Features of Quality Partnerships between Parents and Teachers during the Transition to School of Young Children with Disabilities

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Aims of the research

• To find the quality actions in partnerships that help families of young children with disabilities to start school

• To reflect the practices, philosophies and family focus of early intervention and school, and how parents partner with them

• To ask parent and teacher partners directly about features of partnerships that matter to them
Background to the Research

- Australian transition guidelines vary by State and by age

- Rapid change, including “Every Student Every School” and the NDIS, reflect a complex landscape for parents to digest

- Any period of transition needs a long lead-in time for success

- Parents and teachers, more than ever, need skills to help them negotiate planning and enrolments to school

- Quality outcomes for children over time will depend on quality partnerships between adults (Bioecological Theory; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006)
Methods

• 8 parents from city and country locations with a young child with a disability were interviewed over 2 years, from pre-school to school

• In 2012 preschool teacher partners and directors were interviewed about how they work with parents and help them with transition

• In 2013 school teachers and principals were interviewed about their roles as partners and leaders with kindergarten parents

• The interviews were transcribed and coded using Nvivo 10
Semi-Structured Interviews; 6 Aspects of Partnerships

- Communication
- Authentic Caring
- Child Focus
- Knowledge of Child Characteristics
- Teaming
- School Climate

After Angell, Stoner & Shelden, 2009
Research Questions

• What actions do parents and teachers say contributes to success of their partnerships?

• Can they identify knowledge and experience that they have gained over time?

• Are there processes in school and early childhood settings that help families and children? What are they?

• Are there processes that hinder? What are they?
Benefits of Study

• Identify good practices and evidence of policy working for all parties in the transition process

• Identify frustrations and stressors that work against the process, for both families and teachers

• Record the recommendations of families and teachers for positive change and outcomes
What can Early Childhood Directors do?

- Show leadership in forward planning with Parents
- Network with Directors and Principals in their area
- Know the complexities of the disability landscape
- Translate this simply to Parents
- Support Teachers to build bridges into Schools
What can Preschool Teachers do?

• Be good communicators with Parents

• Start forward planning early with Schools

• Network with other Preschool and School Teachers

• Go to meetings in the Schools with Parents

• Follow up the next year, even in small ways
What can School Principals do?

- Show leadership with Family-Friendly practices
- Network with Directors and Principals in the area
- Support Parent and Teacher partnerships
- Start Orientations early in the year before school
- Identify Kinder Teachers early and support visits to Preschools
What can School Teachers do?

• Be good communicators with Parents

• Be good communicators with Preschools

• Network with Preschool and School Teachers in the area

• Learn Teaching Strategies from many sources

• Help children belong to the School Community
What can Parents do?

- Join Parent Support Networks and learn, learn, learn!
- Be a good Communicator, keeping notes and records
- Help others to understand your child in positive ways
- Start school visits and orientation early
- Take support people to meetings
What can we hope for?

• Clear guidelines to good transitions for children and families

• Linkages between all players put into place

• Communication skills and procedures up to best practice standards

• Parent and teacher partnership skills taught and supported