transforming Troubled Lives: Strategies and Interventions for Children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties – Edited by John Visser, Harry Daniels and Ted Cole
- Volume 3: Measuring Inclusive Education – Edited by Chris Forlin and Tim Loreman
- Volume 4: Working with Teaching Assistants and other Support Staff for Inclusive Education – Edited by Dianne Chambers
- Volume 5: Including Learners with Low-Incidence Disabilities – Edited by Elizabeth A. West
- Volume 6: Foundations of Inclusive Education Research – Edited by Phyllis Jones and Scot Danforth
- Volume 7: Inclusive Pedagogy Across the Curriculum – Edited by Joanne Deppeler, Tim Loreman, Ron Smith and Lani Florian
- Volume 8: Implementing Inclusive Education – Edited by Amanda Watkins and Cor Meijer
- Volume 9: Ethics, Equity and Inclusive Education – Edited by Agnes Gajewski
- Volume 10: Working with Families for Inclusive Education: Navigating Identity, Opportunity and Belonging – Edited by Kate Scorgie and Dick Sobsey
- Volume 11: Inclusive Principles and Practices in Literacy Education – Edited by Marion Milton
- Volume 12: Service Learning: Enhancing Inclusive Education – Edited by Shane Lavery, Dianne Chambers and Glenda Cain
- Volume 13: Promoting Social Inclusion: Co-Creating Environments That Foster Equity and Belonging – Edited by Kate Scorgie and Chris Forlin
- Volume 14: Assistive Technology to Support Inclusive Education – Edited by Dianne Chambers

- Volume 15: Resourcing Inclusive Education – Edited by Janka Goldan, Jennifer Lambrecht and Tim Loreman
- Volume 16: Minding the Marginalized Students Through Inclusion, Justice, and Hope: Daring to Transform Educational Inequities – Edited by Jose W. Lalas and Heidi Luv Strikwerda
- Volume 17: Instructional Collaboration in International Inclusive Education Contexts – Edited by Sarah R. Semon, Danielle Lane, and Phyllis Jones

This page intentionally left blank

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION VOLUME 18

TRANSITION PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH DIVERSE NEEDS

EDITED BY

KATE SCORGIE

Azusa Pacific University (retired), USA

And

CHRIS FORLIN

University of Notre Dame, Australia



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

Editorial matter and selection © 2022 Kate Scorgie and Chris Forlin. Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Individual chapters © 2022 the authors. Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80117-102-1 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80117-101-4 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80117-103-8 (Epub)

ISSN: 1479-3636 (Series)



ISOQAR certified
Management System,
awarded to Emerald
for adherence to
Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>About the Editors</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>About the Contributors</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>Series Introduction</i>	<i>xxi</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xxv</i>

SECTION 1: TRANSITIONS TO AND THROUGH SCHOOLING FOR ECE / PRIMARY / ELEMENTARY

Exhausted, Scared, Anxious, Stressed, Frustrated, Sad, but Hopeful: Transitioning Two Boys with Autism from Home to School	3
<i>Emma Barrett</i>	
The “Now What Dilemma”: An Emirati Perspective on Issues Related to Transition of Learners with SEND from Early Care to Primary Education	9
<i>Rawhi Abdat and Eman Gaad</i>	
Framing the Foundations: A Practice Model for Teaching Children on the Autism Spectrum in Early Years Classrooms	25
<i>Wendi Beamish and Annalise Taylor</i>	
The Experiences of First Generation Learners during Transition from a Government School to a Private Inclusive School in a Tribal Region of Maharashtra, India	37
<i>Ratika Malkani and Richard Rose</i>	

SECTION 2: TRANSITIONS TO AND THROUGH SCHOOLING FOR SECONDARY

- A Journey to Belonging: Transitioning through School with Autism** 55
Annetta Galer
- Transition from Primary to Secondary School: A Collaborative Intervention between Six South African Schools Situated in Socioeconomically Challenged Contexts** 63
Ansie Elizabeth Kitching, Robert Tubb Carstens and Petra Engelbrecht
- Transitioning from Special Schools or Settings into Inclusive Schools: Expectations and Realities for Students with Complex Needs** 77
Chris Forlin and Joanne Deppeler
- “It Doesn’t Just Happen”’: Transforming Schools for Effective Transition** 91
Michelle Ralston and Kerry Dally
- Genuine Engagement with Children: A Principal’s Reflection on Creating a Learning Environment Where Equity Is Upheld, and Diversity Embraced** 109
Simon Reid

SECTION 3: TRANSITION TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Career Interventions with an Inclusive Perspective for Individuals with Disabilities and Vulnerabilities** 127
M. Cristina Ginevra, Sara Santilli, Ilaria Di Maggio and Laura Nota
- Falling between Two Stools? Post-secondary Transition Planning for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the Republic of Ireland** 143
Joanne Banks, Des Aston and Michael Shevlin

Preparing Students to Transition to Employment: Teacher Perspectives and Student Outcomes of the California Workability 1 Program	159
<i>Tamai A. Johnson</i>	

The Regional Learning Collaborative: Supporting Successful Transitions to and through College for All Students	171
<i>Nazanin Zargarpour and Susan R. Warren</i>	

Transitioning Dreams to Reality: Inclusive Post-secondary Education at Concordia University of Edmonton	191
<i>Barbara van Ingen, Brent Bradford, Patricia Bowman, Bruce Uditsky, Jaime Skidmore and Sarah Pereira</i>	

SECTION 4: COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND RESOURCES FOR TRANSITION

CIRCLES: A Three-Team Interagency Collaboration Approach to Support Successful Transitions for Students with Disabilities	209
<i>Stephen M. Kwiatek, Valerie L. Mazzotti, Jared H. Stewart-Ginsburg and Janie N. Vicchio</i>	

Advancing School to Work Transition Programs for Students with Disabilities in Indonesian Special Schools	229
<i>Nur Azizah</i>	

Barriers to Community Re-entry for Incarcerated Youth: Stakeholders' Perspectives in Australia and the United States	245
<i>Iva Strnadová, Heather Griller Clark, Sue C. O'Neill, Therese M. Cumming, Sarup R. Mathur, Timothy C. Wells and Joanne Danker</i>	

Libraries as Social Agencies and Transition Points: Serving Diverse Populations	265
<i>Maria A. Pacino</i>	

Collaborative Partnerships and Strategies to Promote Effective Transitions and Support for Students with Disability: The Role of Parent Groups in Malawi	275
<i>Msenga Anyelwisye Mulungu</i>	

<i>Index</i>	291
--------------	-----

This page intentionally left blank

LIST OF FIGURES

Section 2

Figure 1.	Models of Support for Transitioning.	82
Figure 2.	Levels of Support Provided in Regular Schools.	84
Figure 1.	Conversion of One Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Teacher to Five Case Managers.	100
Figure 2.	Organizational Chart.	102
Figure 1.	Transition Process.	122
Figure 2.	Individual Planning Process for Students with Diverse Needs.	122

Section 3

Figure 1.	Segments of the Education Pipeline.	175
Figure 2.	Institutions of Higher Education Attended by the District Students.	176
Figure 3.	RLC Dual Enrollment Outcomes.	179
Figure 4.	Education Segments and Transitions.	180
Figure 5.	The Regional Learning Collaborative Structure.	180
Figure 6.	The Regional Learning Collaborative Approach.	183

Section 4

Figure 1.	The CIRCLES Cyclical Model of Interagency Collaboration.	211
Figure 1.	Model for School to Work Transition Program in Indonesian Setting (Azizah, 2016).	234

This page intentionally left blank

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Kate Scorgie is retired Professor, School of Education, Azusa Pacific University. Her research interests have included families of children with disabilities, and disclosure and equity accommodation for persons with disability transitioning to postsecondary settings. She has also served as an adjunct professor at Alliant International University and a doctoral research advisor for Bethel University.

Chris Forlin is an International Education Consultant, Adjunct Professor at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Series Editor for Emerald Publishing for *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education*, Researcher and Independent Nongovernment School Reviewer, based in Perth, Western Australia.

This page intentionally left blank

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Rawhi Abdat holds a PhD in Special and Inclusive Education and works at the Ministry of Community Development in Dubai, UAE. His research focuses on children with SEND in early childhood and their transition to inclusive environments and the importance of families' roles in early childhood intervention.

Des Aston is the National & Schools Coordinator at the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities [TCPID], School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. His research interests are inclusive education, postschool education, and employment opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities. Des is the current Chairperson of the Inclusive National Higher Education Forum (INHEF).

Dr Nur Azizah currently teaches at the Special Education Department Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY). Prior to UNY, she was a special education teacher in a primary school and worked with students with disabilities from different backgrounds. Her research includes inclusive education and transition education.

Dr Joanne Banks is a Lecturer and Researcher in inclusive education at the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. Joanne's research interests are in the field of inclusive education and educational inequality. She has published widely on the social and academic experiences of students who encounter barriers to learning in mainstream education. She is creator/presenter of the Inclusion Dialogue podcast series.

Emma Barrett is a mother of four boys, with three identified as needing support for autism. Emma is a qualified special education teacher who is currently on leave to look after her boys.

Dr Wendi Beamish is an Adjunct Senior Lecturer in Special Needs Education at Griffith University, Australia. Her research interests focus on teacher practice in the areas of educational transitions, autism, inclusive education, behavioral support, and early childhood intervention.

Patricia Bowman is the Chief Executive Officer of Inclusion Alberta and began her career in the first inclusive postsecondary education initiative in Alberta. Trish has worked for over 30 years supporting individuals and families to live inclusive lives and advocates at the individual and systemic level to ensure children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families' voices are heard and inform public policy and practice.

Dr Brent Bradford is an Associate Professor (Faculty of Education) and Chair (Department of Physical Education & Wellness) at Concordia University of Edmonton (CUE). Brent's research interests include physical and health education, teacher education, and campus wellness. In 2019, Brent was the recipient of CUE's Gerald S. Krispin Research Award.

Robert Tubb Carstens is an Educator as well as a PhD student in Educational Psychology at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa, and his research focuses on the promotion of health and holistic well-being within school communities.

Therese M. Cumming is a Professor of Special Education at the School of Education at UNSW Sydney and the Academic Lead Education at UNSW Disability Innovation Institute. Her research is focused on students with emotional and behavioral disabilities, transitions, mobile technology, and Universal Design for Learning.

Dr Kerry Dally is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Current research interests include school improvement initiatives aimed at increasing student engagement and well-being, as well as investigation of the links between writing and reading acquisition in the early years of schooling.

Joanne Danker is a Lecturer in Special Education in the School of Education at the University of New South Wales. Her research interests include the well-being of students with developmental disabilities, inclusive and special education, and engaging individuals with disabilities in research using participatory research approaches.

Joanne Deppler is Professor in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, based in Victoria, Australia. For the past decade, she has worked to support countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, and Canada to further develop and advance inclusive education.

Ilaria Di Maggio is a Post-doc Fellow in the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology, University of Padova. Her research focuses on career guidance and vocational guidance in an inclusive perspective.

Petra Engelbrecht is an Extraordinary Professor at North-West University, South Africa, and her research focuses on equity in education with specific reference to the implementation of inclusive education in diverse cultural–historical contexts.

Eman Gaad is a Professor of Special and Inclusive Education at the British University in Dubai, UAE. Her research focuses on inclusivity and diversity in education and impact of social construction of learners with disability on their inclusive education in mainstream schooling.

Annetta Galer is a Primary and Middle School Trained Teacher and is currently completing a Master of Inclusive Education at the Queensland University of

Technology (QUT). She is also a mother of four, including a child on the autism spectrum.

M. Cristina Ginevra is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology, University of Padova. Her research focuses on career guidance and vocational guidance in an inclusive perspective.

Heather Griller Clark is a Principal Research Specialist in the Teachers College at Arizona State University. Her research is driven by her desire to ensure that system involved youth, especially those with disabilities, are provided relevant, effective, research-based instruction, and transition services that promote productive engagement upon release.

Dr Tamai A. Johnson is an Assistant Principal with the Los Angeles Unified School District, an Adjunct Instructor for University of Phoenix, and an Alumna of Azusa Pacific University. Her research focuses on special education, transition to adulthood, and college and career readiness.

Ansie Elizabeth Kitching is an Associate Professor in Educational Psychology at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa, and her research focuses on the coconstruction of schools into enabling environments through the implementation of a holistic well-being process to develop capacity for the promotion of mental health and well-being.

Dr Stephen M. Kwiatek is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Stephen's research interests focus on three strands: (1) general education teacher involvement in college and career readiness efforts; (2) secondary transition best practices (i.e., evidence-based practices, predictors of postschool success); and (3) interagency collaboration.

Ratika Malkani is Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Northampton. Her current research includes a study to evaluate the impact of introducing critical reflexivity into teaching, especially on Black and Asian students, and a study of provision for children with special educational needs and their families in rural Telangana, India.

Dr Sarup R. Mathur is a Professor of Special Education in the Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation at Arizona State University. Her research has focused on issues related to emotional and behavioral disorders, effective classroom behavior management, professional development of teachers, and transition and reentry of juvenile offenders.

Dr Valerie L. Mazzotti is a Professor of Special Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her research interests include self-determination, secondary transition evidence-based practices and predictors of postschool success, and interagency collaboration for students with disabilities.

Msenga Anyelwisy Mulungu is currently working with Parents of Disabled Children Association of Malawi (PODCAM). His role is to advocate for the Rights of Children with Disability. He is a member of the National Inclusive Education Technical Working Group. He also lectures in History at Catholic University of Malawi on adjunct basis.

Laura Nota is a Full Professor in the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology, University of Padova. Her research focuses on career guidance and vocational guidance in an inclusive perspective.

Sue O'Neill is a Senior Lecturer in Special Education with the School of Education. Her research focuses on transitions in the lives of youth with special or complex needs, managing challenging behaviors, and evidence-based classroom and behavior management practices.

Maria A. Pacino is Interim Director of the Azusa Pacific University Libraries, Chair of the Department of Library and Information Studies, and Director of the Teacher Librarian Program. She is the author of several articles on social justice education and a book, *Reflections on Equity, Diversity and Schooling*.

Sarah Pereira finished her studies at CUE in 2019. Sarah is now an employee of CUE, and works part-time in the Student Life and Learning Office as a General Assistant. One of her favorite parts of her job is her coworkers. Sarah is an aunt to eight nieces and nephews and loves every minute she is with them.

Michelle Ralston is a Lecturer at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Current research interests include the role of legislation, policy, and school leadership in guiding and supporting inclusive education.

Simon Reid has extensive experience as an educational leader and education consultant for student disadvantage. He has been a principal in remote, isolated, rural, low, and high socioeconomic areas in both primary and large secondary schools, school reviewer, and an executive network principal. He has a highly regarded reputation for his ability to understand the complexities of leadership and shape and manage strategy to provide the highest level of service and raise the quality of outcomes for all students.

Richard Rose is Professor Emeritus in Inclusive Education at the University of Northampton UK. His current research includes a study of provision for children with special educational needs and their families in rural Telangana, India, and the development of family support in rural communities in Cambodia.

Sara Santilli is a Post-doc Fellow in the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education, and Applied Psychology, University of Padova. Her research focuses on career guidance and vocational guidance in an inclusive perspective.

Michael Shevlin is Professor of Inclusive Education and is the Director of the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities, School of Education,

Trinity College Dublin. He has researched widely in the area of inclusive education and contributed to policy making in establishing inclusive learning environments in Ireland.

Jaime Skidmore is a Regional Coordinator of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education at Inclusion Alberta. Supporting university students with developmental disabilities to have rich and authentic experiences has been her passion for the past 4 years. In addition to supporting students and team members across the province, Jaime supports families to dream of and advocate for an inclusive life after postsecondary.

Dr Jared Stewart-Ginsburg is Graduate Research Assistant at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. His research focuses on increasing community supports for students with disabilities.

Iva Strnadová is a Professor of Special Education and Disability Studies at the School of Education at UNSW Sydney and the Academic Lead Research at UNSW Disability Innovation Institute. Her research aims to contribute to better understanding and the improvement of the life experiences of people with intellectual disabilities. Combining research with advocacy is essential in her research program, which builds on supporting the self-determination (including self-advocacy) of people with intellectual disabilities, and is grounded in an innovative inclusive research approach, in which people with intellectual disabilities are included in the role of researcher.

Dr Annalise Taylor is a Registered Special Education Teacher who completed her doctorate with the Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism and Griffith University. Her PhD research focused on bridging the research-to-practice gap in relation to the effective and inclusive education of students on the autism spectrum in the first year of school.

Bruce Uditsky, MEd, is the CEO Emeritus of Inclusion Alberta, an advisor to Inclusion Canada, Inclusive Education Canada (IEC) Associate, author, and international consultant on inclusion and social justice. Bruce is credited with establishing the first inclusive postsecondary university initiative and has been recognized provincially, nationally, and internationally for his innovative approaches to inclusion.

Dr Barbara van Ingen is the Vice President, Student Life and Learning at Concordia University of Edmonton, with over 20 years' experience in postsecondary education. Her research focuses on university student wellness, cyberbullying, and posttraumatic stress disorder.

Janie N. Vicchio is a doctoral student and Graduate Research Assistant at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her research interests include career technical education and postschool employment.

Susan R. Warren, Professor Emeritus of Azusa Pacific University, is Assistant Director of the RLC and a Research and Evaluation Associate at Claremont Graduate University's Evaluation Center. Her research areas include Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in PK-12 schools and universities; Family/Community/School Collaboration; Urban Leadership; Teacher Education, Action Research; and College Attainment.

Timothy C. Wells is a Faculty Associate at Arizona State University. His research explores issues of accessibility at the intersection of culture, disability, and curriculum.

Nazanin Zargarpour, Associate Professor of Evaluation Practice and Core Faculty of the Claremont Evaluation Center at Claremont Graduate University, is Founding Executive Director of the Regional Learning Collaborative (www.rcollab.com). She is Founding President of Capacity To Impact consulting (www.capacitytoimpact.org). Her research includes Education Reform, College Attainment, Developmental Evaluation, Collaboratives, Organizational Capacity-Building.

SERIES INTRODUCTION

The adoption internationally of inclusive practice as the most equitable and all-encompassing approach to education and its relation to compliance with various international Declarations and Conventions underpins the importance of this series for people working at all levels of education and schooling in both developed and less developed countries. There is little doubt that inclusive education is complex and diverse and that there are enormous disparities in understanding and application at both inter- and intracountry levels. A broad perspective on inclusive education throughout this series is taken, encompassing a wide range of contemporary viewpoints, ideas, and research for enabling the development of more inclusive schools, education systems, and communities.

Volumes in this series on *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* contribute to the academic and professional discourse by providing a collection of philosophies and practices that can be reviewed by considering local, contextual, and cultural situations to assist governments, educators, peripatetic staffs, and other professionals to provide the best education for all children. Each volume in the series focuses on a key aspect of inclusive education and provides critical chapters by contributing leaders in the field who discuss theoretical positions, quality research, and impacts on school and classroom practice. Different volumes address issues relating to the diversity of student need within heterogeneous classrooms and the preparation of teachers and other staff to work in inclusive schools. Systemic changes and practice in schools encompass a wide perspective of learners to provide ideas on reframing education to ensure that it is inclusive of all. Evidence-based research practices underpin a plethora of suggestions for decision-makers and practitioners, incorporating current ways of thinking about and implementing inclusive education.

While many barriers have been identified that may potentially constrain the implementation of effective inclusive practices, this series aims to identify such key concerns and offer practical and best practice approaches to overcoming them. Adopting a thematic approach for each volume, readers will be able to quickly locate a collection of research and practice related to a topic of interest. By transforming schools into inclusive communities of practice all children can have the opportunity to access and participate in quality and equitable education to enable them to obtain the skills to become contributory global citizens. This series, therefore, is highly recommended to support education decision-makers, practitioners, researchers, and academics, who have a professional interest in the inclusion of children and youth who are marginalizing in inclusive schools and classrooms.

This volume on *Transition Programs for Children and Youth with Diverse Needs* was unintentionally impacted in many ways by the international COVID-19 pandemic that occurred throughout 2020 and continued into 2021. Authors of this volume grafted ideas in supporting learners with disabilities, marginalized, vulnerable, or underrepresented populations, with transitions during extended amounts of lockdown time, and while grappling with new models of online teaching. In the midst of these new challenges, they dedicated themselves to writing chapters for this book as they were keen to have their information available to help support others. The result is testament to their dedication to become involved in this important volume and I applaud them on their efforts.

During these days of extreme public health issues, transitions are affecting all who are involved in educational systems, with education as a whole needing to be engaged in a newly emerging transition process. Like a liminal space which continues with an uncertain ending, unknowing what will happen to traditional models of schooling as systems emerge from the pandemic provides little guidance for teachers when planning to reengage their students. In many instances transitions are likely to be even more demanding than previously, especially for those with diverse learning needs. The future of schooling as we know it will need to adapt to unstable certainties as countries plan how to contend with this pandemic and are cognizant of potential future instabilities. Planners will need to be better equipped to identify and support the educational and emotional needs of children and youth during such uncertainties, who may be even more marginalized than previously. Prolonged absences from attending an actual school environment have the capacity to destabilize those who have previously found inclusion in education challenging. Transitioning back into a school environment after extended periods of working from home may raise anxiety levels and pose the need for additional support to ensure the needs of all children and youth are met. In addition to normal school transitions, transition back into schooling for the most vulnerable children and youth may require the implementation of models that offer interim placements in more supportive environments, so that they can become reacquainted with the expectations of schooling before being reintegrated into a large regular class.

This volume contains a plethora of excellent ideas and practical approaches for supporting a range of transitions that children and youth with diverse needs encounter across their life span. Many of these approaches will be of particular benefit to those involved in providing support during these unprecedented times. Although the book has grouped these into different levels of schooling for easy access by readers, the strategies employed at one level with minimal adaptation may well be utilized at other stages of a child's life. I encourage readers to access sections that are most useful to them depending upon their level of teaching, but also invite them strongly to review other sections that may provide further extremely helpful ideas.

Although this volume focuses mainly on transition support for learners, it must be acknowledged that parents are also in a liminal space, and they too may need support in decision-making for their children. As children and youth go through a range of emotions when being expected to return to school, parents

also may find this transition psychologically demanding as they let go of their children and hand them back to new teachers who will not have the understandings of exactly how extended absences have or may have impacted on their children's lives. This volume includes two chapters with parent reflections on transitions and in addition, several chapters highlight the role of partnerships by giving considerable thought to how parents and schools can better collaborate for a more stable and less difficult transition.

Volume 18 builds considerably and highly effectively on previous books in this series by tackling the far-reaching aspects of establishing and supporting effective transitions throughout a child's life. This could not be timelier with the uncertainties that currently surround education for learners with diverse needs. Like the model of inclusion, schools need to transform themselves to ensure that they meet the needs of their students who constantly have to cope with an enormous range of different transitions. From the research identified in this volume it is evident that this will not happen unless schools reform and become considerably more proactive in their approaches to better enabling transitions. Where authors have reported that this has occurred, through implementation of a range of different models, the outcome for children and youth with diverse needs has been positive and stabilizing, giving them confidence in their ability to achieve and emotional support to know that they are welcomed and valued members of society. This book is essential reading for all involved in working with learners with challenging needs throughout their schooling and into postschool options. I recommend this to you as an exceptional addition to the *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* series.

Chris Forlin
Series Editor

This page intentionally left blank

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

Life consists of change. Change of seasons. Change of locations. Change of roles and responsibilities. Change can be minimal or significant; predictable and expected, or unpredictable and surprising. Life changes often involve a shift from one status, position, or identity to another. Changes associated with developmental or chronological markers, such as entering and leaving formal schooling, and entry into or exit from the workplace, have often been referred to as transitions (Strnadová & Cumming, 2016). According to Baker and Irwin (2019), "... the word 'transition' is commonly used to signify movements made—which are often ritualized—as people 'transfer' into and out of different stages and domains in their life courses" (p. 4). Typically, transitions are envisioned as linear sequences that incorporate a socially and culturally constructed conceptualization of both the process, that is how one should navigate the transition, and the acceptable or prescribed outcomes, or what is expected to be achieved. When a person develops and demonstrates the skills or assumes the roles and responsibilities that are expected by society, the transition is considered to be successful.

THE TRANSITION PROCESS

The process of transition is often depicted as consisting of three phases that incorporate the concepts of before, during, and after; that is, leaving something behind and passing through an in-between phase with the objective of emerging with a new or revised orientation or position. During a child's school life, they must go through many transitions, ranging from major changes to minor ones. The most challenging times usually occur when transitioning between different types of schooling. Such transitions commence in the early years when starting kindergarten and then moving into formal schooling. Following five to seven years in a primary school children transition into either a middle school or directly into a high school. At the end of compulsory schooling many students will also need to move to a senior college before transitioning into either further study at a university or undertaking tertiary and further education. Transition from education into the workforce can occur at two different stages, at the end of compulsory schooling or following any further study.

While major life transitions can and often do incorporate challenges, Strnadová and Cumming (2016) suggest that "... these challenges may be greatly

exacerbated for those with disabilities” (p. 2). In addition, children and youth representing marginalized, vulnerable, or underrepresented groups, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and refugee and immigrant populations, may experience transitions that are less linear and more complex as they navigate unfamiliar or disparate educational structures and systems (Baker & Irwin, 2019; Osgood et al., 2010).

Transition Considerations for Students with Disabilities and Diverse or Marginalized Groups

During transitions, a range of aspects need to be considered and addressed by all stakeholders. These tend to fall into three major categories of physical, educational, and social-emotional needs.

Physical aspects can involve consideration of access to facilities, the provision of assistive technologies and physical aids, classroom facilities and layout structures, transportation to and from school, system level supports, and for some children and youth at certain times during their schooling the provision of appropriate onsite accommodation.

Educational considerations relate more directly to forms of instructional collaboration, curriculum and pedagogical modifications, the use of education assistants, and the involvement of peripatetic staff. There may also be a need for alternative assessments that must be planned to provide an appropriate way for students to demonstrate learning. The development and ongoing review of a child’s individual education plan will also have to be scheduled with parental involvement organized to maximize the educational opportunities provided. Adopting a universal design for learning where whole school change occurs to meet the needs of all children and youth is seen as being the optimal approach to enabling educational inclusion (Semon et al., 2021).

Emotional support is a key aspect of any transition planning as individuals with additional needs are more likely to experience anxiety, worry, concerns, and fear, when their regulated, stable, and structured environment alters. Promoting social inclusion is of the utmost importance as placing children and youth into new environments without effective emotional support can lead to ineffective and unsustainable inclusion (Scorgie & Forlin, 2019). Having a positive sense of belonging through acceptance, strong interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers, and school values of evidence-based culturally responsive practices (Hagiwara et al., 2019) will all assist in helping students through the process of transition.

TRANSITION AND LIMINAL SPACES

Originating from the work of van Gennep in the early 1900s and Turner in the 1960s that examined ritual rites of passage, the term *liminality* has emerged to represent the in-between period occurring during a transition (Baker & Irwin, 2019; Brown et al., 2017). Baker and Irwin (2019) describe liminality as “... the

ambiguous, unstable middle ground of a ritual where the individual has moved from one state but is yet to navigate the changes to move into the next state” (p. 5). The liminal phase is often viewed as a period of identity construction. According to Conroy and O’Leary-Kelly (2014), it incorporates a “... dynamic process of self-construal, a time in which the sense of ‘who I was’ gives way to a sense of ‘who I am becoming’” (pp. 67–68), and finally culminates in “who I have become.” This involves the crafting or revisioning of an individual’s personal narrative with a focus on both self-perception, that is how one views or desires to view oneself, and the responses that are received or hoped to be received from others (Conroy & O’Leary-Kelly, 2014; Vincent, 2019).

Effective transitions, therefore, require components that incorporate both internal and external confirmation or acceptance. For example, Brown et al. (2017), who examined the experiences of 16 people who attested recovery from Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) or chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), suggested that when personal accounts of recovery were not validated or affirmed by others, a new experience of liminality was introduced which placed the individuals “... ‘betwixt and between’ health and illness” (p. 706). Similarly, Reid-Cunningham (2009) cited the work of Murray and colleagues to suggest that persons with disability “... may experience an extended or even perpetual state of liminality because of role confusion and a lack of acceptance by others” (p. 106).

While liminal spaces involve anticipation and hope, they can also incorporate a sense of apprehension and loss, which is particularly noticeable for those with diverse needs. Vincent (2019), for example, explored transition from higher education into postuniversity options for young adults with autism and found that several mentioned loss associated with the predictable and familiar educational environment and the friendships formed, and anxiety regarding the unknowns and potential loss of control associated with the transition. Individuals who had some introduction to and experience with the posttransition environment prior to the period of transition demonstrated more positive and optimistic perspectives during transition. Vincent suggested the need for transition planning to begin prior to the final year of university.

Liminal spaces provide opportunities for learning and change to occur within a person, organization, or community, as individuals and stakeholders reflect on how integrating new perspectives, information, and actions might enhance the ability to achieve a desired outcome or result in personal or organizational transformation (Land et al., 2014). Navigating transitions for persons with disability or unique life experiences often requires the input of others who can envision possibilities and facilitate the acquisition of skills and attributes to promote optimal outcomes. What this might involve is the willingness of others to enter a liminal space, such as teachers who demonstrate willingness to acquire and utilize inclusive pedagogy; employers who recognize and value the unique strengths, abilities, and perspectives an individual brings to a work environment; policy makers who affirm the right of individuals to access accommodations, and environments that promote inclusion and equity. It may also involve community leaders who collaborate with members to provide resources to assure quality of life for all, and parents who act as facilitators, supporters, mediators, and often

catalysts throughout the process. Therefore, successful transition through liminal spaces may require collaboration from multiple stakeholders willing to consider new perspectives, processes, and potential opportunities.

FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND LIMINAL SPACES

Liminality impacts on more than just the person in transition, with many uncertainties and emotional challenges also experienced by the parent, the child's siblings, the extended family, and other stakeholders such as teachers. Most importantly throughout these periods is the role that parents play regarding supporting their child's transition through their schooling and into postschool options (Leonard et al., 2016). For many parents, their greatest concerns occur during the liminal space periods that happen between the major transitions in their child's life. The parent frequently finds themselves embedded in their child's liminal space and acting as a facilitator between their child and the school to enable an effective transition. This role appears to be ongoing, especially when the child has a disability. This is clearly illustrated in this small clip from a parent of Rose who is now in Year 11 in high school.

Rose is 16. She's in Year 11. She had quite a bit of bullying in primary school. So she was quite traumatized when she was in school. She just wasn't really happy. I think the most challenging transition was going from primary school to high school. I just think that was the most difficult thing. It was a very difficult transition for her. So now she's got anxiety from the early years of problems. I think what if she had told me? I could approach the principal and I could've said something. I can't do anything because she didn't let me know. In high school she was basically getting straight E's in the class. So I took her to a tutor to try and help her. I've taken her to a psychologist to help with her confidence. She was not diagnosed until she was 14 with Asperger's Syndrome. She now gets some support.

As a parent I think you need to stay on top of what your child is doing and stay on top of what the school is doing. And if there's any different changes in her, speak to her, then if you aren't happy about something, you need to go back to school. So I'm sort of the go-between with Rose and the school. I don't think parents should just leave things up to the school's wishes especially if the child's got a disability or they're getting behind. I think parents need to step up and be involved more. I'm very much involved in what Rose does a lot and I know exactly where she is in the school.

I don't really know what sort of career she will do when she leaves school; and that's what kind of worries me, 'cos I know she wants to take a year off. I don't know what she's going to do. I've no idea. I will just gauge how she goes, what she does in the first year. Otherwise, I may look at putting her into a TAFE course. I will just gauge it for the first couple of months and see what she's doing.

Lourdes, mother (extracted from a Zoom interview)

EFFECTIVE TRANSITIONING

The purpose of this volume in the series, *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education*, is to invite readers to navigate the liminal space of transition through exploring innovative perspectives and practices regarding transition programs that incorporate effective interventions and strategies for potentially marginalized individuals from multiple frameworks. In addition to knowledge and skill training, programs, and strategies explored throughout the volume address attitudes, expectations, and perceptions about what it means to be accorded acceptance and to achieve a sense of belonging through cocrafting of identity, with sensitivity to cultural, family and individual perspectives, values, and aspirations. With this in mind, the volume investigates ways in which systems and structures influence transition options. It examines both barriers to and innovative, evidence-based practices that facilitate a range of educational transitions with an emphasis on children and youth with diverse needs.

OVERVIEW OF VOLUME 18

Section One of the volume, *Transitions to and Through Schooling for ECE Primary and Elementary*, begins with a moving account by Emma Barrett describing her experience navigating inclusive school systems for three children with autism. She emphasizes the critical role parents play in negotiating optimal schooling for their children incorporating occupational therapy, classroom supports and assistance, curriculum modifications, effective learning strategies and pedagogy, and social inclusion. As she transitions two sons into early schooling Barrett invites readers into the feelings of stress, anxiety, frustration, fatigue, and yet hope, that many parents experience during transition. Parent perspectives of transition are further explored by Abdal and Gaad, who conducted research with parents in the United Arab Emirates whose children were transitioning from early care to primary education. Parents described transitions as oscillating between smooth, stressful, and blurring categories based on the challenges faced during various stages of transition and the type of settings to which the children were transitioning. The authors propose a transition framework based on three main pillars of enablers, stakeholders, and inclusive educational settings.

In order to facilitate effective early elementary transition for children with diverse needs, Beamish and Taylor introduce the Early Years-Model of Practice (EY-MoP) framework, a collection of 23 evidence-based practices to guide teachers in program planning and delivery for students on the autism spectrum, situated in three categories: *belonging*, *being*, and *becoming*. Each strategy utilizes a teacher-what-how format, supported by a range of easily accessible online resources. In the next chapter, Malkani and Rose explore transition from children's perspectives through a study that examined the experiences of first-generation learners who transitioned from a government school to an inclusive privately funded school in a tribal community in Maharashtra, India. Students described how the experience increased their self-confidence as learners and broadened their perceptions of future opportunities.

Section Two, Transitions to and Through Schooling for Secondary, begins with a parent perspective on transitioning from primary school into secondary school for a child with autism, provided by Galer who reflects on both the challenges and use of effective practices respective to the transition, with recommendations regarding the importance of obtaining an early diagnosis so that intervention strategies can be implemented at the outset of schooling and professional development provided regarding innovative and inclusive practices.

The issue of well-being is a key focus of the next chapter by Kitching and colleagues. They describe how understanding children's concerns regarding transition from primary to secondary education and the importance of well-being in educational outcomes resulted in the implementation of a successful peer mentoring program to provide opportunities for children to voice concerns regarding academic and social issues; prepare them with information, strategies, and support relationship networks for transition; and build collaborative partnerships between schools. Given the movement toward more inclusive educational placements, Forlin and Deppeler then explore a number of international programs and student support models to facilitate transition from special schools to inclusive schools for children with complex needs.

The final chapters in this section utilize case studies to describe how schools transformed teaching and learning practices. Ralston and Dally highlight that transitions don't just happen but require collaboration and commitment across an educational team to acquire knowledge and skills, and implement practices that are individualized for diverse learners. Reid continues the discussion on leadership for transition from a principal's perspective through use of several case studies that highlight teacher practices in primary and secondary schools to facilitate academic and social inclusion for students with special needs.

Section Three of the volume, *Transition to Post-Secondary Education and Vocational Opportunities*, explores various programs and interventions to foster transition into young adulthood, incorporating further education and employment. Highlighting the need to integrate career intervention across the educational system, Ginevra and colleagues describe the creation of a number of innovative of career education programs designed for children, adolescents, and young adults, with the objective of assisting students to propose a self-determined inclusive and sustainable future and acquire the skills needed for goal achievement.

Acknowledging the role of guidance counseling in preparing youth for post-secondary transitions, Banks, Aston and Shevlin examine the school guidance and transition program for students with intellectual disabilities in the Republic of Ireland through exploring the perceptions of special education needs coordinators, guidance counselors, and principals. Lack of clarity regarding role responsibility for guiding students through postsecondary transition, perceived obstacles within the transition process, and the importance of incorporating an inclusive school ethos emphasizing shared responsibility for transition planning were shared by study participants.

The California WorkAbility 1 Program is designed to equip youth with disabilities with knowledge and skills needed in the workplace through providing

paid employment opportunities to high school students. Perceptions of teachers representing various roles in the WAI program describing the benefits and challenges of the program, as well as strategies suggested for implementing effective work transition programs are presented by Johnson. Zargarpour and Warren describe further how an intersegmental collaborative solution-building partnership, the *Regional Learning Collaboration*, was formed to facilitate transition to and through postsecondary education for vulnerable and low-income student populations in Southern California, based on the willingness to assume shared responsibility to facilitate student pathways and outcomes. Through use of a case study, van Ingen and colleagues describe how the partnership between a university and an organization that provides advocacy to persons with disabilities and their families has resulted in effective transitions to postsecondary educational settings that highlight authentic student experiences, meaningful relationships, identity formation and self-confidence, and employment prospects to the benefit of all members of the community.

Section Four of this volume proposes a number of *Collaborative Programs, Partnerships and Resources for Transition*. Underscoring the need for interagency collaborative partnerships to facilitate transition from school to adult services, Kwiatek and colleagues present the CIRCLES model, a three-team approach consisting of a community-level team, a school-level team, and a student's individualized education program team, with examples of how the model has been effectively implemented. The chapter by Azizah also proposes a collaborative interagency model designed to advance school to work transition for youth with disabilities in an Indonesian special school incorporating input from government agencies, districts, schools, students, and families. Strnadová and colleagues review stakeholders' perspectives of barriers that impact community reentry for youth transitioning from juvenile justice facilities, comparing findings of studies conducted in Australia and the United States. Pacino describes a range of programs and services developed by a library in Southern California, in partnership with various community services, to serve the transitional needs of children, youth, and adults who represent diverse populations. Finally, Mulungo discusses ways in which parent groups work in partnership with school personnel and community members to facilitate educational opportunities for children with disabilities in Malawi.

Kate Scorgie & Chris Forlin

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND GRATITUDE

Putting together a volume during the pandemic has been truly challenging, and we are beyond grateful to chapter authors and peer reviewers who have come together, committed to the value of their work and to the volume, to submit innovative and informative programs and share strategies and insights on how to achieve effective transitions for children and youth with diverse needs. Sincere appreciation to all who have committed to the successful launch of this volume. We are deeply indebted to each.

REFERENCES

- Azizah, N. (2016). *School to work transition programs for students with physical disabilities in Indonesian special schools*. Doctoral Dissertation, The Flinders University. <https://flex.flinders.edu.au/file/3165517e-5f70-4c3b-94dc-1054f2d35fb0/1/ThesisAzizah2016.pdf>
- Baker, S., & Irwin, E. (2019). Disrupting the dominance of ‘linear pathways’: How institutional assumptions create ‘stuck places’ for refugee students’ transitions into higher education. *Research Papers in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2019.1633561>
- Brown, B., Huszar, K., & Chapman, R. (2017). “Betwixt and between”: Liminality in recovery stories from people with myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) or chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 39(5), 696–710. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12546>
- Conroy, S. A., & O’Leary-Kelly, A. M. (2014). Letting go and moving on: Work-related identity loss and recovery. *The Academy of Management Review*, 39(1), 67–87.
- Hagiwara, M., Dean, E. E., & Shogren, K., A. (2019). The self-determined career design model: Supporting young people with developmental disabilities and their families in home and community settings. In K. Scorgie & C. Forlin (Eds.), *Promoting social inclusion co-creating environments that foster equity and belonging, international perspectives on inclusive education* (Vol. 13, pp. 201–220). Emerald.
- Land, R., Rattray, J., & Vivian, P. (2014). Learning in the liminal space: A semiotic approach to threshold concepts. *Higher Education*, 67, 199–217. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-013-9705-x>
- Leonard, H., Foley, K.-R., Pikora, T., Bourke, J., Wong, K., McPherson, L., Lennox, N., & Downs, J. (2016). Transition to adulthood for young people with intellectual disability: The experiences of their families. *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 25, 1369–1381. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-016-0853-2>
- Osgood, D. W., Foster, E. M., & Courtney, M. E. (2010). Vulnerable populations and the transition to adulthood. *The Future of Children*, 20(1), 209–229. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.0.0047>
- Reid-Cunningham, A. R. (2009). Anthropological theories of disability. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 19, 99–111.
- Scorgie, K., & Forlin, C. (2019). Social inclusion and belonging: Affirming validation, agency, and voice. In K. Scorgie & C. Forlin (Eds.), *Promoting social inclusion co-creating environments that foster equity and belonging, international perspectives on inclusive education* (Vol. 13, pp. 3–16). Emerald.
- Semon, S., Lane, D., & Jones, P. (2021). Introduction: A journey of collaborative practices and inclusion around the globe. In S. Semon, D. Lane, & P. Jones (Eds.), *Mapping collaboration across international inclusive educational contexts, international perspectives on inclusive education* (Vol. 17). Emerald.
- Strnadová, I., & Cumming, T. M. (2016). *Lifespan transitions and disability: A holistic perspective*. Routledge.
- Vincent, J. (2019). It’s the fear of the unknown: Transitioning from higher education for young autistic adults. *Autism*, 23(6), 1575–1585. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361318822498>

SECTION 1

TRANSITIONS TO AND THROUGH SCHOOLING FOR ECE / PRIMARY / ELEMENTARY

This page intentionally left blank

EXHAUSTED, SCARED, ANXIOUS, STRESSED, FRUSTRATED, SAD, BUT HOPEFUL: TRANSITIONING TWO BOYS WITH AUTISM FROM HOME TO SCHOOL

Emma Barrett

ABSTRACT

Transitioning a child with Autism from home to school can be a very traumatic time. The process can be extremely challenging for not only the child but also the parent and the family. This is made even more challenging when a parent is transitioning more than one child at the same time. This chapter describes how one mum planned for and managed the transition for two boys, diagnosed with Autism, from home to school. This is her story and the impact it had on her family. It is full of a range of emotions as the family moves through this process.

Keywords: Autism; parent; transition; school; early intervention; disability

INTRODUCTION

I am the parent of four beautiful boys. Three of whom have autism. I am also a special education teacher working with young people who have high and profound special educational needs. I have been teaching for more than 15 years both within the Australian Government system and overseas in an international school. I have taught all years of schooling from early childhood to upper secondary students. I have a thorough understanding of the education system and the constraints that teachers and parents face.

Transition Programs for Children and Youth with Diverse Needs
International Perspectives on Inclusive Education, Volume 18, 3-8
Copyright © 2022 Emma Barrett
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited
ISSN: 1479-3636/doi:10.1108/S1479-363620220000018001

I am currently on extended parental leave so that I can facilitate early intervention and transitions to school for my young children. I have been part of all facets of the transition process with my adult son and have recently begun the home to school transition process with my next generation of boys. I bring to this discussion a full understanding of exactly what the next 14 years of schooling entails.

TRANSITION FROM HOME TO SCHOOL IN THE EARLY YEARS

Although I will be writing about the transition from home to school, I feel it is important to give a quick insight of my knowledge and background of the education system as it serves to understand how I have come to view the importance of transitions and how, as a parent I can alter the way in which my children are seen, heard, and nurtured.

My oldest son was not the child that teachers requested to teach; I never got a phone call to tell me that it was a pleasure to have him in their class. I spent 14 years fighting to get my son's needs met while trying to respect the school system that I also worked within. There were many times I failed to receive the support my son needed but with each failure comes knowledge. The strength that I gained from this first journey has given me the knowledge strength and understanding of how to better navigate the school system and thus receive the best support for my younger boys who are just starting their first transitions into school.

I write this reflection one week before one of my boys starts kindergarten (kindergarten is part-time non-compulsory school education for children the year they turn four before July), and his older brother begins year one. Both have been diagnosed with Autism. I do this with a young baby, an adult child, and having experienced countless hours of early intervention therapy outside of school hours for my two young boys.

A PARENT'S THOUGHTS ON WHAT SCHOOL WILL BRING

I passionately believe the transition from home to school is the hardest transition a parent will make with their child. It's a leap of faith that every parent takes in the hope that an educator will see their child's strengths and positive characteristics and assist and nurture them into and through their schooling journey. The first time I took this leap into the unknown 16 years ago I was naive in the process and had no idea what challenges lay ahead. This time I head into it with eyes open, organized, and planned, prepared and probably overly assertive about what my children need.

My two young children have already attended school tours, visits with teachers and the environment, transition days and class visits with their peers; all planned and supported by the school as the "normal" transition process. This,

however, doesn't begin to prepare my children for the challenges of this transition from home to school. I have spent time liaising with the school, setting up meetings, and discussions about my children. I am, nevertheless, sure that their teachers really do not have sufficient information to enable an easy transition for my boys.

At home we have visual schedules for daily events, each child having their teacher on their schedules long before school starts. I have attended meetings with teachers and the principal prior to the end of the previous year. I have provided as much paperwork as possible including diagnosis letters to ensure the school has been able to apply for funding to have an assistant available to support my children. My children will be in a regular class and the teachers will have a diverse group of students, many of whom will also have specific needs. At this stage no assistant has been allocated.

I have spent months planning with therapists and completing early intervention with my children so that they can have the best possible start to the year. We didn't spend the holidays just playing with friends; we attended therapy sessions, social skills groups, and practiced routines ready for the start of school. Nothing is left to chance and you certainly won't hear me saying "he'll be fine, the teacher will sort it out." I have thought of every possible scenario, worked out what could happen, and how I can provide support.

My biggest struggle as a parent, who is also an educator, is how to ensure I provide the teachers with all the information they require without undermining their knowledge or capabilities. This is a huge challenge as I know and understand my children's intricacies. I have completed a myriad of daily routines to ensure they are able to navigate the world safely. Yet how can I impart all this knowledge onto another person in one or possibly two brief meetings without them feeling threatened or labeling me as "the pushy parent"?

THE EARLY YEARS IN PREPARATION FOR TRANSITION

My children have been receiving therapy support for numerous years before they began this transition to school. I started when they were around two years old, noticing their different intricacies and how those were affecting their daily life. We have spent an incomprehensible amount of time undergoing therapy, travel, planning, meetings, organizing, and gaining support. The toll that this has taken on me as a parent is often overlooked or ignored. Returning to work for me becomes a distant ideal as therapy and early intervention takes over my life; particularly when I am managing more than one child through this process.

In Australia, Early Intervention is valued, supported, and provided for children with a disability. As a parent the responsibility of organizing, booking, attending, and ensuring that my children receive the support they require, nevertheless, falls solely on me. Although there is ample support for families who understand the necessary processes and seek support, there is no requirement for early intervention, nor is there a simple process to gain this support.

Transitioning my children to school looks vastly different from that of my friends who are transitioning their children. For them this is the first big experience where teachers will guide their children into becoming lifelong learners. For us and many families like mine, it's a huge change as we are transitioning years of knowledge and specialist therapists plans and practices over to a school, a teacher, a deputy principal, a principal, hoping that we have given them all the skills that we have learnt, but knowing that it's impossible to impart years of training, knowledge, trial and error, and success in a few short meetings. This makes me as a parent anxious and makes this process difficult because my personal feelings of stress and the potential for failure taint the process.

SPECIALIZED EARLY INTERVENTION THERAPY

As an educator I understand the importance of early intervention and so I prioritize this for my children. My boys will have on average 10–15 hours of therapy, in addition to attending school, each week. The reason I include therapy in the transition discussion is because I believe it is vitally important to ensure my young boys are not overloaded with expectations beyond that of their peers.

The hardest part of the transition process is discussing with the school how attendance will look different for my children. Most therapy takes place outside of the school environment. Unfortunately, this means that my children either attend full school plus full therapy or we need to plan and negotiate a transition program with the school. This is a difficult discussion because although the school management and staff understand the importance of early intervention there is no one size fits all model and so it falls on me to negotiate what I will need for my children.

Having negotiated with my children's school to ascertain the best programs for my children and decided to take a slow and initial part-time transition into full time schooling, I still feel that there needs to be an easier way to support them through intervention into transition to school. There is also no requirement for schools to participate in pre planning and transition for individual students, therefore, as a parent I have to understand that this is my job and make the arrangements for this to happen. Thankfully, this time I have the knowledge and understanding of the process and my children will have this vital early head start into the classroom.

Having negotiated a transition plan that will hopefully work for my boys starting school, it is now vital to develop transition plans for between home, therapy, and school. How will the skills my child is learning in therapy be transitioned into the classroom, so they have the best opportunity to learn? Our therapy model relies on teaching in isolation, then small groups, then transitioning into the school environment. This is a lengthy process and one which is often unable to be understood by the school system who often struggle to have enough support for all students' individual needs.

SOCIALIZATION

This is a fundamental part of the education system. It is impossible to expect a child to learn if their socialization is hindered. Both as a parent and an educator I believe this is critical to the success of my children's education.

My children have complex regulation difficulties, and these are heightened in the social environment. How do you transition from the home environment to the school environment when your basic regulatory system is overloaded? How do you support the school to understand how important this regulation is to ensure any learning happens at school? Particularly, when the school is bound by a curriculum, they need to teach within a set timeframe.

I believe that it is critical in this first transition to school that as a parent you bring specialized professionals that understand your child's needs into the school. I am using occupational therapists and educational psychologists to assist us in developing plans to support my boys (and my understanding) in gaining control of their regulation systems. Providing a detailed and focused plan which includes an escalation profile of my children and how they can become dysregulated, serves as a starting point for discussions with the school. This sounds like an easy task but any parent who has a child with challenging behaviors will attest that this is a long and complex procedure and the document taken to the school may have incorporated months and possibly years of formulation.

When meeting with the school parents need to impart years of knowledge and understanding in a short amount of time. There has been a shift in school processes over the years and the school my sons will be attending is luckily very receptive to gaining as much information from my therapists as they can. The difficulty for parents and staff is that this can only happen when a parent has had the foresight and forward planning to arrange and organize these documents. There is no requirement for any child entering school to have these documents in place. Often parents are unaware these services are available. My first time through as a parent my son had no diagnosis, no funding, and no support. This time my children are transitioning with every opportunity to succeed.

We can't discuss complex regulation difficulties without discussing outside play times. As a parent of children with these difficulties this is the time of the school day that worries me the most. My children struggle in small social settings with children and adults they know: how will they suddenly just cope with the traditional school model of everyone going to play with duty teachers? Even though I have provided every specialist report, plan, and document I can, having specialist one to one support in the playground is not considered a normal practice for schools. This is something that needs to be discussed with the individual school and teachers as part of transition. As a parent I advocate for my child to be supported in the playground more than in the classroom because I understand that being dysregulated socially will lead to an inability to access the curriculum but could also lead to catastrophic meltdowns in an outside unstructured environment. I also know that the transition from the classroom to the playground and vice versa is one of the most difficult parts of my child's day. This is where I need to be strong and advocate for my child's needs.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As school is about to begin in a few days, like all parents taking a child through this first transition, I have everything organized. School supplies bought and labeled, lunch boxes washed and ready, uniforms cleaned, and children prepped and knowing that school is about to begin. This is, however, where the similarities with other parents stops.

I'm not excited to be sending my children to school, I'm exhausted. All the background work I do with planning, organizing, meetings, therapy, and phone calls, are what makes this transition hard. I'm scared of what will happen when my child becomes dysregulated and doesn't make the right choices. I'm anxious for the phone calls to start coming telling me what my child did inappropriately each day. I'm stressed trying to drive two children to school (with a baby in tow) and attend extensive therapy and the normal community activities with their peers.

I'm frustrated because I know I should be excited about this huge step my children are about to make. I'm sad because my babies are growing up. But I'm also hopeful that this time will be different. That this time my knowledge and understanding of what lies before us is a strength and that I have used this knowledge to change the stakes for my children so that they will experience success greater than previous children before them. This time I believe that I am strong enough to ensure that this transition will be successful because I have made it so.