Teacher and Parent Partnerships: the role of common understandings in successful transitions to school for children with disabilities

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This was a study that relied on a group of families speaking candidly about the two year period of transition to school with children who did not conform to the usual idea of a learner aged 5-6. It also relied on the teachers in preschool and school, and their school executive members, talking just as candidly about how they helped the children and their families during transition. I was extremely privileged to have those conversations and to try to accurately represent those experiences from all partner viewpoints. I thank all the participants who allowed me the opportunity to engage and listen.

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ABSTRACT

The background to this exploration of transition to school partnerships between parents and teachers in NSW, Australia from 2012-2013, was large-scale systemic change in disability education at both State and Federal levels. This has had implications for parents, teachers and educational managers working together to provide good educational outcomes for children with disabilities. Starting school is a particularly important test of how well new procedures are being managed and implemented to support parents and children.

In a two-year study of eight families transitioning their young children with disabilities to school, parent and teacher partnerships were the subject of a series of qualitative interviews with individual parent, teacher and executive partners from preschools and then schools. Participants detailed helpful and unhelpful elements of partnerships at interpersonal, professional and organisational levels of the transition to school process, producing data that could be interrogated across people, time, place and process, in a study informed by the theorising of Bronfenbrenner. The eight families’ experiences of partnerships were reported in relation to how well their partners were able to meet family needs, produce good child and parent transition outcomes, and minimise emotional upset and feelings of isolation.

Good transition outcomes for children and families were investigated using NVivo coding and matrix queries; the interview data were able to reveal themes of importance to parents individually and as a group, and also to show a consensus view of what all partners can do to produce good transition outcomes for children. It was agreed by participants in the study, that at a parent-teacher partnership level, teaming, shared understanding, understanding own role and communication were most important to successful transition. At the professional practice level it was essential to know parent goals, develop personal skills, show empathy for the parent partner, and to have a partner who understood their role. Organisations did best when they had developed quality processes, made clear their intentions and goals, created a positive school climate, and were the beneficiaries of focussed leadership.
Conversely, poor transition experiences were linked to the absence of the positive processes above. At the parent-teacher **partnership level** lack of teaming, poor shared understanding, not understanding own role and poor communication contributed to poor outcome or experiences. At the **professional practice level** the common negative features were; not knowing parent goals, undeveloped personal skills, lack of empathy for the partner and partner skills wanting. **Organisational** deficits were; poor quality transition processes, unclear intentions and goals, negative school climate and unfocussed leadership.

The study demonstrated strong links between these features of partnerships and good outcomes for children and parents. Where partners reported the same features absent or poorly executed, there were clear links to poor outcomes. This study made a case for more supports at the three levels of partnerships- partnership, professional practice and organisational- to promote common understanding and role clarity. In eight case studies there was evidence that variability in practices had a clear impact on families over the two year period, suggesting that parents, teachers and schools could benefit from clear and consistent transition guidelines which address the skills and knowledge needed in the new era of disability support and education post 2014.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This research project investigated the experience of planning for and then starting school for 8 families with children with disabilities in NSW Australia between 2012 and 2013. The focus of the study was the influence of partnerships between parents and teachers on the quality of the experience for these families, in terms of how they viewed the transition to school outcomes for their child, for themselves, for their individual family situations, and for their emotional well-being. Parents had two important partnerships during this time; with their child’s preschool teacher and school teacher. Also playing significant roles in the partnerships in transition, if more peripherally, were the preschool directors and the school principals. The study was interested in the interplay of all these significant adults in successful beginnings to school for young children with disabilities.

1.1 AIMS OF THE STUDY

Two ideas, strongly backed by research, recur as themes in this small and localised study. First is the importance of adult relationships in the lives of children, and the responsibilities they have in working together to enable the best life outcomes; in this case, parents and teachers helping children with disabilities transition to school. Their vital roles are articulated in the bioecological theory of Bronfenbrenner and associates (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Second is that the features of positive partnerships between adults can be identified and taught, and that knowledge of these features can support parents and teachers to achieve the best outcomes for children (Angell, Stoner & Shelden, 2009; Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson & Beegle, 2004).
Using these ideas, this study aimed to closely examine partnership experiences of eight parents and their teacher and executive partners over two contexts, a time period of two years and in relation to the transition outcomes for young children with disabilities starting school. The spoken words of participants during interviews conducted in four time frames (two per year) were used to provide examples of partnership behaviour which could be categorised as impacting on the transition experience of children and families in affective ways that could be determined by the researcher to be helpful or unhelpful. Evidence was gathered in this way to build a picture of how the important adults in a child’s life could contribute in positive or negative ways to transition.

This study also aimed to highlight links between practices which supported successful transition to school outcomes and positive evaluations of parent-teacher partnerships. A deeper understanding of how partners were relating in terms of time and place was sought, because change could be expected to occur from a preschool to a school context. Parents, for instance, would very likely feel like novices in the field of disability education in the early phase of the study, but then build their confidence and their voices as advocates for their children.

The study also had the potential to highlight the challenge faced by parents of moving their children between two different kinds of educational institutions. The type and kind of educational practice in each phase of transition was included in this study, allied to parent and teacher assessments of their impacts on transition. All participants could be expected to experience very personal aspects of growth and change in their roles, empathy and skills, whatever their relationship to the child, and they were given the opportunity to comment on changes over time that were relevant to them.

It was also an aim to understand what partnership behaviours contributed to parent’s assessments of less successful outcomes in transition, this being important knowledge to use in supporting others in the future. This study has sought to include the role of emotion as a factor in effective partnerships to build on the research of Brotherson, Summers, & Naig et al. (2010), and so included a search for any apparent links between partnership behaviour and type of emotion reported when participants talked about successful or unsuccessful transition outcomes.
This study saw the potential for positive change for families and children in the current educational environment in NSW Australia, but wished to ask how they were being supported in their partnerships with teachers and executive in preschools and schools to bring about successful transitions to school. It was also important to know how those same educational practitioners were supported in their roles as partners to parents.

1.2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY
Eight families whose young children with identified learning disabilities were starting school in 2013 were recruited from preschools and early intervention centres in a city and its environs in NSW Australia in 2012. A parent from each family agreed to participate in the study by talking about their partnerships with teachers in preschool and school over a two year period. It was contingent that their preschool teacher partners had also agreed to be interviewed about perspectives on partnerships in the lead-up to school. In 2013 the school teacher partners were approached to participate with their perspectives in the children’s first year at school, and all eight agreed. A schedule of two interviews a year was arranged, with a majority of the interviews going ahead and only one parent withdrawing in 2013. The executive of the preschools and schools, directors and principals, were each interviewed once.

Interview questions were based on well-researched aspects of partnerships (Angell, Stoner & Shelden, 2009; Blue-Banning et al., 2004) that were discussed in an open-ended way and in the same manner for each of the four time points of the study. Discussions varied in type and content over time as different aspects of transition to school became important to partners. Initial ideas and categories of partnership and transition experiences were expected to grow and expand in number as participants talked, including the creation of positive and negative categories which could help chart the success or otherwise of transition, for instance examples of positive and negative communication between partners.

Recorded interview data was coded, themed and grouped into matrix queries designed around the research questions using NVivo 10. The data could be examined for clusters of coding attributable to designated groupings of people, times and places. Analysis
and discussion of such a small scale study was reliant on careful and transparent qualitative research practices, as described in the Methods chapter.

1.3 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY
A close examination of parent-teacher partnerships during transition to school as a research project was timely because of large-scale change in Australian schools following the 2005 implementation of the National Standards for Disability Education by the Federal Government in Australia. There have been many flow-on changes in schools to promote inclusive practices and revise the way procedures, such as enrolment, are done. In NSW, for example, Every Student Every School was a policy introduced to make explicit the welcome that is to be extended to parents of children with disabilities at every public school when enrolling (NSW Department of Education and Community, 2012).

By choosing eight parents and their teachers and executive from preschools and schools to interview over a two-year period, this study sought to detail the impacts of change from their different perspectives at personal, professional and organisational levels of partnerships over the two-year period of 2012 and 2013. It was expected that the quality of partnerships would be influential on the transition outcomes for parents and children.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
There have been a number of studies about transition to school (see 2.11) using the conceptual model of Bronfenbrenner, but not in this detail in Australia and in the time frame of rapid change in disability education legislation and practice since 2005. A two-year case study approach was used to obtain perspectives from eight parent viewpoints, and within each case study their preschool and teacher partner viewpoints were included, as well as those of the directors and principals who were their educational managers of the process of transition for preschool and school.

The study aimed to track the partnership factors behind transition experiences that parents, teachers and executive discussed in detail, by compiling into codes the spoken examples of behaviour and actions which built a picture of eight families’ journey of
transition over two years (see Code Book, Appendix C). The researcher created a master set of codes which she named the FAMILY CARE FRAMEWORK. It contained coding for the key components of the families’ experience of transition and was used as the prime tool for testing research questions about the influence of partnership factors on families during the two year period of the study:

• FAMILY NEEDS contained references to all the individual and unique family circumstances which were of primary concern to them

• POSITIVE CHILD TRANSITION OUTCOMES contained references to all positive events and behaviour that occurred for the child

• NEGATIVE CHILD TRANSITION OUTCOMES contained references to all negative events and behaviour that occurred for the child

• POSITIVE PARENT TRANSITION OUTCOMES contained references to all positive events and behaviour that occurred for the parent

• NEGATIVE PARENT TRANSITION OUTCOMES contained references to all negative events and behaviour that occurred for the parent

• POSITIVE EMOTIONS were references to positive feelings associated with events and behaviour for the parent or their partner

• NEGATIVE EMOTIONS were references to negative feelings associated with events and behaviour for the parent or their partner

• ISOLATION was any expression by the parent of feeling alone or lost

The major design feature of this study involved responding to three identified gaps in the knowledge base on partnerships during transition to school (see Literature Review 2.12) by building three sets named for the areas to be questioned; the PARTNERSHIP SET; the PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES SET; and the ORGANISATIONAL SET. They contained codes that helped define each of the three areas of partnership that would benefit from further research. The codes represented Processes, in Bronfenbrenner terms, which could be expected to be significant in describing qualities of partnerships
which were helpful or not helpful. Other elements of Bronfenbrenner’s theory- Person, Time and Context- were able to be tested by creating matrix enquiries which were run in three phases of analysis (see 3.9.2) by changing the groupings within them, for example, parent-only data, or year one and year two data. In all instances the Family Care Framework was the pivotal set at the heart of the enquiries, as this was used as the measure to tell the negatives and positives of the transition journey for the child and the family.

The three phases of data organisation used to interrogate family experiences of Partnership, Professional Practices and Organisation were;

1. Case Studies of the eight individual families over two years
2. All- partner data over two years
3. Parent-only data in year one compared to Parent-only data in year two.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Bioecological theory informed this study researching partnerships during transition to school. Four inter-related elements (Process, Person, Context and Time) were foremost as features to be explored (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Firstly, with regard to Process, Person, and Time, this study needed to capture the type and kind of “proximal processes” that were occurring between partners planning the complex actions of transition to school. In Proposition 1 in the theory, proximal processes between people are said to be qualitatively capable of producing competence or dysfunction in life, and to be effective “the interactions must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 996).

Secondly, in regard to Context, the study would also need to account for variations in system and environment as the child moved from preschool education to school, an effect discussed by Proposition 2 in the theory. There may be evidence in the study for the proposition that “form... content and direction of proximal processes varies...when considering person, context... and changes occurring over time... and the nature of the
developmental outcomes” (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). The two contexts in this study were preschool and school education and the four elements above will be considered for their usefulness to explain parent and child outcomes in this study.

To gather information about proximal processes, large amounts of detailed data describing observable and felt behaviour was gathered from all partners in a two year timetable of interviews over time. To be true to the intentions of Bronfenbrenner and colleagues, proximal processes were the most important focus, to show how they were relevant to the developing individual- a child with a disability- and the context in which they occurred. Their implications in the relevant developmental outcomes- a child’s successful transition to school- were drawn from the combined and contrasted evidence given by adults in their close (micro) or more distant (meso) levels of involvement. The developmental outcomes for children were not directly measured in this study except as references to their progress through transition by parents and teachers. All of the four elements (Process, Person, Context, and Time) were considered in the framing, implementation and analysis of this study, but most particularly, processes. This was in keeping with the integrity of the mature form of bioecological theory as it was developed over time, and to keep faith with its aim of allowing us insight into and understanding of the positive processes of human development, particularly for young children (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009).

Researchers such as Dunst (2002) and Dunlop (2003) saw a need for professionals to reconceptualise expertise and their ways of working in partnerships to optimise child development outcomes. The identification of the dynamics of Process-Person-Context-Time elements when transitioning to school might possibly illuminate the how of help-giving and collaborative practices. The positive effects of recognising the individual expertise of all partners and finding empowerment in participatory partnership could be tested (Dunst, 2002). The results of this study may be useful in supporting the bioecological theory of building competence in partners by positive proximal processes in different contexts and over time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).
1.5.1 PROCESSES HIGHLIGHTED IN THIS STUDY
A group of core features of partnership were chosen from the research literature to initially focus upon in data-gathering by interview, and used as a basis for organising and coding data to look for themes, sub-themes and divergences. They were: communication, commitment, trust, respect, skills and equality (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson & Beegle, 2004), and authentic caring, communication, child focus, knowledge of child, school climate and teaming (Angell, Stoner & Shelden, 2009). Time was a major theme running through the study, and emotional components of partnerships were expected to feature among the themes which evolved during the study (Brotherson, Summers, Naig et al., 2010). These italicised features of partnerships were the starting point for all interviewing and early coding.

1.5.2 PEOPLE IN THIS STUDY
Parents, teachers, early childhood directors and school principals were the key partners interviewed over time and place. Their backgrounds, education and knowledge of particular disabilities could be expected to vary greatly, and affect their personal and professional practices. This was the case, with differing cultural, language and educational backgrounds among the parents, but a more homogeneous grouping of education and backgrounds being evident among the teachers and executive.

1.5.3 CONTEXT IN THIS STUDY
Several types of early childhood educational settings were chosen for the first year of the study; community preschools and early intervention centres from urban and non-urban areas were approached. They could be expected to show variability of staffing training, staff ratios and knowledge of disabilities, and modes of operation.

The schools chosen by the parents for enrolment of their children comprised the makeup of the second year’s contexts. They were both urban and non-urban, in line with family locations.

1.5.4 TIME IN THIS STUDY
Two years, 2012 and 2013, were chosen as the years to identify and speak with parents and their early childhood teacher partners in 2012, followed by the same
parents and their school teacher partners in 2013. The four time periods for interviews were; halfway through preparation for school in preschool in 2012, at the end of the preschool year in 2012 when schools were chosen and transition meetings held, halfway through the first year in school in 2013, and the end of the first year at school.

1.6 THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR THIS STUDY
To represent the elements of the study, Figure 1.1 was designed to show the family and school partnerships of parents and teachers over two years. This model was used as the framework for identifying elements of the transition experience and interrogating relationships over person, time and place. It was used as a focus in the Discussion section of this thesis, to build coherent arguments about actions and processes affecting partnerships and the successful transition to school of young children with disabilities. The elapsing of time shown in the model was two years, when the child moved from preschool to school between 2012 and 2013.

Each family in the study had two contexts to negotiate in each year - home and school. The child was supported within two ecologies - home ecology and school ecology. The layers within these ecologies were influential in degrees of closeness to the child. In the model (Figure 1.1) spheres of influence in the home ecology should be read as the most important in the microsystem of the family, less important in the mesosystem of the community, then less still in the macrosystem of the larger social context of NSW, Australia. This has also been mirrored in the school ecology shown in the model, with degrees of closeness and influence for the child reducing from the classroom to the whole school to the community.

The model highlighted processes under study by using bi-directional arrows between the home ecology and the school ecology, firstly in early childhood education and then in school education. The main focus for the study was the parent-teacher partnership and the features that were helpful or not helpful to the child in promoting good developmental outcomes over two years.

The model was revisited at the end of the study by taking the central questions in the boxes in Figure 1.1 and populating them with processes which participants deemed...
either helpful or unhelpful (Figure 6.1). The lists of specific partnership behaviours so created were the product of the coded conversations of 35 participants over two years as they commented on how they and their partners worked together to help young children with disabilities start school.

The researcher could link all of these behaviours positively or negatively to each family’s experience using the Family Care Framework Set which detailed the relevance of the behaviours to all the constituent nodes; Family Needs, Positive or Negative Parent Transition Outcomes, Positive or Negative Child Transition Outcomes, Positive or Negative Emotions, and Isolation (see Figure 6.1).

Examples of the participants’ own words describing their experiences can be read in the Results chapters and in the Code Book (Appendix C). These quotes illustrated the proximal processes that contributed to both parents’ and teachers’ positive or negative experiences of transition to school. They also confirmed the direct relevance of behaviours or organisational processes to children and families in this very particular kind of transition experience; that of young children with disabilities entering the education system in NSW in 2013.
What are the processes contributing to good transition outcomes for children and families?

What are the processes contributing to poor transition outcomes for children and families?

Figure 1.1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL (after Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006)
1.7 PERSONAL DISCLOSURE

The idea for this study came from the many years I spent as both a special education teacher and a parent to my son Christopher, born in 1987 with Down syndrome. I was a member of two groups (fellow parents and fellow teachers) whose conversations, each about the other, bothered me if they did not tend to do justice to the other group or to be helpful to the child at the centre. I was struck by the sometimes uneasy communication between parents and teachers, particularly if there was any sense of role division or lack of common understanding between them.

My first experience with children with Down syndrome was before Chris was born. In 1983 I had many salutary lessons as a young casual teacher, getting to know students and families in a special school in Sydney, Australia, where early instances of integration and mainstream education were driven by committed parent-teacher partnerships. I often wondered about families’ lives and the impact of having a child with a disability.

In 1987 I walked through the doors of the University of Newcastle’s Early Intervention Centre with baby Chris and his 4 year old brother Conrad, and met teachers, parents and children who are now friends to this day. Our family, with husband Alex and eldest son Roland, have all learned great life lessons, and have fortunately lived in a time of positive social change and opportunities for Chris.

The University of Newcastle’s Special Education Centre became a place where I have worked and studied since 1991, alongside a career in teaching in schools which concluded in 2007. A friend and colleague inspired me to do my own research after seeing her complete a PhD arising from a large project we worked on together between 2007 and 2010 at the University of Newcastle, funded by the Australian Government.
I have brought many of my own life perspectives to this study, with a purpose of narrowing the gaps in understanding and communication between parents and teachers who are partners with a child with a disability at the centre. I chose transition to school as a focus because its implementation and execution is so pivotal to children’s and families’ introduction to school education. It is one of the major milestones for any child, and for families who have a child with a disability, it is not likely to be the typical experience of their peers.

I have also brought my belief systems to this study. I believe that positive interpersonal relationships between adults are the key to supporting children to achieve their potential, and also that parents and teachers are well-placed to form partnerships which can make a positive difference.

Our family has had the benefit of quality partnerships, but I am aware, as teachers, that Alex and I were familiar with the education system and our local school fraternity. We also joined advocacy and parent groups, and were able to pursue our goals for Chris with a wide circle of support. I met many families over the years who told me that entering the education system was an alienating experience that they and their children found traumatic. A crucial difference for families who had good stories to tell was the individual teachers and principals who reached out to them as equal members of the school community.

I was interested to design a study to look closely at the experiences of families who were entering the school system with their young children with disabilities in the present day. Twenty years has been a long time in educational change terms in Australia, and I have been closely involved as a teacher, parent and academic in introducing and implementing that change. It has been a challenging time for parents and teachers.

My study aimed to give a voice to five adult perspectives on the two year transition to school journey; parents, preschool teachers, preschool directors, school teachers and school principals. I was hoping to find pointers to positive partnership experiences in the current climate and especially those aligned with good child outcomes. I expected
to find that both parents and teachers had benefited from social change and greater acceptance of the concepts that have supported reforms for the education of children with disabilities. I also wondered if they were receiving the help and guidance they needed to navigate transition to school and to form beneficial partnerships.

I want to thank all the participants in this study for speaking to me at length and in detail about their experiences. It was truly heartening to see how far we have come, and be able to detail so many good practices and ideas for others in the future.

Judy Neilands

2014
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Parents of young children with any form of disability can experience the diagnosis of disability as a life event that is highly charged with emotions and may present as a disruption to their perceptions of themselves and of their vision for the child they were expecting. There are also challenges to their personal partnerships and their lives in general. Their individual journeys with their children will often mean connecting with a range of professions they have had little contact with or knowledge of, and they may encounter a range of models of practice, including medical, clinical, educational and collaborative. To negotiate these encounters, parents need a clear understanding of the programs they use and their roles in those programs, so that they can participate fully as partners (Woods & Lindeman, 2008, p. 273). How such families fare in their early years will vary, but they are, firstly, families with social contexts, needs and supports, and in Australia in the 21st century they have reason to hope for a life that is engaged and meaningful for all family members.

While the impact of child disability on families is often reported in negative terms, at least one study has contradicted that perception, with parents citing a range of positive aspects (Trute, Hiebert-Murphy, & Levine, 2007). Positive aspects included an enhanced perspective on life, personal psychological growth and enriched lives. Their findings were a reminder that sadness and joy can co-exist in the lives of families, and that professional partners adopting a positive role may make a genuine contribution to enhanced quality of family life through informed empathy and practical coping strategies. There are negative impacts, however, supported by data gathered for the Millennium Cohort Study in the United Kingdom and reported in Hodge & Runswick-Cole (2008), which showed that psychological stress and disorders and poor socioeconomic circumstances were more prevalent for parents of children with early cognitive delay when compared to parents of typically developing children. Social and fiscal policies were recommended for supporting these parents, but it was recognised
that the implementation of such policies need to be mediated by professionals with an understanding of positive supports. Learning the skills that enable them to relate to families was particularly important for professionals who were not originally trained to meaningfully partner with parents (Emerson et al., 2010). The researchers noted that some of the older beliefs, assumptions and practices in partnerships have not translated well to working with the more informed and assertive cohort of parents in the 21st century.

Examples of less than ideal understanding and facilitation of partnerships between parents and teachers during transition to school have emerged in recent research in Australia (Grace, Llewellyn, Wedgwood, Fenech, & McConnell, 2008). These practices included teachers not taking account of parent information, no time allocated for planning and coordination between partners, rushed or minimal daily communication, and parent angst when overworked teachers let them know that they were given insufficient support. Similar findings have been documented in the USA and UK (Janus, Kopechanski, Cameron, & Hughes, 2008; Lovett & Haring, 2003; McIntyre, Blacher, & Baker, 2006; Oliver, 2008; Rous, Hallam, Harbin, McGoldrick, & Jung, 2007). The common deficiencies described were the difficulties parents experienced in becoming equal partners, their anxieties about systems and services not well-explained to them, the uneven allocation of supports not uniformly provided, and the common understanding between parents and teachers about children’s needs.

Given the distress these less than ideal partnerships can cause children and families during transition to school, this study proposed to research features of good partnerships between parents and teachers, and the enhancers and the barriers that exist in the New South Wales early childhood and school systems- particularly to identify how they might promote or prevent a smooth experience of transition for young children with disabilities.
2.2 Changes in Perspectives on Parent and Professional Roles in Disability Services

Professional practices and philosophies of support have evolved over time with regard to their roles with parents and families of children with disabilities. Parent perceptions of their roles have also changed, with expectations of a shared involvement in planning together with professionals for their children’s health, education and welfare.

2.2.1 Parent Roles Over Time

The evolution of the role of parents of children with disabilities has been identified by Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, Soodak, and Shogren (2006), in eight phases: as the source or cause of their child’s disability (the beliefs of the eugenics movement 1880-1930), as organisation members, belonging to such special needs associations as those for deaf and blind children in the mid twentieth century, as service developers establishing schools for children excluded from the public system because of their disabilities (also mid twentieth century), as recipients of professionals’ decisions during the 1960s and 1970s, as teachers of their children where parents were trained to teach their children, as political advocates in the 1970’s and 1980’s organising for change in public education for all children with disabilities, as educational decision makers following the enactment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (IDEA, 2006) in the USA, and by legislation in Australia such as Disability Standards for Education (2005), and as partners with professionals, when family-centred practices encouraged utilising the motivation, knowledge and skills of all parties involved with the child (Turnbull et al., 2006, pp. 102 - 110).

The trend, over time, has been to improve parent choices and participation with professionals, but historically parents have often been coerced or had little say in countering medical, educational or residential options suggested for their child that were restrictive or discriminatory (Ferguson, 2009). It was perhaps inevitable that the two sides and viewpoints of those in the parent-professional relationship were not completely in step in this century or the last. When researching many of the old institutions which were set up for people with disabilities, Ferguson found evidence that the authorities often met with parent resistance, avoidance or reaction against
treatment of their family members, rejecting their claims for the benefits of institutionalisation. He reflected that in the 21st century, researchers in the helping professions were only just beginning to contextualise their models of how parents and other members of families construct and interpret the meaning of raising a child with a disability, and to acknowledge the central role of family dynamics when working with children (Ferguson, 2009). He is supported by many researchers in the re-imagining of better parent-professional relationships in this field (Dunst, 1999; Keen, 2007; Odom, Buysse, & Soukakou, 2011; Reschly & Christenson, 2009; Trivette, Dunst, & Hamby, 2010; Turnbull et al., 2010).

Parents and professionals working together in the best interests of the child has become a goal, sometimes mandated by legislation (IDEA, 2006), and often as a statement of principle following the adoption of global and national guidelines on the rights of people with disabilities [Australian Government Disability Standards for Education, UNESCO Salamanca Agreement, 1994 (A. G. C. Law, 2005; UNESCO, 1994)]. Also driving the ideas for change was the thinking of theorists like Urie Bronfenbrenner, who had a direct influence on American and international policy initiatives as he and other researchers developed approaches which taught parents to be teachers of their own children and to “enrich” their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). Ecological systems theory provided a theoretical framework for adults to work together across all of a child’s environments, so that everyone understood him or her in the context of family, educational goals, cultural norms, and parent and work responsibilities. For professionals in the new concept of partnerships, changing roles from administrator and instructor to a more collaborative relationship with parents has not been easily accomplished, as old beliefs and power differentials were hard to shift (Gilman, Huebner, & Furlong, 2009). Remnants of those old attitudes have been characterised as a “troubled and troubling relationship, characterised by suspicion on both sides”, and present in a tension dubbed the “doubting dance” (Ferguson, 2009, p. 57).

Parents played a pivotal role in the demise of the residential segregation of people with disabilities from their communities, and they were also instrumental in the
establishment of free, appropriate education for children. They advocated for change and instigated litigation against state and federal governments in the USA and other western nations, achieving a significant social shift;

...in 1970, just prior to the prosecution of 37 court cases, which led to the passage of The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142), some 12,000 children of school age had been committed to institutions in that year... In 1981, three years after the effective date of PL 94-142, fewer than 1200 were admitted...the parent movement had reversed the course of history in this century by insisting that these segregated institutions cannot stand and must go. (Turnbull et al., 2006, p. 108)

In Australia, there was a similar change in life choices for parents and children with disabilities occurring since the 1960s. Tens of thousands of men, women and children who were classified as “mentally retarded” in the early part of the twentieth century, spent their lives in institutions, based on decisions about treatment and placement which was often arbitrary and misguided and with few other choices or support for parents (Foreman, 2009). In present-day Australia, all aspects of daily life for children and families living with disabilities - educational, medical and residential - have been overhauled by legislation and the enactment of social measures and standards to address past inequities. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (Government, 2013), the Disability Service Standards (Law, 1992) and the Australian Federal Government’s Disability Standards for Education (2005) have been legislated to provide choice and high standards in all areas of disability service provision.

Professionals working with people with disabilities and their families now do so in a more enlightened time about individual rights and consultation. In one recent study of 64 families, Australian researchers confirmed that helpful professional behaviour had positive outcomes for children with disabilities. They found “professional support was one of the greatest predictors in promoting positive family outcomes, [and] it was imperative that service providers understood that their attitudes and behaviour impacted on the quality of family life” (Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009, p. 161). This finding has even greater resonance in the involvement of many
agencies in the emerging national approach to ensuring quality lives for Australian citizens with disabilities through the enactment and rolling out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Government, 2013).

2.3 EMERGING STUDIES OF FAMILY-PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Improvements in the understanding of the dynamics of family-professional partnerships have evolved in line with social change and understanding. Dunst (2000) provided a useful history through several phases of the theory and practice in a review paper of early intervention for children with disabilities. In earlier times informal supports were most prevalent for families, and any formal supports were often delivered in a clinical way. Parental resistance to this form of support has been evident in partnership research, which has generally concluded that informal supports were positively related to different aspects of child, parent and family functioning, and formal supports were less meaningful to them (Dunst, 2000; Judge, 1997; Kohler, 1999; Spann, Kohler, & Soenksen, 2003). Further, “support provided by early intervention practitioners was judged as most helpful and beneficial when they [the practitioners] were identified as members of a family’s informal social support network” (Dunst, 2000, p.96).

Family-centred practices have been adopted in early childhood practice as social systems theory (Dunst, 2000) and family systems theory (Turnbull et al., 2006) have become widely accepted in the research literature. These theories have evolved from the ecological concepts of Bronfenbrenner, who placed outcomes for children squarely in their contexts of people, time and place, and the quality of processes which helped to explain how they and their families functioned. The family-centred practices include promoting mutual understanding between members, using the language of promotion, empowerment strategies for families, strengths-based starting points for programs, strong resource bases and goals specific to family needs. Researchers in this field have aimed to define and describe the nature and kind of help-giving practices that would inform good family-centred practices. This was deemed important because
“it mattered a great deal in terms of how help is provided if it is to have optimal positive benefits” (Dunst, 2000, p.100).

Professionals trying to understand their role in help-giving using family systems theory were advised to establish trusting partnerships with parents, focussing on “the reciprocity within the family, which were the sum of inputs and combinations of interactions that occur within the whole family” (Turnbull et al., 2006, p. 29). This goal of equal partnerships represented a change of emphasis in the parent-professional dynamic and required the acquisition of skills such as questioning and empathy, among others, to enable building a working relationship. Underlying assumptions about professional practices would have to be addressed, and responses to expressed views and wishes of family members respected and acted upon. The ideas of family systems theory opened the door to change in practices, which are still being refined, debated, and written into organisation manuals in the present time. Ideally sustainable partnership programs will be established that are goal-oriented and available; Epstein and Salinas (2004) described examples of professional learning communities in the American school system that have aimed to reduce disadvantage, difference and school failure by fostering family and community involvement in creative ways.

Conflict in partnerships was investigated in a large survey by Lake and Billingsley (2000). School administrators, mediators and parents of children with disabilities from the USA school system, when asked about preventing and handling conflict, identified eight factors that contributed to conflict in partnerships: discrepant views of the child’s needs, knowledge, service delivery, constraints, valuation, reciprocal power, communication, and trust. Examples were provided of behaviour in each of these domains which either reduced or increased conflict, and helped make explicit the ways of thinking about differing viewpoints. The authors suggested that issues of power were reframed, with the study showing that power existed within individuals, and shifted back and forth between parents and school personnel. They found power struggles could be decreased by focussing on reciprocal relationships and applying problem-solving skills (Lake & Billingsley, 2000, p. 249).
One of the largest and most influential studies into partnerships was undertaken by Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson & Beegle in 2004 in the USA. They used focus groups and interviews across a range of family members of children with and without disabilities, service providers and administrators and locations. The study found that parents and professionals could positively or negatively assess six broad types of behaviour when reflecting on the quality of their interactions with each other. They could also consistently identify types of positive and productive partnership behaviour which could be understood in terms of their effects on relationship quality and child outcomes; 

commitment, communication, equality, respect, skills and trust (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson, & Beegle, 2004).

Following this study, further work was done by some of the same researchers on the Blue-Banning team to try more fully to understand effective partnerships. They used the six domains above to develop a Family-Professional Partnership Scale. The study used two field tests and found that the six domains could be categorised into two components: child-focussed relationships and family-focused relationships (Summers, Hoffman, Marquis, Turnbull, Poston, et al., 2005). Their scale had the potential to check the extent to which partners were working effectively and also had possible use in pre-service and in-service training for professionals.

In the last decade a large number of mixed methods research studies into the types of help-giving behaviour by professionals and the effects on families of children with disabilities have produced a comprehensive body of evidence for the outcomes that may result for parents (Dunst & Dempsey, 2007; Keen, 2007; Nachsen, 2005; Summers et al., 2007; Woods, Kashinath, & Goldstein, 2004). Some of the outcomes of help-giving behaviour cited in studies included mutual trust and respect, feelings of parental competence and personal control gained by empowerment and understanding of their situations, and importantly, feelings of enjoyment and confidence in parenting their children.

An important aspect of service provision and work with families was explored in a large study in the USA about gathering information from families and giving information to them in return (Woods & Lindeman, 2008). The researchers found that
most professionals and services understood the “why” of these practices, but not the “how”. They field-tested a framework for partnerships which used five strategies that promoted reciprocal sharing and giving of information. They reported success in improving the understanding between partners in programs, and making explicit to parents how they could be involved to the best effect for their children. The five strategies were interviews as conversations, interactive and personal use of checklists, community mapping of families to understand their supports, problem-solving together, and use of the family environment to maximum effect (Woods & Lindeman, 2008).

A smaller scale qualitative study asking parents about aspects of parent-teacher partnerships that they valued revealed consistently identifiable and specifically helpful behaviour towards their children at school. These were authentic caring, communication, child focus, knowledge of child characteristics, school climate and teaming. It was evident that parents responded to evidence of professionals’ genuine interest and knowledge of their children, and recognition of their family situations and their children’s needs (Angell, Stoner, & Sheldon, 2009).

Trivette, Dunst, and Hamby, (2010) provided definitive evidence of the benefits of positive partner\(^1\) behaviour. Their extensive meta-analysis of family systems intervention practices was conducted involving 910 infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers. Evidence of support for families and “encouraging correlations” with child and family outcomes emerged when professional partners displayed positive partner behaviour that was sensitive to individual family needs. The study found: capacity-building, helping and family systems interventions practices had direct effects on both parent self-efficacy beliefs and well-being, and indirect effects on parent-child interactions and child development mediated by self-efficacy beliefs and parent well-being (Trivette et al., 2010, p. 3).

Trivette et al. were able to show rigour by linking elements of partnerships with positive parent and child outcomes across a large sample, firming up evidence for the

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\(^1\) The term “partner” is used throughout to refer to parents and professionals working for the benefit of the child.
importance of more clearly defined partnership behaviour in the early years of childhood, particularly for children with disabilities. This research study, and much of the literature reviewed thus far, strongly suggests that type and kind of partner behaviour can have a direct impact on child and family outcomes.

2.4 DEFINING PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership can be a term that is understood differently from context to context. The idea of what comprises a successful partnership in transition to school, particularly for parents and teachers working with a child with a disability, has been refined and described in recent years, as researchers such as Blue-Banning et al. (2004) designed and field-tested studies using large numbers of participants who were involved as parent, teacher or professional partners in this endeavour. Their work delineating and understanding the elements of effective partnerships has considerably contributed to the field in the 21st century. This study has adopted a definition of partnerships that was refined in further work by some of the same researchers in 2007:

“mutually supportive interactions between families and professionals, focussed on meeting the needs of children and families, and characterised by a sense of competence, commitment, equality, positive communication, respect and trust” (Summers et al., 2007, p. 321).

The dissemination of the understanding of what comprises good partnerships, and the means to put this knowledge into practice, has been concerning researchers such as Dunst and Trivette (2009), Odom (2009) and Turnbull et al. (2010). They have all noted that a gap often existed between research and practice in partnership knowledge. Turnbull and a large team, in particular, published knowledge-to-action guides aimed at parents who have a lifetime in front of them of negotiating for their children with disabilities in education and other fields of life (Turnbull et al., 2010). These researchers also suggested there be supports to help parents and practitioners find and use evidence-based practices that were practical and user friendly, because establishing effective partnerships played a crucial part in child and family outcomes. Further, implementation scientists took the view that simply identifying features of good collaboration such as shared philosophies, good communication and joint
participation in planning, without supports in place to help partners implement them, was compounding the difficulties of converting evidence of good practice to common use (Odom et al., 2011).

The present study was designed to question parents and teachers the year before school started and during the first year of school, about features of their partnerships and the supports that helped them in a small locality in NSW, Australia. Understanding the views of both partners and their particular concerns has importance in creating common understanding, and identifying skills and knowledge that could be implemented in modern practice.

2.4.1 TRANSITION TO SCHOOL AND PARTNERSHIPS
The pathways to early education and then transition to school present the parents of children with disabilities with many more issues than those faced by parents of children who do not have additional needs. Education systems often provide parents and teachers with separate documents detailing procedures for enrolment. For instance, in New South Wales there are guidelines on the government website advising that enrolment for children with disabilities should be commenced early in the year preceding school to allow for funding applications, assessments and other supports to be arranged (DEC, 2012).

Transition, is by definition, a period of change where individuals may experience uncertainty, unreadiness, or unpreparedness. A research project with 722 United States children from 214 pre-kindergarten classrooms demonstrated positive effects of planned transition practices for all children, but particularly for at-risk children (Lo-Casale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer, & Pianta, 2008). Among the effects of the transition activities were early school adjustment, social competence for children, positive teacher perception of children’s competencies, and individualising of transition activities by meeting with parents. They found that well-planned transition activities moderated against risk of future school problems and poor outcomes, particularly when children had extra learning needs and disabilities.

In New South Wales, transition to school supports were evaluated by researchers in a university-based inclusive preschool program, by following up and
interviewing parents and teachers in the child’s first year at school (Kemp, 2003). Over
five years from 1995-1999, the integration of 39 children with intellectual disabilities to
mainstream school was studied in terms of the types of actions and structures
provided to parents and teachers which were helpful in producing successful
outcomes. The most strongly rated factor in success for teachers was the “family’s
attitude”, and equally, parents rated “teacher attitude” as highly important. This study
recognised the need to foster mutually supportive relationships between parents and
teachers, as it was their assessments of positive shared understanding in the other
which both groups believed contributed to successful integration (Kemp, 2003). The
same study also indicated that school community, or positive school climate, was an
important factor for parents in feeling their children were welcome, but that school
principals played a minimal role in ensuring supports were available once enrolment
was completed. Parents and teachers reported a need for greater oversight of support,
from a timetable of orientation visits, to ongoing support for planning, programming
and skills training, which suggested a stronger role for principals was called for (Kemp,
2003).

These results supported an earlier, larger study of 314 children with disabilities
transitioning to school in New South Wales, where parents, teachers and service
providers were surveyed about factors for success. Variables which were thought to
influence success included attitudes of welcome, positive supports for teachers,
information to the school community and preparation activities for children (Chadwick
& Kemp, 2002).

While finding benefits to planned transition approaches, other studies have
demonstrated the gaps that can exist between teacher language and parent
understanding, and between the approaches taken and the accounting for the range
and diversity that exists in children and families (Dockett & Perry, 1999; Dunlop, 2003).
These studies suggested more work was needed to support teachers to understand
family perspectives and the gap between their ease of understanding of educational
concepts and parent knowledge.
Transition at all levels of the school system is generally recognised in teaching circles as important, and is even a mandated procedure for some children, yet in a study across time and types of school settings in Scotland, Dunlop (2003) found very mixed approaches to transition by teachers, where the barriers to success were many. They included separation of sectors of education, lack of developed relationships across settings, variation in leadership and staff development within and across settings, and use of language and labels that varied in meaning among teachers (Dunlop, 2003).

Successful transition to school for typical children has been recognised to have a critical window of 4-12 weeks in the initial period of adjusting to the new environment (Branson & Bingham, 2009). A number of factors could be shown to assist this adjustment, including some experience of preschool, presence of familiar children and a high number of transition activities. There is evidence that children’s adjustment to early schooling benefits from interconnections of many elements in their lives; family, school, peer and community (Margetts, 2002). The idea of a ‘readiness for school’ residing in the child was criticised in a study about teacher judgements and successful transition to school (Rimm-Kaufmann, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). The researchers found that a more important concept was the teacher-organised work done during preschool transition activities which helped align children’s competencies, their home environments and their future teachers’ expectations. This study is interested in the type and kind of transition activities that occur for the participating families, and the parent and teacher assessments of them in preparing children for school.

It has been asserted that binary concepts such as ‘ready’ and ‘unready’ have come from out-dated normative concepts of child development and that they are unhelpful in addressing children’s needs at the point of entry to school (Rimm-Kaufmann et al., 2000). Rather, transition to school needs to be conceptualised as a shared process that supported the change experiences of children and families (Petriwskyj & Grieshaber, 2011). In response to this and other perceived needs, the Early Childhood Intervention Association (ECIA) of NSW created a website with state government funding to assist schools and families in the transition to school process in
2014. They adopted the concepts of “ready families, ready schools, ready communities and ready services” as their preferred conceptualisation of the way the child is situated before school begins (Family & Community Services, 2014). The website adapted this phrasing from the work of a 17-state project in the USA (US National School Readiness Indicators Initiative, KIDS-COUNT, 2005) where the contribution of all participants in the lives of young children was recognised as having purpose and value in smoothing the path to school. The above initiatives represented widespread recognition of the complexity of the transition process and the need for supports at all steps along the way.

A deeper enquiry into successful transition to school in Australia was conducted by Dockett and Perry, (2004), who surveyed 355 parents and 166 teachers. The findings revealed a concern for the outcomes for children and families where extra learning difficulties could be expected, such as for children in lower socio-economic areas or with disabilities. The report suggested that teacher understanding and expectations of children were dependent on cooperative and collaborative relationships between adults and a willingness to communicate effectively about the children experiencing problems with transition. Another study (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007) suggested that if teachers and parents shared the same conceptual framework of a child’s learning, they could find some common ground when relating and agreeing on consistent goals. The authors argued that this provided a greater chance of successfully setting and attaining realistic and workable goals.

Studies focusing on children with disabilities transitioning to school have echoed the findings on partnership quality with the parents of typical children, with the added effects of potentially multiple environments and multiple partnerships. Besides the important variable of transition activities conducted by partners, a second critical variable has been identified - the interagency factor, with the many facets of communication, strategies and supports that exist between the parents’ multiple partners in the care of their children (Rous, Myers, & Stricklin, 2007). Parents could experience significant anxiety during transition to school when their children had a disability. A key to teachers and paraprofessionals helping them to manage this was an
open flow of communication over this time and being clear with mutual role understanding and tips for surviving the adjustment to school (Oliver, 2008).

Rous and colleagues (2007) proposed a conceptual framework for the complexity of the interactions of these multiple factors framed around an ecological family model acknowledging the work of Bronfenbrenner and associates, and it proposed two significant levels: the broader more distal level of state services, providers and community resources, and the more immediate supports close to families and most heavily influencing child and family adjustment and outcomes (Rous, et al., 2007). This framework has been an influence on the design of the present study because it proposed a way to position the influences on children and families in the complex transition ecology in which they find themselves.

Other researchers and practitioners have carried forward the ideas of viewing families in their contexts and working to smooth the connections between their various partners and supports. Systems more removed from the family have been found to be more likely to use language and philosophies based less on family needs and understanding than on corporate goals and outcomes for children, such as educational, functional and developmental (Branson & Bingham, 2009). For families of young children, the variability of services can be part of the difficulty many experience when transitioning to school. Operating structures and funding constraints may have an influence on the narrow focus of some service and therapy providers; the negative effects include separation of practices and resources, and limited networking on behalf of their families. Interagency cooperation can be problematic for families, and the transition process is more difficult when service providers ignore or are unaware of family needs, strengths or natural supports. Issues like cultural sensitivities, social disadvantage and degree of disability require a collaborative family-centred approach which builds on existing family supports (Branson & Bingham, 2009; Lovett & Haring, 2003).

A significant test of interagency collaboration can occur at the point of school entry, as parents are making important decisions about the future education of their children. Satisfaction with this process has been low in the past, due to poor linkages
between schools and services, overwhelming paperwork and lack of availability of supports for the child (Branson & Bingham, 2009; Janus et al., 2008). More recently, in a climate of greater support, a study of 40 families reported improvements in these areas, but found barriers still existed to satisfactory transition (Janus et al., 2008). Some of these barriers were put down to being inherent in the stresses experienced by families of children with disabilities, but the main source of perceived problems was in the enacting of promises made to families in a timely way, and once at school, the lower levels of support and services available. There were encouraging signs of communication between school and preschools and crucial partners involved in the transition process, but the study concluded that there was a gap between policy and execution, due in part to the in-between nature of transition and the lack of an overriding sense of leadership in the transition process (Janus et al., 2008).

Child factors cannot be ignored in the transition to school of young children with disabilities. Their particular qualities and learning needs have a part to play in adjustment to school, particularly in the areas of social skills and adaptive functioning. Researchers have suggested that transition activities include a combined effort by partners to address deficits and excesses in child behaviour that could impact successful school adaptation (McIntyre et al., 2006).

Teacher and parent knowledge-sharing have come to the fore as a key to successful transition. A common conclusion of recent transition research has been to highlight the need for understanding of families’ functioning, and the complex interactions and variables in their lives (Hatton, Blacher, & Llewellyn, 2003; Rous, Hallam, et al., 2007; Summers et al., 2007).

Further research may help demonstrate the links between particular partner actions and behaviour that lead to positive effects on each family and their quality of life, but the trend in results to date has suggested that parents and teachers have a lot to offer each other and the child with a disability if they work in concert. How parents and teachers might best do this during transition to school forms part of the basis for the present study. Both parents and teachers were expected to have views about shifts in role identification and adjustments they needed to make in order to work together.
2.5 GOVERNANCE: POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The role of context for parents and children should not be underestimated. Their individual transition experiences can vary with preschool and school interpretations of the process of preparing, enrolling and starting school at state and local levels. The literature provides evidence of the various influences of administrative structures and leadership roles in educational settings, usually due to differences in operation and practice (Epley et al., 2010; Kohler, 1999). These may be felt directly, such as with a welcoming school climate, or indirectly, such as the quality of service integration with their setting. Four main facets of influence for service quality have been identified: administrator knowledge and vision; organisational climate that fosters partnerships and peer support; effective use of resources; and accountability for effective practices (Epley et al., 2010). The present study has included the voices of executive teachers from preschools and schools, to add to the picture of the kinds of helpful structures that assisted parents and children during transition.

Early childhood education undoubtedly has a different framework and operating procedure from school, and variations will occur within and between sites, as the individuals interpret and implement policies and curriculum. Some common features of settings which are able to promote positive change for including students with disabilities comprise the presence of key personnel who promote it, shared vision among participants, positive state and national policies, training and organisational structures (Odom et al., 2011). Odom has promoted positive change in thinking and practice for many years, and in a review of 25 years of research he and his colleagues argued that the success of inclusive programs was “less about the characteristics of the children and more about the collaborative relationships amongst the adults” (Odom et al., 2011, p. 349).

In Australia all education services are required to meet the National Disability Standards for Education (2005) with some variations between states on implementation. Early intervention centres in Australia specifically teach children with disabilities and operate under a National Quality Framework (ACEQA, 2012) and Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2011). Policies on transition to school vary from
state to state in Australia, and in NSW the most recent release was 1997 (DET, 1997). Researchers in this area contend that modernising standards would involve adding pedagogical processes which support a range of children, including children with disabilities, and moving on from such outmoded constructs as binary notions of age of school entry, readiness for school and judgements of risk (Petriwskyj & Grieshaber, 2011). The present study may shed some light on how recent changes to policy, particularly the implementation of the National Standards for Disability Education (2005), have impacted on the transition experience of a small number of young children in NSW.

In the area of enrolments in early childhood education considerable variability exists for access by children with disabilities. A survey of 27 regular early childhood settings in NSW in 2008 found significant variations in leadership and policy interpretation, affecting the experiences of parents trying to gain inclusion for their pre-school aged child with a disability (Grace et al., 2008). These data highlighted the variability of context and how that might relate to partnership dynamics amongst professionals and families, but it also reflected funding, training and support levels in regular preschool and childcare centres and how these impacted on families. The study showed that the rules and the funding were of such complexity that administrators needed to invest large amounts of time in obtaining extra supports for children, and some preferred not to do so. Staff who successfully integrated children with disabilities into their preschools had only done so with extra unpaid personal time and strong support from all staff members (Grace et al., 2008).

Questions of early childhood intervention and transition to school have been tackled by the special interest group Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA, NSW branch), who have produced a resource funded by the NSW Department of Aging Disability and Home Care (ADHC). Their website Transition to School Resources was released for schools, families, communities and services, and took a Bronfenbrenner approach to children’s development by considering all spheres of influence in their lives (ECIA 2014). Informing the website’s approach to transition was the USA’s National School Readiness Indicators Initiative (KIDS-COUNT, 2005) which had
challenged the idea of children’s “readiness for school” by declaring instead “ready families, ready community, ready services and ready schools = children ready for school” [National School Readiness Report, 2005, p.12 (KIDS-COUNT, 2005)]. The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative was a privately funded research project in a 17-state partnership, and represented a shift in thinking to factors beyond the child which influenced successful transitions to school (KIDS-COUNT, 2005). The approaches that flowed from this re-thinking, and provided by the ECIA website, included extensive information and supports for all of the adults involved in transition so that they could be well-informed about their roles, rights and responsibilities, and be alerted to useful practices and potential barriers. The ECIA, NSW Branch, through their website, has endorsed the idea of successful transitions to school being reliant on effective partnerships between all the potential adult partners working with the child.

Also in 2014, the Australian Federal Government released a document on their website called Continuity of Learning: A resource to support effective transition to school and school age care (Dockett & Perry, 2014). It was a culmination of earlier work produced by the Educational Transitions and Change (ETC) Research Group (ETC, 2011). That team had launched the Early Years Learning Framework for School Age Care and the Transition to School: Position Statement in 2011. Five essential elements in successful transition practices were identified and explained in the Continuity of Learning website. They were: secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships; partnerships; high expectations and equity; respect for diversity; ongoing learning and reflective practice (Dockett & Perry, 2014, p. 5)

The website has provided extensive examples and demonstrations of what each of the five elements look like in practice during transitions, and from different participant viewpoints. When focusing on the importance of partnerships, the website, backed up by research, has emphasised six common goals. They were: respect for the knowledge, expertise and contributions of each partner; mutual respect and trust; willingness to engage in open communication; reciprocity; shared decision-making; and working towards common goals (Dockett & Perry, 2014, p. 29). The website has taken each of these elements of partnerships and provided real-life
practical examples of how they may be instigated at all levels for adults and children. An explicit portrayal of what equity and inclusion can look like has been provides for the families and teachers of children with disabilities (Dockett & Perry, 2014, pp. 59 - 69).

This recent and comprehensive release of resources on transition in Australia has the potential to positively address an issue that has been apparent for some time. Programs and initiatives to help children with disabilities may struggle if teachers and parents are not supported to understand their roles and to act together as equal partners. Several research studies have sought to understand why some parent-teacher partnerships have not been successful during early childhood. In a large study of parent participation in early intervention programs, their attitudes and their commitment to long-term involvement were examined in relation to their ability to connect with and work with teachers (Pretis, 2011). There was concern about poor outcomes in the USA; drop-out rates and participation of parents was low, and quality of partnerships and parent satisfaction was in question. Researchers found that parental choice and fit with the programs was an issue, related to common understanding and use of language, as well as lack of joint decision-making processes (Pretis, 2011).

How parents would be actively involved in all areas of decision-making over time is a difficult area when generalising about the parents of children with disabilities, because individual circumstances vary widely. Dillon-Goodson (2005) suggested that it was not just a question of quantity but quality, and that the strongest evidence in this field supported the benefits of programs that combined a parent support intervention with direct educational services for children. Design and implementation of early childhood programs and how they interacted with parents have not been well researched or evaluated; “the critical role of parents in the lives of children provides a strong incentive to policy-makers and researchers to design programs that take advantage of these intimate and powerful familiar processes” (Dillon-Goodson, 2005, p. 5). This would suggest a shift for educators and other professionals towards shared decision-making with parents, to the child’s benefit.
The present research study will follow a small group of parents as they move from one early childhood context to another, with an interest in how they interact with their teacher partners, and how the programs they belong to foster and enhance good partnerships between them. Both parent and teacher perspectives will be sought, as well as the relationship between the two types of schooling and their teachers’ levels of cooperation and interaction to aid transition. It could be expected that the teachers have different types of training, and focus primarily on their own locations. However, transition to school involves more complexity than that, and the communication between parents, preschool teachers and school teachers could be expected to have some role to play in successful transitions.

2.6 TEACHER EDUCATION (PRESERVICE AND INSERVICE TRAINING)

The adoption of family-centred practices as a primary strategy in early childhood education has not necessarily been accompanied by adequate training in skills and understanding for professionals to partner with parents (Dunst, 2002; Murray & Curran, 2008; Murray & Mandell, 2004). It is also apparent that the further along the education spectrum, as children progress from early childhood to school, the less emphasis there is on family-centredness in consultation and decision-making practices (Dunst, 2002). Dunst characterised the reduced focus as “family-allied”, rather than “family-centred” because of the more limited involvement with families in planning and teaching processes. Recent studies support this trend, with parents reporting problems partnering with teachers in some school environments (Grace et al., 2008; Lilley, 2013; Villeneuve et al., 2013). A common theme for teachers was the stress they felt when accepting children with disabilities into schools when they felt under-resourced, inadequately trained or poorly supported with time and other organisational structures. These studies reported that this, in turn, was communicated to parents who were concerned about the quality of care and attention to their children’s needs.

Teacher education on partnerships may not be taught as specifically as in other helping professions. Researchers have proposed that the concept of boundaries between professionals was taught and understood in other helping professions such as
counselling and social work, with specific codes of practice, yet teachers in special education may not have this understanding (Lord-Nelson, Summers, & Turnbull, 2004). These researchers surveyed 34 focus groups and 32 individuals for an ethnographic analysis of parents, teachers, professionals and administrators in social service agencies and health agencies. Views on boundaries in their partnerships were sought, encompassing a broad spectrum of backgrounds and services. Three themes emerged; availability and accessibility, breadth of responsibility, and dual relationships (p. 157). Parent and professional perspectives on each of these were compared and contrasted, revealing the complexity of the picture for individuals negotiating partnerships and the variability for each of them along the continuum of the three dimensions of boundaries above. Implications for practice for professionals recommended by the authors were “conversations with families to explore preferences and to share their own preferences” (p. 163), and an understanding that effective partnerships may require a more flexible approach to time and availability. The authors found that guidelines in special education were much vaguer than in other professions. Mismatches and misunderstandings were reported in the study, particularly for parents of children with more significant disabilities, who, it was hypothesised, may often prefer closer relationships and more fluid boundaries (p 163).

In Australia the Disability Standards for Education (Australian Government, 2005) have meant all teachers may teach children with disabilities, will need to understand issues of equity and will need to make lesson adjustments. National agreement on targets and standards for teachers have moved steadily towards alignment since 2008, when state, territory and Federal education ministers signed the Melbourne Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education, 2008).

An element of teacher training that may be missing when preparing teachers to teach children of all abilities was recognised in a trial semester of study on a US campus in 2008. Insight and understanding into parent experience of disability cannot be easily acquired by undergraduates, and in preparation for a climate of teaching with greater emphasis on teacher-parent partnerships, a course was devised where trainee teachers mixed with parents of children with disabilities. The success of the course was
measured by the feedback from both students and parents, who reported that it helped to create a better understanding and empathy for each other’s roles (Murray & Curran, 2008).

Research into how effective teacher training was for preparing teachers to be partners in inclusive classrooms within Australia has raised several unresolved issues, such as how and when to deliver partnership training, how to incorporate experiences to familiarise teachers with students with disabilities, and how to account for the demographic variables within the teaching community (Daniel, 2011; Forlin, Loreman, Sharma, & Earle, 2009). In a four-country study (including Australia), with 603 pre-service teachers, variations between the four countries showed a statistical association with teachers’ receptiveness to inclusion, outlook and expectation for positive change and willingness to change and adopt new practices (Forlin et al., 2009).

This study identified a dearth of empirical evidence to support any one type of training that could reach a wide range of teachers from different backgrounds and with different experiences. Educational institutions in the four countries had responded to the emphasis on teaching about partnerships with parents in very different ways, and with differing amounts of attention to pre-service preparation (Forlin et al., 2009). Almost certainly this would be reflected in the confidence, knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers in working with parents in inclusive classrooms widely differing as both partners make their very individual pathways through their own educational landscapes. How teachers reach out to parents and help them in their unfamiliar roles could also vary and have consequences for children during transition to school.

2.7 PARENT TRAINING FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Examples of structured parent-focussed training for partnerships to assist with advocating for children with disabilities can be found in Australia and overseas. The Knowledge-to-Action Guides, designed by University of Kansas researchers, and freely available on the Beach Center Disability website (beachcenter.org, 2014) is an example of the detailed information that parents can access to assist them.
In the UK, Parent Partnership Services was established to assist parents and teachers in Local Education Areas (LEAs) to negotiate the best services and education for students with disabilities. They recognised the complexity of partnerships and negotiating the education system for families of children with disabilities, and the stresses involved for parents (Todd, 2003).

Australian initiatives include Positive Partnerships (DEEWR, 2008,) which aims to teach parents and teachers how to be effective partners for young children with autism. Funding was provided to promote nationwide training and implementation to improve knowledge and quality of partnerships. A website and other resources have been made available. In NSW, a Parents as Case Coordinators (PACC) course was constructed to teach parents of children of pre-school age how to acquire the skills and confidence to be life-long managers in coordination with others (Learning Links, 2010). The NSW State Government has also initiated Stronger Together (2006) and Strengthening Families (Parents, 2014). Both of these programs aim to inform and empower families who are vulnerable or in need of support, including those bringing up children with disabilities.

Practical help for parents has recently arrived in Australia with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the establishment of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). All families and people with disabilities have their own individual planners to help them to negotiate the complexities of services and funding. The primacy of the individual and their close support networks have been recognised and incorporated in the shared planning for optimal quality of life (Government, 2013).

This study will be asking parents about their access to training, and their acquisition of skills and knowledge during the two year period of transition. Their familiarity, or not, with enrolment procedures for children with disabilities can be expected to influence their confidence in partnerships with teachers. The quality of processes for themselves and their children in this area may be influential on their overall experiences of transition.
2.8 PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON PARENT-TEACHER PARTNERSHIPS

The lack of operational definitions and poor preparedness of partners in the parent-teacher relationship to work together is evident in the parent-focussed literature. Historically, the tradition has been one of expert and client, with the advent of child disability being something that sets those children and their families apart from regular life, requiring expert input (Turnbull et al., 2006). The re-thinking of that relationship in special education in recent times has required that teachers incorporate family knowledge and practice into their programs. However, both parents and teachers need support in understanding what their roles are, and the skills that are needed to achieve reciprocal partnerships (Woods & Lindeman, 2008).

Parent involvement in decision-making for children with disabilities has been embedded in the UK educational policy landscape since 1978 (Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008, p. 638) and in the USA since 1978 (IDEA, 2006). Australian parent involvement is written into policies but not enshrined in legislation. There is an emphasis on the importance of hearing the parent voice when working with young children with disabilities in policy in these countries but only in the USA is it mandated as policy that parents be included in decision-making teams regarding their children. In Australia, several phases of legislation have been introduced to protect the rights of persons with disabilities; Disability Discrimination Act, 1992; Disability Standards Act, 2005; (Law, 1992; C. Law, 2005).

In spite of the passing of several decades since partnerships with parents became accepted as good educational practice, it is still being argued that problems exist (Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008). In the UK researchers state there are three ways in which partnership roles are not clear and equal. First: parents are positioned as informants to teachers rather than equal decision-makers. Second: parents are seen to be in need of support themselves to become partners in education, without corresponding advice for professionals on how to become partners to parents and children. Lastly, there is little recognition of parent expertise in terms of consultation or collaboration with revision of practices (Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008, p. 638).
Parents have often reported feeling less than equal in many partnerships and transitions before school, as they have usually had to negotiate a number of medical, social service and therapeutic treatments and visits with their children (Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009; Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008; Keen, 2007). When surveyed, parent groups have reported that knowledge, skills, practice, language and meetings are delivered in less than optimal ways, and parents have sometimes had strong opinions about what could be better professional practices (Angell et al., 2009; Brooks, Summers, Thornburg, Ispa, & Lane, 2006; Flanigan, 2005; Macartney & Morton, 2011).

Sensitivity to the emotional states of parents could mean better planning on the part of professionals and better outcomes for parents and children (Lovett & Haring, 2003; Oliver, 2008). Other researchers have recognised the significance of social and emotional contexts to parent and children outcomes and contended that further research could demonstrate that they are more important than family support program designers currently give them credit (Dillon-Goodson, 2005).

Other researchers have taken up this theme (Brotherson et al., 2010), with a focus on the influence of emotional factors in the relationships and service delivery between families and professionals working with young children with disabilities. Brotherson’s study involved parents and early intervention professionals working through centres and home visiting. It found that the effectiveness of the service and the interpersonal relationships reflected a balance between the emotional needs and characteristics of the parents and professionals. A clear finding was the way parents’ and professionals’ differing perspectives could mutually influence the partnership patterns. The more compatible and close-matched their emotional functioning and personal characteristics, the better were their perceived outcomes of the interventions. Implications drawn for practice and professional development were important to note on several levels. First: not putting parents under excessive pressure to teach and habilitate the child. Second: acknowledging that pacing the professional workload will allow adequate time to build relationships, and thirdly: appreciating the strengths of the children and families with whom they are working (Brotherson et al., 2010). The study also found that a significant barrier to professionals being emotionally
responsive to families and their complex needs was adequate time to listen, reflect and support both the families and each other. The conclusion was that partnership problems could arise if both parents and professionals were not aware of their own and the other’s personal operating styles and sensitivities (Brotherson, et al., 2010).

The desire to be listened to, and have their child seen as more than their disability, was another theme of the parent literature (Brotherson et al., 2010; Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008). A survey of parents cited several barriers to good partnerships; the tendency of professionals to focus on impairment effects and intra-family aspects of parenting a child with a disability; the difference in lived experiences between professionals and parents; a knowledge hierarchy which undervalued parent knowledge; parents feeling disempowered; resource allocation and the complexity of systems of care and education being a source of difficulty for parents, unhelpful use of labels in formal diagnoses, fraught access to services and funds, and sharing information and inter-agency cooperation (Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008).

Parent and family adjustment to the reality of disability in their children in the early years was surveyed in 103 Canadian families (Trute et al., 2007). More mothers than fathers participated, yet within families and over time, appraisal of family impact over one year followed trends noteworthy for their insight into emotion and coping. If early reactions in families were negative and parent self-esteem low, then that trend continued 18 months later. However, if reactions were more positive then that appraisal was likely to be confirmed over time, with recognition of life-affirming outcomes when living with a child with a disability. An understanding of this, the study concluded, had implications for all partners in the childhood disability services, because self-esteem of the parents was a salient issue in predicting overall family functioning in the long term (Trute et al., 2007).

An Australian study involving 39 mothers enrolling their children with disabilities to preschool detailed similar elements of emotionality (Grace et al., 2008). The researchers reported barriers to their forming partnerships with teachers, as well as a complex and inconsistent approach to childcare in a state system where support and funding for additional needs were sometimes difficult to access. Positive
leadership and belief systems of staff were factors in gaining successful enrolment, and this varied considerably from preschool to preschool. Teacher cooperation and collaboration with parents and therapists was important for child and family adjustment at preschool but this also varied. If teacher partners had little time or funding support for planning or teaming with the parents, then emotional upset was evident for both teachers and parents. The overall picture was not positive, with little training and support for staff and few incentives for preschools to enrol children with disabilities. Parent strain and disappointment was considerable, leaving them with little choice but to accept whatever was offered; often less than they had hoped for in terms of hours per day or days per week (Grace, et al., 2008).

Families, too, reported difficulties with engaging with teachers, such as not feeling like equals in decision-making, not being credited with expertise about the child, not being able to connect on a positive level, not having their world understood and feeling pressured or criticised in their parenting (Brotherson et al., 2010; Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008; Spann et al., 2003).

Relevant to this section on research into parent viewpoints is a reiteration of the effects of a study in Ohio, discussed earlier. Parents were given an opportunity to be part of experimental undergraduate teacher training in a one semester course on parent-teacher partnerships (Murray & Curran, 2008). Student teachers did not initially know that some of their group were parents of young children with disabilities, however the lecturers helped all members of the group to navigate the differing viewpoints and knowledge that they each held about special needs education. Both parents and undergraduates rated this experience positively for insights and greater understanding of child and family perspectives (Murray & Curran, 2008).

Prezant and Marshak (2006) surveyed 120 parents of children with disabilities in the US on their experiences of help-giving behaviour from professionals to discern the characteristics of effective and empowering interactions, as well as the characteristics of problematic or demeaning interactions. They provided examples of events that illustrated positive and negative practices, as well as listing types of behaviour they would like to see in future. Most important in the helpful category was
their rating of good job performance by the professional (44%), followed by their ratings of supportiveness of the child and the family (16%), and a positive outlook with encouragement of inclusion (14%). These were almost mirrored in category of behaviour by parent ratings of the three most unhelpful actions; poor job performance (25%), low expectations (21%), and noncompliance with recommendations or regulations (14%), (p. 38). Teachers and principals made up half of the professionals who rated as least helpful (53%). Early intervention personnel were cited only 1% of the time, while therapists and paraprofessionals were cited at 13%. The move to school, and the school years, stood out as troubling times for parents, and the researchers concluded that it was sobering to reflect that parents were so emphatic about being pleased when a professional just “did their job well”. It was worrying to the researchers that parents may have lowered their expectations of educational professionals over time to the point where adequate standards of work with their children were good enough (Prezant & Marshak, 2006, p. 40).

When asked, in the same survey, to describe what they wished to see in their relationships with professionals, parents cited as their first three priorities: listening to and respecting parent input (24%), being competent and providing good information (23%), collaborating and communicating (15%). While acknowledging that professionals have a complex task of working with and advocating for young children with disabilities and their families, the study concluded that professionals would benefit from taking the view that “informed and involved parents can be an asset in optimising future outcomes”, and that they should perhaps “consider the possibility that their attempts to help may or may not meet the perceived needs of parents, regardless of positive intention or academic prescription” (Prezant & Marshak, 2006, p. 44).

These conclusions had resonance with a study by Podvey, Hinojosa, and Koenig (2013) when a small group of parents transitioning their children with disabilities to school described their role changes, from “insider” status in the home realm to “outsider” status in the school realm. Podvey et al. (2013) used the analogies of microsystems and mesosystems from bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris,
2006) to explain the concept of parents adjusting to their children moving from their immediate sphere of influence to another level. Two issues were identified; parents did not understand their changing role, and schools did not consider family needs, suggesting the need for further training and support for parents and teachers to improve the experience of transition (Podvey et al. 2013).

In an unpublished study by Conway, Porter, Gray and Pascoe (2003) at an early intervention centre, parents of two cohorts of around 20 pre-school aged children with disabilities in early intervention were surveyed about their perceptions of partnerships and the changes they experienced when their children moved into the school system. Researchers in this study found three areas to be of the greatest concern to parents; instruction, policy and relationship. They were confused and stressed by choices and options, as well as uncertain about new partnerships and what their roles were. Positive qualities and actions that parents looked for included listening, informing, planning ahead, meeting regularly and agreeing on collaborative courses of action. Two-thirds of the parents, however, rated their experience of transition poorly (Conway et al., 2003, p. 4). Policy and procedures impacted negatively on families in spite of forward planning, and parents used descriptions such as “lonely”, a “nightmare” and “overwhelming” to convey feelings of uncertainty and lack of control (Conway et al., 2003, p. 5).

In the present study, there were areas of questioning to investigate the mutual understanding between parents and teachers and their ideas about their respective roles as partners for children. Teacher awareness of parent perspectives, and empathy for their family needs, was expected to be a helpful aspect of partnerships.

2.9 TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON PARENT-TEACHER PARTNERSHIPS

Teachers are as individual as the children and families they work with, but in contrast to most parents, they have an educational perspective and possibly many years of experience in an education system. Inclusion of students with disabilities has meant all teachers partnering, at some level, with parents. Teachers’ responsibilities have been extended to the adjustment of teaching and learning programs, social inclusion and transition activities at their schools for students with disabilities [Australian Disability
NSW schools, for example, changed enrolment practices in 2012 in response to new standards with Every Student Every School (DEC, 2012). In NSW, all children attend their local schools for initial enrolment processing, regardless of any additional learning needs, and every effort is made to accommodate children at their local schools, if that is the parents’ wish. For some early childhood and school teachers, these changes have presented challenges to their ideas about teaching, their partnering with parents and their knowledge of processes such as transition to school preparation and support (Grace et al., 2008; Lilley, 2013).

Recent studies have suggested that some teachers struggle with the changes in expectations of their teaching and partnering roles. Teacher behaviour around accepting students with autism into their schools was surveyed in NSW over three years, 2009 - 2011, through the experiences of 22 mothers. Half of that group of mothers experienced negative behaviour from the schools such as stereotyping of children, reluctance to enrol, hostility, disabling practices for the children and ignoring of parent information. A prevailing response of teachers was to suggest segregated education options (Lilley, 2013).

In an in-depth qualitative study of three families enrolling their children with disabilities to school in Canada, researchers found substantial barriers present in teacher approaches to partnerships with parents (Villeneuve et al., 2013). The differing styles of service ethos from preschool to school were apparent with schools offering less communication, less shared decision-making and less inclusion of parent knowledge into their teaching and planning. These results were presented as part of a much larger study across several sites to illustrate some detailed understanding of difficulties raised for parents when enrolling their children with disabilities to school (Villeneuve, et al., 2013).

Pre-service teacher attitudes have been surveyed and courses re-designed to address negative perceptions of parents and parent blaming by young teachers when there are difficulties with student learning. Results have indicated a need to better prepare young teachers to meet standards of collaboration and equity, particularly when partnering with parents of children with disabilities (Flanigan, 2005; Murray &
Curran, 2008). Other research has suggested that content in many universities’ teaching courses lacked serious attention to community involvement and partnerships with parents, leaving student teachers unprepared and lacking in skills for effective collaboration (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Forlin et al., 2009).

Practising teachers have a range of attitudes, skills and understandings of working with parents. Surveying teachers about their roles in transition, Brostrom (2000) identified varied understandings of meetings, coordination of activities and types of practices that were part of the planning and implementation for transition. This was expressed in many different practices and interpretations of the process of transition for children and their families. As noted earlier, in a large survey of teachers in Scotland, Dunlop (2003) found differences in meaning in language used about similar concepts across preschool and school settings. Report-writing style and focus tended not to match particularly well when conveying important information about children’s learning from one setting to another. Another aspect of transition that was influential was the type of leadership and training that teachers had experienced. Teachers were more confident, Dunlop found, when the kinds of actions and strategies that were required of them had been made explicit, and they understood the language of transition (Dunlop, 2003).

Teacher and other professional viewpoints on difficulties with partnerships have been canvassed in a large body of research (Grace et al., 2008; Lake & Billingsley, 2000; Moore, 2003). Barriers to good partnerships cited have included pressures on services to meet all the demands on them, poor coordination between services, complex funding, diversity of family needs, little time for communication and consultation, and lack of training for working with families. Preparation of staff to meet the demands of inclusive and consultative education may not have kept pace with the rate of change in recent years. Organisational and structural procedures, as well, may have experienced a lag in meeting the schools’ capacity to support parents and teachers (Grace et al., 2008; Lake & Billingsley, 2000; Moore, 2003).

When teachers were operating in conditions that supported their capacity to learn and use the skills of partnerships, research has identified that they acted in
enabling ways: sharing knowledge, enhancing teaching programs by two-way adaptations with parents, supporting the home in managing behaviour problems, joint planning for better use of resources, shared implementing and assessing of programs, empowering parents for the future and envisaging better child and family outcomes. Teachers themselves required time, support and feedback, with recognition of the stressors and emotional demands of their work (Brotherson et al., 2010; Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009; Dunst, Hamby, & Brookfield, 2007; Korfmacher et al., 2008; Pretis, 2011). Links have been made between good partnerships and positive child outcomes and family quality of life, so training and support for both teachers and parents has been identified as a means to achieve this (Trivette et al., 2010).

The present study aimed to elucidate aspects of parent-teacher partnerships identified by participants to explain, from both their viewpoints, the ways they believe they worked most effectively together.

2.10 MEASUREMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS OF FAMILY-TEACHER PARTNERSHIPS

Researchers have built on the findings of the productive partnerships study by Blue-Banning et al., (2004) by developing a Family-Professional Partnership (FSP) Scale (Summers, Hoffman, Marquis, Turnbull, Poston, et al., 2005). The scale showed an inter-relatedness between the six domains (commitment, communication, equality, respect, skills and trust) and aspects of each appeared in subscales, which were tested in two phases with diverse groups of just over 200 participants. The subscales demonstrated good internal reliability, and further research was planned to demonstrate reliability and construct validity. The researchers hoped that they had developed a tool that could be used as a “basis for both pre-service and in-service training on family-professional partnerships...and for dialogue between groups of professionals and family members” (Summers, Hoffman, Marquis, Turnbull, Poston, et al., 2005, p. 78).

Further work on the scale was reported in 2007 when it was used in combination with two other measures, to further elucidate the understandings that can be quantified in family-professional partnerships. The three measures were the
Services Inventory, the Family-Professional Partnership Scale and the Family Quality of Life Scale, and the 180 respondent families were from a range of early childhood services in Midwestern USA. The research examined whether services were providing adequate support to families, and how and if they were contributing to family quality of life. The study used this three-pronged exploration into family quality of life and service provision to find ways to test program accountability and measure family outcomes. The researchers reported that “the means of delivering services (caring, respectful and based on trust) had an impact on families as well as the actual service or support” (Summers et al., 2007, p. 335). They suggested that family quality of life could be validly and reliably measured and used as a barometer of the quality of partnerships. Problems could arise, they concluded, when professionals lacked a precise definition of their role, or an understanding of their impact on families. This negative impact on family quality of life could be averted by specific training for workers and providers in this area (Summers et al., 2007).

These large partnership studies above have made explicit that at micro and macro levels, professionals can become part of the daily life of parents who are bringing up young children with disabilities, and yet they may have widely varying understandings of their roles, and how to engage with families. Cultivating partnerships emerged as an important part of a program model. Some light was shed on this when professionals were directed to focus attention and address children’s individual needs, resulting in greater parental satisfaction. Role understanding and clarification for professionals, they said, was needed to provide guidance to providers about the type and kind of supports they should be offering to families (Summers et al., 2007, p. 334).

2.11 BACKGROUND TO THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR THIS STUDY

Using the bioecological theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner and colleagues (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) to investigate the experiences of children and families during transition to school has been a feature of other studies (Dunlop, 2003; Podvey et al., 2013; Rous, Hallam, et al., 2007). This theory was chosen for the present study because it allowed the framing of features thought to be essential for good outcomes for children. The central proposition to the theory that informed
this study was that the developmental outcomes for children over time during transition to school could possibly be directly related to the quality of processes and interactions around the child in terms of people, place and closeness. Contrasts could be made between the child’s ecology over the period of transition, where the family and social supports remained the same, but the teacher and school levels changed. The influences at all levels could be tested by talking to the people close to the child who are working for the best outcomes. Figure 2.1 in the Methods Chapter is a representation of the child situated in relation to the important adults, and the layers, or spheres of influence, known as micro, meso and macro systems (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Several large-scale studies have used Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model. They have investigated various aspects of children and family functioning in a range of social settings to identify elements of adult partner behaviour that contributed to achievement of competence over dysfunction for young children through their early years. Examples of these studies were, in the UK, the Millennium Cohort Study detailing the lives of children for the first five years of the 21st century (Hansen, Joshi, & Dex, 2010) and in the USA, the Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD) (NICHD, 2005).

Bioecological theory has proposed that important transitions in a child’s life such as starting school were able to be understood in terms of interactions between family and school systems; the closer the match, the smoother the transition, because children played a role by acting within their various environments trying to find their “developmental niches” and adults interacted to help explain the environments to them (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000).

Other more distal systems such as community and therapeutic services became significant in times of transition, with their match with other systems affecting outcomes for children. The effects of all systems inter-relating were described in terms of exchanges of energy and information, constantly in a state of play. The degree to which schools and families were in tune with each other, referencing each other, and
refining their “proximal processes”, would, according to this theory, be a predictor of developmental outcomes (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000).

In this study reflections of similarities and common influences between preschool and school systems, and between preschool teacher behaviour and school teacher behaviour, were studied for their influences on the transition experience. The study looked for shared meanings or understandings or views which would be helpful to parents, teachers and children.

2.12 ISSUES IDENTIFIED FOR RESEARCH IN THIS STUDY

The education landscape for parents of young children with disabilities has changed considerably in the early years of the 21st century, both globally with the United Nations Salamanca Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994), and nationally, with the Australian Disability Standards for Education (2005). What this means to individual families and teachers who are translating these principles and standards into reality for the children in their care is of interest for several reasons. Many facets of education have changed in response to universal agreement that children with disabilities be made welcome in their local schools as part of their local communities. The lived reality of that is still unfolding as parents, teachers, schools and government work out their respective roles and the supports that they each need to achieve the best for children.

Reviewing the research literature about parent-teacher partnerships, and targeting transition to school, there were many studies devoted to the importance of this time in families’ lives, and the crucial role teachers and schools could play in successful beginnings to school for children with disabilities.

Three areas for research have been identified from the literature for the present small-scale intensive study of the partnership experiences of a group of parents preparing their children for school in a two year period. They reflected degrees of closeness to the child in their decreasing spheres of influence (Figure 1.1).

The first target for this study was to gain a more detailed knowledge of parent and teacher perspectives on aspects of their partnerships that were helpful or not
helpful to the child and family during the transition to school. This was the closest sphere of influence to the child, with the most frequent encounters between partners.

The second area of interest was the type of professional practices that were present in successful transitions. It could be expected that the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to implement inclusive practices may not be uniformly present in the community or in schools, and that markers to successful transition practices would be useful for future education and training. This was a school level sphere of influence.

The third facet of transition chosen for study was the wider picture of the organisations within which parents and teachers operated. School and community governance has long had restrictive practices for people with disabilities, and the point of interest for this study was to examine how the recent changes have improved the experiences of parents, teachers and children. Many transactions at this level were subject to rules and practices which came from beyond the school sphere.

### 2.13 Research Questions

1. **What are the partnership actions and behaviours of parents and teachers that are associated with positive or negative child and parent transition outcomes in preschool and school?**

2. **What are the professional practices associated with positive or negative child and parent transition outcomes in preschool and school?**

3. **What are the organisational factors associated with positive or negative child and parent transition outcomes in preschool and school?**

This study has taken the opportunity to explore the experiences of parents and teachers at a most crucial point in young children’s lives, where in addition to making the transition to school from preschool, the parents must negotiate partnerships with teachers to enable their young children to be welcomed and understood in their new schools for all their unique learning and social needs. Change in social and educational
knowledge and practice has suggested that we have cause for optimism for these children; this study sought to provide detail and analysis of the transition partnerships of eight families which might contribute to the deeper knowledge of best practice for the future.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION
A qualitative research design utilising a series of in depth interviews was chosen to generate rich detail of families’ experiences of teacher partnerships across the two-year period of transition to school. The interviews would provide a detailed longitudinal study of partnerships between parents and teachers and the way they influenced the successful start to school for young children with disabilities, as well as allowing points of comparison about early childhood education and primary school education.

Questions were framed to explore three aspects of the transition experience:-

- partnership behaviour by both teachers and parents which could be linked to successful child and family transition outcomes
- professional practices in preschools and schools which could be linked to successful child and family transition outcomes
- organisational structures influencing both parents and teachers when planning and executing transition to school, and reflected in successful child and family transition outcomes.

Designing the research required a planned approach to recruiting participants, a timetable of data collection, and decisions about managing and analysing data. It also required an overall conceptual framework for theorising and testing data, outlined below.

The two people closest to the child in the transition process were the parent and the teacher. They were part of the microsystem that involved close personal interactions with the child in meeting their needs in education and were interviewed twice in each year. Also commenting on the processes were people from the mesosystem who had responsibility for the organisation of their schools- the directors and principals. They were interviewed once in each year.
The child was at the centre of the home and school ecologies, and supporting them were people in closer or more distant spheres of influence, the most important being parent and teacher (see Figure 1.1). Over time there were two contexts; preschool and then school. The study was interested in the evaluations of the parents and the teachers each year of the child’s progress from preschool to school, and the success of their joint efforts to smooth the transition over two years.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used a longitudinal mixed methods qualitative study design to explore aspects of bioecological theory (after Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) in relation to child and family transition to school outcomes. It was conducted in an Australian context using qualitative interviews to draw out details of people, time, place and processes. Choosing this kind of qualitative research was an acknowledgement that working with people was not a neutral activity, but existed in a larger social and political milieu (Lichtman, 2010).

Researchers’ responsibilities to members of communities with whom they engage, with the intention of shedding light on that community, have been made explicit by researchers such as Cho and Trent (2006). They recommended openness and transparency at every step in order to have confidence in the integrity and value of the data gathered in interviews. Research employing qualitative methods was designed to have a social conscience and respect for the informants, with a challenge to make useful, valuable data relevant to the questions being asked and sufficiently rich to provide a new understanding (Richards, 2009).

The qualitative research interview was chosen as the main research tool because of the possibilities inherent in a meaningful dialogue between an interviewer and an interviewee with common ground, and personal knowledge and insights into a particular phenomenon of shared interest. Secondary research tools were added to provide data which could be used to build confidence in the overall analyses. They were interview profiles, document profiles, meeting observations and parent and teacher profiles of the child using the Scales of Independent Behaviour-Revised (SIB-R) (Bruininks, Woodcock, Weatherman, & Hill, 1996). The researcher aimed to fairly
reflect lived experiences over time, from parent and teacher viewpoints, of planning for, enrolling and starting a young child with a disability at school by incorporating personal knowledge and experience, and establishing some common ground for dialogue.

3.2.1 INTERVIEWS
The style of interview used in the study accorded with the neo-positivist typology described by Roulston (2010) when classifying kind and purpose of qualitative research interviews. Features of the neo-positivist qualitative interviewing approach that concurred with this study’s aims included: semi-structured with open questions, findings in the form of themes, categorised data to reflect a particular group, generation of substantive theories on research topics, credibility of data and findings established by showing that recording of words spoken by participants and researcher were reliable and accurate, using sufficient data sources, and knowledge of the topic (Roulston, 2010). Partners were interviewed separately, but the study sought clusters of meaning and themes that might be developed to test theory, as well as looking for overlaps and contrasts that could emerge from a process of cyclical checking (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010).

The researcher initially and informally tested her ideas of types of questions and mode of interacting with participants by means of a small pilot interview with a mother and father of a young child with disabilities about to start school. This was useful because the parents provided valuable feedback about their responses to the focus questions.

3.2.1.2 CREATING AN INTERVIEW PROFILE RUBRIC
When profiling the interviews in this study, the researcher chose to add reflexive steps to the way in which the interview data quality could be assessed. Alvesson (2003) detailed how the qualitative interview as a research tool evolved over several decades, from the broad assumptions and unexamined bias of interviewers, to more recent attempts to conduct closer examination of local and interpersonal effects. He recommended that researchers explore alternative possibilities and avoid preconceived ideas. Being true to a time and place was a concept Alvesson called
“localism”, which expressed the value of people’s lived experiences in a clearly understood context. He also proposed eight metaphors for interviewing which were challenges for the interviewer and interviewee to solve (Alvesson, 2003). The researcher made a synthesis of the eight metaphors with nine “problems and pitfalls” (Myers & Newman, 2007) to create five areas for a rubric as a tool for profiling the interviews in the study. They were: interaction, intention, identity, language and social realities. These concepts were helpful in writing profiles after each interview in the study to build evidence for the authenticity of the interview data (Appendix A).

3.2.2 SIZE OF STUDY
Parameters for choosing a sufficient number of participants to produce useful data when testing theory were derived from the research of Morse (2000) and Morse and Niehaus (2009). They suggested that between six and ten cases provided a large enough number to be representative of the phenomena, particularly if a large amount of data was generated. Morse (2000) indicated that the scope and design of the study, the quantity and quality of data, and the repeating of interviews with the same participants gave the researcher a guide to the number of participants that could yield rich and useful data. Morse (2000) also proposed an inverse relationship between the amount of usable data obtained from each participant and the number of participants. In a phenomenological study design such as this, where the participants are interviewed in a semi-structured way (up to four times), a large amount of data could be anticipated. The other guides for a quality sample were that participants be expressive, reflective and articulate. Also of value was availability over a period of time, willingness to participate, and with the necessary experience (Morse, 2000; Morse & Niehaus, 2009).

3.2.3 SUPPLEMENTARY DATA
Supplementary forms of qualitative data were recommended by Moran-Ellis, Alexander, Cronin, Dickinson and Fielding (2006) for research which specifically addressed the testing of questions arising from a defined theoretical basis, such as in this study. By collecting additional data such as meeting observations and interview profiles, this research aimed to increase the accuracy and level of confidence in the
findings, possible generation of new knowledge, more accurate representation of
different voices, wider reflection of complexity of the phenomena being studied and
better examination of the fit of findings to the theory (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006).
Comparisons could be made across time and between people and places by the use of
a variety of data taken at four time points, and which interrogated partnership
elements consistently. The researcher could be more assured in testing joint
construction of meaning and drawing conclusions using the different data sources
(Moran-Ellis et al, 2006). There were four forms of supplementary data collected in this
study; interview profiles, document profiles, meeting observations and SIB-R data
(Bruininks et al., 1996).

3.2.4 CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT DATA
Some of the ideas of critical theory researchers such as Kincheloe (1995) and Freebody
(2003) were anticipated to emerge as themes in the interviews. Perceptions of power,
privilege, and schools’ roles in their communities could be issues for parents, teachers
and executive to contend with when enrolling children with additional needs. Rather
than disadvantaged communities and difficult-to-teach children, such as those with
disabilities, being regarded as “failures at education”, critical theorists suggest the
perspective can be changed to identify structural and attitudinal conditions in
education which have remained unchallenged and unrecognised as unfairly privileging
some and not others. Issues of empowerment can be particularly relevant to families
with young children with disabilities. Studies such as this may contribute to quality
research into the practical ways teachers and parents can understand the value of
partnerships and overcome barriers to emancipatory education (Freebody, 2003;
Kincheloe, 1995).

Some of the potential themes within partnerships relevant to providing
perspective for partners would be the role of empowerment, lack of power, empathy
for parents and a positive construct of disability evident in the participants’ words and
actions. The role of theory, culture and politics on the researcher’s assumptions about
the objectivity of the data collecting and analysis were considered when designing the
research, with consideration for personal involvement in parenting, teaching and
administration in the education of children and students with disabilities. Freeman and colleagues (Freeman, de Marais, Preissle, Roulston, & St Pierre, 2007) listed researcher self-awareness and consideration of bias as a responsibility to account for, along with reflecting diverse points of view in a fair and open way, employing member-checking and discussion and feedback with participants. Freeman resisted the trend towards “scientism”, where singular truths and realities were expected, and little account taken of the role of theory, or of culture and politics behind researcher assumptions. Scientism could also be associated with a too-ready presumption about the objectivity of data collecting and analysis, as well as a lack of methods employing reflexiveness. Freeman also took steps to check with participants that he had understood their perspective, because he was aware that his own ideas and preconceptions could shape his conclusions.

### 3.2.5 Establishing Credibility

Establishing credibility of data in qualitative research has become a researcher responsibility, particularly in acknowledgement of personal involvement and bias, and having open procedures to ensure integrity and reactivity with the data collection and analysis. In pursuing this, Maxwell (1996) described the diligence required to look for negative cases, discrepant evidence, comparisons and contrasts in a thorough and mindful way. He also supported feedback, member checking, rich data, quasi-statistics, and triangulation of data to strengthen the support for emerging themes and conclusions (Maxwell, 1996). This study employed those methods for all four phases of data collection.

Tests were applied to the data in this study in three spheres of validity suggested by Cho and Trent (2006): *transactional*, where a robust interaction between participants was established by verbal and written feedback given to participants, and by the reflections contained in the interview profiles; *transformational*, where all participants in this study were conscious and explicit about working towards a worthy goal of better partnerships and transitions to school; and *holistic*, where multiple methods and multiple purposes were made explicit in a polyvocal narrative. The
researcher employed recursive methods and an open attitude to findings, which were made apparent to all participants.

3.2.6 CASE STUDY APPROACH
Yin (2009) recommended a case study approach for reporting data when there were rich and varied sources of data to describe contemporary phenomena of a real-life context. For this present study, data collected included transcripts, themed and coded excerpts, rubrics and checklists. The eight resulting case studies were used to generalize theory, based not so much on frequency and statistical measures, but on the evidence of lived experiences told eight times. Precautionary efforts by the researcher to ensure reliability included multiple sources of evidence, reflexiveness for bias and alternative explanations, member checking and illuminating decisions made during the study- why taken, how implemented, and with what results (Yin, 2009). The interviews in this study were framed to allow participants to report real-life events covering their experiences of organisational processes, social change, and leaving one educational establishment and starting at another.

3.3 PARTICIPANTS
The researcher approached the directors of four early childhood centres who agreed to explain the study protocol to teachers and parents of any children with diagnosed disabilities planning to start school in 2013. It was a convenience sample based around the University of Newcastle and nearby preschools and schools, but several non-city locations were added to widen the reach of the sample. The directors put the researcher in touch with any parent-teacher partners who expressed an interest. Eight parents and their early childhood teachers agreed to take part in 2012, along with their early childhood director. In 2013 the new school teachers and principal partners were identified and approached to gain agreement to participate in the research. All participants were fully informed of the nature and duration of the study and received and signed authorised consents approved by the Human Research Ethics branch of the University of Newcastle in 2011 (H-2001-0322). In the school phase the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) provided written approval to approach schools in 2013 (SERAP number 2013122).
3.3.1 PARENTS
Eight parents were recruited from four early childhood settings; each parent had a young child with a diagnosed disability with substantial support needs. There was a range of child disabilities including language delay, autism, oppositional defiant disorder, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. In this instance eight parents self-selected when approached by the directors of the four settings. All were made aware of the two year span of the study and its completely voluntary nature. The parents were accepted into the study when their early childhood teacher also agreed to take part in the research. Parents in the study were de-identified and named Parent 1, Parent 2 and so on.

When using repeated in-depth interviews it was recognised in the research literature that sampling should be purposive rather than random in order to provide rich data, particularly when testing theory (MacDougall & Fudge, 2001). In this study there were narrow parameters for inclusion as the child had to be starting school in 2013, requiring advanced planning to enable full consideration of the child’s additional needs at school.

The parents were diverse in personal circumstances and backgrounds, with differences in culture, language, education and marital status. They were all female and mothers of the children; one was an adoptive mother. Five families lived in a city and three families lived in semi-rural settings.

Parent participation across the four data collection phases was as follows: eight in phase 1 of 2012, seven in phase 2 of 2012, seven in phase 3 of 2013 and six in phase 4 of 2013 (see Tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4).

3.3.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS, 2012
The early childhood teachers of each of the eight children were from four early childhood centres; three taught at an early intervention centre based at a university, one at the suburban outreach branch of that centre, one taught at a community suburban preschool, two taught at a community semi-rural preschool and one taught at an early intervention centre in a semi-rural setting. Five of the eight teachers were in specialist early intervention settings and had special education qualifications. Seven
were female and one was male, and seven had university degrees and one had a certificate qualification. One of the teachers was also the director in her community preschool. Early childhood teachers were de-identified and named ET1, ET2 and so on, with their numbering matching their parent partners. They also had A, B, C, or D added to match the location’s identification.

Early childhood teacher participation was eight in phase 1 of 2012 and eight in phase 2 of 2012 (see Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 in section 3.6).

3.3.3 EARLY CHILDHOOD DIRECTORS, 2012
The four directors were female, university educated, with three having additional special education qualifications. They each operated under different funding models and governing bodies, and all were implementing changes required at that time in Australia such as the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards. Directors were de-identified and named ED, followed by the centre identifiers A, B, C, or D. Several parents had the same director supervising their programs, but none had the same teacher partner. All four were interviewed once for their views on partnerships, and once for discussion of the type and kind of documents that informed their practices with parents and teachers (see Table 3.1).

3.3.4 SCHOOL TEACHERS, 2013
When the eight children began their school year the researcher approached the principals and teachers of the eight new schools to recruit them to the second year of the study. At this point all agreed, although one parent, and hence their school, withdrew from the study for personal reasons in term one. An additional teacher came into the study halfway through 2013 because one of the families changed schools. Another teacher did not give a repeat interview at the end of 2013 because her parent partner withdrew her child from school to begin home-schooling. Two other teachers did not give repeat interviews at the end of 2013, citing busy schedules. The eight teachers were female, all had university degrees, five held executive positions and two had special education qualifications. School teachers were de-identified and named ST1, ST2 sequentially, to match the parent number, and a letter E-M to match the
location letter of the school. The participation of school teachers in 2013 was seven in phase 3 and three in phase 4 (see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4).

### 3.3.5 SCHOOL PRINCIPALS, 2013

Eight principals participated; seven were male and one was female. Two were acting in the position and had left it by the end of 2013. All were university educated and one had special education qualifications. One principal agreed to the study but did not personally take part. Two of the principals were involved in one family’s transition when the children (twins) changed schools halfway through 2013. The principals were de-identified and named SP followed by the letter allocated to their school from E-M. Principal participation was seven in phase 3 and one in phase 4 (see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4).

### 3.3.6 THE RESEARCHER

Researcher factors are outlined here, along the same lines as the Interview Profile (Appendix A), which was developed as a tool to reflect on each of the qualitative interviews over the two year period. There were five facets of participant-researcher interaction delineated from research by Alvesson (2003) and (Myers & Newman, 2007) and discussed here in terms of researcher characteristics.

**Interaction**: the researcher has many years of experience living and working with communities of families, friends, teachers, parents, children and students with a common interest in good lives for people with disabilities.

**Intention**: the researcher has a strong interest in understanding the ways that people work and relate best when promoting the interests of people with disabilities and their access to happy and productive lives.

**Identity**: the researcher identifies with a range of roles in common with other participants in this study and has experienced the roles of mother of a child with a disability, teacher of students with disabilities and executive teacher in special education.

**Language**: there may be disparity in language facility with some of the participants, because the researcher has had access to many years of education in roles closely
associated with disability education, and as a parent negotiating the many disability support systems for her son, but this would be of some help in discerning the meaning and intention in relation to views expressed by them.

Social reality: the researcher has a background of experience of different roles which may assist in establishing common ground with all of the participants.

3.4 SETTINGS

This study was small in terms of numbers of families but every attempt was made to draw on experiences from a variety of locations within the region chosen. The fifteen preschool and schools who participated in the study were from a mix of inner city, suburban and semi-rural locations

3.4.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

In 2012 there were four different early childhood settings approached and engaged to take part in the research project. They reflected some diversity in location and type: an urban and a semi-rural early intervention centre, and an urban and a semi-rural community pre-school. They varied in their relationships with their communities and their focus on the preparation of families to enrol young children with disabilities to school. They were named A, B, C and D.

Location A was a very large city-based early intervention centre with a wide sphere of operation and many sessions run for different purposes, ages and stages. Child attendance was sessional and limited in number of days per week. Families could access specialist staff and have home visits. Additional parent support and training was available, such as talking to a designated family worker and learning case management skills. Members of staff were often able to support parents by attending meetings with schools, and acted as guides through transition at the levels of support asked for by parents.

Location B was a semi-rural community preschool where children attended full day sessions several times a week. They had identified that 25% of enrollees required extra assistance and planning for their additional learning needs, and so had
developed a strong emphasis on local and available ancillary supports such as therapists, doctors and a counsellor. The centre also networked and closely associated with local schools to assist with transitions, including attending meetings with parents and taking children on school visits.

Location C was a small semi-rural early intervention centre with families from a large geographical area. Their program was short and sessional and included home visits. Staff networked with schools and services in the district and accompanied parents to meetings when requested.

Location D was a small city-based community preschool with very few parent supports available outside the daily program, due to the type of staffing and funding. They had some contact with the school next door but not in an organised procedural way during transition times. Individual staff members made connections and engaged in visits, but child visits were limited.

3.4.2 SCHOOL SETTINGS
In 2013 eight primary school principals agreed to be involved in the study when the researcher contacted them to explain about the study with the family recently arrived at their school. All were state-run public schools; five were in city suburbs and three were in semi-rural settings. One principal of a participating school declined to be interviewed but data was gathered from the parent and teacher. One family moved schools halfway through the year, so had two teachers and two principals as partners. The schools were de-identified and allocated letters from E-M. School L did not participate and schools G and M were attended by the same family.

All of the schools had transition procedures involving at least one parent and child visit. Some made personal arrangements with parents to start informal transition visits as early as Term 2 in the year before school. Most did not begin until Term 4, and sometimes as late as the end of November. In most cases, when a child with disabilities was identified, the parents and the school negotiated additional personalised visits to help transition.
3.5 Instrumentation and Procedures

There was a mixture of qualitative methods of data collection employed to give a more rounded picture than one data source could provide. They were: qualitative interviews in a series over two years; interview profiles (Appendix A) comprising reflections by the researcher; document profiles (Appendix E) taken from executive; and meeting observations (Appendix D) between parents and teachers. Partners were also asked to complete a rating measure of child adaptive behaviour (Appendix F) using the Scales of Independent Behaviour- Revised (SIB-R) (Bruininks et al., 1996), which contain developmental norms able to give an indication of functional age. Parent and teacher ratings of the child could be compared to discern the closeness of agreement between them about his or her developmental levels.

3.5.1 Main Data: Qualitative Interviews

The main instrument of data collection was a twice-yearly semi-structured qualitative interview schedule utilising open-ended questions with parent, teacher and executive over 2012-2013. Eight parents and their teacher partners across the 2 years were interviewed at around the same time to capture both perspectives on their partnerships and their child of concern’s progress during transition to school.

The questions for the interviews open-ended enquiries were developed from the focus ideas arising from the research literature (communication, caring, knowledge of child characteristics, child-focussed orientation, school climate, teaming and time (Angell et al., 2009) (Chapter 2, section 2.3, p 37).

The study aimed to test those seven areas of known concern to parents across four time frames; twice a year over the transition to school period of 2012-2013. The perspectives of all participants on these facets of partnership could be related to specific times, and could be expected to reveal information about the interplays of People, Process, Context and Time.

Four tables have been provided in section 3.6 of this chapter, which show the timing and participation of the interviews. Interview data was organised into sets which could reflect People, Processes, Time and Place.
3.5.1.1 THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The Interview Protocol (Appendix B) used the same seven areas of questions *(communication, caring, knowledge of child characteristics, child-focused orientation, school climate, teaming and time)* for all partners, but with the expectation that none of the paired interviews would follow the same timing or trajectory. The researcher explained the outline, intention and the seven facets of partnership that would be addressed in the interview, and then explored each of the facets with the participant by querying their relevance to their experiences of the partnership at that time and place, and from their perspective.

Tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 illustrate the data collection over four time points, and the participants who contributed to the data. Each interview followed the Protocol’s seven topic areas, but they all reflected the very individual circumstances of Person, Process, Time and Place for each interviewee.

Some of the techniques used were prompting, suggesting, reflecting, giving personal examples and asking for clarification. The researcher and the participant explored each facet until a point of mutual agreement was reached to move to the next focus area. Five to ten minutes was typically the range of time spent talking about each of the seven sections of the interviews, with total interview duration ranging from 30-75 minutes. Changes over time were reflected upon by participants in the context of the questioning, and the central issues of the particular phase of transition for the child.

3.5.1.2 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

The same interview protocol with the same subheadings was used for all participants. The value for the study was the differing perspectives on the same phenomena involving transition of the child over time by different stakeholders.

What this meant during interviews in the four time samples was that the interviewer framed questions in terms of the phases of transition being experienced from the perspectives of each particular partner participant. The areas of questioning remained relevant to drawing out aspects of partnerships which were helpful and not helpful.
1. **Authentic Caring**: “What is something you do for this child that you see is specially needed to help him or her?”

2. **Child Focus**: “What do you plan together with this child in mind?”

3. **Communication**: “How do you share information and keep in touch?”

4. **Knowledge of Child Characteristics**: “How do you update each other with progress?”

5. **School Climate**: “How does the school create a welcoming atmosphere?”

6. **Teaming**: “How do you approach working as a team?”

7. **Time**: “In what ways have you changed over time as a partner for this child?”

(Appendix B: Interview Questions)

The directors and principals were interviewed using the same elements of partnerships, but questions included a leadership focus in terms of asking how policy and practice were implemented in their setting, and their role in providing training, mentoring and supporting teachers in working with parents.

Time-related questions were asked of all participants in all facets of partnership to help reflect, predict and compare experiences over time. Participants who were educators were invited to reflect on change over time outside the study’s focus, because they may have had a perspective over several decades, and could possibly provide useful insights into changes in transition to school and partnership practices.

### 3.5.1.3 DATA ENTRY AND ORGANISATION

All interviews were recorded, transcribed, entered into NVivo 10 (QSR International, 2013) and coded. As a form of member-checking, copies of transcripts were provided to participants, inviting them to contact the researcher if they had any issues with meaning or veracity. A series of checking mechanisms were in place during the data collection, entry and analysis phases. Two experienced researchers from outside the study, Dr Jennifer St George and Dr Margaret Freestone, were asked to independently view the data at several points throughout the study. Their tasks included verifying the level of agreement between spoken words and transcripts, cross-checking randomly selected excerpts of dialogue with coding and matrix destinations, and checking to see if construction of sets and matrices followed a logical process. These checks were
taken to ensure the validity and coherence of the spoken material, as well as the soundness of the researcher’s decisions about where to allocate segments of dialogue in the coding framework. This chain of checking procedures was necessary to provide confidence in the process of providing sound empirical knowledge of each of the participants’ particular experiences of transition (after Kvale, 1996).

At the conclusion of the study, these procedures were revisited and re-examined in the Results chapter (see 5.9 and 5.9.1). The researcher used feedback from supervisors and peer debriefing to ensure that the interview data and the way it was used in this study reflected the experiences of all the participants.

3.5.1.4 TRACKING DATA

The researcher kept a diary of actions and decisions to assist linking data to propositions and criteria for interpreting the findings (Richards, 2009). This study required time, person and place markers and ways to track data that were logical, organised and thorough (Yin, 2009). All data entries could be readily grouped into different combinations of person time and place, which was part of the design for linking data that was apposite to this study; time-organised data to enable comparisons and contrasts relevant to its goals.

3.5.2 SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

The study used supplementary data as a support to the main data gathered in the interviews. The researcher constructed three rubrics based on ideas from the research literature to profile meetings, interviews and documents, and used a respected norms-derived questionnaire to explore differences between parent and teacher assessments of children’s developmental levels of independent behaviour; the SIB-R.

3.5.2.1 INTERVIEW PROFILES

The researcher created a rubric with five areas for profiling the interviews in the study and completed an assessment of each interview as fairly as possible from one viewpoint – the interviewer’s. The aspects considered were: interaction, intention, identity, language and social realities. They had been acknowledged in the research literature for their influence on the credibility of interview data (Alvesson, 2003; Myers
& Newman, 2007) (Appendix A). The researcher used the rubrics for personal reflecting and validity checking, looking for evidence of engagement and understanding between interviewee and interviewer.

### 3.5.2.2 MEETING OBSERVATIONS
The meeting observation rubric was designed to collect supporting evidence for partnership features over time and place and used aspects of productive partnerships identified by Blue-Banning et al. (2004) from an extensive survey of teachers and parents. They were **communication, commitment, equality, respect, skills** and **trust**. The researcher recorded any examples of speech, behaviour or writing related to any of these six areas that could be said to enhance or inhibit partnership understanding and effectiveness from meetings and document profiles during the two year period. The observations of meetings ideally happened between partners- one per data point. These were by invitation from the partners, who chose a planning meeting from which the researcher took field notes in terms of tone, purpose, and level of agreement, understanding and resolution. It was entirely voluntary, with participants allowing recording or note-taking. The data was entered into NVivo 10, coded to the 6 areas of partnership, with decisions made whether they were positive or negative examples. In some cases the researcher was able to show a copy of one of the meeting rubrics to a parent and have a discussion about it, but this data item was small in number, based on the researcher’s impressions alone and not collected at all in a school setting in 2013.(Appendix D: Meeting Observations)

### 3.5.2.3 DOCUMENT PROFILES
The document profile rubric had the same six aspects of partnership of Blue-Banning et al., (2004); **communication, commitment, equality, respect, skills and trust**, against which the researcher recorded examples of documents proffered by directors and principals to illustrate their references and sources of authority and ideas for managing their preschools or schools. Directors of preschools and principals of schools were included in the research design to widen the perspective of the study and to further test bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) with information from the
wider context of setting and processes of governance which affected parents and teachers.

The profiles were coded as positive examples of leadership support for any of the 6 facets of partnership that were revealed in their documents. The data and the coding were largely positive in emphasis, as the researcher asked for examples of supportive documentation. There was an indicative quality to this profiling, as executive provided examples in a 30 minute time frame, and spent much of it talking to the researcher about the practicalities of supporting transition to school for students with disabilities, their roles as leaders, and the changes that had occurred over time. The exercise was useful to discover the variability of the locations and their differing approaches to transition. (Appendix E: Document Profiles)

3.5.2.4 SCALES OF INDEPENDENT BEHAVIOUR - REVISED
A Scales of Independent Behaviour - Revised Early Development Form (Bruininks et al., 1996) checklist was completed by participants at the time of each interview as a possible indicator of discrepant knowledge and perception of the child’s level of development and ability. When a matching pair of checklists was completed, differing perceptions of a child’s ability could possibly provide additional information about the issues within a partnership, mainly about the agreement partners shared about the needs of the child, and the way that informed their planning for transition. (Appendix F: SIB-R Results)

3.6 TIMING OF DATA COLLECTION
A total of four data collection times was carried out, called Phase 1 and Phase 2 in 2012, and Phase 3 and Phase 4 in 2013. Each year the parent and teacher participants were interviewed twice; parents speaking a total of four times and teachers in each setting speaking twice. This was designed to capture the changes that occurred for parents and children over people, time and place.

The directors of preschools in 2012 were interviewed once, and they were also asked to reference documents and policies that informed their guidance and leadership when transitioning young children with disabilities to school. The principals
of schools in 2013 were also interviewed once and asked about their documents and policies. All data collected in the four phases from 2012-2013 has been represented in four tables; Table 3.1, Table 3.2, Table 3.3 and Table 3.4.

Data could then be grouped into sets that explored the effects of time and place, so that all data from Phase 1 and Phase 2 in 2012 became the Setting 1 Set (Preschool), and all data from Phase 3 and Phase 4 in 2013 became the Setting 2 Set (School). This could then be used to differentiate experiences, particularly those of parents’ perceptions of partnerships as they moved from preschool to school.
Table 3.1: PHASE 1 DATA COLLECTION - 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARENTS</th>
<th>TEACHERS</th>
<th>EXECUTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Transcript and Profile</td>
<td>SIB-R (Adaptive Behaviour Score)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1A</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2A</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3A</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4A</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5B</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6B</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7C</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8D</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SUMMARY: 19 interviews were held with 19 participants (ET5B and EDB are same person in a dual role)

1 meeting in location A was attended by 4 parents

4 pairs only of SIB-R’s could be matched; 4 document analysis interviews were held
### Table 3.2: PHASE 2 DATA COLLECTION - 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARENTS</th>
<th>MEETING</th>
<th>TEACHERS</th>
<th>EXECUTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SIB-R</td>
<td>Interview Transcript and Profile</td>
<td>Interview Transcript and Profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting Observation for transition to new school</td>
<td>SIB-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1A</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ET1A x</td>
<td>EDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2A</td>
<td></td>
<td>ET2A x</td>
<td>EDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3A</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ET3A x</td>
<td>EDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4A</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ET4A x</td>
<td>EDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5B</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ET5B x</td>
<td>EDB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6B</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ET6B x</td>
<td>EDB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7C</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ET7C x</td>
<td>EDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8D</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ET8D x</td>
<td>EDD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUMMARY:** 15 interviews, 3 meetings (2 with P7C- one at preschool location C, one at new school K). P2A missed this interview but returned in Round 3
Table 3.3: PHASE 3 DATA COLLECTION - 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARENTS</th>
<th>TEACHERS</th>
<th>EXECUTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Transcript and Profile</td>
<td>SIB-R</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1E</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ST1E x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2F</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ST2F x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ST3G x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4H</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ST4H x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5I</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ST5I x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6J</td>
<td>Left the Study</td>
<td>ST6J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7K</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ST7K x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ST8L x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SUMMARY: 20 interviews with 20 participants; P6 dropped out in 2013; SP7K chose not to do an interview; no meetings could be arranged. 2 sets of SIB-R’s could be matched, 6 document analysis IV’s completed.
Table 3.4: PHASE 4 DATA COLLECTION - 2013

<table>
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<th>TEACHERS</th>
<th>EXECUTIVE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Transcript and Profile</td>
<td>SIB-R</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>Interview Transcript and Profile</td>
<td>SIB-R</td>
<td>Interview Transcript and Profile</td>
<td>Document Profiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1E</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ST1E</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>SP1E</td>
<td>No further data collected in 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2F</td>
<td></td>
<td>ST2F</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>SP2F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3M</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ST3M</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>SP3M</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5I</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ST5I</td>
<td></td>
<td>SP5I</td>
<td>No further data collected in 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7K</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ST7K</td>
<td></td>
<td>SP7K</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>ST8L</td>
<td></td>
<td>SP8L</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SUMMARY: 10 interviews, 1 new location M, new participants ST3M and SP3M (P3 moved from location G), no meetings
P4 left location H to home-school, 1 set of matched SIB-R, 1 document analysis

TOTAL INTERVIEWS Rounds 1-4 = 64 TOTAL PARTICIPANTS Rounds 1-4= 35
3.7 ANALYSIS OF THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

Analysis of the main data was planned as a process of transcribing and coding the interviews carried out during the two year period. The main tool used was the NVivo data management program (QSR International, NVivo 10, 2013). All data collected was entered into folders, sets, matrices and queries in the interactive NVivo database that allowed the information about participants, time, place and theme content to be sorted in specific ways identified by the researcher. Designing and using matrices in this way has been verified in the field of qualitative research for its usefulness in comparative analysis and interpretation to generate inferences of change (Saldana, 2009).

Firstly taped interviews were transcribed and sorted into parent files, teacher files and executive files. Time files from phases 1-4 over the 2 year period made it possible to compare places and changes over time. Family groupings which contained Parent 1 data and all their partners’ data, Parent 2 data and all their partners’ data, were useful to follow individual transition and partnership experiences.

Parent and early childhood teacher partners agreed to be interviewed and recorded twice a year in 2012; halfway through the year and at the end of the year. The same schedule applied to parent and school teacher partners in 2013. The directors and principals of each early childhood centre or school were interviewed once about partnerships, and were also asked about documents that informed their leadership, policy and practices. The study began with eight parent-teacher partners in four preschool settings in 2012, and aimed for eight parent-teacher partners in eight school settings in 2013.

The interviews generated a large amount of data that was then coded in NVivo, starting with the original themes and building on them as nodes and child nodes in the database. The nodes were studied for common themes that could be used to explore research questions. They were grouped in sets regarding Time, Person and Place. Ideas about aspects of parent-teacher partnerships and child transition outcomes evolved over two years. Meaning and intention, co-constructed between interviewer and interviewee, was analysed and used to build a critical understanding of context and
circumstance of lived phenomena; in this case, an appreciation of the complexities of partnerships between parents and teachers when transitioning young children with disabilities to school (Kvale, 1996).

Another source of coding came from the researcher being aware of issues from prior research studies and looking for examples in the conversations of participants. This proved to be a productive line of coding.

A code book was constructed by the researcher to explain and expand upon ideas represented by the codes as they were created and modified. There was an iterative process in checking and re-checking coding over time (Appendix C).

Three steps are detailed below, by which codes were synthesised, organised and thematised to build sets which could be used to explore the research questions.

### 3.7.1 Initial Coding

As a **first step**, to assist coding, the researcher developed and expanded the six themes of partnership taken from the work of Angell, Stoner and Shelden (2009)-AUTHENTIC CARING, CHILD FOCUS, COMMUNICATION, KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD CHARACTERISTICS, SCHOOL CLIMATE and TEAMING- along with TIME, as a starting point. The initial codes also included additional themes from the work of Blue-Banning et al. (2004); COMMITMENT, EQUALITY, RESPECT, SKILLS and TRUST. They all became codes that were built upon in an iterative way; by adding to, by introducing positive and negative shades, and by refining or redefining codes as time and the amount of interviews revealed new possibilities. In analysis terms, these codes were called nodes, and any subsidiaries of a code were child nodes; for example, *bureaucracy* was defined more specifically to produce child nodes of *funding, intentions and goals, leadership and policy knowledge and detail*. Some nodes were able to be characterised as **positive** and **negative** aspects, such as *positive communication* and *negative communication*. (see Appendix C: Code Book). Patterns began to emerge, as the negative aspects of transition described by a participant resulted in a cluster of negative codes, such as negative emotions or feelings of isolation.
3.7.2 EXPANDING THE CODES

Coding into themes was an iterative and expansive process because initial theory-related codes grew with the wealth of conversations. Richards (2009) described the significance of the growth of codes; they were emergent concepts arising from initial testing of ideas to become more refined and conceptual. Over time these theory-laden codes could, by close examination and modification, generate newer theoretical ideas as they are expanded and become more nuanced. The resulting ideas could then be analysed in terms of theory to suggest how or why there appeared to be patterns or similarities in the data (Richards, 2009).

In this study the research questions were built around Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory, and proposed that good outcomes for children were reliant on their significant adults working together using quality processes over Time and Place. Initial codes came from themes describing quality partnerships which had been derived from research, but the main work of analysis in this study was assessing how useful these themes were once the interviews began, and to refine and add to them in response to the participants’ narratives. The researcher was aware that this process of deeper interrogation of emphases, meanings and significance of codes over time was insurance against superficial assumptions about where and how the study would lead (Bazeley, 2009). As the number of codes increased, the researcher revisited earlier coding to include them if there were examples of the phenomena. The researcher created codes of her own devising, as well as codes derived from ideas from the research literature (see Chapter 2).

Examples of codes devised by the researcher to suit the aims of the study were:-

- **Time** and its child nodes **Change over Time, Future, Lack of Time, and Past**
- **Positive Child Transition Outcomes, and Negative Child Transition Outcomes**
- **Positive Parent Transition Outcomes, and Negative Parent Transition Outcomes**

Examples of codes derived from research and found to be useful and relevant:-

- **Family Needs** (Podvey, 2013; Trivette, Dunst & Hamby, 2010)
- **Role Understanding** (Oliver, 2008; Summers et al., 2007)
Emotion, Positive and Negative (Brotherson et al., 2010; Dillon-Goodson, 2005)

Training Available or Lacking (Flanigan, 2005; Odom, 2011)

Empathy for Partner Roles (Dunlop, 2007; Murray & Curran, 2008)

Power/Lack of Power (Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008)

(Code Book, Appendix C).

The primary units of analysis were the interviews, coded into over 90 nuanced features of participant experiences of transition to school partnerships. Supplementary data collected, such as meeting observations, made a small contribution to the overall body of coded data.

There was a strong relationship between the codes assigned to their transcripts and prior research and theorising about transition to school partnerships, evidenced by the examples above. Linking data to propositions and criteria for interpreting the findings required a data and diary trail of researcher actions and decisions or “log trail” (Richards, 2009), whereby gathering and keeping data is logical, organised and thorough. Yin (2009) gave an example of design linking to data that was apposite to this study; a temporal study with time markers and time-organised data to enable comparisons and contrasts relevant to its goals. Yin stressed that another important design strategy was allowing for identifying and addressing rival findings, to strengthen the study’s ability to draw conclusions related to the original questions and theory. At all points of development in the design of this study, relationship to theory and how to test it was the uppermost goal (Yin, 2009).

**3.7.2 DERIVING THE SETS FOR THE MATRIX QUERIES**

The second step in analysis of the data occurred when coding was deemed saturated by the researcher, categorising and creating sets assumed importance as a means to find patterns in the data. Researcher observations, knowledge of the topic and participants’ ideas was central to devising meaningful collections of codes which could be used to answer the research questions using a series of matrix queries. Choosing the components of the sets to be used in the matrix queries was an important aspect of the analytical process for this study. The resulting choices were
backed up by the knowledge and research brought to bear on this study, as well as the evidence of frequent agreement between participants.

The three research questions required sets be created which contained elements for investigating interpersonal partnership factors, professional practice factors, and organisational factors influencing transition to school. The researcher had generated over 90 shades of coding in negative, positive and neutral forms (see Code Book, Appendix C) and so spent considerable time allocating them into the three following sets which could help describe the key behaviours that affected children’s and families’ transition outcomes. This process was step one in forming the basis for the three-pronged enquiry into partnerships during transition to school.

### 3.7.2.1 THE PARTNERSHIP SET

This set was aimed at grouping codes which helped to describe close interpersonal behaviour between partners, and so needed to reflect key themes apparent in the interviews, and the research literature, which parents and teachers had identified as having in their partnership, or wishing for, to help their relationships and the children at the centre. For instance, it was of prime importance to parents that their partner be an open and available communicator who listened to them when they wanted to talk specifically about their children. The researcher chose the codes for this set after the four time phases were over, and with much reflection about the content of partner conversations.

The composition of the **Partnership Set** was: *positive and negative communication, teaming and lack of teaming, positive and negative commitment, positive and negative equality, friendship, mentoring, empowerment and lack of power, positive and negative respect, understanding of own role, understanding of partner role, positive and negative shared decision-making, positive and negative shared understanding, trust-building and trust-eroding.*

### 3.7.2.2 THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE SET

This set aimed to group codes which were in the realm of the professional practices of teachers and executive, which they and parents talked about in terms of their role in
aiding or abetting the transition progress of children and families. There were many examples from the interviews, of practices varying widely. This study wished to be able to identify what they were and why partners would rate them negatively or positively, for instance, to collect examples of skills which could be named and taught to partners in the future. The research literature supported the idea that both teachers and parents could benefit from specific skills acquisition, particularly in a period of rapid change in educational practices (Odom, 2011).

The composition of the **Professional Practices Set** was: *positive and negative authentic caring, positive and negative child focus, positive and negative knowledge of child characteristics, positive and negative disability constructs, engagement of parents, empathy for parents, knowing parent goals, exemplary practices by parents and teachers, and personal and partner skills.*

### 3.7.2.3 THE ORGANISATIONAL SET

It was expected that features of the each organisation in this study would have a bearing on families’ experiences during transition to school, and a set was needed to draw together codes which could be linked to positive and negative outcomes for children. For example, in previous studies parents had rated school climate as important, and this study delineated positive from negative, with many interviewees returning descriptions of what these might look like, and how they felt in those contexts. This study also aimed to create a set that could possibly make comparisons with two different contexts; preschool and school. The codes in this set were able, to some extent, to give examples of positive cooperation between contexts that benefited families and children, as the research had indicated that interagency factors could play a part (Rous, Myers & Stricklin, 2007).

The composition of the **Organisational Set** was: *positive and negative school climate, bureaucracy, funding, intentions and goals, leadership, knowledge of policy details, training for staff, positive and negative quality processes and training useful and available or wished for and lacking.*
3.7.3 CREATING THE PIVOTAL SET: THE FAMILY CARE FRAMEWORK SET

The third step in analysis was to decide how the three aspects of partnership were to be tested against the prism of family experiences over two years. Important features of successful or unsuccessful transition experiences were being sought in the context of the Partnership, Professional and Organisational spheres, so that this study might show, in the words of participants, what behaviours were connected to their negative or positive ratings. Their words needed to be grouped as their opinions and self-reports about the nature of the transition experience for children and families, as this was the central focus of the study. For example, the researcher coded “positive child transition outcomes” in response to stories of happy inclusion of a child in school activities, or “negative emotions” when a parent described being frustrated and angry after a school meeting. Brotherson et al. (2010) had produced work about the importance of partners matching well emotionally when good outcomes for children were produced, so this study sought to make emotions an identified factor in transition to school research.

The personal nature of each families’ journey became apparent from the outset of the interviews, and their unique situations were reflected in the code Family Needs. Many studies had emphasised this central pillar to parents and teachers understanding each other, and seeing the child in context of his or her environment. This is the basis for the theoretical structuring of this study, and the foundation for the many recommendations of studies such as Woods & Lindeman (2008), when they suggest the family environment be understood and used to maximum effect in partnerships.

A pivotal set to encompass the family experience of transition was created for all matrix enquiries in NVivo to be tested against. It was named the Family Care Framework and comprised the nodes positive and negative child transition outcomes, positive and negative parent transition outcomes, family needs, positive and negative emotions and isolation.

3.7.4 PERSON, CONTEXT AND TIME SETS

This study had the capacity to group interview data into sets which reflected elements of Brofenbrenner’s bioecological theory; Person, Process, Context and Time. To this
end, other sets that were devised for analysis that allowed analysis using combinations of matrix queries.

They were Setting 1 (preschool), Setting 2 (school), All Parents Set, Parent 1 Set, Parent 2 Set, Parent 3 Set, Parent 4 Set, Parent 5 Set, Parent 6 Set, Parent 7 Set, Parent 8 Set, Early Childhood Teacher Set, School Teacher Set, Early Childhood Director Set, School Principal Set, All Participants Set and Passage of Time Set.

Outlined in the following sections is a schedule of the way series of matrices were run using these sets and varying the time and person compositions. For example, to investigate the individual experiences of Partnership, Professional Practice and Organisational features in the case studies, the Parent 1 – Parent 8 sets were run three times in each of these areas of interest. Each parent and their partners over two years contributed to an understanding, to the extent that this study could show it, of the journey of transition for one family.

Other combinations of sets were devised, also set out below, to derive other perspectives. As an example, questions of change over time Setting 1 and Setting 2 data could be compared on any of the study’s focus sets.

3.8 SUPPLEMENTARY DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of supplementary data was used to build up data credibility by use of different sources. Interview profiles, meeting observations and document profiles were compiled with illustrative examples in each category of the rubrics and coded with step one codes to provide additional lines of evidence for the main research themes. They provided an additional checking and reflecting mechanism for the study.

The Scales of Independent Behaviour-Revised (Bruininks et al., 1996) relied on pairs of checklists being completed so that parent and teacher results could be compared. The researcher made every effort to collect completed checklists to be scored according to the methods set out in the manual. Differing scores relating to the same child were examined in the case studies.


3.9 Overview of Phases of Matrix Queries

The three research questions were investigated in three ways; by case study, by whole participant input and by parent experiences contrasted over time and place (preschool compared to school). Each approach was expected to highlight different aspects of the transition experience. With only four data collection points and a relatively small group, the iterations of data comparison had the potential to confirm trends or ideas arising from the data.

The three phases of data enquiry described in detail in 3.9.1, 3.9.2 and 3.9.3 were designed to add to the trustworthiness of the work done by the researcher in building codes, grouping codes into sets, and then running matrix queries in different combinations of People, Place and Time. Each phase was aimed to add to the picture of partnership processes over time which contributed to positive or negative transition outcomes. The three research sets- Partnership, Professional and Organisational- were queried with the Family Care Framework in all phases, with the People and Place sets varied to highlight different viewpoints on transition experiences.

The three phases were in summary:-

CASE STUDIES:- 8 sets of Parent and Partner data, Preschool + School

ALL PARTICIPANTS:- All Parent and Partner data combined, Preschool + School

PARENTS ACROSS SETTINGS:- Parent only data, Preschool separate from School

3.9.1 Phase One: Case Studies

For phase one of the results, a case study approach was chosen to report the experiences of each parent during the two year duration of the study, so that individual stories of transition could be told to complement the findings resulting from the themed enquiries of the NVivo matrices. Each family had their data, and that of their specific partners for the two years of the study, selected to create matrices using the Family Care Framework Set run against theirs and their partners’ data of three other sets; the Partnership Set, the Professional Practices Set and the Organisational Set. Nodes inside each set were chosen by the researcher for their relevance to each of
the three facets of the transition experience being queried. There were 24 matrices
created in this manner, profiling eight family experiences. From the three matrix tables
created for each family, frequencies of nodes and relationships between nodes could
be observed and explored by reading and summarising content of each cell. The
researcher reported on the six or so most frequent nodes, and their relationship to
each particular family’s experience.

The data presented in each of the case studies represented the thoughts of the
parents and their education partners and executive in two settings, or, as in one
parent’s case, the preschool year only. This data for that parent was retained in the
study because of its contribution to the overall detail of the experience of the lead-up
to school for families in phase one and phase two in 2012. Data from the case studies
also provided a perspective on the family’s experiences over time in the three areas of
interest laid out in the research questions (partnership, professional practices and
organisational factors). Quotes by all partners were used to illustrate the personal and
particular local realities of transition for parents, teachers, executive and children.

3.9.2 PHASE TWO: RESEARCH MATRICES - ALL PARTICIPANTS
A second phase of results was carried out using the data of all participants in the study
to test the theory behind the three main research questions. The matrices were
formed by using all data in the Family Care Framework and creating three matrices
with all participants’ data in the Partnership, the Professional Practices and the
Organisational Sets. This phase was designed to produce as close to a consensus result
as could be attempted, with data from all participants in the two year study. Four main
themes were chosen for discussion from each matrix, with the criteria being the
substantial amount of data that supported them as themes of interest.

3.9.3 PHASE THREE: RESEARCH MATRICES - PARENTS ACROSS SETTINGS
A third phase of results was designed to seek information from the data about the
differences that parents may have experienced between the two settings of the study
for the same three areas of investigation; Partnership, Professional Practices and
Organisational. Six new matrices were created using parent data from the Family Care
Framework in Setting 1 (Preschool) and again in Setting 2 (School) Sets, to draw
comparisons between the two settings for parents and to explore any other changes over time that were evident. Those two parent-grouped data sets were run in matrices three times, to test Partnership, Professional Practice and Organisational aspects of parent and family experience of transition.

The three pairs of matrices from the two phases of data collection were the main tool for exploring factors in partnerships contributing to good outcomes over time. The Family Care Framework data could be separated across two settings to find trends in parent reports of transition outcomes, positive or negative emotions and feelings of isolation over time. It also offered a way to gather data on the part the family needs node played in explaining parent priorities and motivations. While type and kind of family need remained individual, the node had the potential to be linked frequently with many other aspects of partnerships for parents, and to possibly help explain issues that arose and were either not understood or addressed, or that were recognised and handled successfully in partnerships.

3.10 SUMMARY OF METHODS

Over 2 years of the study, the researcher aimed to establish and maintain contact with 8 parents in a series of 4 data collection points. The goal of the study was to gain their trust and belief in the aims of the study, and to ask them to share personal stories about a very important period in their lives: starting their children at school in circumstances they did not necessarily foresee or expect when they were born.

The partnerships parents formed with teachers in early childhood and then at school could be expected to be very different to those anticipated or already experienced with children learning within age norms. How they and their teacher partners minimise difference and effect good transitions for children with disabilities is an important social and educational question.

Qualitative interviews were deemed the best and richest source of information about partnerships formed for the benefit of children starting school in this particular time and place, supported by several other data types. It was important to use a research-based Interview Protocol which had topics for questioning derived from other
parent partnership research, and to use it as a constant framework for discussion over
the two year period. The value of using these topics lay in the ease with which open-
ended questioning could be used to explore each area, knowing they were relevant to
participants.

The success of the interview process was reliant on the generosity of parents
and their teachers giving their time to talk, and the researcher was very grateful that
so many agreed to do that. Parents who spoke four times, in particular, made a vital
contribution to the usefulness of this research.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS - PHASE ONE: CASE STUDIES OF PARENTS

INTRODUCTION
The results of this study are presented in 2 parts; Part 1 as eight case studies of the parents during the two years their children were transitioning to school in 2012 and 2013, and Part 2 as a summary of the thematic analyses applied to the interview data of all participants.

Six of the parents were interviewed at all four data points, mid and late 2012 and mid and late 2013. One of the parents was interviewed once in 2012 and once in 2013, and one of the parents was interviewed twice in 2012 but declined to continue into 2013 (see Case Study: Parent 6).

4.1 CASE STUDY 1: PARENT 1

Participant Abbreviations

2012: Parent1= P1A, Early Childhood Teacher= ET1A, Director=EDA

2013: Parent1=P1E, School Teacher= ST1E, Principal= SP1E

Locations

A= Early Intervention Service

E= Primary School

Background information
Parent 1 was in her 40s, married, with a graduate qualification, and lived in a suburban area. English was her second language and she indicated that language difficulties could be an issue at times. Parent 1 had two children, both of whom were on the autism spectrum. She gave up fulltime work to care for the children, and neither she nor her husband had extended family support to help them. The elder child attended a special school and had more substantial needs than the focus child. Because this family began to find resources over time, the second child enjoyed more early intervention
education and therapies, and attended a regular preschool as well as the Early Intervention Outreach of Location A. When the family’s local primary school, Location E, accepted enrolment of the child to kindergarten, they did so in communication with the two early childhood settings.

**Setting: 2012**
Location A was a large early intervention program, within a city university, which had an outreach branch in Parent 1’s suburb where her child attended one morning a week, as well as several days at a regular preschool that was not part of the study. Parent 1 was very happy with the standard of care and attention her child received in both early childhood places. Location A had an extensive team of teachers, family workers and therapists who coordinated their efforts, made home visits, and helped Parent 1 apply for material and other forms of assistance. Transition to school was a dedicated focus of Location A in 2012, with the early childhood teacher (ET1A) playing a helping role by attending school visits with Parent 1 and writing detailed reports for them. The director, EDA, based at the main site for Location A, emphasised family-first, strengths-based programming, and this was evident in the way the staff interacted with families in the outreach program.

**Setting: 2013**
Location E was a large suburban public school with a positive reputation for inclusiveness and community involvement. Parent 1 was shy and reserved, but was made welcome by staff at Location E. The school staff had a demonstrated commitment to students with additional needs within the school, evidenced by funding their own supplementary classes and therapy sessions such as gross motor programs and life skills lessons for targeted students. Staff at the school had extensive experience with inclusive practices, and the relatively new principal (SP1E) likened the ethos to a family atmosphere, where everyone supported each other. The teacher, ST1E, had Special Education training.
Review of Outcomes over Time

**Preschool:** Parent 1 began at Location A in 2011, and was very glad to have found the service according to her own and ET1A’s account. During 2012 both she and her child were supported in tangible ways, so that she gained in confidence, made friends with other mothers, and was put in touch with agencies that helped to change family life for the better. Her child made good progress from a low base of school-ready behaviour to gain sufficient skills for the school to be confident they would not need additional funding support in the classroom, and that they would be able to manage the child’s transition with their own resources.

**School:** In 2013 Parent 1 walked the child to and from school and was able to speak to the teacher (ST1E) on a regular basis, so that any issues were largely known and understood by both parties. Language was acknowledged by both to sometimes cause misunderstandings so ST1E was conscious of needing to be clear in her communication with Parent 1. Some additional aide assistance was provided to the class part way through the year because of another student arriving; the aide and the teacher were experienced and confident in their abilities, with the focus child achieving to a level with which all were happy. The principal (SP1E) was clear in his support of inclusive practices in the school.

### 4.1.1 DATA COLLECTED FOR PARENT 1 CASE STUDY

**Interviews:**
Four semi-structured informal interviews were held in times and locations of Parent 1’s choosing; two in 2012 and two in 2013 (see interview profile, Appendix A). Parent 1 was open and expressive when describing her experiences of a difficult personal journey, and while nervous in the first interview, warmed to the aims of the project and established rapport with the researcher. Her teacher and executive partners all consented to interviews (ET1A twice, EDA once, ST1E twice, SP1E once) and all spoke at length and in detail of their perspectives of their part in the parent’s and family’s experience of transition to school (see Appendix A).
Meetings:
In 2012 Parent 1 and ET1A discussed inviting the researcher to a planning interview at the primary school, but the meeting occurred with little notice, and the researcher was not contacted. Parent 1 and ET1A reported a very satisfactory and welcoming discussion about the child starting school at Location E the next year. Location A’s main branch hosted a parent information night about transition to school issues with education representatives, but Parent A found it too difficult to attend because of the travel and distance.

In 2013 Location E did not arrange formal planning meetings, but spoke often and informally to Parent 1. ST1E and Parent 1 had frequent conversations as the child was dropped off and picked up by her or her husband every day.

Documentary Analysis
In 2012, Director EDA at the main branch of Location A oversaw the outreach programming and organisation accessed by Parent 1. The same principles of family service plans at the larger centre were applied to the smaller program in an outlying suburb. They also maintained the same compliance with state and national guidelines such as the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), the National Quality Framework (NQF) and the Disability Standards for Education. EDA emphasised family-centred and strengths-based principles based on the guidelines of the state licencing body DADHC and also the United Nations Convention for Persons with Disabilities.

In 2013 school principal SP1E was guided by the Disability Standards of 2005 and the Every Student Every School (DEC, 2012) mandate of the state government. The Strategic Planning cycle was his platform to plan adjustments to curriculum and manage staff needs to do this.

Scale of Independent Behaviour - Revised (SIBR-R)
In 2012, Parent 1 and ET1 had a small difference in perception of the child’s ability, based on the SIBR-R; Parent 1 rated him more highly at raw score 88 (equivalent age 3 years and 10 months), compared to raw score 82 (equivalent age 3 years 2 months) for ET1.
In 2013 Parent 1 again rated her son more highly to a similar degree; raw score 93 (equivalent age 4 years 8 months) compared to ST1E’s raw score of 88 (equivalent age 3 years 4 months). This could be characterised as the parent’s slightly more optimistic view of her child’s learning than that held by his teachers (Appendix B).

4.1.2 NVIVO MATRIX QUERIES

Query 1: Family 1 experiences of partnerships 2012-2013

The Family Experience Set of nodes was used in a matrix query with the Partnership Set of nodes and filtered for Parent 1. Strong relationships between actions and needs became apparent for Parent 1 and her family over the two year transition period.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Teaming was the most valuable feature of Parent 1’s partnership experience, linked strongly with family needs, and less so to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘I’m getting more confident now. As I said before, people from IFSO [a helping organisation], they’ve been there for us all the time now’ (P1, round 2)

Shared understanding was the next most valuable feature, also linked strongly to family needs, and less strongly to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘We also have a form that’s given out to all families and it’s “getting to know your child”, and so we get to know their child and we make sure spend time in conversation before the plans are written, and they’re not based on our goals, they’re based on the family’s goals, and we make sure they understand this is your goal.’ (EDA, round 1)

Understanding of own role was important to both parent and teacher partners in meeting family needs, and similarly related but subordinate features were positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:
‘I think if there were big issues with preschool I think I would be pushing to get out there and do another visit and talk to the teachers a lot more about ways that we can support them.’ (ET1A, round 1)

The fourth important feature in the positive experience for Family 1 in meeting family needs was *commitment,* with *positive child transition outcomes* and *positive emotions* linked to a lesser degree. Example:

‘When you’ve got a parent preparing to come to school with a child with additional needs, it’s crucial that we find out exactly what the needs of the student are, the parents find out what sort of environment their child’s going to be coming in to, and doing that as early as we can gives us the opportunity to change whatever we need to change to meet the children’s needs, and also helps the parents prepare the child in partnership with the staff for entry into school’ (SP1E, round 3)

NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

The family experience was predominantly positive with *isolation* rating at a low level of mention and was associated with *communication* and *teaming.* Examples:

‘When she [P1] first started at the beginning of last year she was very quiet and very isolated. One of the biggest things last year was she was isolated, she didn’t drive or have any extended family here’ (ET1A, round 1)

‘At first I was too shy- that was last year- but now I am very comfortable’ (P1, round 1)

*Lack of power* around *family needs* registered to a similar relatively minor degree. Example:

‘That was in 2010, I was so depressed, what should we do now - because they won't let [children with] disabilities go there - we were so upset’ (P1, round 1)

Matrix Summary of Query 1

The significant partnership nodes emerging from this query that were highly related to Parent 1’s *family needs* were, in order: *teaming, shared understanding, positive communication, understanding of own role* and *positive signs of commitment.* These
nodes also were associated with higher scores for Parent 1’s perception of *positive emotions*, *positive child transition outcomes*, and her own *positive experience of transition*.

**Query 2: Family 1 experiences of professional practices 2012-2013**

The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Professional Practice set to identify significant professional practices during transition for Family 1.

**POSITIVE PRACTICES:**

*Knowing parent goals allied to family needs* was a strong relationship. Example:

> ‘I might have assumptions about what I assume we should be working on but that’s not how we set our goals - we set our goals based on the family’s needs.’ (ET1A, round 1)

*Empathy for parent’s situation in meeting family needs* also rated highly. Example:

> ‘They’re very supportive, and they’re always asking me “How are you [P1A]?” and “How’s [son]?” and “How’s [daughter]?” Even though they’re not supporting [daughter], they are also asking about her.’ (P1, round 2)

*Personal skills* for both parent and teacher were highly valued in meeting *family needs*. Example:

> ‘At the initial enrolment I did send them a copy - it was a 7 page report of just where he is and what he will need support with when he gets there. And I know that they went through that and got lots of information from that.’ (ET1A, round 2)

*Authentic caring* for Parent 1’s child was highly related to *family needs*. Example:

> ‘Well I think developing and nurturing partnerships with all our parents is important, but on the whole, the parents of children with special needs are the ones you develop the closest relationships with, because the parents are up more regularly, making contact and getting information.’ (SP1E, round 3)

*Positive child focus* and *family needs* followed closely in importance. Example:
‘We seem to have talked a lot more in the last half of the year in terms of daily chats of what he did that day, and I’m trying to make him more independent in terms of packing his bag and remembering to bring things in and unpacking and all that sort of thing.’ (ST1E, round 4)

Exemplary practices by teachers rated next for family needs for Family 1. Example:

‘We have a Students in Focus opportunity in our staff meetings to let everyone else know, but they also - this boy goes to another teacher who takes a special needs group every Thursday afternoon, so all the children with special needs get together and do cooking or gardening or shopping or technology, and that sort of thing’s also communicated to the parents, and I think it’s good that the parents know as much as they can, because often the children with special needs can’t communicate to their parents about what they’ve been doing. So I think it’s important - I know it’s important - for parents to know what’s going on, and hopefully support the school in knowing that they’re trying to do what’s best for their child.’ (ST1E, round 3)

Partner skills were of somewhat important to meeting family needs. Example:

‘Then I am asking the therapists to help me - like Boardmaker, the pictures. The therapist went to the classroom and gave the teacher the pictures, and she also gave me Boardmaker and pictures at home, so I use it when he’s getting anxious, like when he cannot use the computer because next day he has school.’ (P1E, round 4)

NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

The feeling of isolation was a small negative for Parent 1, allied to partner empathy for her situation and knowing parent goals. Example:

‘We also have a friend nearby with two kids with difficulties – autism - and she’s advising us with where to go, names of doctors... and she says she liked us because we understand the behaviour of her kids!’ (P1E, round 4)

Some negative emotions were also described, related to negative constructs of disability and empathy of partners. Example:

‘Yes it’s very, very stressful with the kids sometimes.’ (P1A, round 2)
Matrix Summary of Query 2
The significant professional practice nodes emerging from this query that highly related to Parent 1’s family needs were in order; knowing parent goals, empathy for parent, personal skills, authentic caring, positive child focus and exemplary practices by teachers. They were associated with high scores for Parent 1 on positive child transition outcomes and positive emotions.

Query 3: Family 1 experiences of Organisational Factors 2012-2013
The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Organisational Factors set to investigate the impact of bureaucracy on the family experience of transition over two years.

POSITIVE PRACTICES:

Quality processes were specific practices of schools and other organisations which were described and appraised by participants as having excellent design and execution features, and appreciated by them for overall positive outcomes.

In this matrix query, quality processes were strongly allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘We have Learning Support meetings that involve the Learning Support coordinator, any support staff that are involved, the classroom teacher and the parents. We put together plans for whatever aspects of the student’s daily life, whether it’s learning, whether it’s social welfare.’ (SP1E, round 3)

‘Listening properly to what the parent has to say, understanding that they only want what’s best for their child - they’re not...sometimes they get angry and that’s the time to move away, and just say [that] we need to make another appointment to discuss this further with someone else there as a support person.’ (ST1E, round 3)

‘I feel happy now because now he’s really interacting with kids. He’s learning how to talk to his classmates. Actually he had an award for “Getting along well with others!” [laughs] He’s always getting awards - sometimes “Organised.”’ (P1E, round 3)
The intentions and goals of bureaucratic practices, as made explicit to parents, was strongly tied to family needs, positive emotions and less so to positive child transition outcomes. Examples:

‘What I’ve been impressed with since I started at this school is the genuine efforts of communication by staff towards parents. I’m always passing staff in the corridors on their way down to make phone calls to parents. And that’s not something I’ve seen in every school that I’ve been in.’ (SP1E, round 3)

‘Everything is positive! He’s a lucky boy because everything is - we knew everything to do, because we experienced it with our daughter.’ (P1A, round 2)

‘We celebrate successes through our newsletter, we celebrate successes at assemblies, we celebrate and value participation not just achievement, so it’s about having a go, giving your best. Our “pencil” values [large signs with different values inscribed in the playground] yes the pencils are everywhere! The value system is part of our daily operation of the school- we talk about it all the time, children work towards achieving the pencil values.’ (SP1E, round 3)

A positive school climate was important, and allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘We come from two philosophies that are strength-based and family-centred, and we run that as a parallel practice, so when we, as a management philosophy I am strength-based with staff, and at management level I am family-centred with staff as well.’ (EDA, round 1)

‘She [a preschool teacher] gave me a referral to here, and I found that the teachers were really friendly and very helpful and very approachable, very understanding.’ (P1A, round 1)

‘My own view is that everybody is welcome, everybody needs the opportunity. There will be some children whose needs we can’t meet in a mainstream environment, and those children - we will work with their parents to see if we can find a more suitable placement for them. But they need the opportunity to have a go first! If the parents want mainstreaming then they’ve got every right to do it.’ (SP1E, round 3)
Leadership, funding and undifferentiated references to bureaucracy were secondary in strength but of some importance to family needs. Examples:

‘Our school should be a one-stop-shop, so someone who wants to enrol their child in a government school should be able to walk through that door and come in and have all their answers, or all their questions addressed. Whether or not it’s here, or whether or not they have to go somewhere else I don’t know- but we shouldn’t be turning people away. We should be welcoming them in – saying “Come on in! Let’s see what we can do for you”, and help them make some informed decisions about their kids!’ (SP1E, round 3)

‘Before that [before finding Location A] I don’t know where to get speech therapy and they said we have our own speech therapists, we can help you, now we’re using them.’ (P1A, round 1)

NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

Some negative emotions registered at a low level for Parent 1 with negative quality practices and some of the intentions and goals of bureaucracy. Example:

‘The strength to put your hand up and say I need help, first, takes so much courage, and then to be told- sorry, you don’t qualify- it must be just, just shattering!’ (ET1A, round 2)

Feelings of isolation also registered against some features of bureaucracy and its intentions and goals. Example:

‘We tried Brighter Futures before but we were rejected - there’s no violence in the house- they’re only helping those with violence, they can see that what we have at home, we can handle it- but we said "we need more help!”’ (P1A, round 1)

Matrix Summary for Query 3

The most reported organisational nodes emerging from this query that related to Parent 1’s family needs were in order; quality processes, intentions and goals, positive school climate, leadership and funding. They were also associated with higher scores from Parent 1 on positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions.
4.2 CASE STUDY 2: PARENT 2

Participant Abbreviations

2012: Parent 2= P2A, Early Childhood Teacher= ET2A, Director=EDA
2013: Parent 2= P2F, School Teacher= ST2F, Principal= SP2F

Locations

2012: A= Early Intervention Service
2013: F= Primary School

Background information
Parent 2 was in her 40s, living in a suburban area, and in a stable partnership. She and her partner fostered and then adopted a relative’s child who had a complex diagnosis, including autism and anxiety. Parent 2 gave up fulltime work to care for the child, and also fostered and adopted another child during the period of the study. She was very connected to her family and community, and had strong cultural values related to her indigenous background. Parent 2 previously held a responsible job, and demonstrated her administrative and other skills in her assiduousness with organisation, planning and attention to detail with any issues to do with her child. She had strong involvement with the NSW Department of Community Services and other agencies, and was adept at finding and receiving services, being very motivated to get the best outcomes for her child. Location A, an early intervention centre at a city university, provided a session once a week of education and therapies for her and her child, who also attended a preschool in the grounds of the anticipated school for 2013, Location F. Parent 2 organised visits and transition with the school from early in 2012, which was the longest preparation time for any child in the study by at least a term.

Setting: 2012
Location A early intervention centre had multiple sessions for working with different ages and stages of children with additional needs every week, and parents benefitted from a large team of teachers, therapists and family workers who were all practiced at
guiding families through the many arms of bureaucracy and services to help children receive a good start in life. Parent 2 was confident enough to get the information she needed talking to staff such as ET2A, but also to act on her own behalf in organising transition to school as she wanted it to happen. Location A offered an information night for parents early in 2012, where education representatives spoke to them about enrolment and transition to school procedures. Parent 2, and others, found this to be both confusing and overwhelming in detail and content, so she set about making transition happen in her own way with little reliance on ET2A. Several teachers at Location A expressed some reservations about the information night organised to help parents to learn about transition. Many other forums were offered by the centre (Location A) for the benefit of parents, such as advocacy training, and parents as case manager training. It was also the practice at Location A for teachers to accompany parents to school transition meetings if requested, though Parent 2 chose not to do so. The director, EDA, emphasised family-first, strengths-based programming, which was evident in the staff interactions in the sessions attended by Parent 2.

Setting: 2013
Location F was a medium-sized suburban public school located in a city, within walking distance of Parent 2's home. She and her child were familiar with the school through frequent visits, both through attendance at the in-grounds preschool there and incidentally through an invitation to “visit any time” to overcome the child’s known anxieties. Over several terms they also were invited to spend time in a kindergarten classroom for short periods at a time. Staff at Location F had an established practice of visiting the in-grounds preschool and becoming familiar with children with additional needs. Parent 2 was very confident that the preparation for school was on track at the end of 2012. However, an oversight in informing her of a staff change for 2013 led to Parent 2 almost withdrawing the child from the school. An effort was made by the school to restore confidence and continue with the enrolment. Some staff disruptions and changes in executive had impacts on this family, but equilibrium was restored; the teacher (ST2F) and Parent 2 developed a pattern of communication and trust, and the child made a good transition to school. The acting principal (SP2F) was very family- and
community-minded and instigated positive cultural and heritage programs to which Parent 2 and her family were integral. ST2F was a young teacher who acknowledged her inexperience, but who demonstrated active and open practices in finding the best ways to work with the child.

**Review of Outcomes over Time**

**Preschool:** Parent 2 faced a complex experience in parenting a child with challenges while also going through the requirements for fostering and adoption. She saw his needs as central and her purpose was to find and act on everything that she could to help him succeed in life. Parent 2 had learned how to pursue her goals by persistence; finding advocates to attend meetings with her, keeping good records, handing out copies of reports to others, asking questions and not accepting less than she thought was right. In 2012, Location A offered courses and information nights and weekly close communication with ET2A. Parent 2 was confident enough to become closely involved with her local school, Location F, and establish a regular pattern of transition activities. When a misunderstanding occurred at the end of 2012, SP2F was involved in negotiating change and an apology.

**School:** The kindergarten teacher in 2013, ST2F, was an early career teacher who stated she had a lot to learn about teaching children with additional needs; this child was not the only one identified with needs in her class. ST2F regularly spoke to Parent 2 and incorporated the parent’s knowledge and concerns into her teaching. She also experimented with techniques of her own, discovering ways to help the child overcome some of his anxieties. The school demonstrated its community-mindedness and inclusiveness with Heritage Week activities, and a project of building and decorating message sticks. The school brought in large numbers of parents and grandparents to the school, and saw Parent 2 and the child with a central involvement. As the year went by, ST2F reported successful settling into school routines for everyone.
4.2.1 DATA COLLECTED FOR PARENT 2 CASE STUDY

Interviews:
Two semi-structured informal interviews were held at times and locations of Parent 2’s choosing: once in 2012 and once in 2013 (see interview profile, Appendix A). Parent 2 was guarded at first when describing her experiences and sharing personal information, but agreed with the aims of the project in opening up dialogue on good partnerships. She was forthright in her views and spoke with feeling about her journey. She deferred several scheduled interviews, resulting in a total of two interviews rather than four, but she was very busy with family issues and adopting a second child. Her child’s teacher and executive partners all consented to interviews (ET2A twice, EDA once, ST2F twice, SP2F once) and all spoke at length and in detail of their perspectives of their part in the parent’s and family’s experience of transition to school (see interview profiles in Appendix A).

Meetings:
In 2012 Parent 2 attended Location A’s parent information night with education representatives (see Appendix D), which she found confronting and confusing. Her response was to begin the process of enrolment and transition as early and as assiduously as she could.

There were no other planning meetings to which the researcher was invited either in 2012 or 2013.

Documentary Analysis
In 2012 Director EDA emphasised family-centred and strengths-based principles based on the guidelines of the centre’s licensing and funding body, and also quoted United Nations conventions on the child and disability. She and her staff wrote Family Service Plans together with families, and also complied with state and national guidelines such as the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Standards and Quality Framework (see Appendix C).

In 2013 SP2F took a community view and found ways to bring parents into the school formally and informally, such as with reading, heritage and outdoor projects.
Her guides were the National Quality Framework, Every Student Every School, the Early Years Learning Framework and the Disabilities Standards for Education. She took transition practices from the DEC website and collaborated closely with the on-site preschool (see Appendix C).

**Scale of Independent Behaviour- Revised (SIBR-R)**

In 2012 Parent 2 scored her child at 67 (raw) and ET2A scored him at 73 (raw). This was a small disparity in understanding of functioning at 2 years and 1 month, compared to 2 years and 5 months, when working on goals together and avoiding unrealistic expectations. In 2013 Parent 2 and ST2F did not complete the SIB-R (see Appendix B).

### 4.2.2 NVIVO MATRIX QUERIES

**Query 1: Family 2 experiences of partnerships 2012-2013**

The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Partnership set and filtered for Parent 2. Strong relationships between actions and needs became apparent for Parent 2 and her family over the two year transition period.

**POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS:**

*Teaming* was the most valuable feature of Parent 2’s partnership experience, linked very strongly with *family needs*, and strongly to *positive child and parent transition outcomes* and *positive emotions*. Examples:

‘We’re really lucky in that we do the IFSP’s, [IFSP expanded] so the family planning together at the start of the year, and then we write the goals up, and that’s also a partnership. We go back and say - you know, checking - going back and saying “This is what I’ve written, but this is a draft- are there any strategies you want me to change or that you think that I can add to suit your family more?”’ (ET2A, round 1)

‘We ask the families do they want their copies sent or would they prefer if we gave them to them and they hand them on, and in this family’s case they took them. So that would mean that P2A was distributing them to who she felt would need them. So we do provide 3-4 copies and one could go to the day care service and those sorts of things as well.’ (ET2A, round 2)
‘I’ve sort of covered all my bases, between discussing it with my partner (ET2A) and discussing it with my support networks, I would say, and that being his preschool, early intervention and his support therapists. For example, his speech, OT etc.’ (P2A, round 1)

**Shared understanding** was the next most valuable feature, also linked strongly to family needs, and less strongly to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘I still have informal chats regularly with [P2F], but with the boy’s development, and the more he’s become settled into kindergarten, and the more that he achieved some of the goals he had with socialising and emotional security - a lot of them have been met, and I think [P2F] thinks that as well. So it’s more relaxed, and it’s not as many talks about “this is an issue” or “this is going well”. It’s more personal chatting.’ (ST2F, round 4)

**Understanding of own role** was important to both parent and teacher partners in meeting family needs, and similarly related but subordinate features were positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘Double check! Double check. Check your communication lines and follow up! And don’t leave it, that’s right. So always double check, never assume that the forms have actually gone in, so everything now, I just go up to the office and double check and make sure that they’ve sent it. If they did, who did it and what time they were posted.’ (P2F, round 3)

‘I think that if we stay family-centred and strengths-based the outcomes can only be good, because that means that we are really looking at the families and really spending time understanding families - and then that sends value to the families. And it sends value to the staff.’ (EDA, round 1)

The fourth important feature in the positive experience for Family 2 meeting family needs was positive communication, with positive parent transition outcomes, positive child transition outcomes and positive emotions linked to a lesser degree. Example:
‘A better, I would say a better communicator, I wouldn’t say good, but a better communicator than what I was. Yes, so a bit more confidence in speaking up and putting things together, and knowing where to look for things.’ (P2A, round 1)

NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Parent 2’s experience, while being positive overall, included a significant breakdown of communication at a critical point of transition and it took some time for them to restore equilibrium in partnerships. Child transition outcomes were largely unaffected as the issues were in the adult partnerships. Parent 2’s negative experience of transition at the point of entry to school was largely due to five factors: negative communication, lack of teaming, negative shared understanding, lack of power, and negative shared decision-making. Negative emotions were associated with each of these partnership elements. Examples:

‘Just the teachers letting me know, at the school, or the office, or someone, just saying “This is where we’re at” or “We’ve had the meeting”, or “we haven’t had the meeting”.’ (P2A, round 1)

‘I think the main thing I got out of it was I should have pushed more and followed through more, instead of just waiting for the school. Don’t take that from the school and just let them dictate, otherwise you’re just letting them ride over you. I think it was part my fault for letting them push me into that position’ (P2F, round 3)

‘It was just too overwhelming and it was too - it was like they [who?] were pitching at more of their people, not just families who wanted basic information.’ (P2A, round 1)

‘That’s why you have to call DOCS and you have to a meeting...because otherwise they think you’re a neurotic overbearing parent. You have to, unfortunately, you have to, and that’s why I brought the psychologist there, so she could evaluate the meeting as well as say what was needed, because they can sit there and say at the meeting what they like, but they can’t argue with the person with the degree.’ (P2F, round 3)
Feelings of isolation were clustered with understanding of own role for Parent 2 and her experience of partnership, for example:

‘I think making parents feel comfortable in the setting is really important, because a lot of parents have had their own negative experiences with educational settings, so especially people with kids with disabilities who are going through all sorts of grieving processes themselves! So they’re already under stress, so they don’t need additional stress that could hark back to their early years themselves.’ (SP2F, round 3)

Matrix Summary of Query 1
The important partnership nodes emerging from this query that were highly related to Parent 2’s family needs were in order; teaming, shared understanding, understanding own role and positive communication. These nodes also were associated with higher scores for Parent 2’s perception of positive emotions, positive child transition outcomes, and her own positive experience of transition.

This family had a period of negative partnership when negotiating details of transition to school, experiencing negative emotions associated with the negative aspects of communication, teaming, shared understanding, shared power and shared decision-making.

Query 2: Family 2 experiences of professional practices 2012-2013
The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Professional Practice set to identify professional practices and their impact during transition for Family 2.

POSITIVE PRACTICES:
Positive practices that emerged as important all had links to family needs, positive emotions, positive child outcomes and positive parent transition outcomes.

Knowing parent goals allied to family needs was the strongest relationship. Example:

‘Sometimes the parents say “look we just want someone to back us up- when we go they’re not listening because we’re their parents”. It’s nice to have someone to come in, or I’ve had parents say “I just want a second pair of ears because I need that- I’m going to go in there and not hear everything. I’m going to come out and have
missed things”. I’ve had parents who just want you to go to visit a certain type of school and type of class because they’re anxious about what that is, especially if it’s a special school or something like that.’ (ET2A, round 1)

**Personal skills** and **partner skills** were the next strongest link to family needs. Example:

> ‘I don’t go to the office any more. I go straight to the teacher, we have a communication book, if I write something- we talk to each other- and then she will go up to the office, and at least if it gets lost from there, at least I’ve got the direct contact to say “well you knew about it”.’ (P2F, round 3)

**Empathy for parent**’s situation in meeting family needs also rated highly. Example:

> ‘We understand that it is an artificial environment here, and that the largest component of what’s happening for that family is what’s happening at home and what’s happening in the community and we value that, and that we understand that to be able to generalise those skills that are happening here we need to make sure that we maintain those relationships outside of those two hours as well.’ (EDA, round 1)

**Authentic caring** for Parent 2’s child was highly related to family needs. Example:

> ‘P2 is so...committed to supporting him! She does everything, and everything’s perfect. So she’s an expert, so I did take note of a lot of anecdotal experiences of what has upset him in the past and know to anticipate and be pre-emptive, and to avoid situations arising rather than having to deal with something after it’s happened. That has been my strategy with him, so it was very helpful because she was such an expert and she is so heavily involved.’ (ST2F, round 3)

**Positive child focus** and family needs were moderately connected. Example:

> ‘A lot of the group stuff, or a lot of the staff are very aware that this child has anxieties, and that they will be big anxieties for the beginning of next year, so we’re modelling or doing activities within the group that hopefully support that next year- so maybe pushing him a little further around those anxieties because we know next year they’re things that are going to have to happen. So I suppose examples of that are group time or speaking up and using a louder voice and trying to promote those things because they’re going to be important for next year.’ (ET2A, round 2)
NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

There were negative partnership issues, though mostly confined to school partners at the end of 2012. *Partner skills* and *knowing parent goals* were strongly associated with *negative emotions* around that time. Examples:

‘*She [P2] has visited another local school and is trying to decide where he will end up. There have been a couple of emergency meetings with the DOCS agency, so they’ve become involved in this process as well, to support her in...so I think it may be a loss of confidence for her around the school, and how confident [she is] about how they are going to deal with her child, still, in the last week of the program that was still undecided [late in December] and she still hadn’t decided where she would be sending him for next year.*’ (ET2A, round 2)

‘*If we had had that social story book weeks before when we were supposed to get it, we could have sorted all of this before the new year, instead of on the last day!*’ (P2F, round 3)

Matrix Summary of Query 2

The professional practice nodes emerging from this query that highly related to Parent 2’s *family needs* were in order; *knowing parent goals, personal skills, empathy for parent, authentic caring and positive child focus*. When the *positive* application of the practice was present they were associated with higher scores for Parent 2 on *positive child transition outcomes, positive parent transition outcomes and positive emotions*. When the *negative* nodes for the practices were registered, the association with negative family experience was clearly in line with *negative emotions, negative child and parent transition outcomes*, and a small link to *isolation* when *empathy* was in question.

Query 3: Family 2 experiences of Organisational Factors 2012-2013

The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Organisational Factors set to investigate the impact of bureaucracy on the family experience of transition over two years.
POSITIVE PRACTICES:

Quality processes were specific practices of schools and other organisations which were described and appraised by participants as having excellent design and execution features, and appreciated by them for overall positive outcomes.

In this matrix query quality processes were strongly allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘It [the course I went to] was how to be a coordinator for your child with special needs. It was an eight week course.’ (Parent 2, round 1)

‘The transition to kindergarten here is quite extensive as well. It starts next week [August] which is only halfway through the year, and it goes right up until the end of the year. It involves parent sessions as well as the kids.’ (SP2F, round 3)

A positive school climate was important to Parent 2 and allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘We try to encourage diversity across the whole school. And try to celebrate it in everything!’ (SP2F, round 3, talking about an indigenous project involving P2, among other initiatives)

The intentions and goals of bureaucratic practices, as made explicit to parents, were strongly tied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘The transition is held at all of the classrooms of the teachers for the new kinders; their children [usual kinder class] are taken by either their following year’s teacher or a casual teacher, depending on what sort of organisation needs to be done on the day- so that they’re free for the whole day to meet with the parents.’ (SP2F, round 3)

Leadership was emphasised as next most relevant to family 2’s positive experience of transition. Example:
'She's also brought cultural issues up, where there has been nothing done at that school that I could ever see. And I'm actually involved in a project right now, putting message sticks up - message poles.' (Parent 2, round 1)

NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

Negative practices for Family 2 centred on the misunderstanding at the end of the preschool year when Location F failed to communicate intentions and decisions.

Negative quality practices were linked to negative emotions and negative parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘This was all going so well and there were no concerns, so I wasn’t feeling the need to go “I should ring and try and make contact and work this out.” It was “yep, this is the process that’s been happening and it’s all going really well,” and all of a sudden, really quickly at the end it’s deteriorated.’ (ET2A, round 2)

Negative school climate was linked to negative emotions and negative parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘We only got to say hello to her [the teacher doing transition visits] at the end of every visit because she was teaching class. We never ever got to have an in-depth talk.’ (P2F, round 3)

Intentions and goals of bureaucracy had negative associations with emotion and parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘His teacher is supposed to be Mrs X. And they said “no, it’s Mrs K”, and I said “no, it’s Mrs X!”...And we had a big row over the phone... and I said “you’ve done it again! Go back to our meeting that we had a few months ago and look at the minutes for that meeting, and you’ll find that it’s been put down in the minutes that boy is spending more time with Mrs X...and now you’re telling me that his new teacher is going to be Mrs K! You’ve got to be kidding me! He will not be going to this school!”’ (Parent 2F, round 3)

Matrix Summary for Query 3

The important organisational nodes emerging from this query that related to Parent 2’s family needs were in order; quality processes, positive school climate, intentions and goals and leadership. Parent 2 experienced contrasting and distinctive phases in the
transition to school process, so that there were both positive and negative examples of the above facets of organisation. It was instructive to note the close association for Parent 2 of positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions with positive processes, and the exact reversal to negative of child and parent transition outcomes and emotions when processes were perceived as negative.

4.3 CASE STUDY: PARENT 3

Participant Abbreviations

2012: Parent 3= P3A, Early Childhood Teacher= ET3A, Director=EDA
2013 Terms 1-2: Parent 3=P3G, School Teacher= ST3G, Principal= SP3G
2013 Terms 3-4: School Teacher ST3M, Principal SP3M

Locations

A= Early Intervention Service

G= Primary School terms 1-2; M = Primary School terms 3-4

Background information

Parent 3 was in her 30s, married, with twin boys both on the autistic spectrum. When the study began they were living in a suburban area and started school there, but halfway through 2013 they moved to a small regional centre and enrolled at a new school. Parent 3 had worked in a trade prior to having the boys, but left employment to be a fulltime carer. She made her sons her priority and set out to do “what it takes” to help them succeed. She described herself as a shy person, but made efforts to mix with other parents and to learn to speak up, particularly for her boys. Location A had a family worker who was a great help to Parent 3. The Parents-as-Case-Coordinators (PACC) course at Location A was said by Parent 3 to be the best thing she could have done to become more confident. The boys attended Location A—an early intervention centre- over several years, as well as a preschool. Parent 3 was nervous about her boys starting school, but the large team at Location A helped her with strategies such as writing things down in advance of a learning support meeting. Parent 3 found the local
school, Location G, to be welcoming and reassuring about her children’s enrolment. Parent 3 volunteered in the classroom and met other parents before and after school.

**Setting: 2012**
Location A was an Early Intervention centre within a city university which ran multiple sessions for different ages and stages of children with additional needs every week. It was of advantage to parents because it had a large team of teachers, therapists and family workers. The staff were practiced at guiding families through the bureaucracy and community services available to help children and families in the early years. Parent 3 went to the school information night hosted by Location A and reported being confused and overwhelmed about her role. Staff at Location A, however, helped her to make plans and set goals. During their time at Location A, Parent 3 and her boys made tangible gains in skills and confidence so that by the end of 2012 the transition to school went smoothly, despite her concerns that Location G started its sessions for parents and children late in the year before school started.

**Setting 1: 2013**
Location G was a medium-sized public school in a suburban area. The present principal, SP3G, had overseen a change in family and staff cohesiveness and cooperation, citing a dysfunctional past where parents were discouraged from entering the school grounds. The school now had a strong values-based ethos, as all participants from this location agreed that it was a friendly place where staff and children knew and looked after each other. The two kindergarten teachers did team teaching and made sure one of them was always available in the morning to talk to parents. This was very helpful to Parent 3 and her boys in the early stage of the year, as many anxieties were dealt with, and the teachers became aware of the individual skills and interests of each child. Parent 3 also volunteered in the room one morning per week and found it helped her communication with the teacher, and her understanding of how the boys were learning and what she could do to help at home. ST3G was an experienced teacher with some special education background and twins of her own. She was a relatively new executive teacher to the school and was pleased with the school’s caring and supportive
atmosphere. This setting was very responsive to the children’s and parent’s needs but family circumstances meant they moved to Location M midway through the year.

**Setting 2: 2013**

Location M was a very large public school in a small regional centre, where Parent 3 moved to be near family. The boys transitioned to this school well, partly aided by having cousins to look out for them. There were five kindergarten classes and different regimes to learn, but the twins were accepted and catered for in a no-fuss way, and Parent 3 began volunteering at Location M one morning per week. ST3M had some family affinity with children with autism and approached her teaching with a strong belief in the twins’ ability to learn. This teacher was not as available as the previous teacher (ST3G) for Parent 3 to talk to, there being different structures in the school for communication. At the end of each day all kindergarten teachers, children and parents gathered to exchange information. Parent 3 was aware of being concise and focussed when bringing up any concerns to ST3M. Principal SP3M was relatively new to the school and had worked with the large number of staff to implement the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) schema for improving interpersonal communication in the school.

**Review of Outcomes over Time**

**Preschool:** Location A proved to be a supportive environment for Parent 3 and her twins, with group sessions once a week where teachers and other parents talked both in a focussed and an incidental way about the children’s learning program. The teacher ET3A took some leave for part of the year but the team was able to minimise the effect because of their close communication. Parent 3 praised the family worker, who helped her at a personal level with her confidence to negotiate parenting and school issues. Parent 3 also undertook case manager training (PACC) and was coached in ways to overcome nervousness and feelings of intimidation. The program at Location A focussed on goals negotiated with teachers, parents and therapists. ET3A was not closely involved with the transition activities with the new school due to leave taken from work.
School: Location G used inclusive practices, with team teaching, parent volunteers, buddies in the playground, and a staff and principal who watched out for all students and made them welcome. Principal SP3G had instigated family-friendly approaches over a number of years, and ST3G was a skilled executive teacher who demonstrated empathy and understanding with the boys’ learning. Communication with parents was a priority in kindergarten at Location G. Parent 3 was reassured and supported and her hopes of the boys keeping up in the class were met.

Location M was very different in size and nature but a number of factors helped the transition that occurred halfway through the year; good home preparation, family at the school, familiarisation visits and positive school practices for students with additional needs. A Learning Support Team was formed and Parent 3 provided information and her ideas on settling the boys in, such as keeping them in the same class. ST3M had little warning about the enrolment but incorporated them into her class and other groups in such a way that they were happy and confident in a short space of time. There was ample evidence of other staff members taking an interest and contributing to their enjoyment of school.

4.3.1 DATA COLLECTED FOR PARENT 3 CASE STUDY

Interviews:
Four semi-structured informal interviews were held in times and locations of Parent 3’s choosing; two in 2012 and two in 2013 (see interview profile, Appendix A). Parent 3 was shy at first when describing her experiences and sharing personal information, but warmed to the project and the researcher and opened up in a more confident way over the two year period. Her teacher and executive partners all consented to interviews (ET3A twice, EDA once in 2012; then in 2013 ST3G once, SP3G once; then at the new school halfway through 2013, ST3M once and SP3M once). All spoke at length and in detail of their perspectives of their part in the parent’s and family’s experience of transition to school (see interview profiles in Appendix A).
Meetings:
In 2012 Parent 3 attended Location A’s parent information night with education representatives (see Appendix D meeting observation) and became worried and nervous about the process. Her response was to seek help from staff at Location A, which included a personal training course called Parents as Case Managers.

There were no other planning meetings where the researcher was invited to attend in 2012 or 2013. Parent 3 was invited to specific planning meetings at both school locations.

Documentary Analysis:
In 2012, Director EDA emphasised family-centred and strengths-based principles based on the guidelines of the centre’s licencing and funding body DADHC, and also quoted United Nations conventions on the child and disability. She used Family Service Plans and complied with state and national guidelines such as the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Standards and Quality Framework (see Appendix C).

In 2013 SP3G said he annually updated a document by consensus with staff and parents called the Wellbeing Guide, an in-school statement of how the school’s values were being honoured and implemented. His focus was people more than documents and he considered Location G a village school where the individual needs of families and children came first. SP3G said he had been facilitating the inclusion of students with additional needs for many years (Appendix C).

At Location M SP3M cited the implementation of Positive Behaviour Support for Learning (PBL) and the improvement of lines of communication in the school as his priorities. PBL brought the cultural change he believed was needed in the school, and a communication checklist and protocol assisted in bringing together information from all parties assisting students, particularly those with additional needs. The stage learning groups in the school, the Learning Support Teams, the parents and teachers and himself all had the means to be included in planning and implementation of strategies. SP3M also cited Best Start- changed to PLAN- as the means to track students across all their school years and be informed and accountable about their learning (see Appendix C).
Scale of Independent Behaviour - Revised (SIBR-R)
Parent 3 and her teacher partners did not complete a pair of scores; both parties agreed to the process but did not return forms.

4.3.2 NVIVO MATRIX QUERIES

Query 1: Family 3 experiences of partnerships 2012-2013
The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Partnership set and filtered for Parent 3. Strong relationship between actions and needs became apparent for Parent 3 and her family over the two year transition period.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Teaming was the most valuable feature of Parent 3’s partnership experience, linked strongly with family needs, positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Examples:

‘You can’t do everything by yourself and you can’t know everything, and you can’t be everywhere for your child, so if you don’t use teamwork and communicate about it, then it’s really your child that’s going to suffer!’ (P3M, round 4)

‘We have a management meeting every Tuesday morning where we sit and talk about upcoming individual students, and we have a Learning Support Team meeting three times a term and those boys were raised at both of those- so everyone’s on the same page.’ (SP3G, round 3)

Shared understanding was the next most valuable feature, also linked strongly to family needs, positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘What we decided to do together was just to integrate them fully, to do things as the rest of the class would do, to begin with, and if there were any problems then we would change it. But they were fine! They didn’t really need it! Although she was very understanding, for example, when my husband was going away to work- L was very upset- it upset him a lot. It changed his routine and he was really put out by it, and he started hiding. And she [ST3G] was great about that.’ (P3G, round 3)

Understanding of own role was important to Parent 3 in meeting family needs, and also linked to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:
‘I’ve spoken to the teacher and I’ve said that if we can keep an open communication, and I hope we do, because there’s other things we can do. We have FACSIA (for autism) funding. If they’re having problems with this or that we can see to it.’ (P3A, round 2)

Positive communication was next most important for Parent 3 meeting family needs; again, strongly linked to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘They communicate with me...what, how the kids are doing. I love getting the feedback at the end of the day- what they’ve done and how they’ve done it and things like that.’ (Parent 3A, round 1)

‘I think partnerships are important, and it’s just the sharing of communication. It’s the communication that makes a difference to understand what you’re doing and what I’m doing- and we’re both doing the same thing to try and achieve a result.’ (Parent 3G, round 3)

Positive signs of commitment from partners rated highly for Parent 3 in meeting family needs; there were strong links to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions in evidence again. Example:

‘Well it’s a culture, not an event. This whole school is very child-centred and we have lots of things in place. Every teacher knows every child, because we’re small enough to be able to do that. My place in it is to make sure the right people are going to meet them and greet them... our school rules are based around care; we have a care program. So care is a critical ethos of the school!’ (SP3G, round 3)

Empowerment was important to Parent 3, as she rated her own growth over time in this area as a personal achievement. It was clearly linked to family needs, positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘When we moved to this new school [end of term 2] they wanted to split them up and I put my foot down and said “No! They need to stay together because of this and this and this!” And they said “OK!” [laughs] They listened and they agreed to keep them together for at least this year.’ (P3M, round 4)
NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

The family experience was predominantly positive with very low incidences of negative ratings. Communication, understanding of own role and teaming had single digit mentions only. Example:

‘Some people are just so much easier! They take the time to explain things to me, because I get there and I get all flustered.’ (Parent 3A, round 1)

Matrix Summary of Query 1

The partnership nodes emerging from this query that were highly related to Parent 3’s family needs were in order; teaming, shared understanding, understanding of own role, positive communication, positive signs of commitment and empowerment. These nodes also were associated with high scores for Parent 3’s perception of positive emotions, positive child transition outcomes, and her own positive experience of transition. There were occasional single digit mentions of negative aspects of partnership.

Query 2: Family 3 experiences of professional practices 2012-2013

The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Professional Practice set to identify significant professional practices during transition for Family 3.

POSITIVE PRACTICES:

Knowing parent goals, allied to family needs, was the strongest node association. Also firmly associated were positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Examples:

‘We do have some families who like to stay in group, which is their decision, which is fine. We’re open to that. And generally those families want to stay because they want to see the strategies in action so that they can pick up exactly how the teachers are using those strategies and how they might be able to implement them at home as well.’ (ET3A, round 1)
'Then parents are a big part of that where we tailor our Learning Support Team (LST) meetings to include parents, in particular if we’re case-managing children, so they’re completely informed as to what our concerns or otherwise are with their kids, and they’re part of the decision-making process.' (SP3M, round 4)

Personal skills were important to Parent 3 who allied these strongly with family needs and positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘It’s very helpful. She’s [the Family Worker at Location A] helping me get my thoughts together about what I need to find out and what I want to know and what I need to do and things like that, which has been really helpful. And we had orientation at the school last Friday, and I took a list of questions so I wouldn’t stress out and forget.’ (Parent 3A, round 2)

Positive child focus was the next most important aspect of professional practice for Parent 3, allied again with family needs and positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Examples:

‘Definitely with our home visits and whatever observations we take during those first 4-5 weeks, linking that with information the parents give us to formulate some long-term and short-term goals with our IFSP and then our IEP to support the child’s program.’ (ET3A, round 1)

‘She got down and she was talking to them eye to eye and she was saying “I have twins and they’re grown up!” And telling them personal things.’ (P3A, round 2)

Authentic caring for Parent 3’s children was highly related to family needs and positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘I know when I wanted to organise transition for them for next year, because I don’t want them to have any anxiety, and we don’t usually notify the children until the 2nd day of next year, then I wanted them to know now. I approached our LST and said can I have special permission to notify P3M and the boys and to arrange some visits to where they were going to go. So I did speak to P3M before I did that though; I’d rather ask her first and say did she have the same feeling as I did- that I felt they’d benefit from that- and she agreed.’ (ST3M, round 4)
The node *empathy for parent’s situation in meeting family needs* also rated highly, and was connected to a lesser extent to *positive child and parent transition outcomes* and *positive emotions*. Example:

‘It’s a hard road for a lot of parents out there, particularly single mums or dads, and you’ve got to take the time to listen to people.’ (ST3G, round 3)

The *exemplary practices by teachers* node was noteworthy in meeting *family needs*, and weakly associated with *positive child and parent transition outcomes* and *positive emotions*. Example:

‘Our Learning Support structure- when we have children who require some help, not necessarily remedial, it could be extension- then parents are a big part of that.’ (SP3M, round 4)

**NEGATIVE PRACTICES:**

Parent 3 had very positive experiences of professional practices and made only minor mention of *negative emotions* related to *empathy* and *knowing parent goals*. Example:

‘I was communicating to [P3A], and also had communicated to the school via direct contact with the principal, who felt that it was ok, it would be fine. But for me and for her, it started to worry that parent, because half our families in that transition to school group were going through the process much sooner.’ (ET3A, round 2)

**Matrix Summary of Query 2**

The significant professional practice nodes emerging from this query that were highly related to Parent 3’s *family needs* were in order; *knowing parent goals, personal skills, positive child focus, authentic caring, empathy for parent, and exemplary practices by teachers*. They were associated with high scores for Parent 3 on *positive child and parent transition outcomes* and *positive emotions*. The negative mentions were infrequent.
Query 3: Family 3 experiences of Organisational Factors 2012-2013

The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Organisational Factors set to investigate the impact of bureaucracy on the family experience of transition over 2 years.

POSITIVE PRACTICES:

In this matrix query, quality processes were strongly allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘With discussion with P3 I also arranged for her to come in on an extra day, and the boys have some experience in the classroom and meet their peer support buddies ahead of time. That would see them through the beginning of kindergarten, and then we walked around the school and took photos, and we did some social stories, so that she was able to show the boys the school, the classroom, where the toilets were, how everything worked, where the library was, and when I knew what teachers were going to be there in kindergarten.’ (ST3G, round 3)

‘We then put together that final report and it goes back to that parent. That parent has the choice about who they want to forward that report on to. We often suggest that they forward a copy to the school counsellor, and also at least the principal, who can forward it on to the kindergarten teacher.’ (ET3A, round 2)

A positive school climate was significant, and allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘Trying to be as open as possible I think. You’ve got to be transparent and you can’t keep things from parents. You can’t try to make things happen, that’s why I would always go to P3M first- or the parent first- and run things by them and ask what they think. Make them feel like they’re included, and I always say to the parent “you know your child best- you tell me, because I’ve got my education perspective, but you know this child better than anyone.”’ (SP3M, round 4)

‘Why I decided to go [ to Location G] was basically the feeling; not of the facilities or anything like that, but of the people there. When I went there the first time, just to say I might be coming to this school, can I get some forms- they were so welcoming! Smiles on their faces and- “hi, how are you going?” And the principal would walk past and they’d introduce us and he’d smile and say hi and get down to the boys’ level and say hello, and he was saying who he was and- “have you got a minute?
Do you want to go for a walk around the school?” And he took the time, just from me walking in off the street, to go for a walk around the school!’ (P3G, round 3)

The intentions and goals of bureaucratic practices, as made explicit to parents, were strongly tied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘We’ve had our current program for all kids coming in, it’s been going for a number of years- they come in four times. For special needs kids, or any kids that have transition issues, they’re invited to come back, and make times to come back. These boys came in a number of times outside of the regular orientation times.’ (SP3G, round 3)

‘I think it’s the growing realisation that effective teaching is about partnerships. It is about that home and school partnership. It is like climbing a mountain when you don’t have that good working relationship with the family. You have to be able to talk to people and understand- they have a different view of their child that they can tell you, and sometimes the things that they will tell you give you an insight into why this is happening in the classroom, and I think the partnership is vital.’ (ST3G, round 3)

Leadership was of some importance to family needs and was associated with positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘I think our PBL [Positive Behaviour for Learning] has made a huge difference. It’s only been in this year, and I think it’s just made such a...the children are being rewarded at every turn. There’s a special day and a special activity, and it’s really specific things that we’re looking for. It’s really clear and explicit for children and parents about what we’re looking for, and what’s expected. And all the signage around the school has made it so much easier for children to make good choices, and to know what’s expected.’ (ST3M, round 4)

NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

Parent 3 registered minimal negative quality aspects of organisational practices in the family experience of transition.
Matrix Summary for Query 3
The most reported organisational nodes emerging from this query that related to Parent 3’s family needs were in order; quality processes, positive school climate, intentions and goals and leadership. They were also associated with higher scores from Parent 3 on positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions.

4.4 CASE STUDY 4: PARENT 4

Participant Abbreviations

2012: Parent 4= P4A, Early Childhood Teacher= ET4A, Director=EDA
2013: Parent4 =P4H, School Teacher= ST4H, Principal= SP4H

Locations

A= Early Intervention Service
H= Primary School

Background information
Parent 4 was in her 40s, single, living in a suburb of a large city and bringing up her youngest child who had autism and anxiety issues. She had given up fulltime work to care for him, and was skilled in gathering information and networking in order to find the best programs and resources. This led her to Location A early intervention centre where she reported valuing the interactions she and her child had had with the staff and the programs over several years. Parent 4 was a confident person, appeared to be sure of her role as advocate, and was focussed on the needs of her child. She attended the information night at Location A where education representatives talked about school enrolment and reported feeling overwhelmed by the type and amount of information.

Parent 4 subsequently spoke to her partner ET4A to help make decisions about the process of transition, and also did her own research and networking. Her child had significant negative reactions to some social situations and she wanted to minimise stress and anxiety by finding a good match for him. Choosing a school involved visits to
several schools by Parent 4, but she also applied and was accepted to enrol her son in a
special class for students with autism. She and her son trialled the class, but a regular
school, Location H, had been chosen for the future, as the special class placement was
only for 12 months. After a few weeks of attending the special class in early 2013,
Parent 4 decided the class was not working for her child and enrolled him at Location
H. He began attending there for limited daily hours, to allow a staged transition.

Setting: 2012
Location A was an early intervention centre in a large university, with a team of
teachers, therapists and family workers. Parent A and her child attended programs
there over several years and developed close relationships with some staff members.
In 2012 ET4A played an important role in supporting the search for a school by
consulting and debriefing about progress and decision-making. He was available to
accompany Parent 4 to transition interviews, though did not in this case. Location A
strongly supported the transition process in the lead-up to school, and in the case of
the information night that Parent 4 and others found confusing, ET4A took a pragmatic
view of the need to provide information and work within the system. He supported the
choice of special class placement, and Parent 4 left the centre feeling very hopeful.

Setting 1: 2013
After a brief and unhappy period in a special class, Parent 4 approached Location H to
enrol her child. The school was a medium-sized public school in a low-socio-economic
area which had received extra funding for many years to address the social and
educational needs of the children. The principal SP4H was supportive of inclusion by
belief and practice and had a strong presence in the community as an advocate and a
fundraiser for the school. He accepted all the provisos put by Parent 4 for partial
attendance as well as her presence in the room as a teacher assistant. There was a plan
to reduce her time in the room and increase the child’s time at school, but this did not
eventuate. There was an experienced executive teacher [ST4H] on the kindergarten
class, with no teacher’s aide, but with many students having significant learning and
social needs. Part way into the year, a new student arrived with funding for a teacher’s
aide, so a new dynamic ensued, with reportedly poor coordination and communication
between the three adults in the room. Parent 4 felt the effect on her child was sufficiently negative to remove him from the school. The principal SP4H was on leave at the time. There was no resolution or mediation brought to bear by any party as Parent 4 chose to walk away, reporting her child was happier for that.

Setting 2: 2013
In the second half of 2013, Parent 4 home-schooled her child, after going through the registration process and obtaining leave to teach him for 12 months. She was open to the idea of finding a school again, but wanted the child to be settled, learning and confident. Parent 4 belonged to parent and home-schooling networks, plus she had the resources of therapies through funding for autism, and a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding package.
Review of Outcomes over Time

**Preschool:** Parent 4 found that Location A provided her with a wealth of information and strategies so that she felt supported, and saw her child make satisfying progress. Transition proved to be a stressful and emotional time for her as she tried to choose the best option, finding her first choice in a special class had poor outcomes for her boy, evidenced by upset and nightmares at home.

**School:** Location H was an inclusive school with a welcoming principal, but Parent 4 and her child could not settle in the kindergarten classroom. ST4H was operating in a challenging classroom with 2 other adults- an aide and Parent 4- in the room, but with a reportedly low level of planning and communication between them all. When the boy exhibited his anxieties again through nightmares Parent 4 decided to withdraw him from the school.

**Home-schooling:** In the second half of 2013 Parent 4 was registered to home-school her child, and received useful support from the personnel associated with it. She and her child were settled in home-schooling and family and social activities, with some respite available using NDIS funds.

### 4.4.1 DATA COLLECTED FOR PARENT 4 CASE STUDY

**Interviews:**
Four semi-structured informal interviews were held in times and locations of Parent 4’s choosing; two in 2012 and two in 2013 (see interview profile, Appendix A). Parent 4 was confident when describing her experiences and thoughts, and clearly her child and his reactions were the barometer she used to judge how planning and implementation were progressing. Her teacher and executive partners all consented to interviews (ET4A twice, EDA once in 2012, then in 2013 ST4H once and SP4H once). Parent 4’s final interview in 2013 was unpaired, as she had begun home-schooling her child. The preschool partners were open and forthcoming in interviews, but the school partners at Location H were discussing the aftermath of Parent 4 withdrawing her child and were a little more guarded as a result, and worried about that outcome being unresolved. (Appendix A).
Meetings:
In 2012 Parent 4 attended Location A’s parent information night with education representatives (see Appendix D), and was not impressed with the process. Her response was to seek help from staff at Location A, and begin searching for a school that seemed right for her child. There were no other planning meetings where the researcher was invited to attend in 2012 or 2013. Parent 4 reported a lack of formal planning as one of her issues with the transition of her child.

Documentary Analysis:
In 2012 Director EDA emphasised family-centred and strengths-based principles based on the guidelines of the centre’s licencing and funding body DADHC, and also quoted United Nations conventions on the child and disability (REF). She used Family Service Plans and complied with state and national guidelines such as the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Standards and Quality Framework (see Appendix C).

In 2013 SP4H was committed to inclusion, with knowledge of all the disability-related policies of the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) and an open door approach to enrolment of students with additional needs. His attitudes were formed well before the Every Student Every School policy (REF) was put into practice, through personal experience within his own family. He stated that there was no single document which could tell him how to relate to children and families or to build rapport and links with the community (see Appendix C).

Scale of Independent Behaviour- Revised (SIBR-R)
In 2012 Parent 4 scored her child at 91 (raw) compared to her partner ET4A’s 84 (raw). This equated in age equivalent functioning to 4 years and 2 months, compared to 3 years and 4 months.

In 2013 it was a similar discrepancy with her score being 90 (raw) for him and ST4H’s being 84 (raw), or perceptions of functioning of 4 years and 2 months compared to 3 years and 4 months. This could be characterised as the parent having slightly more optimism and higher expectations of the child compared to his teacher’s assessments (Appendix B).
4.4.2 NVivo Matrix Queries

Query 1: Family 4 experiences of partnerships 2012-2013

The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Partnership set and filtered for Parent 4. Strong relationships between actions and needs became apparent for Parent 4 and her family over the two year transition period.

Positive Relationships:

Teaming was the most valuable feature of Parent 4’s partnership experience, linked most strongly with family needs, and strongly to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Examples:

‘Teaming is the reason we’ve been able to have the outcome that we’ve had! If it wasn’t for being to access those little things, I don’t think we would have been able to move forward. I think what I... I wouldn’t have had the confidence to make those decisions!’ (P4, round 4)

‘SP4H said that the boy was coming to spend mornings in our room I got Sue Larkey’s books out and read as much as I could about children coming to school and that transition time. About setting routines, having expectations for what they will and won’t be able to achieve. Making sure that I was aware of any triggers that could upset him that might happen incidentally in the classroom. Looking for those- P4 came in and we worked out what was going to work for him and what wouldn’t. She was in contact with his OT and she brought in his little chair for him to sit on the floor to keep him still and to stop him from rocking and rolling.’ (ST4H, round 3)

Shared understanding was the next most valuable feature, also linked strongly to family needs, and weakly to positive child and transition outcomes and positive emotions. This was explained by an unusual trajectory with transition that resulted in home-schooling for the child. Example:

‘Changing my view that this centre belongs to the families rather than it’s our centre and you’re coming to us. We’re here in your centre. Yep, shifting the ownership more than anything else, onto families. And I’m here just to listen and contribute where needed.’ (ET4A, round 1)
Understanding of own role was important to Parent 4 in meeting family needs, and was related to positive and negative child and parent transition outcomes, and positive and negative emotions. Examples:

‘I think I didn’t understand the process. I didn’t understand what need to happen. When I first came here at the beginning of the year I was aware that (boy 4) needed to start school but I didn’t understand how that was going to happen. What I needed to do.’ (P4A, round 2)

‘I feel a lot more confident in that I think I had the ideal that the education department or the schools or whatever- just knew what...I thought that I would take him and they would...the job would be done! I had an idea that once school starts I’d have a life! [laughs] I’d just hand him over and things would be right. And that didn’t happen! And I feel now that, OK, I’m fairly empowered because I go back to- if I don’t do it for my boy, I don’t see too many other people that would be putting up their hand to do it.’ (P4H, round 3)

The fourth important feature in the positive experience for Family 4 meeting family needs was positive communication, with positive emotions most strongly linked. There were lesser associations for positive parent transition outcomes and negative emotions. Example:

‘Through genuine communication, is one important aspect- although we are educators, we are communicating, I guess, on the most appropriate level and on a very equal level... with the young boy. Also identifying straight away what this young boy’s interests and strengths are- rather than a deficit model- the interests and strengths and building on those. Maintaining a very effective close relationship with his family is particularly important as well because families are in the room with the child and this young boy and all the children pick up on the relationship that you develop with the family.’ (ET4A, round 1)

Empowerment was also important to Parent 4, linked strongly to positive emotions. Example:

‘Quite often in larger meetings many people will look towards myself as the primary educator and ask a series of questions. I look straight towards the [parent] partner - because the partner can answer all of those questions, and over time...the partner becomes aware.’ (ET4A, round 1)
NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Family 4’s experience of transition included quite a few negative elements as they moved through three settings; briefly to a special class, then to almost a semester in a regular kindergarten class, and then to home-schooling. Negative child transition outcomes were strongly related to negative shared understanding, negative communication, lack of teaming and understanding of own role. Example:

‘There is a little bit, a small amount of anxiety...um, at one stage I spoke with the coming partner, and she said “oh, he’ll be fine!”, you know, “he’ll be right!” And I don’t feel happy with that response. It’s a bit too flippant. “He’ll be right, we’ll make him fit in”, I think “Oh! OK!” But I’m the one who suffers the consequences!’ (P4A, round 2)

Parent 4’s negative experience of transition at the point of entry to school was largely due to 6 factors; lack of teaming, negative shared understanding, negative communication, understanding own role, negative shared decision-making and trust erosion. Negative emotions were associated with each of these partnership elements. Examples:

‘In this instance it was very hard. I think it could have been improved if we had had a meeting or such with just the three of us, and had an idea of where...there wasn’t a clear...I had an idea of where I wanted to go with boy, the teacher had her idea, and the teacher’s aide had a bit of an idea, but we weren’t on the same page!’ (P4H, round 3)

‘It would have worked a lot better if we had a group meeting. I think I tended to access the principal and so it was communication between myself and the principal, rather than the teacher or the aide- I’m not quite sure why that happened. I think he [SP4H] went away on leave.’ (P4, round 4)

Feelings of isolation were clustered with lack of teaming and understanding of own role. Example:

‘There were some difficulties for me with the team because I was so used to making decisions on my own and doing it on my own. To have to open up and let other people in, and to be able to take on board and trust.’ (P4A, round 1)
Matrix Summary of Query 1

The important partnership nodes emerging from this query that were highly related to Parent 4’s family needs were, in order: teaming, shared understanding, understanding own role, positive communication and empowerment. Parent 4 experienced the positive and negative aspects of these partnership nodes over the two year period of transition and her range of emotions reflected the positive and negative closely. Her scores for child and parent transition outcomes were trending in the negative more than for any other family, culminating in her leaving the school system for the homeschooling option.

Query 2: Family 4 experiences of professional practices 2012-2013

The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Professional Practice set to identify professional practices and their impact during transition for Family 4.

POSITIVE PRACTICES:

Positive practices that emerged as important all had links to family needs, positive emotions, positive child transition outcomes and positive parent transition outcomes; but for Family 4 they also linked strongly to the negative aspects of the same nodes of professional practice as the transition experience unfolded.

Knowing parent goals allied to family needs was the strongest relationship by a large margin, with associations with positive emotions and positive parent transition outcomes related to some of the phases of transition. Examples:

‘The updates that we’re giving each other don’t specifically relate to transition to school, or specifically relate to the child’s ability or disability- it’s more of a broader picture of what she wants or expects for her child and family. And that fits in also with the framework mentioned earlier [Early Years Learning Framework].’ (ET4A, round 1)

‘We invite them in, we make an appointment for an individualised tour of the school, we sit and talk about what their child’s needs are, how they see their child as a being- gifts and talents, or any weaknesses and concerns that we have to address. I believe it’s seen by the people as a very welcoming and warm experience for them. It
builds a lot of confidence, because giving your child to someone to educate and look after for a majority of the day is quite a lot of trust involved.’ (SP4H, round 3)

Personal skills were the next strongest link to family needs, positive emotions and positive parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘We’re winding up the old now, and I’m preparing [boy] with things like “next week is a party at Location A and then you’re finished”, and “you won’t be going back there”- trying to get him to get his head around the change. “You’ll be going to [special class briefly attended] Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday”…um, just trying to introduce the idea that he’ll be starting school.’ (P4A, round 2)

Empathy for parent’s situation in meeting family needs also rated highly. Example:

‘Of course, many families aren’t thinking of those factual aspects initially- it is all mainly the concern and worry about the whole transition process- because it is quite big and daunting. Once we are empathic to that, we can move straight on to the factual information and get the whole team on track.’ (ET4A, round 1)

Positive child focus was important to Parent 4’s family needs, but only weakly connected to positive emotions and positive child transition outcomes. Example:

‘For the very start I spoke to SP4H about could we have shortened days as (boy 4) was not coping so well with the length of days, and SP4H said he hadn’t turned 6 yet, so he was very flexible in what he could give him. So he said, “until he turned 6, I’m really happy for you to do whatever needs to be done”. So I asked him if he was happy enough for me to stay there till he needed, or until we could get a fulltime aide. In that particular classroom, and more so the playground, but also the classroom too, there would be no way I would see [boy 4] being able to cope without some support.’(P4H, round 3)

Authentic caring for Parent 4’s child was related to family needs and positive emotions. Example:

‘Over the past- over I guess term 4- I tend to focus on the children I work with as, more as part of the family unit. Prior to that I’m really focussing on their needs, their skills, their abilities, but now I start to put that more in the context of the whole family. Because it’s the whole family that will be moving from here.’ (ET4A, round 2)
NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

There were negative partnership issues which began in the school year. One placement was short-lived and Parent 4 described concerns there which emerged again in her next partnership at Location H.

Knowing parent goals was the largest measure of negative processes for Parent 4; also strongly associated with negative emotions, negative parent transition outcomes, and less so with negative child transition outcomes and isolation. Examples:

‘I felt during that whole time I muddled through! I think at the beginning of the term- the beginning of the school year- if it had have been “OK, now we need to be thinking right now about school next year”. It was a process for me. I had to muddle my way through it until I got a clearer head, then I could take some action and I could think “if I had started a little earlier” then I would have felt a little more positive. Now if that makes sense?‘ (P4A, round 2)

‘It really needs to be simplified! And even if it was over a longer period of time, rather than just one information session... If maybe somebody from this organisation came into the group of a morning or afternoon group, and then gave you the opportunity to talk directly to them.’ (P4, round 2)

Personal skills were linked to family needs, negative emotions and negative parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘Smaller and personal and some clearer written information. I took away the information but I didn’t understand it.’ (P4A, round 1)

Empathy for parent also rated in a negative way for Parent 4, with a link to negative emotions. Example:

‘Recently I became really overwhelmed with the whole starting school process, I attended the information evening- but tended not to retain any of the information- it just went all over my head! I started to get a bit confused about what steps I needed to take, I emailed ET4A and he got back through email and he broke it all down for me and said “there’s no need to panic” and this is what you need to do, and it made all the difference.’ (P4H, round 1)
Partner skills and negative child focus were linked to negative emotions and negative parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘I was disappointed by the way it unfolded. I had a lot of faith in that particular placement because of what it was, and I placed a lot of trust because it was a specialist type school; I thought, OK, it will be very well run, it will be very organised. And I found there was a lack of enthusiasm amongst the teaching staff.’ (P4H, round 3) [speaking of a failed trial of 2 weeks in a special class]

Matrix Summary of Query 2
The professional practice nodes emerging from this query that highly related to Parent 4’s family needs were, in order: knowing parent goals, personal skills, empathy for parent, positive child focus and authentic caring. Parent 4 experienced these nodes in both a positive and a negative way, with child transition outcomes, parent transition outcomes and emotions falling in line as positive or negative. Her experience of preschool was largely positive.

The negative nodes for the practices registered strongly for Parent 4 in the school phase of transition and the association with negative family experience was clearly in line with negative emotions, negative child and parent transition outcomes and a moderate link to isolation when knowing parent goals was in question.

Query 3: Family 4 experiences of Organisational Factors 2012-2013
The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Organisational Factors set to investigate the impact of bureaucracy on the family experience of transition over two years.

POSITIVE PRACTICES:
In this matrix query quality processes were strongly allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘When the family first starts in a group, it’s clearly identified who the key worker is attached to that family. Quite often for transition to school kids, it’s me as
the teacher... however, as a broader team, it’s the family who can readily identify who needs to go to certain meetings, or who needs to put in particular feedback and information... which is how I think we have worked particularly well as a team.’ (ET4A, round 2)

‘The Family Worker’s been wonderful. She has been very approachable for when I feel it’s all too overwhelming, and she helps me sift through it all. Then I can go back on my way, and then I’ll come back again... because it’s... life still goes on! And you’ve still got everything else happening - and this on top.’ (P4A, round 1)

A positive school climate was important to Parent 4 and allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘I believe it’s seen by the people as a very welcoming and warm experience for them. It builds a lot of confidence, because giving your child to someone to educate and look after for a majority of the day is quite a lot of trust involved, so I think it makes a lot of difference to parents when they can come and have a look at the school, and feel what the school is like, because every school has a heartbeat, and some schools have a bigger beat than others.’ (SP4H, round 3)

‘I think it’s a very strong belief, and I think that people realise that the reason I’m like I am, and the reason the school is like it is, is because it is all about community, and we are all about a community made up of a variety of different people, whether it be race, ability, social status- and I think the greatest thing about having your child attend a school like this - an inclusive community school - is that they experience everything that is real, and we don’t wrap children up in cotton wool, we tell them that this is truth and this is life.’ (SP4H, round 3)

NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

Negative practices for Family 4 centred on Parent 4 trying to match family needs to quality processes. Her preschool experience was also quite different to her school experiences.

When negative quality practices were discussed by Parent 4 in regard to family needs there were strong associations with negative emotions and negative parent and child transition outcomes. Examples:
‘I feel like there wasn’t enough orientation. As I said, we had the 4 sessions. I think orientation could have lasted over a longer period of time. Maybe shorter sessions, longer periods of time. I think there’s only seven new students, so even if it was once a fortnight and they came in for a day, or they had alternate days or something. Four sessions doesn’t seem enough.’ (P4, round 2)

‘It was a traumatic experience! Cause you’re just given all this information and lots of confusion!’ (P4, round 2)

Intentions and goals perceived by Parent 4 as negative in regard to family needs were also strongly associated with negative emotions and negative parent and child transition outcomes. Example:

‘It was all a very rushed start, I don’t think at the time we were even very clear on what day they were going to start. Thinking back it was, ah, some children were starting on the 1st day back, and we were - as a group - we were wondering if we were starting with the other (mainstream) kids, or starting the next day. And how did we solve that...? I think it was through messaging backwards and forwards between parents that we worked that out.’ (P4, round 3)

Some experience of negative school climate resulted in moderate alliances to family needs, negative emotions and negative parent and child transition outcomes. Example:

‘There was an example of one that we went to that he was very unhappy and he exhibited that! There was just no way I’d even consider the school. And it wasn’t anything huge, it was just that he couldn’t cope with the environment and he had a meltdown, and I thought “well this is not the place.”’ (P4, round 2)

A group of references to bureaucracy was associated to a moderate degree with family needs, negative emotions and negative parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘He needs speech therapy, he needs support, he needs aides. What are we going to do? And then that again is another headache, because you have to fight for those things. You have to push to get them.’ (P4, round 2)

Leadership and family needs had some negative associations for Parent 4 in negative emotions and negative child and parent transition outcomes. Example:
‘At [mainstream school] the principal spoke broadly about “well, we’ll need to put some things in place”, which was a nice positive thing for me, but in another….I went to another mainstream school and it was “well, there is no funding” and lots of talk about “there’s a pool of funding and it’s allocated”. The principal nominates or something.’ (P4, round 2)

Matrix Summary for Query 3

The significant organisational nodes emerging from this query that related to Parent 4’s family needs were in order; quality processes, intentions and goals, school climate, intentions and goals, bureaucracy and leadership. Parent 4 experienced contrasting and distinctive phases in the transition to school process, so that there were both positive and negative examples of the above facets of organisation. It was instructive to note the close association for Parent 4 of positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions with positive processes, and the close association between perceived negative processes and both negative child and parent transition outcomes and emotions.

4.5 CASE STUDY 5: PARENT 5

Participant Abbreviations

2012: Parent 5= P5B, Early Childhood Teacher= ET5B, Director=EDB

2013: Parent 5=P5I, School Teacher= ST5I, Principal= SP5I

Locations

B= Community Preschool

I= Primary School

Background information

Parent 5 was in her 30s, married with 4 children and living in a country town. The youngest children were twin boys on the autism spectrum who attended a community preschool, Location B. Parent 5 worked part-time and could talk to the staff at drop-off or pick-up most days. She reported being a shy person who has become more
confident over the years of parenting her sometimes challenging children. She had learned to manage her boys’ cases and use the help that was available such as funding for autism, which paid for therapies and other resources. Parent 5 had an older son with more significant disabilities who attended a special class, so she had familiarity with many of the school and education issues. She anticipated that the twins would go to the local public school, Location I, with their sister.

Setting: 2012
Location B was a community preschool in a country town with a director, EDB, who was also the teacher partner of Parent 5, and identified as ET5B for round 2 interviews. She played an integral local role in networking, pooling resources and providing country parents with access to services without having to travel to the city. EDB reported that 25% of the children in her care were identified with some form of learning support needs or disadvantage. Parent 5 was familiar with Location B as all four of her children had attended the preschool. EDB was able to fund a transition teacher to attend school meetings and work closely with all families, particularly those with additional needs. Because Location I school had a new principal, EDB attended transition meetings with Parent 5 and her family to further the shared understanding of transition processes between the school and the preschool. Staff from Location B and all the other early childhood centres in the district met regularly and had strong links to their local schools. Staff and children from Location B frequently visited nearby schools for special and casual occasions, and teachers from preschool and school exchanged information pertinent to transition, having often known each other for some years. Location B ran a playgroup within one of the schools, which also helped to build networks. It was common practice in this district for schools and preschools to plan and execute transition together, particularly as there had been some demonstrated success with enrolling children with complex and additional needs to local schools in the recent past.

Setting: 2013
Location I was a medium-sized public school in a country town with a relatively new principal SP5I. It was in an area of some disadvantage and had attracted National
Partnership funding for several years. Some of the funds were used to create an executive position in kindergarten; this was held by ST5I. Prior to the twins starting school Location I had a well-thought out process to meet the parents and the children, as well as an attendance schedule for them late in the year. Staff at Location I had developed a good working relationship with Location B and a practised transition setup and information exchange, including visits by school staff to Location B to see the boys in preschool. A buddy system operated, with some older boys specially recruited for the twins. A teacher’s aide was nominated in 2012 and known in advance to the boys. Parent 5 had a daughter there at Location I and was confident in the school and its preparation.

Review of Outcomes over Time

Preschool: During the boys’ time at Location B a concerted, directed effort was made to prepare them for transition to school. There were visits, social stories and information exchanges. A Learning Support Team was set up by Location I towards the end of 2012 and the kindergarten teacher went to see the twins in preschool. Networking was well established and a plan was in place to anticipate problems and aid transition.

School: When school started, the teacher ST5I and aide were able to manage most issues easily and Parent 5 found time to see them before or after school as needed. She returned to employment within school hours. When there was a particular issue about one of the twins wearing an item of uniform, Parent 5 was able to engage ST5I, SP5I and other members of staff to support a positive change. Location I was a community-minded school where Parent 5 and her children experienced good outcomes.

4.5.1 DATA COLLECTED FOR PARENT 5 CASE STUDY

Interviews:
Four semi-structured informal interviews were held in times and locations of Parent 5’s choosing; two in 2012 and two in 2013 (see interview profile, Appendix A). Parent 5
was shy and quietly spoken when describing her experiences and thoughts but over the period of the study showed her clear and unfussed way of approaching the task of transition to school with her children. Parent 5 had confidence in the process and communicated effectively at all the levels she needed to. Her teacher and executive partners all consented to interviews (ET5B twice in 2012 as both teacher and director; then in 2013 ST5I spoke once and SP5I once). The partners were open, forthcoming and even prolific in the detail in their conversations (Appendix A).

Meetings:
In 2012 Parent 5 and ET5B/EDB invited the researcher to a transition planning meeting as an observer at the local school, Location I, where a sibling was also enrolled (Appendix D). A Learning Support Team was formed with 5 attendees, plus the parents and children. ET5B/EDB was coordinating information and planning exchanges from Location B to Location I, with the family playing a central role. In 2013 the researcher was not invited to any planning meetings.

Documentary Analysis:
In 2012 Director EDB shared documentation with parents by showing them the goals and curriculum of the Preschool Handbook in the Early Years Learning Framework and discussing how they were being implemented. She was aware of the DEC Transition Policy document (1997) but said it gave ideas rather than specifics (Appendix C).

In 2013 SP5I was a new principal who found the DEC website to be his main resource, along with networking with other principals. He was open to the idea of extending the networking to the preschools and others to make transition a success, and supported extra visits and other contact to build relationships. In a small community he saw the value of relating with parents and developed a communication flowchart and an information book (Appendix C).

Scale of Independent Behaviour- Revised (SIBR-R)
In 2012 Parent 5 scored her child at 87, exactly the same as her partner ET5B’s 87, both agreeing on his functioning at 3 years and 8 months level of development. (Appendix B). This would suggest very good understanding between the partners about the child’s
ability (only one of the twins was chosen for this study because of his greater learning needs).

In 2013 no matched pair was obtained.

4.5.2 NVIVO MATRIX QUERIES

Query 1: Family 5 experiences of partnerships 2012-2013
The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Partnership set and filtered for Parent 5. Strong relationship between actions and needs became apparent for Parent 5 and her family over the two year transition period.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Teaming was the most valuable feature of Parent 5’s partnership experience, linked strongly with family needs, and in following order positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Examples:

‘We then invite the school teachers to come and visit us, and we usually take, first of all, our whole class, over to the school so we can see - we go to lots of different schools, it’s not just one school. We’re lucky we’re in a position where we can walk to most of our schools, local school, so we plan an excursion, so all of the children can see where all of the children are going to go. We take photos of each school and try and put those around the room so children can see where they’re going to go. Involved in that is usually photographs, so that we can make social stories for those children.’ (ET5B, round 2)

‘One of the things we do at our centre, because we do have a team around the child, is we’ve taken a new approach to employing our therapists- so if the OT, for instance, is partnered with (Regional Health Name) so they are our employee but they invoice us, so that the OT can notify the Health System that this child exists, and so there’s a smooth transition out of us and into the Health System to support the child once they’ve left our service. Because that was a problem for us, once they’d left the centre, the therapy stopped. So that moves now, it’s a seamless transition.’ (ET5B, round 2)

Positive communication was the next most valuable feature, allied to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Examples:
‘During the transitions we received a bag with lots of booklets and that kind of thing in it, about the school and all that kind of thing. I’ve also been told - I know who his aide will be for next year.’ (P5B, round 2)

‘Whenever we can - the SSLO [teacher’s aide] will if I am busy - she will communicate things for me. But he’s had such a good transition to school that there hasn’t really been a big need for major communication! [laughs] But we do see her [P5] every day. She was coming in and helping in the classrooms and that as well, so she was having an idea of what was happening in the classroom and how he was going.’ (ST5I, round 3)

Shared understanding was the next most valuable feature, also linked strongly to family needs, and less strongly to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘The therapists can certainly network with the school, and say “this is what we’ve been working on”. If the child has sensory issues that they become aware of, and sometimes these things emerge over Christmas! That period of time where we’re not with them - 6 weeks is a long time for children to change, maybe new fears, new concerns, so those therapists certainly could - I don’t know whether they have or will - certainly write reports to the school to give that additional support to the school if they needed to do that.’ (ETS5, round 2)

Understanding of own role was important to both parent and teacher partners in meeting family needs, and similarly related but subordinate features were positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘Our partnership with families and schools continue - it starts probably about the end of second term, so families are encouraged to go and talk to their local school, to inform the school. Usually the Department of Education already has their paperwork prior to that, so they are aware of the children.’ (ETS5, round 2)

The fourth significant feature in the positive experience for Family 5 meeting family needs was commitment, with positive child transition outcomes and positive emotions linked to a lesser degree. Example:

‘It’s been a long time. I probably can’t put a time on it, I would think maybe 12-13 years we’ve been working on this and refining it. We’ve always believed that the
children should go to visit the school well before they actually did orientation visits. So at that stage we used to organise with the school for the last term for the parents to meet us at the school with their child, and we’d have the classroom teacher and we’d spend an hour in the school with the child over a 5-6 week period. Eventually the school took on the orientation, so now those visits are dependent on what the school does.’ (ET5B, round 2)

NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

There were very few negative references as the family experience of transition was positive, with Parent 5 experiencing quality partnerships and processes.

Matrix Summary of Query 1

The significant partnership nodes emerging from this query that were highly related to Parent 5’s family needs were in order; **teaming, shared understanding, positive communication, understanding of own role and positive signs of commitment**. These nodes also were associated with higher scores for Parent 5’s perception of **positive emotions, positive child transition outcomes**, and her **own positive experience of transition**.

Query 2: Family 1 experiences of professional practices 2012-2013

The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Professional Practice set to identify significant professional practices during transition for Family 5.

POSITIVE PRACTICES:

Knowing parent goals allied to family needs was the most significant correlation, followed by **positive child and parent transition outcomes** and **positive emotions**.

Examples:

‘Most families enjoy that conversation. If I need to talk to families and they don’t come I ring them, so there’s lots of opportunity - I don’t think there are families who are overlooked. And I can’t say we meet them all equally, because some families just want to know what they need to know - others want to delve deeper and further into that.’ (EDB, round 1)
‘I’ve just had a chat with the speech therapist before here, and (boy 5) has just had an assessment done and she’s just given me ideas about what we can work on.’ (PSB, round 1)

Personal and partner skills for both parent and teacher were highly valued in meeting family needs, with associated high scores for child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Examples:

‘I’d just try and make it just a bit more familiar for him, or something…yes, maybe if it’s OK for the school to take something that he enjoys doing at home to help him to settle in - cuddling down and that sort of thing.’ [a weight blanket or a familiar game or puzzle to soothe him] (PSB, round 2)

‘Team approaches is what I’ve learned the most and what I’ve seen change the most! There’s an expectation now that every school has a LST that meets and functions on a daily basis. So I guess those team approaches to coordinating things for parents—that’s the biggest change that I’ve seen. And also the openness and the expectation that parents meet with the school. The school doesn’t make all the decisions. The parents are partners in their child’s learning!’ (SPSI, round 3)

Positive child focus linked to family needs followed closely in importance. Positive child transition outcomes scored highly in this link, with lesser scores for positive parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Examples:

‘If the children have celebrated a birthday or letting them know that these children are important to us, and we’ve remembered that they’ve hurt their knee or that they were going fishing, or the family was going camping...following those things up with the families is really important. They know then that they really are valued.’ (EDB, round 1)

‘I guess another example is when (boy 5) started to wear shorts and short sleeves I asked to work on the sleeves first, and asked the aide to get other teachers to say something to him - “I like your shirt!” And they did! The principal would pass him in the playground and say “I like your shirt”, and I think that builds his confidence and morale.’ (PSI, round 4)
Exemplary practices by teachers rated next for family needs for Family 5, with high associated scores for positive child and parent transition outcomes and a more moderate score for positive emotions. Example:

‘In the middle of the year run parent and educator exchange meetings where we talk to families, we show them the children’s work samples, we work through their documentations, we do a written report on each child looking at the Early Years Learning Framework document and say - these are the skills your children are working towards and these are the outcomes. Are they what you had expected? Would you like us to work on other areas and together we set some long term goals for the rest of the year with those families.’ (EDB, round 1)

Authentic caring for Parent 5’s children was highly related to family needs, positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘So something like extra days of transition? So the child was offered that, the family was offered that, and the same thing will happen with a couple of children coming into kindergarten next year. We’ve started to identify that some of those children may need extra transition. A couple of them we’re going to provide a social story of photos and information about what school looks like and where things are.’ (SP5I, round 3)

NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

Parent 5 reported negligible negative aspects professional practice in her experience of transition over two years.

Matrix Summary of Query 2

The significant professional practice nodes emerging from this query that highly related to Parent 5’s family needs were in order: knowing parent goals, personal and partner skills, positive child focus, exemplary practices by teachers and authentic caring. They were associated with high scores for Parent 5 on positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions.
Query 3: Family 1 experiences of Organisational Factors 2012-2013

The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Organisational Factors set to investigate the impact of bureaucracy on the family experience of transition over two years.

POSITIVE PRACTICES:

In this matrix query, quality processes were strongly allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘You can’t stagnate! Because the children change each year, in some schools the teachers change, so it’s all about going back and making connections, having network meetings because we actually do have school networks- preschool and school networks - now between the teachers and ourselves, so that you can break down those barriers and you can talk about the things that are a problem. What are these skills that the children need? How can the preschool assist? They’re identifying issues that children are coming to school with.’ (EDB, round 1)

‘I think with him, he just loves routine, and I think that was a big part. Just starting school and a teacher that likes to know what’s happening, and there’s lots of visuals in there in the classroom, and they have a visual schedule with what’s happening during the day, and “we’re going to do this before lunch” and “we’re going to do this after lunch.”’ (P5I, round 3)

A positive school climate was important, and allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘She’s [parent 5] visited at the centre, she came to see how he’s managed and the things that he requires to support him for group time, for individual time...ways to communicate with him. That’s really important as well, so she took all of that on board, asked lots of questions at the end just to clarify anything. The reasons for why we were doing whatever.’ (ETSB, round 2)

‘I think consistency of staff as well, because we shifted an SLSO from another classroom and another student into kinder at the end of last year so that child was able to see her at the end of last year and know that she was going to come back next year. You’ve got to give consideration to your staffing and be consistent around that.’ (SP5I, round 3)
The intentions and goals of bureaucratic practices, as made explicit to parents, was strongly tied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘What I really appreciated was they have a buddy system and there were no boys wanted to be a buddy, and she did actually go out of her way to speak to the class again, and really try and get some boy buddies, and they did actually get two boy buddies - and so both my boys have got boy buddies!’ (PSI, round 3)

‘So children with support needs, such as the meeting you attended last year, we would have our Learning Support Team (LST) meet together to establish meetings with parents, and of course the school counsellor has a vital role in that. We have the transition to school paperwork that comes from DEC for any students targeted with those needs, and then I guess we contact parents and all the outside agencies that would be involved in that transition.’ (SPSI, round 3)

Leadership was of some importance to family needs, positive child transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:

‘We do a lot of work with the schools, often the first...week 4 I think it is...of term 1, we invite all of our pre-schoolers from this year to come back, and they come in for an afternoon tea, and we find out whose class they’re in and the parents talk to us about the things that the children are doing. And the kids have a lovely time just running around and reconnecting with all the kids from different schools that they were friends with!’ (ETSB, round 2)

NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

Some negative child transition outcomes registered at a low level against intentions and goals, but for Parent 5 this was minor. Example:

‘The other negative was the family last year being involved in the early intervention centre, and confusion about Access Request forms for funding support- as to who had to put it in, and again, and that goes back to what we said at the start, the lack of support for schools in these transitions...and this feeling that once you’re principal you know everything! When I started as a principal I believed that I didn’t know anything until someone told me and I learnt it.’ (SPSI, round 3)
Matrix Summary for Query 3
The most reported organisational nodes emerging from this query that related to Parent 5’s family needs were in order; quality processes, intentions and goals, positive school climate, and leadership. They were also associated with higher scores from Parent 5 on positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions.

4.6 CASE STUDY 6: PARENT 6

Participant Abbreviations
2012: Parent 6= P6B, Early Childhood Teacher= ET6B, Director= EDB

Locations
B= Community Preschool

Background information
Parent 6 was in her 30s, married with 2 children and living in a country town. The elder child was on the autism spectrum, and attending Location B community preschool. Parent 6 worked part-time and was able to speak to staff on some drop-off and pick-up times, but if not, she rang or dropped in at other times. Location B was a hub for services and therapies, so that Parent 6 had access to a doctor, a transition teacher, therapists and a counsellor. Her child was proving challenging in group time and also with other skills helpful to preparation for school, but Parent 6 had access to a comprehensive team of ancillary professionals at the preschool and found that very supportive. As the end of the year approached, Parent 6 gave up part-time work to devote herself to the task of transition. The child was going to start in a regular class in a small Catholic Education school some distance away. Location B provided her with support in the transition visits to the school in 2012.

Setting: 2012
Location B was a community preschool in a country town with director EDB playing an integral local role in networking, pooling resources and providing country parents with access to services without having to travel to the city. EDB reported that 25% of the
children at the preschool were identified with some form of learning support needs or disadvantage. Parent 6 had the benefit of a depth of understanding among all the staff regarding her child’s needs at Location B. Her partner, ET6B, had some experience with transitioning challenging children; she and the other staff at Location B worked as a team to assist Parent 6 and her child. Any member of staff was able to give good information about the child’s day and what worked well for him. Location B had the resources to pay for a transition teacher to attend school meetings and work closely with all families, and in this case that teacher did the transition visits without the direct involvement of ET6B. It was standard practice in this district for schools and preschools to plan and execute transition together, particularly since jointly succeeding with children with complex and additional needs in the recent past. The proposed school for 2013 was outside this network.

Setting: 2013
Early preparations were made to continue the study into the school year but Parent 6 changed her mind and withdrew. She explained that life was complex and busy and that her child’s progress was always going to have ups and downs.

Review of Outcomes over Time

Preschool: Parent 6 took part in the study for one year only so all transition to school partnership issues in this study relate only to preschool in 2012. Parent 6 credited Location B with being a supportive environment that met her and her child’s needs over difficult early years. She accessed therapies and counsellors available at the preschool, and was conscious of this help not being available in the school years. Her child had become more social in 2012, so she was hopeful that he would transition to school successfully. A series of orientation visits was arranged at the new school towards the end of the year. They did not go well, and Parent 6 indicated that she and the school personnel were not communicating on a level that she would have liked. She withdrew the child from the visits schedule and took a family holiday. Parent 6 was hopeful it would all work out in 2013, but was nervous and prepared for a difficult time. She indicated to the researcher that she would like to talk to the school staff before the end of 2012 but was not confident to take the initiative.
School: In 2013 the school and parent had agreed for the researcher to visit, but Parent 6 withdrew from the study in April. She indicated that her life was complex and that her son was always going to have ups and downs with schooling.

4.6.1 DATA COLLECTED FOR PARENT 6 CASE STUDY

Interviews:
Two semi-structured informal interviews were held in times and locations of Parent 6’s choosing; both in 2012 (Appendix A). Parent 6 was energetic and emotional when describing her experiences of partnerships and her child’s progress at preschool. She was very grateful for the support given by the staff at Location B to her child and herself; after difficult early years she was seeing promise of her child succeeding in a regular school setting. Her teacher ET6B spoke twice and executive partner EDB once (Appendix A).

Meetings:
There were no planning meetings held in 2012 to which the researcher was invited to observe.

Documentary Analysis:
In 2012 Director EDB shared documentation with parents by showing them the goals and curriculum of the Preschool Handbook in the Early Years Learning Framework and discussing how they were being implemented. She was aware of the DEC Transition Policy document (1997) but said it gave ideas rather than specifics (Appendix C).

Scale of Independent Behaviour- Revised (SIBR-R)
Parent 6 and ET6B did not return a matched pair of the checklist.
4.6.2 NVIVO MATRIX QUERIES

Query 1: Family 6 experiences of partnerships 2012
The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Partnership set and filtered for Parent 6. In her case all results refer to her preschool partnerships only, as Parent 6 withdrew from the school year phase of the study in 2013.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Teaming was the most valuable feature of Parent 6’s partnership experience, linked most strongly with family needs, and more weakly to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Examples:

‘She actually spoke to the doctor that works here because she was just feeling overwhelmed with the pressure and the behaviour and things. And just being able to say “well look, Doctor will be here if you want to come and have a chat.”’ (ET6B, round 2)

‘I think we’re really fortunate to have our extra support teacher to take on that role because she then has the opportunity to go to transitions which are in school time, and to be aware, to make connections. She’s on top of when applications need to be in, what information is required - and that took a lot of pressure off me having to do that. Because over my three days I’ve got 31 children, 9 of whom have funding for additional needs!’ (ET6B, round 2)

Positive communication was the next most important partnership feature for Parent 6, related to family needs and positive child transition outcomes. Examples:

‘It’s something I tried to change this year because last year they’d stand outside and at 10 to 3 the door would open and we’d send the children out - I decided to change it so that the parents were coming into the room. We’ve got the opportunity to speak to them, not just disappeared before we’ve had a chance to catch them or…and they can see a bit about what we’re doing.’ (ET6B, round 1)

‘Their diaries, they have a beautiful photo book and diary, and we have our meetings every term, and sometimes {boy 6} has had more meetings with the teachers than the other children and I...they know him down to a T, and they pick him out. I think all that sort of stuff has been really, really good. Their picture books are great to go through and see what he’s done each day.’ (P6B, round 1)
Shared understanding was the next most valuable feature, also linked strongly to family needs, and weakly to positive child transition outcomes and positive emotions. The transition process was difficult for this family. Example:

‘They’ve actually gone into the classroom when it’s been playtime at transition and sort of helped him through so he’s been comfortable - rather than me as his parent being in there. They’ve actually come into the classroom, they’ve stood at the window and watched him...lots of things like that. They’ve handed over the reports to the teachers, and they’ve been there the last 5-6 weeks - every step of the way! So it’s made him - it’s helped on days...they’ve made him feel really comfortable.’ (P6B, round 2)

Understanding of own role was important to Parent 6 in meeting family needs, and was weakly related to positive child transition outcomes, and positive emotions. Examples:

‘I think we’ve sort of compensated for what they’re not asking by providing that information, and being involved. Like, we chase up “when do the applications have to be in?” And we pass that information on to the parents, whereas it’s not as accessible as they think it is for people!’ (ET6B, round 2)

‘We’ve just sort of coached along together I suppose - if there was - with his toileting - we really struggled with that. I asked for help, and they would say “you really need to do this at home so we can follow that along” and we tried to keep it all quite smooth, between speech therapy and occupational therapy - like as soon as there’s been a new report I’ve brought it in here and vice versa, just so everyone knew the information.’ (P6B, round 1)

Empowerment was strongly related to family needs and weakly to positive emotions. Example:

‘No-one knows him better than what I do, and I think, instead of sometimes putting it into their hands, and of course I respect their professional point of view - but at the end of the day - I’m his Mum, and for him to be wetting the bed, and you know, that stress, I think I probably need to be a little bit more forward. And a little bit stronger as his mother, and stick up for him and speak for him in so many ways!’ (P6B, round 2)
NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Family 6’s experience of transition included negative elements of partnership as connections with the school of choice were made at the end of 2012. Transition visits did not go well.

Lack of teaming was associated with negative child and parent transition outcomes and negative emotions. Example:

‘I just sort of thought ok, after all the transition we might have sat down and had another meeting and go “well this hasn’t worked, I think we need to do this, this and this”, or “this is working, but we need to do this”. Everything seems just a bit up in the air. I don’t know whether they just expect him to go next year and be wonderful - which would be lovely - but it’s not going to happen! Not seeing how he’s coped with it.’ (P6B, round 2)

Understanding of own role was associated with negative child and parent transition outcomes, negative emotions and isolation. Example:

‘One thing I have found through transition, which has been an absolute godsend, and it’s really helped towards the end of the year - I’ve actually found another mother. And I actually went to school with her but I didn’t know anything about her child. And her little boy has actually the same traits as (boy 6) and so we’ve sort of clung together and (boy 6) has also through the last transition clung to her child, and it’s just been lovely! And there’ve been things, you know, just as simple as I didn’t know anything about Carer Allowance.’ (P6B, round 2)

Negative shared understanding was associated with negative child and parent transition outcomes, negative emotions and feelings of isolation. Examples:

‘I think they forget that these people might be new to a school, and it’s their first child going into kindergarten, that you don’t understand what’s involved until it’s happening. And they’ve done it for so many years! The same process, and “how many times do I have to say this?”, and you’re like, “well you haven’t said it to me once yet!”’ (ET6B, round 2)

‘Just probably a little bit more communication with the special needs teacher there as well. Because she has seen all through, and probably ideas to make me, well not to make me feel better, but just to know that he’s not - next year - just being thrown into it. He hasn’t coped with it very well at all. So it’s been quite horrible. It’s
been quite stressful to the point where he’s actually started to wet the bed again. Which is very much not him. So he’s been quite stressed. And I think I’ve been quite stressed - it’s been hard.’ (P6B, round 2)

Negative communication was linked to negative child and parent transition outcomes and negative emotions. Example:

‘There’s not anything put into place at this stage. I think if we maybe organise a communication book in his schoolbag - that’s always a fabulous thing if the teacher can just write on how he went each day.’ (P6B, round 2)

Lack of power was associated with negative child and parent transition outcomes, negative emotions and isolation. Example:

‘With my role last year when I was supporting kids with transition, you realise that I’m in education and I still didn’t know how it worked or what to do, so these parents that don’t have the same skills or the same understanding to provide that support and that extra assistance - so, you know, the more knowledge you have about the schools, the feeder schools, that you can share with them, helps build those relationships, because it just seems, there’s a lot of first children we’re supporting to transition - it’s all going into the unknown.’ (ET6B, round 1)

Matrix Summary of Query 1
The important partnership nodes emerging from this query that were highly related to Parent 6’s family needs were teaming, shared understanding, understanding own role, communication and empowerment. Parent 6 experienced the positive and negative aspects of these partnership nodes over the period of transition during 2012, and her range of emotions reflected the positive and negative nodes closely. Her scores for child and parent transition outcomes were trending in the negative as the end of the year drew near. There were sharp contrasts with preschool and school partnerships evident.

Query 2: Family 6 experiences of professional practices 2012
The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Professional Practice set to identify professional practices and their impact during transition for Family 6.
POSITIVE PRACTICES:

Positive practices that emerged as important all had links to *family needs, positive emotions, positive child transition outcomes* and *positive parent transition outcomes*; but for Family 6 they also linked strongly to the negative aspects of the same nodes of professional practice as the transition experience unfolded.

Knowing parent goals allied to *family needs* was the strongest relationship by a large margin, with moderate associations with *positive emotions, positive child and parent transition outcomes* related to the early phase of transition. Examples:

‘Families will tell you, maybe you could try this because he loves music. That was where that came from, he really does like this song - maybe that would help him mix in with the other kids - and it certainly did. It worked well.’ (EDB, round 1)

‘The teachers here know that he works better with structure and they really try and keep up... but also you could melt and just give (boy 6) a cuddle and give him his own way - but they know that I like to be quite - not hard on him - but he works better...the teachers will challenge him and say “I had an argument with him today.”’ [laughs] (P6B, round 1)

*Positive child focus* was important to Parent 6’s family needs, but moderately connected to *positive emotions* and more weakly to *positive child transition outcomes*. Example:

‘We have done a social story for him so that he can look at that over the holidays and get ready, and just general things we’ve done for all the children who are getting ready for school in terms of incorporated into role play and group discussions about getting ready for school.’ (ET6B, round 2)

*Authentic caring* was strongly associated with *family needs* and moderately associated with *positive child transition outcomes* and *positive emotions*. Example:

‘We’ve really tried to just focus on the things that he’s done well or the things he’s done and what worked for us, rather than always bringing back the days that were tougher.’ (ET6B, round 2)
Personal skills were the next strongest link to family needs, positive emotions and positive parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘I found by experience last year that the more knowledge I had the better, because I went in without a lot last year and, sort of trusting of the school we were dealing with and came away thinking, no, I needed to be more of an advocate for this family because the school is not providing them with the information and the options that were available to them.’ (ET6B, round 1)

Empathy for parent’s situation in meeting family needs also rated highly, though with weaker links to positive nodes than negative nodes. This related to the change from positive experiences at Location B early in 2012 compared to the beginnings of transition to school experiences at the end of the year. Example:

‘The whole lot of us work as a team for the best focus for (boy 6) and the best outcome, to really get him ready for school, cause that’s going to be a big change for him next year, yes, so we’ve worked all along - they’ve helped me be the best mum I can possibly be, too.’ (P6B, round 1)

NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

There were negative partnership issues towards the end of 2012 when transition to school visits began.

Knowing parent goals was the largest measure of negative processes for Parent 6 and her family needs, with strong associations with negative emotions, negative parent and child transition outcomes, and less strongly with isolation. Examples:

‘There’s been 6 visits, 2-3 have been just (boy 6) and a couple of other children on their own, and then the rest has been all the children. I think they’re just sort of waiting to see how things pan out, but that’s probably made me slightly nervous, because it hasn’t been the transition for (boy 6) that was nowhere near as easy as I kind of thought how he would ease into it. Like, I thought, he transitioned from day-care to here fabulously, and I thought - probably slightly naïve of me - but I thought it was going to be quite similar, and things would be easier.’ (P6B, round 2)

‘I just think on the new partner’s point of view, they probably...maybe a few more phone calls, follow-ups, and maybe some ideas, and you know, a follow-up meeting...like as simple as that. And I can understand they’ve got a busy school and it’s
Partner skills were linked to family needs, negative emotions and negative child and parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘The school, I think, has taken on board the information to a certain extent...I know there’s lots of other kids and (boy 6) is not the only one that’s going there, but, yeah, I haven’t been 100% on the school side, but here has been amazing! You know, like I don’t think they could have given the school any more information, and I just don’t think the school entirely used it.’ (P6B, round 2)

Empathy for parent also rated in a negative way for Parent 6, with a moderate link to negative emotions, and more weakly with negative child and parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘And he was out of his sorts for a good couple of weeks. He seems back to his normal happy self now, and that’s because I took him out of the last couple of transitions as well. I spoke to the psychologist that comes in here (location B) that’s helped me all the way through with (boy 6) and she thought it was a good idea to pull him out, if he’s that overwhelmed. Because he wasn’t talking, he was just going a bit into himself as well. It was awful to see him like that.’ (P6B, round 2)

Matrix Summary of Query 2
The professional practice nodes emerging from this query that highly related to Parent 6’s family needs were; knowing parent goals, personal skills, partner skills, empathy for parent, child focus and authentic caring. Parent 6 experienced these nodes in both a positive and a negative way, with her positive experience of preschool giving way to negative nodes for the practices as the school phase of transition began.
Query 3: Family 6 experiences of Organisational Factors 2012

The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Organisational Factors set to investigate the impact of bureaucracy on the family experience of transition, based on just one year.

**POSITIVE PRACTICES:**

In this matrix query quality processes were strongly allied to family needs, but with relatively low positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘It’s been excellent. The preschool here has been fabulous, as far as...they’ve really handed over lots of information on boy to the school, so that’s been fabulous. They know him down to a T, especially after the last 2 years here, so it’s been great.’ (P6B, round 2)

‘I think that I’ve had it a lot better than some of the other parents that I’ve spoken to! Like the environment here with the school (location B) has had all of these options, you know, with (boy6) even though it’s a hard run, it’s been smooth and amazing. Like I don’t think he would be where he is if he hadn’t come to this little preschool.’ (P6B, round 2)

A positive school climate was important to Parent 6 and allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘I think it’s the environment that really plays a huge role for these families - and for all of our families...but making sure the environment is welcoming. People are there to assist families, knowing for the family that we do have an interest in their child - that we’ve got time, that it’s not “give me your child because I know what I’m doing!”’ (EDB, round 1)

‘I hope it’s in the relationships that you build, that they do have that connection with the 3 staff that are in the room - that everyone is greeted individually, and feel a part of the group.’ (ET6B, round 1)

**Intentions and goals** were strongly related to family needs, moderately to positive child and parent transition outcomes and more weakly to positive emotions. Examples:
‘We have IEP meetings with families that we do, in week 5 of term 1 is where all of our goals are set so families have contributed to those goals so everybody is working on the same thing. Families can contribute and say to us - look he’s done this this week so is that carrying over here at preschool? Or we can say, this has happened - is that happening for you at home?’ (EDB, round 1)

‘I would think maybe 12-13 years we’ve been working on this and refining it [transition support for parents and schools]. We’ve always believed that the children should go to visit the school well before they actually did orientation visits. So at that stage we used to organise with the school for the last term for the parents to meet us at the school with their child, and we’d have the classroom teacher and we’d spend an hour in the school with the child over a 5-6 week period. Eventually the school took on the orientation, so now those visits are dependent on what the school does.’ (EDB, round 2)

NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

Negative practices for Parent 6 related the experience of school orientation visits at the end of 2012. Her preschool experience of partnership and organisational factors was quite different to her initial school experiences.

Negative quality practices were strongly related to family needs, negative child and parent transition outcomes and negative emotions. Examples:

‘There’s been no other communication, which I thought there would have been. The only other thing, I suppose, in their defence, because they’re beautiful ladies, is that the principal is changing, and also the kindergarten teacher is changing, so you know what it’s like at schools when things are changing - no one kind of wants to take any ownership. So as far as the special needs section, that’s not changing at all.’ (P6B, round 2)

‘Transition didn’t start till late November, which I probably think it should be something that’s done September - October. All kids are getting sick of school come November - December. I don’t think the interest is there, whereas September - October they’re still fresh! Or even a halfway through the year visit - “OK, this is where you’re going to go next year”. And, you know, rather than a bulk lot of 6 weeks in a row, but whether they were spread out so they started in August and finished in December - 6 visits that way.’ (P6B, round 2)
Intents and goals perceived by Parent 6 as negative in regard to family needs were also moderately associated with negative emotions and negative parent and child transition outcomes. Example:

‘Even the school here did agree - probably the transition should have been done earlier.’ (P6B, round 2)

Some experience of negative school climate resulted in moderate alliances to family needs, negative emotions and negative parent and child transition outcomes. Example:

‘The school, I think, has taken on board the information the information to a certain extent...I know there’s lots of other kids and (boy 6)is not the only one that’s going there, but, yeah, I haven’t been 100% on the school side.’ (P6B, round 2)

Matrix Summary for Query 3
The significant organisational nodes emerging from this query that related to Parent 6’s family needs were; quality processes, intentions and goals and school climate. Parent 6 experienced contrasting and distinctive phases in the transition to school process, so that there were both positive and negative examples of the above facets of organisation. These were weighted positively to the preschool experience and negatively to the early stages of school orientation.

4.7 CASE STUDY 7: PARENT 7

Participant Abbreviations

2012: Parent 7= P7C, Early Childhood Teacher= ET7C, Director=EDC

2013: Parent 7=P7K, School Teacher= ST7K

Locations

C= Early Intervention Service

K= Primary School
Background information
Parent 7 was in her 30s, married with four children and living in a large country town. Her youngest child, who had a complex diagnosis including autism, attended an early intervention centre, location C, as well as a local community preschool. The child was challenging in many ways, but the locality was one where networking between schools, preschools and Location C was well established. Parent 7 was educated to a trade level, and had held a responsible job before becoming a fulltime carer and family manager. Her skills meant that she researched what she needed and found the support, funding and schooling options that would suit her child. She planned for her child to attend a regular class at the local public school with an older brother.

Setting: 2012
Location C was an early intervention centre in a country town with affiliations to Location A in a city some distance away. It provided sessional, outreach and home visit options in a spread out, largely economically depressed area, employing community resource sharing such as the local club bus to help people access the service. Parent 7 found the service in the 2011 and had established rapport and teamwork with staff, working with them to acquire knowledge and strategies which helped the child. EDC was an experienced director who networked and found resources to meet the needs of the families. ET7C was a young and relatively inexperienced teacher who wanted to learn from the parents as well as work with them. Assisting with transition to school was a strong focus of Location C and ET7C was learning the systems and protocols.

Setting: 2013
Location K was a large public school in a country regional centre where the mix of students included some with additional needs and social disadvantage. It was practice there to interview all families before enrolment to identify learning needs. Location K also had a close association with the local community preschool where the child of Parent 7 attended, along with Location C. The acting principal SP7K did not choose to talk to the researcher. ST7K was part of the executive who oversaw kindergarten and transition and maintained network links in the community. She was present at the initial Learning Support Team meeting at the school in 2012.
Review of Outcomes over Time

**Preschool:** After some difficult early years finding a diagnosis for her child, Parent 7 located the early intervention centre at Location C. Parent 7 acknowledged the benefits of the team collaboration she found there. The networking between professionals in the region where she lived resulted in established protocols for transition to school. Early planning, school visits and sharing strategies occurred with the input of all parties in 2012.

**School:** Parent 7 and ST7K established regular useful communication, mostly at school drop-off and pick-up, where problems and incidents were dealt with in a timely and united fashion. ST7K was a skilled and experienced kindergarten teacher who found ways to accommodate the child’s learning and social needs. This situation changed when a young student teacher on internship took the class for the majority of a term. Without the communication skills to talk to Parent 7 there was a period where the young teacher did not listen to information given by the parent, and the child regressed in behaviour. There was also a problem with the school routines where medication times were not observed and the child and family were adversely affected. Parent 7 took a supporter to a meeting with the principal and asserted her child’s needs, and the school’s responsibility in maintaining good protocols.

4.7.1 DATA COLLECTED FOR PARENT 7 CASE STUDY

**Interviews:**

Four semi-structured informal interviews were held in times and locations of Parent 7’s choosing; with one being rescheduled and reinterviewed because of a researcher adverse incident (Appendix A). Parent 7 was articulate and confident with much to say about difficult early years learning about her child, and about the helping professions and systems that had become part of their life.

In 2012 her teacher partner ET7C spoke twice and executive partner EDC once (Appendix A).
In 2013 her teacher partner ST7K was interviewed halfway through the year, but took compassionate family leave and was not available at the end of the year. The acting principal SP7K declined to be interviewed.

Meetings:
There were two meetings in 2012 to which the researcher was invited to observe; a group meeting for parents at Location C early intervention centre to meet all the education representatives who could help them enrol to school, and a planning meeting at Location K school where a Learning Support Team was formed with input from Location C and the local preschool. Parent 7 found both of these meetings helpful and accessible and particularly appreciated the presence of the early childhood people who supported her at Location K (Appendix D).

In 2013 there were no formal planning meetings arranged between the school and Parent 7.

Documentary Analysis:
In 2012 director EDC used Early Childhood Australia and Early Childhood Intervention Australia (REF) as her guide. She was also aware of the National Quality Framework and the standards in action required (Appendix C).

In 2013 principal SP7K chose not to participate in the study.

Scale of Independent Behaviour- Revised (SIBR-R)
Parent 7 and her partners did not return any matched pairs of the checklist.

4.7.2 NVIVO MATRIX QUERIES

Query 1: Family 7 experiences of partnerships 2012-2013
The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Partnership set and filtered for Parent 7 to find important aspects of partnership over the two year period of transition to school.
POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Teaming was the most valuable feature of Parent 7’s partnership experience, linked most strongly with family needs, and more weakly to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Examples:

‘I’ve learned so much, in the 2 years at Location C, everything I know about [laughs] everything - resources, where to find them, techniques that will help with the visuals, the sign language. Through them and through resources, 90% of our techniques and things have come out of here.’ (P7C, round 1)

‘It’s a big deal when you get someone who’s willing to work with you and not against you - it’s big - because the autism journey is quite a difficult one as a parent, and when you don’t have supportive professionals behind you it’s even worse.’ (P7C, round 1)

Understanding own role was important for Parent 7, and strongly associated with family needs and positive emotions. Examples:

‘I’ve learnt that I need to put my foot down. I’m her [girl 7] voice and I’ve got to make them listen! [laughs] Even if they don’t always want to listen.’ (P7C, round 2)

‘We’ve communicated effectively enough so that we both knew the issues and the techniques that each was going to put in place to try and encourage her to push those boundaries.’ (P7K, round 4)

Positive communication was the next most important partnership feature for Parent 7, related moderately to family needs and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘I think it’s really important to keep the parents informed and to listen to the parents’ concerns. But I also think it’s important, when you have the child in front of you, and you want to focus on that child and that text and the child’s learning needs, and what she [girl 7] needs to be successful with that text, ok? So you need to be sensitive each morning about what she might bring in, and her mood.’ (ST7K, round 3)

‘Our best tool, for communicating with the school, has been her communication book, because… I don’t have to catch the teacher at the end of the day
and say “how was my daughter’s day?” The teacher can just throw a scribble in the book “she had a great day working with her numbers or her handwriting - she was really proud of this…” It’s been a great tool and it’s given me a chance to say “you’ve done a really great job with this” to the teacher, so that the teacher understands that I appreciate the extra work that she’s putting in.’ (P7C, round 2)

**Shared understanding** was the next most valuable feature, also linked strongly to family needs, and moderately to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Examples:

‘Separation and those transition times are when [girl 7] is most anxious, and learning...I suppose, I’d never feed into her anxiety - I’d know she was safe at school, so it was “peel you off me, here you go teacher! Here she is, I’m going and I’m going fast!” [laughs] Which other parents don’t understand, but they give lovely charming looks, but...when I was doing that the teacher was saying “you’ve done a really good job! It’s what we need, we need that.”’ (P7K, round 3)

‘A lot of parents are quite needy when their kids come into kindergarten because they’re concerned about their children being away from them for an extended period of time, and someone else is in charge of their children and influencing their child... I always find that if parents know that they can come, and making yourself available at the end of the day, that kind of thing. I always think... they know that they can leave me messages and they certainly know when meetings are organised and that they’re welcome to come.’ (ST7K, round 3)

**Empowerment** was strongly related to family needs and moderately to positive emotions. Examples:

‘If we are able to build good partnerships with families, make them confident, because they are going to go into a bigger setting with different teachers and some of the families that we work with don’t have positive experiences from their past and their education, so if we are able to have positive partnerships with them and we support them through to the next setting - with support - then they and their child will have a better transition.’ (EDC, round 1)

‘I’ve learnt that I need to put my foot down. I’m her voice and I’ve got to make them listen! [laughs] Even if they don’t always want to listen.’ (P7K, round 3)
NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Family 7’s experience of transition included negative elements of partnership as some problems emerged for the child settling into school.

Lack of teaming was associated with family needs, negative child and parent transition outcomes and negative emotions. Example:

‘I felt kind of intimidated. There was...I almost felt like they weren’t listening to my opinion until another professional backed me up. So it was a little frustrating in that manner, and a little frustrating in that they were very “oh yes! We can do that! Yes we can do that!” in several of the meetings, and then later those things changed, and they weren’t possible.’ (P7K, round 3)

Understanding of own role was associated with moderate mentions of negative parent transition outcomes and negative emotions. Example:

‘I kind of felt inferior - compared to my support person from location C and the preschool aide and the speech therapist. They kind of almost made me feel like I was secondary in information.’ (P6C, round 2)

Negative communication was linked to negative child and parent transition outcomes and negative emotions. Example:

‘And we settled back into it when her regular classroom teacher came back, and she was doing really, really well, but in the final term of school ST7K is now on leave for personal reasons and we’ve got teachers job-sharing 2 days/3 days a week and there is absolutely no communication anymore! It ceased. I’m not sure if it’s lack of communication between the teachers.’ (P7K, round 4)

Negative shared understanding was associated with moderate levels of negative child and parent transition outcomes and negative emotions. Examples:

‘They felt that the buddy system can be a little bit stifling to kindergarteners because older girls want to control their younger buddies, and not let them grow independently at school. Which I think is fine for some children but then there are others that need that support. That’s why (girl 7) has struggled with the social aspects of school. Because she hasn’t had that guidance from an older student saying “this is how we do things.”’ (P7K, round 3)
Matrix Summary of Query 1

The important partnership nodes emerging from this query that were highly related to Parent 7’s family needs were teaming, shared understanding, understanding own role, communication and empowerment. Parent 7 experienced the positive and negative aspects of these partnership nodes over the period of transition during 2012 and 2013, and her range of emotions reflected the positive and negative nodes closely.

Query 2: Family 7 experiences of professional practices 2012-2013

The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Professional Practice set to identify professional practices and their impact during transition for Family 7.

POSITIVE PRACTICES:

Positive professional practices that emerged as important all had strong links to family needs, and varying report levels for positive emotions, positive child transition outcomes and positive parent transition outcomes.

Knowing parent goals allied to family needs was the strongest relationship by a large margin, with moderate associations with positive emotions, and weaker counts for positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘I think the thing is also it’s showing you a shift in the way we work with families and children, because I think, 25 years ago, 30 years ago maybe, the full focus was on the child - to look at what the child can’t do mostly! And then let’s get the child to do it! Whereas now you’re saying “let’s do it in the context of the family” - what can the child do that you can use to get the child to do what they can’t do? And how do you get the family involved in doing that? So it happens in the child’s everyday life.’ (EDC, round 1)

‘We talk to the parents during group and ask for their feedback as well, but, yeah, there’s a professional conversation goes on afterwards too.’ (ET7C, round 1)
Positive child focus was important to Parent 7’s family needs, strongly connected to positive child transition outcomes but moderately connected to positive emotions. Examples:

‘I think that we do focus on the child but the focus of the child within the family - that’s how we look at it. But looking at the child... I guess, going back to the IFSP and the IEP, so, we have a global picture of the family and its needs, because I think it’s hard to separate the child in isolation if you don’t take into consideration what’s going on with the family.’ (EDC, round 1)

‘We had two or three meetings at the school, so they were completely aware of daughter’s needs and how best to move forward with her with those, and we had... the school only had its regular transition program which was one transition day where all the new kindergarten students come in and meet their teachers, and go through the routine for school. We organised another two for (girl7), so she had one with her aide so that she could go more on her own but still have a support person that she knew with her.’ (P7C, round 2)

Partner skills were the next strongest link to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘The main person was ET7C from location C - she was the main person organising the transition to school, she was the communicator between me and the school, and she also communicated heavily with the preschool - and (girl 7)’s aide at preschool - so she was...our whole team coming to the school to inform the school so that there was...I had an advocate. She was very, very strong.’ (P7C, round 2)

Exemplary practices by teachers registered moderately for positive child and parent transition outcomes, and positive emotions. Example:

‘They run a playgroup of a Monday morning, and they organised it so they found out she had some anxiety about libraries and the smell of libraries and books - and they organised within the playgroup to have playgroup time and then story time in the library with the librarian, so that she was able to experience a little bit more of the school through playgroup, and so she had that extra teacher that she had a connection to.’ (P7C, round 2)
NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

There were some negative partnership issues in the school year with changes of personnel and other disruptions.

Knowing parent goals was the largest measure of negative processes for Parent 7 and her family needs, with strong associations with negative emotions, and moderate counts with negative parent and child transition outcomes and isolation. Examples:

‘It was kind of like gloss over it and almost treating me like the paranoid parent! And saying “oh no, it’s fine, it’s fine, it’s fine!”’ (P7C, round 2)

‘They felt that the buddy system can be a little bit stifling to kindergarteners because older girls want to control their younger buddies, and not let them grow independently at school. Which I think is fine for some children but then there are others that need that support.’ (P7K, round 3)

Empathy for parents was allied to family needs, negative child and parent transition outcome, negative emotions and isolation. Examples:

‘Support. Number One, the support. Two: have someone to lean on, to go [to], you’re not the only one! It happens, don’t worry about it! Let it go and let’s move to the next thing! Because in the scheme of things, a lot of the things you stress about are minute, and if you spend too much time worrying about them you’d end up a wreck.’ (P7C, round 1)

‘Knowing I’m not alone! The isolation, the isolation… Knowing that you’ve got people to fall back on, who understand it and know what you’re going through, and aren’t going to criticise if you go [laughs] “I’m going out of my head! I don’t know what I’m doing!” Or someone just to sit there and go “you’re doing a really good job!”’

(P7C, round 2)

Partner skills were strongly linked to family needs and negative emotions, and to a moderate degree, negative child and parent transition outcomes and isolation. Example:

‘It’s a big deal when you get someone who’s willing to work with you and not against you - it’s big - because the autism journey is quite a difficult one as a parent,
and when you don’t have supportive professionals behind you it’s even worse.’ (P7C, 
round 1)

Matrix Summary of Query 2
The professional practice nodes emerging from this query that highly related to Parent 7’s family needs were; knowing parent goals, partner skills, empathy for parent, child focus and exemplary practice by teachers. Parent 7 experienced these nodes in positive and negative ways, with her positive experience of preschool giving way to some negative experiences with the professional practices of others - not ST7K - in the school phase of transition. Her close partnership with ST7K was disrupted by outside circumstances at several points in the year with negative consequences.

Query 3: Family 7 experiences of Organisational Factors 2012-2013
The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Organisational Factors set to investigate the impact of bureaucracy on the family experience of transition.

POSITIVE PRACTICES:
In this matrix query quality processes were strongly allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘Even with changes of staff in classes and (girl 7) changed groups this year, even those transitions were very warm and it was - at the end of last year - these teachers introducing the new teachers and making sure that [(girl 7) was aware there was going to be a change, and who was going to be with her and supplying photos.’ (P7C, round 1)

‘I think you get the sense of a real camaraderie, you know, but still professional, with staff, and I think that’s come about from the changes where parents have been in the groups with the children, and the staff asking parents what they like to do.’ (EDC, round 1)

Intentions and goals were strongly related to family needs and moderately to positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Example:
‘Last year’s occupational therapist (OT) was through location C, and once she started school she couldn’t use her because they’re both Department of Education funding. Her old OT referred us to a private OT who does mobile, comes to the home, and will happily go to the school, and she’s going to go in this term [2013] and see how the classroom works, and see how well it works within the classroom, and then do some OT with her. And we’re going to do that a couple of times over the year so that she can keep track of what the school’s doing!’ (P7, round 3)

A positive school climate was important to Parent 7 and allied to family needs, positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Examples:

‘I just love that group and feel really passionate about it. We’re always coming up with ideas.’ (ET7C, round 1)

‘The staff are a-mazing! Amazingly open and caring, the caring just oozes, from all the staff, and you walk into the main room, and you see all the bits and pieces that they have for the kids.’ (P7C, round 1)

NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

Negative practices for Parent 7 were mostly from the school year when replacement staff or some of the school protocols were not consistent with the needs of the child. Negative quality practices were strongly related to family needs and more moderately to negative child and parent transition outcomes and negative emotions. Examples:

‘He just didn’t understand the need to be honest. Everything was “oh, everything is fine! She’s doing great!” and I was going to him saying “hang on, we have an issue” but he was glossing over it like it was sunshine and daisies all the time.’ (P7K, round 4)

‘Thankfully we have it to a point where the school is under a complete understanding that my girl needs her medication no matter what teacher is in the classroom! Because we were having a lot of issues when she had a student teacher.’ (P7K, round 4)
Intentions and goals perceived by Parent 7 as negative in regard to family needs were also moderately associated with negative emotions and weakly with negative parent and child transition outcomes. Example:

‘I’ve just got to know that I’ve got to be onto it. Be on the ball and not allow them to intimidate me, and be educated on all aspects of the school! So that if issues do come up then I can know their policy and their protocol and say “follow through with it!” ‘ (P7K, round 4)

Some experience of negative school climate resulted in moderate alliances to family needs, negative emotions and negative parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘I had to request them; it’s not a standard procedure. They only had the one transition day for incoming students, so I, and her aide from preschool, we all pushed for something more for her.’ (P7K, round 3)

**Matrix Summary for Query 3**
The significant organisational nodes emerging from this query that related to Parent 7’s family needs were; quality processes, intentions and goals and school climate. Parent 7 experienced contrasting and distinctive phases in the transition to school process, so that there were both positive and negative examples of the above facets of organisation. These were weighted positively to the preschool experience and negatively to the adjustment to school period after the early stages of school orientation.

**4.8 CASE STUDY 8: PARENT 8**

*Participant Abbreviations*

2012: Parent 8= P8D, Early Childhood Teacher= ET8D, Director= EDD

2013: Parent 8= P8L, School Teacher= ST8L, Principal= SP8L

*Locations*

D= Community Preschool

L= Primary School
Background information
Parent 8 was in her 40s, married then separated, with 4 children and living in a suburb of a large city. Her youngest child had delayed language and an anxiety disorder, and was diagnosed on the autism spectrum during the course of this study. He attended a community preschool in the grounds of a large education precinct with the school to which he would be going located next door. Parent 8 was familiar with both places, having been a fulltime carer for all 4 children and able to visit and volunteer in classrooms. She returned to fulltime education and completed her HSC during the study, planning to go to university after that.

Setting: 2012
Location D was a small suburban community preschool with a close relationship to its community and a lesser relationship with the public school, Location L, next door. Director EDD was relatively new and stated she wished to see the cooperation between school and preschool improve. Long term teachers at both places had cordial relations but a regular exchange of visits and information during transition times had never been consistently established. ET8D was one of the long-term staff members who spoke to school staff she knew, but she explained that staffing levels in the preschool made it difficult to visit the school with or without children. Parent 8 was on close terms with the staff at Location D and often spoke to them before and after school. She had also been a classroom volunteer at Location L for many years.

Setting: 2013
Location L was a medium-sized suburban public school with a diverse cultural make up due to its proximity to a large university. The acting principal SP8L was mindful of creating an inclusive school which welcomed parents. He stated he would like to coordinate more cooperation with Location D preschool, but he had moved on by the end of 2013 and change did not occur. Parent 8 was a long-term parent volunteer at the school and trusted the school to know her child very well. She was not able to call in and talk informally in 2013 as she had returned to full-time study.
Review of Outcomes over Time

Preschool: Parent 8 and ST8D and other staff at Location D had constant and regular communication in what was a difficult personal year for the family. As a small community preschool it had a central role in maintaining stability, warmth and routine, so that the child was happy there. Parent 8 also knew the school well but not able to find out details of the transition arrangements as they evolved; not hearing who would be the teacher, or having certainty to help her child prepare for the start of school. The preschool and the school did not have a history of cooperating in transition, in spite of being located next door to each other.

School: Parent 8 did not have the same constant casual communication with the teacher ST8L in 2013 because she had enrolled in full-time study. In past years she had volunteered in the classroom of ST8L, so they had a cordial friendship, and the child was reportedly happy for the most part. Parent 8 was not able to keep up with or comment on issues that arose; she trusted the school to work through them but felt frustrated by not continuing to have her previous level of regular communication. ST8L felt very confident in her abilities as she was an experienced teacher who had known the child from a baby. Parent 8 reported meetings were hard to arrange and a phone call with the school counsellor was the only formal discussion in 2013. By the end of the year, however, the child was achieving good milestones and was settled into the school.

4.8.1 Data Collected for Parent 8 case study

Interviews: Four semi-structured informal interviews were held in times and locations of Parent 8’s choosing (Appendix A). Parent 8 was forthright and articulate about the difficulties of negotiating with experts, helping professionals and systems when seeking help for her child. In 2012 ET8D spoke twice and director EDD once; both were experienced and articulate (Appendix A). In 2013 teacher partner ST8L spoke once halfway through the year but was not available at the end of the year. The acting principal SP8L spoke once (Appendix A).
Meetings:
In 2012 and 2013 there were no formal planning meetings arranged by either Location D or Location L.

Documentary Analysis:
In 2012 director EDD used the Family Handbook of the Early Years Learning Framework, the National Quality Framework and the Education and Care Services National Regulations as her guides in running the preschool. She had a background in long day care where a more systematic approach to inclusion and transition operated. EDD and her staff had done recent training with Inspired Early Childhood to provide specific strategies for transition.

In 2013 acting principal SP8L had a strong focus on staff skills and training using the Grattan Institute’s “Better Teacher Appraisal and Feedback in Improving Teacher Performance” (Jensen & Reichl, 2011). He was aware of Disability Standards and the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, being conscious of the diverse community in his school and the challenges for children with low socio-economic, cultural and transitory issues. SP8L also used the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority’s “Student Diversity and the Australian Curriculum” to guide school knowledge of child performance (Appendix C).

Scale of Independent Behaviour- Revised (SIBR-R)
Parent 8 and her partners did not return any matched pairs of the checklist.

4.8.2 NVIVO MATRIX QUERIES

Query 1: Family 8 experiences of partnerships 2012-2013
The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Partnership set and filtered for Parent 8 to find important aspects of partnership over the two year period of transition to school.
POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

*Understanding own role* was most strongly associated with *family needs* and *positive emotions* for Parent 8. Examples:

‘I feel a lot more comfortable to approach them and everything now. I mean, they were always very approachable, but it’s just a lot easier for me now, and I talk a lot freer’ (P8D, round 2)

‘I think learning, now, that you’ve got to be direct and you’ve got to keep pushing. You learn persistence, very much to keep persisting.’ (P8L, round 3)

*Positive communication* was the next most important partnership feature for Parent 8, related strongly to *family needs* and more moderately to *positive child and parent transition outcomes* and *positive emotions*. Examples:

‘We’re also communicating with the teacher - the kindergarten teacher - who often comes down, pops her head in, says hello, and asks how things are going. Mum has given permission for the school to access all our files that we have on (boy 8), which we have photocopied and given to the school. So they’re quite aware of what we’ve been doing to help him, how he has been over the last couple of years he has been at preschool.’ (ET8D, round 2)

‘The communication with families, is basically the educators do it on a one-on-one basis, mornings and afternoons, and generally there is more communication when children do have additional needs- definitely through that process. And in regards to this family, it’s more me just asking where we’re up to, what’s happening with all of that? Generally, finding out about all the support services being used and whether we can access them or whether we need to be doing something in our programs around them.’ (EDD, round 1)

*Teaming* was strongly tied to *family needs*, moderately to *positive child and parent transition outcomes*, and weakly to *positive emotions*. Example:

‘The acceptance with other students in the class is very good and the groups that support him - the LST, the classroom teacher and external providers and whoever else will come on board - seems to work quite well. Coming up to term 3 and term 4 we will start new orientation programs, and we’ll start planning what class he’ll go to next year and we’ll start providing the other teacher - I hate going to other schools where
they don’t let teachers know what they’re going to do for the next year - I try to let them know as soon as I can based on best-guess numbers so we can plan and structure for that transition to the next class and the new teacher. The parents get to meet them.’ (SPBL, round 3)

NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Family 8’s experience of transition included negative elements of partnership as some problems emerged in the school processes at the end of 2012.

Lack of teaming was associated with family needs, negative child and parent transition outcomes and negative emotions. Examples:

‘Even just getting that time... I’m sure they’ve got their classes established by now, or have a rough idea, so they can say “yes, you’re here” or “you’re there”- just so I can start... I mean 6 weeks, 5 weeks, whatever it is, is all they’ve got left of school. I need all the time I can get, because we’ve got that big holiday in the middle - but I need all the time I can to get him familiar with the classroom and just comfortable with going in there, and everything takes so long with him!’ (P8D, round 2)

‘I found it really frustrating signing all these forms to say, yes, I give you permission to share with such-and-such, and then you’d sign the other side and say yes, but none of them would actually talk, and you found you were running between and relaying messages and it became a bit like Chinese whispers; this person said this, and trying to remember everything!’ (P8L, round 4)

Negative communication was linked to family needs, negative child and parent transition outcomes and negative emotions. Examples:

‘I spoke to the teacher that’s going to be one of the kindergarten teachers next year at the parent orientation about (boy 8) having anxiety and things like that, and the fact that I’d booked him in to see a psychologist [takes a big breath]. She assured me that it would all be OK and that he’d have her and everything would be all settled, but then when the orientations came up, he was put into a different class altogether - that he wasn’t prepared for - and when I spoke to them again they said “oh, we forgot that you’d spoken to us!”’ (P8D, round 2)

‘We give out sheets for the children to take to school, and we sort of write so the teachers would understand what we’re getting at, or aiming at, and what the child can do and can’t do, but they sort of weren’t - they just thought they could solve it all,
like they didn’t have problems, then, beginning of this year they rocked up at the preschool and said “oh! What’s all this going on?” And we said “well, we gave the parents the paperwork, we thought that the parents would tell you all”, but the parents didn’t want their children labelled. So that’s a big problem.’ (ET8D, round 2)

Negative shared understanding was associated with family needs, strong levels of negative parent transition outcomes and negative emotions, and moderate mention of negative child transition outcomes. Examples:

‘P8D has been very relieved to have someone to talk to about it. She’s very relieved that she’s actually found someone that will help her. She’s always had problems about his anxiousness and his anxieties, but every time she goes to a doctor, or she goes to speak about it the boy is not like that. No-one’s seen him the way - and I’ve - we’ve seen it here, so I think she feels quite comfortable talking to us about it.’ (ET8D, round 2)

‘I’m just worried his learning and everything will be compromised if they won’t listen to, just ways of helping him to cope - and just to listen to the things that he needs to cope - then his learning and everything is going to be compromised because he won’t be able to sit and function, basically.’ (P8D, round 2)

Matrix Summary of Query 1
The important partnership nodes emerging from this query that were highly related to Parent 8’s family needs were teaming, shared understanding, understanding own role and communication. Parent 8 experienced the positive and negative aspects of these partnership nodes over the period of transition during 2012 and 2013, and her range of emotions reflected the positive and negative nodes closely.

Query 2: Family 8 experiences of professional practices 2012-2013
The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Professional Practice set to identify professional practices and their impact during transition for Family 8.
POSITIVE PRACTICES:

*Positive child focus* was important to Parent 8’s *family needs*, strongly connected to *positive child transition outcomes* but moderately connected to *positive emotions*.

Examples:

‘We watch the children play in the [school] playground, outside playing their games of Marco Polo and Hide and Seek, so we’ve incorporated that into our outdoor environment, so that they know those games when they go to school and they’re out in the playground on their own. We’ve had a canteen visit every day this week, where the children have had to go to the canteen every day to get their morning tea and pay for their food. And we’ve had walks around the school, where they’ve taken their drawing pads and their pencils, and they’ll draw anything that they see in the school that they like. We’ve had a sit under the trees where they have their morning tea. So we’ve, sort of, over the last few weeks we’ve - in the last term - we’ve really focussed on school life!’ (ET8D, round 2)

‘If there was an issue, but looking at him, if he’s socially OK in my classroom - and he is - and he’s interacting well with his peers... his learning is the focus, and it’s going along really, really well.’ (ST8L, round 3)

*Knowledge of child characteristics* was strongly associated with *family needs* and *positive child transition outcomes*, and moderately associated with *positive emotions* and *positive parent transition outcomes*. Example:

‘I mentioned that to the teacher. I said  “don’t make a fuss of him, just let him...” You know, so little things that we’re all learning, that I didn’t know - I mean, I didn’t know that! I knew that he came in very quiet and very head down, but... So I said to him “now I know that I’ll just give you a little wave when you walk in the door so that you know that I know you’re here.” ‘Cause usually it’s “Hello! How are you today?” So now we don’t. We just give him a wave and he responds really well. He [boy 8] comes to us straight away!’ (ET8D, round 2)

*Personal skills* were important to Parent 8’s *family needs* and *positive emotions*.

Example:

‘I’ve learned a lot of patience! Just to look at things differently.’ (P8L, round 4)
NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

Knowing parent goals was the largest measure of negative processes for Parent 8 and her family needs, with strong associations with negative emotions and negative parent transition outcomes and moderate links with isolation and negative child transition outcomes. Examples:

‘I’ve told them where I need him to be. As I said, I told them at the parent orientation. And previous to that - I was in the classroom, and I told her “this is what he needs”. When I was volunteering she said “yeah, yeah, yeah” and “sure, sure, sure”, and when it came to crunch time, they just went, oh well, we’ll just chuck him wherever! [laughs ruefully]’ (P8D, round 2)

‘Which is what I need for him to be able to cope with moving forward - because if I can just take him in maybe a couple of afternoons a week after preschool, and just say “this is the room” - get him familiar with all the different things. Sometimes it’s fine to look at photos but he needs a bit more.’ (P8D, round 2)

Partner skills were strongly tied to family needs and the source of some negative emotions, negative parent transition outcomes and feelings of isolation. Example:

‘I said to them “he won’t cope if I take him up” and as it was, he went up with one of the teachers and still froze up and had a bit of a tear and they had trouble actually getting him in the rooms.’ (P8D, round 2)

Empathy for parents was allied to family needs, negative parent transition outcomes, negative emotions and isolation. Example:

‘I just found it really frustrating too, that they approached my 12 year old daughter - who won’t even be there next year - and asked her to help him through it, without actually coming and seeing me! And saying “what can we do?”’ (P8D, round 2)

Matrix Summary of Query 2

The professional practice nodes emerging from this query that highly related to Parent 8’s family needs were: knowing parent goals, partner and personal skills, empathy for parent, child focus and knowledge of child characteristics. Parent 8 experienced these
nodes in positive and negative ways according to how well she was listened to and understood in a difficult family time. The coordination between the preschool and school was a factor in some of the negative practices.

Query 3: Family 7 experiences of Organisational Factors 2012-2013
The Family Experience set was used in a matrix query with the Organisational Factors set to investigate the impact of bureaucracy on the family experience of transition.

POSITIVE PRACTICES:
In this matrix Parent 8 did not return high positive scores for organisational practices but those that scored moderately well were as follows:

Positive school climate was associated with moderate mentions of positive emotions and positive child transition outcomes. Example:

‘They’ve just finished doing a little show - they called it an extravaganza. Each class performed and he loved that!’ (ST8L, round 3)

Intentions and goals had a strong link to family needs and a small link to positive emotions. Example:

‘We’re also communicating with the teacher - the kindergarten teacher - who often comes down, pops her head in, says hello and asks how things are going. Mum has given permission for the school to access all our files that we have on (boy 8), which we have photocopied and given to the school. So they’re quite aware of what we’ve been doing to help him, how he has been over the last couple of years he has been at preschool.’ (ST8D, round 2)

Quality Processes were strongly allied to family needs, with moderate scores for positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘I’m happy with it. He’s meeting his benchmarks, he’s not doing outstandingly but he’s keeping up.’ (ST8L, round 3)
NEGATIVE PRACTICES:

Negative practices for Parent 8 related to the experience of school orientation visits at the end of 2012 and her desire for them to be more responsive to her family needs. Her preschool experience of partnership and organisational factors was different to her initial school experiences.

Negative quality practices were strongly related to family needs, negative child and parent transition outcomes, negative emotions and less strongly to feelings of isolation. Examples:

‘I tried to get a meeting and couldn’t get one, but I caught her [ST8L] as she was walking up the stairs to the classroom [small ironic laugh] on one of the children’ orientation days, and I said “look, he’s in with a psychologist and they’re doing further testing to find out what the problems are - he has to see a paediatrician and everything else, to be completely assessed”, and told her that I need to know what’s going on to be able to prepare him’ (P8D, round 2)

‘I suppose I just want a concrete meeting, where I can sit down and go, OK this is...as I said, I get treated as the over-anxious parent, but, the psychologist has actually diagnosed him as having severe anxiety and you want people to recognise that it is in fact, a condition that will impact on him. It’s not just me! You know, that’s the brick wall I keep hitting! Everyone just goes, “oh no, you’re just being an over-anxious parent!” OK, yes, I am protective and things, but in saying that, I’m quite happy to separate from him, I’m quite happy to walk in and leave him and things like that. I’m not the issue. The issue is - are they going to be able to deal with him when he shuts down, and... I can give you strategies, but you won’t listen to me!’ (P8D, round 2)

Intentions and goals were by Parent 8 as negative more than positive in regard to family needs, negative emotions and negative parent and child transition outcomes. Example:

‘I never know how much I’m annoying people by going “I need this” or “I want that”, you know, especially with the school. How often can I call them and say “Look-where are we?” You know, you don’t want to be a nuisance! But at the same time as I said- time’s running out! I need these strategies in place, and whilst ever they won’t let me know definitely what’s going on - I’m sort of left in limbo for everything else!’ (P8D, round 2)
Some experience of negative school climate resulted in moderate alliances to family needs, negative emotions and negative parent transition outcomes. Example:

‘I just found it really frustrating too, that they approached my 12 year old daughter- who won’t even be there next year - and asked her to help him through it, without actually coming and seeing me! And saying “what can we do?”’ (P&D, round 2)

Matrix Summary for Query 3
The significant organisational nodes emerging from this query that related to Parent 8’s family needs were; quality processes, intentions and goals and school climate. Parent 8 experienced frustration in the transition to school process, even though she had good partnerships with her teachers. Her feelings were predominantly negative about all aspects of the organisational facets.

4.9 SUMMARY OF CASE RESULTS
Three sets of nodes in the areas of interest to this study (Partnership Factors, Professional Practices and Organisational Factors) were used to create distinct topical queries against a Family Experience set. The three matrices showed consistent and consequential relationships between parents, professionals and organisations which could be understood in terms of transition outcomes for the eight parents and their families.

The six primary nodes from the original framework for the research interviews (authentic caring, communication, child focus, knowledge of child characteristics, school climate and teaming) were added to by the researcher while coding interviews over two years, bringing the number of nodes to 31. The extra nodes were suggested by the detailed explanations of participants during interviews and included attributions such as quality processes and exemplary practices, all of them adding to the understanding of the partnerships in question. Some of these were further nuanced by adding positive and negative dimensions, such as positive or negative emotions.
All nodes grouped into the sets used in the matrix queries could be seen individually for their contribution to the overall picture. The strongest node of all for its contribution to partnership understanding was *family needs*. This proved to be the pivotal node for explaining how well or poorly a family was experiencing transition to school. No detail or breakdown of *family needs* was provided by this study, as its very individuality for each family was assumed to be a given for any professional to explore. This chapter’s results clearly provided links between family needs and all nodes contained in the three sets; partnership factors, professional practice and organisational factors.

These will be further explored in Chapter 4: Results Phases Two and Three.
CHAPTER FIVE: PHASES TWO AND THREE RESULTS

5:1 INTRODUCTION:
The purpose of the study of themes in partnerships between parents and teachers over the two year period of transition to school of young children with a disability was to elicit important knowledge about the way family and child needs were met, and the type and kind of processes which impacted favourably or unfavourably, across people, time and place.

5.1.1 PHASES OF ENQUIRY

Three phases of enquiry were designed and executed:-

   Phase One was the case study phase in Chapter Four using individual parent data

   Phase Two was a series of matrix enquiries using all participant data, and

   Phase Three was another series of matrix enquiries using all parent data from two years.

5.1.2 THE MAIN SETS FOR ANALYSIS

The main tools were the sets of interview data, coded and themed and detailed in Chapter 3 (3.7.1,3.7.2, 3.7.3, 3.7.4):-

Partnership Set

Professional Practices Set

Organisational Set

Family Care Framework (child transition outcomes, parent transition outcomes, family needs, emotions and feelings of isolation)

Time and Place sets; (Setting 1 –preschool; Setting 2 -school)
5:2 SUMMARY OF THE DATA SOURCES 2012-2013

For Phase Two and Three enquiries, the groupings of data were important to draw out different aspects of partnership. The study relied on consistency of involvement and contributions from both partners and their directors and principals to produce fair and trustworthy conclusions.

5:2:1 People:
The participants were eight parents of young children with disabilities; seven parents spoke about their partnerships over two years, and one parent spoke about her partnerships in the preschool year only. There were eight early childhood teachers and four directors interviewed in 2012 (one early childhood teacher was also a director), and eight school teachers and seven principals interviewed in 2013; a total of 35 individuals.

5:2:2 Time 1:
There were two interview phases in the preschool year of 2012: halfway through the year and at the end of the year. Discussion of themes for Time 1 refers to the thoughts of 19 individuals in a total of 34 interviews gathered in the two phases in 2012.

5:2:3 Time 2:
There were two interview phases in the school year of 2013; halfway through the year and at the end of the year. Discussion of themes for Time 2 refers to the thoughts of 22 individuals in a total of 30 interviews gathered in the two phases in 2013.

5:2:4 Setting 1:
In 2012, two early intervention centres and two community preschools were chosen; one of each type of centre was based in a city, and one of each type of centre was based in a semi-rural setting.

5:2:5 Setting 2:
In 2013 the children enrolled in eight regular classes in government-run primary schools; one child left the public education system after two terms for home-schooling, twin boys moved schools halfway through the year, and one parent and child withdrew
from the study early in the school phase for personal reasons. Five of the schools were located in various suburbs of the same city, and three were located in semi-rural settings.

5:3 SUMMARY OF PHASE ONE CASE STUDIES: Individual Parent Assessment of Aspects of Transition

The three matrix queries reported in Results Phase One compared a Partnership Set, a Professional Practice Set, and an Organisational Set, each in a matrix against the Family Care Framework Set for each parent; using their individual data in the eight Parent sets. This enabled a deep examination of the transition experience from each of the eight families’ points of view by relationship-mapping the nodes in the Family Care Framework Set (Family Needs, Positive Child Transition Outcomes, Negative Child Transition Outcomes, Positive Parent Transition Outcomes, Positive Emotions, Negative Emotions and Isolation) against the nodes in the three research-focussed sets above. In the Family Care Framework Set the most highly referenced node was Family Needs by a large margin. Indeed the Family Nodes theme was the strongest and most recurrent thread through the entire study of partnerships.

The preliminary results using the Family Care Framework for Parents 1-8 were presented in Chapter Four: Results Part One: Case Studies. Seven themes were strongly rated in the Partnership Set by parents (Teaming, Shared Understanding, Understanding Own Role, Commitment, Communication, Lack of Power and Empowerment); nine themes were strongly rated by parents in the Professional Practices Set (Knowing Parent Goals, Empathy for Parents, Personal Skills, Authentic Caring, School Climate, Child Focus, Exemplary Practices by Teachers, Partner Skills and Negative Construct of Disability) and six themes strongly rated by parents in the Organisational Set (Quality Processes, Intentions and Goals, School Climate, Leadership, Funding and Bureaucracy).
5:4 INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS PHASE TWO: Assessment by all Participants of the Three Sets; Partnership, Professional Practices and Organisational

The three matrix queries of Partnership Set, Professional Practice Set and Organisational Set were each re-run against the Family Care Framework Set using the data from all of the 35 individuals who were interviewed in the two-year period of 2012-2013. An across-the-board view of partnerships during transition was sought from all interviews by all participants.

The same relationship-mapping applied in Phase One was repeated in Phase Two. In each of the three matrix queries (Partnership, Professional Practices, Organisational) the four themes of highest incidence were listed with examples of partnership actions that illustrated their relevance to families when all the interview data was taken into account. Four themes were distinguished in each category by their relatively high ratings. They were: in the Partnership Set (Teaming, Shared Understanding, Understanding Own Role and Communication); in the Professional Practices Set (Knowing Parent Goals, Personal Skills, Empathy for Parent and Partner Skills) and in the Organisational Set (Quality Processes, Intentions and Goals, School Climate and Leadership).

The twelve highly rated themes all had strong and demonstrable links to the quality of partnerships during transition for the eight families in the study; all had appeared consistently in the individual family case studies of Results Part 1 in Chapter Four. The same themes are shown to be just as significant in the views of all participants; parents, preschool teachers, directors in early childhood, school teachers and principals of public schools. This revealed some insights and awareness from all partners into the complexities of partnerships during transition to school and is an important finding to be amplified and explored in the next section.

5:5 RESULTS FOR PHASE TWO

The three research questions in this study were interrogated in Phase Two by using the data from all participants which had been coded into the nodes belonging to the three sets, Partnership, Professional Practices and Organisational.
5:5:1 PARTNERSHIP THEMES: ALL PARTICIPANTS

Four themes of Partnership emerged which were strongly linked to the Family Care Framework nodes of Family Needs, Positive Child Transition Outcomes, Negative Child Transition Outcomes, Positive Parent Transition Outcomes, Positive Emotions, Negative Emotions and Isolation. The four themes were expressed by participants in both positive and negative terms. They were:

1. Teaming
2. Shared Understanding
3. Understanding Own Role
4. Communication

These themes were each examined for positive and negative examples, particularly for their instructive value in explaining why participants rated them strongly and how they impacted on family experience of transition.

5:5:1:1 Teaming

Teaming was highly rated by all participants and linked to Family Needs, positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions. Its converse (Lack of Teaming) was associated with Negative Transition Outcomes, Negative Emotions and Isolation. Teaming in early childhood, as understood by all participants, provided timely help to parents’ learning about new roles and systems associated with planning for their young children about to go to school. Its absence, or poor execution or coordination, was also understood to be a barrier to providing the best outcomes.

In 2012, examples of positive teaming in early childhood were teachers attending school meetings with parents, a director facilitating parent information sessions, and parents and teachers working on home skills during home visits. There was a close association with positive teaming and statements indicating positive emotions and positive outcomes in most cases. Sample:-

‘We have a team, let’s work together with other services and make that team available to other services so that they don’t have to wait months and months for children to have assessments, that families have got somewhere they can go to speak to a counsellor or somebody - when they need it! Not 3 weeks down the track when things have really fallen apart’ (EDB, round 1)
Examples of lack of teaming in early childhood were professionals who didn’t coordinate with each other, preschools and schools not having clear transition teaming practices, and parents not receiving timely help and information. Parents usually made reference to negative emotions and negative outcomes where lack of teaming was an issue. Example:

‘I just sort of thought ok, after all the transition we might have sat down and had another meeting and go “well this hasn’t worked, I think we need to do this, this and this”, or “this is working, but we need to do this”. Everything seems just a bit up in the air. I don’t know whether they just expect him to go next year and be wonderful - which would be lovely - but it’s not going to happen! Not seeing how he’s coped with it [transition to school experiences]’ (P6B, round 2)

On an organisational level, teamwork between early childhood centres and schools was evident at the end of 2012, but was not consistent in type and kind. Many participants offered ideas about improving that level of teaming in the future as it was seen as a valuable element of good partnerships.

Positive examples of teaming between the two levels of schooling were school teachers visiting the local preschools to learn more about students with additional needs, and a localised professional network of early childhood and school teachers in a semi-rural district. In most cases explicit leadership in one or both levels of schooling played a part in facilitating teamwork; individual differences were apparent in all the participating preschools and schools and their teamwork routines with each other. These differences were reflected in the variable practices experienced by this study’s parents during transition. Sample:

‘Our partnership with families and schools continues - it starts probably about the end of second term, so families are encouraged to go and talk to their local school, to inform the school. Usually the Department of Education already has their paperwork prior to that, so they are aware of the children. We then invite the school teachers to come and visit us, and we usually take, first of all, our whole class, over to the school so we can see - we go to lots of different schools, it’s not just one school. We’re lucky we’re in a position where we can walk to most of our schools, local school, so we plan an excursion, so all of the children can see where all of the children are going to go. We take photos of each school and try and put those around the room so children can see
where they’re going to go. Involved in that is usually photographs, so that we can make social stories for those children’ (ET5B, round 2)

Negative examples of lack of teaming between the two levels were school and preschools lacking structures for interaction, and poor exchanges of information between teachers, executive and parents about the child’s placement in a school. They were associated with parents describing negative emotions or isolation, as well as negative transition outcomes for themselves or their child. Sample:

‘We give out sheets for the children to take to school, and we sort of write so the teachers would understand what we’re getting at, or aiming at, and what the child can do and can’t do, but they sort of weren’t - they just thought they could solve it all, like they didn’t have problems, then, beginning of this year they rocked up at the preschool and said “oh! What’s all this going on?” And we said “well, we gave the parents the paperwork, we thought that the parents would tell you all”, but the parents didn’t want their children labelled. So that’s a big problem’ ET8D, round 2)

In 2013, positive teaming in schools was associated with positive child and parent transition outcomes and other positive nodes in the Family Care Framework set. Conversely, lack of teaming was associated with the negative dimensions of the nodes.

Examples of positive teaming in schools were executive structures allowing teachers to visit preschools to learn about students with additional needs, and parent consultation about type and kind of orientation program. Transition outcomes and emotions were positively associated positive teaming. Sample:

‘We do visit them [preschools]. One of them comes up and visits us and we host their playgroup on Fridays because they like the venue - the chickens and the gardens - so they bring the kids up for a fun day. I think the big thing that we try and do is make sure that whoever runs Big School for Little Kids is going to be on kindergarten next year, so the people that come and work with that lady know that she’s one of the teachers on kindergarten, so it means that they also get to meet the early stage 1 assistant principal and they get to meet me over the time and they get to meet the president of the P&C and they get to meet all these different people- in the canteen, the office, the registered nurse- so all of a sudden a lot of the trust element gets built because they start to know who’s in the team, because the canteen is about health and the first aid person is a registered nurse’ (SP4H, round 2)
Examples of lack of teaming in schools were few or irregular Learning Support Team meetings, and little contact with parents or preschool teachers about child needs to assist with school planning. This lack of teaming had negative effects on parent reporting of emotions and transition outcomes. Sample:

‘It [the problem] wasn’t the office, or it wasn’t the principal, it was the actual teacher and the... liaison to the teacher... to the principal - the assistant principal - they’ve got 3 of them... it’s a waste of time if you ask me! Anyway! Cause she’s the kindergarten teacher as well [the assistant principal], so if she and 2 others hadn’t have met me and come down... I brought my psychologist to the meeting as well. I got her to come out. It cost me $400 for her [psychologist] to sit in on that meeting!’ (P2F, round 3)

5:5:1:2 Shared Understanding
Positive and negative shared understanding nodes were important to all participants’ perception of partnerships; the efficacy of the understanding between partners was highly related to family experience of transition being positive or negative.

Positive shared understanding was strongly related to the positive versions of the nodes in the Family Care Framework Set. The interconnectedness of positive actions with positive outcomes was apparent.

Examples of positive shared understanding were a director explicitly talking with parents about centre goals and methods with a long view of starting school, and teachers having regular, reliable and predictable contact with parents to discuss children’s needs and family goals. They were reflected positively in reported emotions and transition outcomes. Sample:

‘In the middle of the year [we] run parent and educator exchange meetings where we talk to families, we show them the children’s work samples, we work through their documentations, we do a written report on each child looking at the Early Years Learning Framework document and say - these are the skills your children are working towards and these are the outcomes. Are they what you had expected? Would you like us to work on other areas and together we set some long term goals for the rest of the year with those families’ (EDB, round 1)

Negative shared understanding was strongly related to negative nodes in the Family Care Framework Set. Families were more likely to be feeling isolated and to poorly rate
their transition outcomes when partnerships were not operating on a similar level of understanding of particular issues.

Examples of negative shared understanding were parents in the school year feeling uninformed and uninvolved in the process of transition, and assumptions by teachers that parents understood language and educational protocols as well as they did. Parent reports in this facet of partnerships were linked negatively in all other aspects of the Family Care Framework nodes. Sample:-

‘Probably a little bit more communication with the special needs teacher there as well. Because she has seen all through, and probably ideas to make me, well not to make me feel better, but just to know that he’s not - next year - just being thrown into it. He hasn’t coped with it very well at all. So it’s been quite horrible. It’s been quite stressful to the point where he’s actually started to wet the bed again. Which is very much not him. So he’s been quite stressed. And I think I’ve been quite stressed- it’s been hard.” (P6B, round 2)

5:5:1:3 Understanding Own Role

Understanding of own role was a single conceptual node which all participants had rated as important to their perceptions of partnerships; the feeling or belief in the understanding of their own roles as partners was relevant to them when discussing the experience of transition. Parents in this study were learning about their roles in a relatively short period of time; some of the teachers and executive had been working in education for several decades.

Positive aspects of the nodes from the Family Care Framework Set were weighted towards positive child and positive parent transition outcomes. Negative aspects of the nodes were more notable in negative emotions and feelings of isolation.

Examples of positive understanding of own role were parents learning the skills of advocacy, and a principal who set an example of inclusive practice with school-wide practices that showed caring for all children. Parents reported positively on emotions and transition outcomes when feeling clear about their own roles. Sample:

‘I learnt a few tricks from the family worker at location A, from when I did the parent assertiveness/advocacy course. (Parents as Case Coordinators) If my thoughts
are ordered, and if I’ve written things down, I don’t fall to pieces and make no sense - which is what I usually do! I get nervous and then just errrrgh!’ (P3G, round 3)

Examples of negative understanding of own role were parents who were overwhelmed with aspects of bringing up and educating a child with additional needs, and teachers who did not make clear decisions and protocols which impacted families by creating doubt and confusion. Parents reported more negative emotions, feelings of isolation and negative transition outcomes with this node. Sample:

‘That was when it was the start of confusion for me! [laughs] I came in and I went away from that meeting overwhelmed and confused! I didn’t feel any clarity, any understanding. It was just lots of different organisations, lots of options, but I didn’t seem to take it in.’ (P4A, round 2)

5:5:1:4 Communication

Positive and negative communication played a large role in the quality of partnerships and family experience for all participants, with clear alignment of positive communication with positive nodes in the Family Care Framework Set, and negative communication with the negative nodes in that Set.

Examples of positive communication were teachers (preschool and school) who encouraged parents to approach them in informal and discreet ways in an open classroom environment, and directors who had daily photo boards, noticeboards and open doors for parents. Parents responded positively to this node in all other areas of the Family Care Framework. Sample:

‘We’re really lucky in that we do the Individual Family Service Plans, so the family planning together at the start of the year, and then we write the goals up, and that’s also a partnership. We go back and say - you know, checking - going back and saying “this is what I’ve written, but this is a draft - are there any strategies you want me to change or that you think that I can add to suit your family more?”’ (ET2A, round 1)

Examples of negative communication were confusing and unclear meetings with parents where difficult language and concepts were used, and teachers who avoided formal planning meetings and sharing of information, causing frustration for parents. Parents reported negative emotions and feelings of isolation, as well as negative transition outcomes, in association with this node. Sample:
‘I just think on the new partner’s point of view, they probably...maybe a few more phone calls, follow-ups, and maybe some ideas, and you know, a follow-up meeting...like as simple as that. And I can understand they’ve got a busy school and it’s the end of the year and everyone’s on the countdown, but I think it’s important to plan. You know, I don’t want to get to May-June-July next year and still not have him settled! So things need to be put in place, and put into place early.’ (P6B, round 2)

5:5:2 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE THEMES: ALL PARTICIPANTS

Four themes of Professional Practices emerged which were strongly linked to the Family Care Framework of Family Needs, Positive Child Transition Outcomes, Negative Child Transition Outcomes, Positive Parent Transition Outcomes, Positive Emotions, Negative Emotions and Isolation. The four themes were expressed by participants in both positive and negative terms. They were:

1. **Knowing Parent Goals**
2. **Personal Skills**
3. **Empathy for Partner**
4. **Partner Skills**

These themes were each examined for positive and negative examples, particularly for their instructive value in explaining why participants rated them strongly and how they impacted on family experience of transition.

5:5:2:1 Knowing parent goals

Parent-teacher partnerships were clearly predicated on how well family needs and goals were understood, as this node had the largest number of coded entries in the Professional Practices Set. **Knowing or not knowing parent goals** produced many responses in all aspects of the Family Care Framework Set, with the largest numbers against family needs, positive and negative emotions and feelings of isolation.

Examples of positive knowledge of parent goals were when parents and children had significant breakthroughs working with their teacher partners, and when executive staff instigated protocols to include parents in planning. References to family needs were the strongest association, and an important finding. Sample:
‘[Parents] knowing that we are available. And I do let parents know that I’m here most mornings early from 7.30, so that they can talk to me without their children being in earshot as well, so sometimes families just need to know that they can just have a chat’ (EDB, round 1)

Examples of not knowing parent goals were not enabling a parent to acquaint their child with a place or person or practice during the transition period, and a teacher not sharing problems occurring with the child in a plain-spoken or collaborative way to the parent. Higher than usual incidences of negative emotions, feelings of isolation and negative transition outcomes were recorded against this aspect of professional practice. Sample:

‘I think if it [transition] was presented to me (sighs)... I felt during that whole time I muddled through! I think at the beginning of the term - the beginning of the school year - if it had have been “OK, now we need to be thinking right now about school next year”. It was a process for me. I had to muddle my way through it until I got a clearer head, then I could take some action and I could think “if I had started a little earlier” then I would have felt a little more positive. Now if that makes sense?’ (P4A, round 2)

5:5:2:2 Personal Skills
There was a strong attribution of importance to personal skills for all participants. There was a recognition that skills were acquired over time and that they made a contribution to parent and teacher partnerships.

Positive aspects of this node were weighted more strongly to helping families, with negative aspects showing a weaker influence on negative outcomes. Some evidence of feelings of isolation was nonetheless present for parents.

Examples of positive effects of personal skills were directors focussing on family-centred and strengths-based practices, and parents enrolling in an advocacy course. Parents, in particular, were conscious of the difference they felt when positive personal skills came into play. This was evidenced by the strong association with family needs.

Sample:

‘I’ve always been a reasonably confident person but at first, when (boy 6) was diagnosed the confidence I had in that, and my knowledge, I suppose it wasn’t there,
but now I know that we’ve made the best decisions for him and I’m very confident in my parenting as far as [boy 6], and proud of him and us as a family - because the whole lot of us have had to adapt’ (P6B, round 1)

Examples of the negative aspects of personal skills were a parent who had shyness and anxiety to overcome when talking to teachers, and a principal who mishandled a parent meeting by not fact-checking. This facet of professional practice aligned with other negative nodes. Sample:

‘I’m generally pretty shy, and I don’t like going to new places or talking to new people. I hate conflict, and I don’t deal with it very well. And just speaking to her [Family Worker at Location A] about how to go about doing things, and to be proactive and to get what the boys need, and to go about it my way so that it happens, but it doesn’t need to get nasty...has been really helpful. And one of my goals we worked out together was to, not to be more friendly, but to go out of my way to actually talk to people.’ (P3A, round 2)

5:5:2:3 Empathy for Partner
This was a single conceptual node that was frequently noted by all participants as a factor in good partnerships. Its main expression was negative, as a sign that the absence of empathy was likely to upset parents during the period of transition. Isolation gained its highest number of mentions in this node.

Examples of positive empathy for partner were a teacher who was excited to find badly-needed services for a parent, and a principal who set up extra services in his school because of personal knowledge of hardship for families. The node family needs was strongly associated, as were positive emotions. Sample:

‘Like [ PBD boy’s] family - often they might be having the same issue we’re having, or they might be having a different issue at home, so we talk about - in a real partnership - what sort of things we’re using that might be working, and asking them “what do you do at home when this happens?”’ (ET8D, round 1)

Examples of negative empathy for partner were a teacher who dismissed a parent’s concerns about a child starting to bed-wet again, and a parent who felt let down by a principal who failed to tell her of a staff change. Negative nodes in the Family Care Framework were strongly associated with this node. Sample:
‘I think they forget that these people might be new to a school, and it’s their first child going into kindergarten, that you don’t understand what’s involved until it’s happening. And they’ve done it for so many years! The same process, and “how many times do I have to say this?”, and you’re like, “well you haven’t said it to me once yet!”’

(ET6B, round 2)

5:5:2:4 Partner Skills

Perceptions of partner skills and the effects on partnerships were recorded in large numbers, as all participants showed some awareness of the importance of the dynamics between partners. Partner skills rated well for positive child transition outcomes, but not for positive parent transition outcomes. Higher counts of negative emotions and some registering of feelings of isolation suggested that the parents were more likely to feel troubled by their relationship with teacher partners than happy.

Examples of positive aspects of partner skills were teachers who ran orientation sessions that parents liked, and parents who appreciated the skills their children had learned with their teachers in early intervention classes. Sample:

‘We also go to the school on their individual orientation sessions, and if we feel they need it, we actually take them to additional transition to school meetings and visits so that they are with one preschool teacher and themselves in the kindergarten room in the environment - so they can experience it a little bit more. And talking and swapping strategies so the teacher can actually see those strategies in practice.’ (ET5B, round 2)

Examples of negative aspects of partner skills were orientation sessions run by teachers which were not flexible enough to address problems that arose, and a principal who was not perceived by a parent to have responded to bullying issues. Parents reported negatively in all areas of the Family Care Framework in association with this node. Sample:

‘I felt kind of intimidated. There was...I almost felt like they weren’t listening to my opinion until another professional backed me up. So it was a little frustrating in that manner, and a little frustrating in that they were very “oh yes! We can do that! Yes we can do that!” in several of the meetings, and then later those things changed, and they weren’t possible and...Little things, but...’ (P7C, round 2)
5:5:3 ORGANISATIONAL THEMES: ALL PARTICIPANTS

Four themes of Organisational features emerged which were strongly linked to the Family Care Framework of Family Needs, Positive Child Transition Outcomes, Negative Child Transition Outcomes, Positive Parent Transition Outcomes, Positive Emotions, Negative Emotions and Isolation. The four themes were expressed in both positive and negative terms by participants. They were:

1. Quality Processes
2. Intentions and Goals
3. School Climate
4. Leadership

These themes were each examined for positive and negative examples, particularly for their instructive value in explaining why participants rated them strongly and how they impacted on family experience of transition.

5:5:3:1 Quality Processes

These were distinguished as positive and negative nodes, with distinct alignments along the positive and negative aspects of the Family Care Framework. All participants recognised the value of processes that enhanced partnerships and the transition process, and the problems associated with poor quality processes.

Examples of quality processes were school orientation programs that were extensive, flexible and individualised if necessary, and a preschool teacher changing her routine so that parents were invited into the classroom so they could observe their children and talk informally about issues. This node was strongly associated with all positive aspects of the Family Care Framework. Sample:

‘First thing, most of our parents start with the orientation tour around the school. We put communication out through our library, through our local bank. We also have fliers that go out from the school gate. So we’re pretty out there as far as... we invite them in, we make an appointment for an individualised tour of the school, we sit and talk about what their child’s needs are, how they see their child as a being - gifts and talents, or any weaknesses and concerns that we have to address. I believe it’s seen by the people as a very welcoming and warm experience for them. It builds a lot
of confidence, because giving your child to someone to educate and look after for a majority of the day is quite a lot of trust involved, so I think it makes a lot of difference to parents when they can come and have a look at the school, and feel what the school is like, because every school has a heartbeat, and some schools have got a bigger beat than others.” (SP4H, round 3)

Examples of negative quality processes were school processes which omitted or paid little heed to preschool and parent information about a child, and a school without meeting or feedback structures which allowed for teaming with the parent. This was associated with parents reporting greater numbers of negative nodes from the Family Care Framework. Sample:

‘I’ve been to two Early Learning Support Team Meetings this year, where the school counsellor and the school staff thought this was the process, yet the Department said “no, it’s all changed now, it’s not like that anymore.” So the family and I were sitting there thinking “oh my gosh! We’re coming to a school where the Department can’t even work out what’s going on!”’ (ET4A, round 2)

5:5:3:2 Intentions and Goals
This single dimension conceptual node referred to the intentions and goals of the early childhood and school locations, as understood by the individual participants from their various reference points. This node emerged as important because all participants had views about the reasons and objectives behind institutional rules, actions and procedures. Their attributions were largely positive when talking about child transition outcomes, but on more personal levels parents reported negatively on family needs, emotions and parent transition outcomes and feelings of isolation. Participants often expressed opinions on several aspects of the organisational constraints under which they operated, whether from a teacher or parent viewpoint.

Examples of positive feelings towards intentions and goals were teachers who had been refining their orientation programs for several years to make them the best they could, and directors who maintained community connections and invited families at school to come back for morning tea and to talk about their children’s transition. Positive nodes were evident, reported by both parents and teachers. Sample:
‘I think that we do focus on the child but the focus of the child within the family - that’s how we look at it. But looking at the child... I guess, going back to the Individual Family Service Plan and the Individual Education Program, so, we have a global picture of the family and its needs, because I think it’s hard to separate the child in isolation if you don’t take into consideration what’s going on with the family’ (EDC, round 1)

Examples of negative feelings towards intentions and goals were feelings of rejection by parents when funding or services were applied for and not granted, and frustration when a complexity of services accessed by parents required them to be the manager of paperwork and shared information. Teacher partners generally reported empathy for parents in this area of their lives, and parents spoke negatively about unclear intentions and goals. Sample:

‘I never know how much I’m annoying people by going “I need this” or “I want that”, you know, especially with the school. How often can I call them and say “Look-where are we?” You know, you don’t want to be a nuisance! But at the same time as I said - time’s running out! I need these strategies in place, and whilst ever they won’t let me know definitely what’s going on - I’m sort of left in limbo for everything else!’ (P8D, round 2)

5:5:3:3 School Climate
School climate was a node which was expressed in positive and negative terms, and for parents the effects of each showed a clear alignment of positives following positives and negatives following negatives in the Family Care Framework Set. School climate was a tangible concept to all of the participants when describing the way they felt in their school environments, particularly when it meant they were happy to be there.

Examples of positive school climate were principals who fostered a caring family atmosphere where parents and members of the community were welcome, and directors and principals who set up playgroups in school grounds to assist parents and young children in transition programs. This node registered strongly with family needs. Sample:

‘Families are just essential, they’re key to it - because they do, they know their children the best, and they know how they’re going to respond and what the best strategies are, and ideas for them to settle more quickly and comfortably into an
environment. Trying to find out those interests as well and making sure we’ve got within the environment, as much as we can, activities out that are going to be of interest to the children’ (EDD, round 1)

Examples of negative school climate were parents who were not able to work in tandem with teachers when their child was regressing in behaviour in a school environment, and schools with poor support structures in place to help students with additional needs to cope in the playground. Parents responded in negative terms in the Family Care Framework nodes. Sample:

‘Yes, I was disappointed by the way it unfolded. I had a lot of faith in that particular placement because of what it was, and I placed a lot of trust because it was a specialist type school; I thought, OK, it will be very well run, it will be very organised. And I found there was a lack of enthusiasm amongst the teaching staff. I think the older teaching staff - my experience - is they’ve been there for a while and it’s a little bit blasé.’ (P4H, round 3)

5:5:3:4 Leadership
This was a single dimension child node of bureaucracy, as leadership emerged as a talking point for participants when attributing cause for the quality of outcomes in preschool and school environments. It was weighted to positive responses when talking about child transition outcomes and emotions, and evenly weighted negative and positive for parent transition outcomes.

Examples of positive leadership were a director who stayed at the forefront of change by explaining and implementing new ideas to parents and teachers alike, and a principal who reportedly turned his school around from disunity amongst staff to a strongly welfare-focussed school for children, community and staff. Participants often mentioned leadership in influential terms. Sample:

‘One of the things, and that definitely goes hand in hand with the changing of the whole system at the moment in terms of “that person being responsible for that child” – I’m slowly getting people around to, “no, everyone works with that child”. And “we all have knowledge of that child, and we all need to have knowledge of that child”. So part of our teaming - at staff meetings at the moment we do have a section where we talk about specific needs of specific children’ (EDD, round 1)
Examples of negative leadership were a parent who felt compelled to take a professional person with her to meetings with school hierarchy in order to feel listened to, and a new principal and director inheriting a history of lack of unity on transition to school practices between their preschool and school, even though they were next door to each other. The number of data points was low for this node. Sample:

‘It was all a very rushed start, I don’t think at the time we were even very clear on what day they were going to start. Thinking back it was, ah, some children were starting on the 1st day back, and we were - as a group - we were wondering if we were starting with the other (mainstream) kids, or starting the next day. And how did we solve that...? I think it was through messaging backwards and forwards between parents that we worked that out.’ (P4H, round 3)

5:6 TEACHER AND EXECUTIVE IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

The researcher and the teacher and executive participants discussed changes over time and reflected together on learning and growth that occurred for them. Some had education experiences which spanned 30 years, so shared their detailed knowledge of the amount of change that they had seen in the education of young children with disabilities in that time. Many had ideas about transition in terms of measures to improve practices in the future. Examples of their comments follow.

5:6.1 Early Childhood Teachers

‘I don’t know if it’s a realistic wish, but I would like to see that transition between us and school to be bridged a lot better, and for us to be supporting these children and families and schools, at least into 1st term of their first school year...it’s supporting each other, making sure you don’t just hand over and walk away- that’s the school’s thing now- the school can deal with that family- because that family’s built up a rapport with you. The school has nothing, they want to know, it’s supporting those teachers as well, and that school to provide the best for everyone- the bridge is there, it just needs to be wider and longer!’ (ET1, round 2)

‘I’d really like there to be more help, for it to be easier access for parents- not to be such an involved process, that you could just pick up the phone, say “I need help, can you come out?” It seems to me, things need to be more simplified. A lot more simplified. They could have a centre agency, a one-stop shop that you can go to or something like that- but there definitely needs to be easier access for parents and for teachers to go to’ (ET8, round 2)
‘I would like to see is the schools to have the capacity, and the Department to have the capacity to have our children become a part of their system a little earlier than October- November! I don’t think that the school system- the schools themselves, and the Department of Education and Communities in general- they don’t communicate the process very well’ (ET4, round 2)

5:6.2 Early Childhood Directors

‘I guess the team around the child is a new concept, it’s something that we’re trialling and I’d like to see us do research on that. I’d like to see if it really does- in fact we think anecdotally that it does make a very big difference to families and families are saying that- but we would like to design some form of research that would support that, which we could take back to the government to say this is what’s happening when you’ve got these people, these resources in place and available to centres- to upskill staff, and not only my staff. I think that’s where my vision is now- is to be able to say- we have a team, let’s work together with other services and make that team available to other services so that they don’t have to wait months and months for children to have assessments, that families have got somewhere they can go to speak to a counsellor or somebody- when they need it! Not 3 weeks down the track when things have really fallen apart...so for me, that’s my vision’ (EDB, round 2)

5:6.3 School Teachers

‘I think I’d like to see those outside agencies that are working with children and parents- I’d like to see a little bit more communication between, say, the clinical psychologist and the classroom teacher, because often we communicate through a checklist, or through the parent, and I think they may see more of the child if we had a little bit more communication. I’ve often written reports for parents to take to the clinical psychologist, and I think sometimes they feel overawed by some of the professionals they work with’ (ST3G, round 4)

‘The government talks big about integrating special needs children, about a fair education for everybody, and an equal opportunity for everybody- and then they pull the funding! They take our aide support, they make it so exceptionally difficult to get aide support for a child, that having these children in our class and providing an equal opportunity for everybody...doesn’t happen! Because, yes we’re providing an opportunity for these little people to learn in a mainstream school, which is fabulous and wonderful, but sometimes the amount of attention and teacher time that they require over the course of a day, is to the detriment of the other 20 children in your class. So while it seems very free and equitable to have those little people in our classrooms, it’s to the detriment sometimes of other children. And that’s the devil’s advocate part of me, because they’re all entitled to an education’ (ST4H, round 3)
5:6.3 School Principals

‘We’d actually like to see that improved. The school has a good relationship with the local preschools and the staff are able to speak with the preschools about children that are transitioning up and anything we might need to look out for—additional support that is needed. But I’d like to see that formalised a bit more, because we do a very clear process between year 6 and year 7. It’s a very strong transition program between primary school and high school, and I think there’s a lot of scope to improve the formal transition between preschool and primary school’ (SP1, round 3)

5:7 SUMMARY OF PHASE TWO

The main themes to emerge from the interview data of all participants have a commonality in their emphasis on duality in partnerships; a consciousness of the “other” in the way parents and teachers may successfully work together. Teaming, empathy, shared understanding, communication, school climate, understanding own role, personal skills, partner skills, knowing parent goals, quality processes, intentions and goals and leadership may all be said to require understanding of others and their individual circumstances. Phase Three of the Results which follows was designed to assess parents’ views in different settings and over time; in preschool and school.

5:8 RESULTS FOR PHASE THREE:

Assessment of Time and Place Variables for Parents

5:8:1 INTRODUCTION

Investigation of time and place differences for parents formed the third phase of matrix queries. The aim was to investigate if there were differing practices and attitudes towards transition and partnerships evident between preschools and schools, and if so, how these were reported by parents. Other changes over time could be expressed in the Family Care Framework nodes and reveal changes for families at a more personal level, such as for family needs, emotional levels and transition outcomes.
5:8:2 STRUCTURING THE ENQUIRY

Time and place could be distinguished in the study by creating two sets; Setting 1 set contained all 2012 preschool data, and Setting 2 contained all 2013 school data. For this phase of enquiry six new matrices were created using parent data only.

Preschool data from Setting 1 was used to re-run the Family Care Framework against the Partnership, Professional and Organisational Sets, for Parent data only, to produce three new matrices using NVivo. These matrices gave a profile of parent and child experiences in preschool.

School data from Setting 2 was used to re-run the Family Care Framework against the Partnership, Professional and Organisational Sets, for Parent data only, to produce three new matrices. These matrices gave a profile of parent and child experiences in the first year of school.

Relative differences in Partnerships, Professional Practices and Organisation between the two settings were sought, as was any evidence of the similarity, cooperation and consistency of transition practices across the two settings. This was achieved by comparing Setting 1 and Setting 2 versions of Partnership, Professional Practice and Organisational matrices to see what had lessened in frequency of mention and what had increased in frequency of mention by parents.

5:8:3 SUMMARY OF THE DATA

There were eight parents interviewed in 2012 and seven in 2013; one parent withdrew for personal reasons in 2013. Her data was kept because the transition experience up until her departure was a valid contribution to the knowledge created about differing school styles and approaches which may help or hinder children’s success. There were a total of 28 interviews; 15 in Setting 1, (2012) and 13 in Setting 2 (2013). There were four early childhood locations and eight school locations in a mix of city and semi-rural locations.

Six matrices were created from parent-only data in two settings, to enable comparisons in the three research areas of partnership between settings. The number
of participants and the data generated was within the parameters that were set in the design of the study to achieve fairness and trustworthiness in the comparisons.

5:8:4 PARTNERSHIP THEMES FOR PARENTS ACROSS SETTINGS
Change in emphasis between facets of parent experience of partnerships across settings could be seen as reduced or increased over time and place when looking at the matrices across these dimensions. Those which reduced or increased by data mentions of five or more are set out as follows: As there were only eight parents in 2012 and seven parents in 2013, the idea of “increase” and “decrease” in reporting of any facet of partnership is an indicative rather than a numerically strong concept.

5:8:4:1 NODES SHOWING REDUCTIONS ACROSS TIME

Negative communication
There were reductions in mentions of this node by parents in relation to family needs and negative emotions in Setting 2.

Positive communication
There were also similar reductions in mentions of this node by parents in relation to family needs and negative emotions in Setting 2.

Teaming/Networking
This node recorded one of the most notable reductions between settings, which reflected negatively for parents against family needs and positive emotions in Setting 2. Other reductions indicated improvement over time; there was less isolation, negative emotions and negative parent transition outcomes for parents in Setting 2.

Lack of Power
There were fewer mentions of this node by parents in Setting 2, particularly with reference to negative nodes such as negative emotions and negative child and parent transition outcomes. Family needs were also reduced.
Understanding Own Role
This node was lower in mentions by parents in Setting 2, particularly with negative nodes such as negative emotions, isolation and negative parent transition outcomes.

Understanding Partner Role
Parents reported fewer incidences of nodes associated with negative child transition outcomes, emotions and isolation in Setting 2 when commenting on partner role.

Positive Shared Understanding
There were fewer incidences of this node in Setting 2 in the areas of emotions, family needs and isolation.

Trust-building
Parents recorded drops in mentions of this node in the areas of emotions, family needs and isolation in Setting 2.

5:8:4:2 NODES SHOWING INCREASES ACROSS TIME

Negative Communication
This node increased for parents in Setting 2 when associated with negative child transition outcomes.

Positive Communication
This node increased for parents in Setting 2 when associated with positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions.

Lack of Teaming
There was a rise in this node associated with parents reporting negative child and parent transition outcomes in Setting 2.

Positive signs of Commitment
Parents registered an across the board rise in the positive nodes of family needs, positive child and parent transition outcomes and positive emotions in Setting 2 associated with this node.
Positive signs of Equality
This node increased in Setting 2 associated with positive child and parent transition outcomes.

Empowerment
This node increased for parents in Setting 2 associated with other positive nodes for good outcomes; family needs, positive child and family transition outcomes and positive emotions.

Understanding of Own Role
This node showed increase for parents in Setting 2 when linked to positive child and parent transition outcomes.

Understanding Partner Role
Parents reported increases in this node when associated with positive child and parent transition outcomes and negative parent transition outcomes.

Negative Shared Decision-making
Parents reported increases in this node in Setting 2, linked to other negative nodes; negative child and parent transition outcomes, negative emotions and isolation.

Positive Shared Decision-making
There were small increases for parents in Setting 2 when associated with positive child and parent transition outcomes.

Negative Shared Understanding
Parents reported increases in this node in Setting 2, linked to other negative nodes; negative child and parent transition outcomes, negative emotions and isolation. This was an indicator that some of the poor assessments of transition by families were connected to the lack of understanding between themselves and school personnel.
**Positive Shared Understanding**
There were increases for parents in Setting 2 when associated with positive child and parent transition outcomes. This was consistent with the emerging pattern of helpful practices being reflected in good outcomes for families.

**5:8:5 SUMMARY OF PARTNERSHIP FACTORS FOR PARENTS**
There were strong trends associated with change over time and setting for parents. There were also signs of parents learning and changing, with less emotionality and isolation reported, and increases in personal nodes such as understanding own role and partner role. The family needs node was much reduced in Setting 2, suggesting a shift in emphasis as transition to school became a reality.

Positive aspects of partnership aligned with positive child and parent transition outcomes and some of the more subtle nodes registered, such as trust-building, commitment, respect and equality. Key nodes such as teaming and communication were reduced in emphasis, but with less negative impact at the same time.

Negative aspects of partnership strongly aligned with negative child and parent transition outcomes, to help pinpoint ways in which parents felt let down during transition to school. They included the negative versions of key nodes, such as teaming and communication, and also the more nuanced nodes of shared decision-making, understanding own role and lack of power.

Table 5.1 is a summary of the key partnership factors for parents over their two-year experience of transition to school as the advocates for their children with disabilities. They were chosen for their relevance if 25 or more attributed quotes by parents were aligned with the parent partnership matrix enquiry and important parent outcomes taken from the Family Care Framework; family needs, child transition outcomes, parent transition outcomes and emotional components. The node isolation registered low numbers and was not included in the table.
TABLE 5.1: Key PARTNERSHIP factors reported by Parents over two years

**RESEARCH QUESTION ONE:**

What are the Partnership actions and behaviours of parents and teachers that are associated with positive or negative child and parent transition outcomes in preschool and school?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY NEEDS</th>
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<th>PARENT TRANSITION OUTCOMES</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL COMPONENT</th>
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5:8:6 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE THEMES FOR PARENTS ACROSS SETTINGS

Change in emphasis between facets of parent experience of professional practices across settings could be seen as reduced or increased when looking at the matrices across time and place. Because data points were small, with only eight parents in 2012 and seven parents in 2013, a decision was taken to take account of those which reduced or increased by five or more data mentions. They are set out as follows:

5:8:6:1 NODES SHOWING REDUCTIONS ACROSS TIME

**Authentic Caring**
Authentic Caring trended downwards in Setting 2 on all measures on the Family Care Framework, except against positive child transition outcome. The largest falls were against family needs and positive emotions. This showed a clear difference in perceptions by parents; that schools did not offer the same level of caring as early childhood settings.

**Child Focussed Orientation**
Child Focussed Orientation references showed a relatively large reduction in Setting 2, particularly for family needs. However, feelings of negativity were reduced as well as negative nodes recorded lower numbers of mentions.

**Positive signs of Knowledge of Child Characteristics**
There was a fall in mentions of this aspect of partnership by parents regarding family needs in Setting 2.

**Empathy for Partner’s Needs**
This node was reduced in all areas in Setting 2, with the largest fall against family needs. There were smaller falls against negative nodes as well, particularly negative emotions.

**Knowing Parent Goals**
The largest fall in mentions for this aspect of partnership in Setting 2 was for family needs; however the other falls of any note were in areas of negativity, reflecting the largely positive outcomes for parents in this study.
**Partner Skills**
The parents in Setting 2 recorded a large drop for *partner skills* against *family needs*, and an overall drop in *positive* and *negative emotions*.

**Personal Skills**
The parents in Setting 2 recorded a large drop for *personal skills* against *family needs*, and an overall drop in *positive* and *negative emotions* and *isolation*.

**5:8:6:2 NODES SHOWING INCREASES ACROSS TIME**

**Negative Child Focus**
Incidences of this node increased for parents in Setting 2 when associated with *negative child* and *parent transition outcomes*.

**Positive Child Focus**
Incidences of this node increased for parents in Setting 2 when associated with *positive child* and *parent transition outcomes*.

**Positive signs of Knowledge of Child Characteristics**
Parents increased their mentions of this aspect of partnership in Setting 2 when they had *positive child transition outcomes*.

**Exemplary Practices by Parents**
This node recorded small but across the board increases in positive aspects of partnership in Setting 2. Some satisfaction for parents was evident in the increases in mentions of the node against *family needs, positive child* and *parent transition outcomes* and *positive emotions*.

**Exemplary Practices by Teachers**
The increase in mentions of this node by parents in Setting 2 occurred in association with *positive child* and *parent transition outcomes*.

**Partner Skills**
A modest rise in Setting 2 occurred for this node when parents recorded *positive child transition outcomes*. 

**Personal Skills**

Parents reported increases in mentions of this node in Setting 2 against *positive child* and *parent transition outcomes*.

**5:8:7 SUMMARY OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES FOR PARENTS**

Differences were in evidence in the emphases on professional practices between preschool and school. Parents’ central concerns with family needs and transition outcomes were also reflected over time and setting.

Overall *emotionality* was reduced between settings, even though it appeared that *family needs* were not associated with school partnerships to the same degree as in preschool. There were also fewer of the more nuanced nodes such as *authentic caring, knowing parent goals* and *empathy for partner’s needs* present in any numbers in the school phase.

Increases in aspects of partnerships mentioned across settings were largely partner attributes that contributed to *positive transition outcomes* for both parent and child, such as *positive child focus, positive knowledge of child characteristics, exemplary practices by teachers* and *partner skills*.

*Table 5.2* is the summary of the key professional practice factors for parents over their two-year experience of transition to school. They were chosen for their relevance if 25 or more attributed quotes by parents were aligned with the parent professional matrix enquiry and important parent outcomes taken from the Family Care Framework: *family needs, child transition outcomes, parent transition outcomes* and *emotional components*. The node *isolation* registered in low numbers and was therefore not included in the table.
Table 5.2: Key PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE factors reported by parents over two years

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO:
What are the Professional Practices associated with positive or negative child and parent transition outcomes in preschool and school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS OR FAILURE FOR PARENTS</th>
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<th>CHILD TRANSITION OUTCOMES</th>
<th>PARENT TRANSITION OUTCOMES</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL COMPONENT</th>
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5:8:8 ORGANISATIONAL THEMES FOR PARENTS ACROSS SETTINGS

Change in emphasis between facets of parent experience of organisational practices across settings could be seen as reduced or increased when looking at the matrices across time and place. Those which reduced or increased by data mentions of five or more are set out as follows:

5:8:8:1 NODES SHOWING REDUCTIONS ACROSS TIME

Negative School Climate
This node reduced for parents in Setting 2, but it should be noted that the higher scores recorded in Setting 1 would have been referring to the receiving schools and their transition programs. This negativity is reduced, apparently, by the end of the year in Setting 2. The downward trend was associated with negative child transition outcomes, negative emotions and family needs, which all indicate a lessening of the negative effects of school climate.

Positive School Climate
Parents reporting on positive school climate in Setting 2 had lowered associations with positive and negative emotions and family needs, indicating some resolution of family transition to school issues.

Bureaucracy
The influence of bureaucracy on parents in Setting 2 is much reduced on all counts compared to Setting 1. This suggests the initial impact of negotiating layers of administration had reduced by a large degree by the end of the Setting 2 year. The largest drops were against family needs, negative emotions and isolation.

Funding
This node also reduced across all Family Care Framework nodes, as apparently the concerns of parents during Setting 1 were resolved and the negative impacts reduced. The largest drop was against family needs.
Intentions and Goals
This node reflected the concerns parents had understanding how preschools and schools functioned to help their children, and it trended towards the negative in the Family Care Framework in Setting 1. While reduced across the board in Setting 2, some of the scores remained high enough to register remaining issues, such as negative emotions and negative child and parent transition outcomes.

Policy Detail and Knowledge
Parents recorded fewer mentions of this node in Setting 2 across the measures of the Family Care Framework. The reductions in negative nodes such as negative emotion, isolation and negative parent transition outcomes indicated that Setting 1 had been a more difficult time for parents as they began the transition process to school.

Negative Quality Processes
Parents rated the two settings very similarly for Setting 1 and Setting 2, and the references to either setting contained some cross-over by the nature of the transition processes between preschool and school at the end of Setting 1. This node was allied closely to the negative nodes for child and parent transition outcomes and emotions.

Positive Quality Processes
This node was associated with lower mentions of family needs and negative nodes for transition outcomes for parents and children, indicating parent satisfaction with good processes in Setting 2.

5:8:8:2 NODES SHOWING INCREASES ACROSS TIME

Leadership
This node featured more strongly in Setting 2 for parents and was associated with both positive and negative versions of transition outcomes and emotion nodes. This indicated that both good and poor outcomes were felt to be connected to leadership in schools, with the negative clusters outnumbering the positive.
Positive Quality Processes
There were increases in the positive clusters of nodes associated with this one, as parents reported higher mentions of positive emotions and positive child and parent transition outcomes in Setting 2.

5:8:9 SUMMARY OF ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS FOR PARENTS
There was a downward trend in most organisational nodes into Setting 2, with Family Care Framework indicators suggesting fewer concerns with the bureaucratic issues of Setting 1 as familiarity with processes grew, and emotional levels lessened.

Some of the nodes that lessened in importance to parents over time can also be explained by their lessening need for reassurance and support, such as school climate, funding and intentions and goals.

Nodes that increased in mention by parents over time were long-lasting and important to have in place at all times; leadership and positive quality processes.

Table 5.3 is the summary of the key organisational factors for parents over their two-year experience of transition to school. They were chosen for their relevance if 25 or more attributed quotes by parents were aligned with the organisational matrix enquiry and important parent outcomes taken from the Family Care Framework; family needs, child transition outcomes, parent transition outcomes and emotional components. The node isolation registered few data points and was left off the table.
RESEARCH QUESTION THREE:

What are the Organisational factors associated with positive or negative child and parent transition outcomes in preschool and school?

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<tr>
<th>KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS OR FAILURE FOR PARENTS</th>
<th>FAMILY NEEDS</th>
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5:9 PARENT IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

As the study drew to a close, the researcher and the parents discussed changes over time and reflected on learning and growth that occurred for them. Parents shared their ideas about their experiences of transition in terms of measures to improve practices in the future. Examples of parents’ comments follow.

‘I think in an ideal world it would be really nice to link with one person at your school. It would be nice for about 6 months or so and have that person get to know your child prior to starting school. In the real world it would be really nice to build that relationship prior to starting, so you can start with confidence then, and your child knows somebody. I think stepping into the schooling is huge so it’s a new environment, it’s new people, and you’ve got to get to know- not only... when you go in with a typical child you want to know where the toilets are and the canteen and what’s banking day... When you go in with a child with additional needs you need to know the school counsellor, you need to know procedures- you know, what happens if this happens- just extra things’ (P4, round 1)

‘Support for the parent is the biggest one! I think it lowers everybody’s anxiety really- it makes that transition smoother by having a team you’re able to... everybody can communicate, and this person’s vital information can be expressed to this person and everybody gets all the information. There’s not someone going “well why isn’t this working?” because they haven’t got the information from the speech therapist, just say, to work with visuals...’ (P7, round 2)

‘I just feel like they [children] need... the more they [teachers] could do to introduce them to the school and make them familiar with it, the better they’d- and I understand there’s a time issue with it- they’ve got their own classes to run and everything, but (sighs) just exposing them more, even just letting them sit up in the playground at morning tea time or something, if they attended the preschool connected to the school, and just little things like that, or bringing the buddies down into the preschool so they get familiar with them’ (P8, round 4)

‘But for future kids- I’d love to see people sit down and talk to each other! You’ve got all these groups of people- why can’t there be just one meeting time? You all agree on a set time and you give each other phone numbers and actually talk to each other! ’ (P8, round 4)
The main results in Phase Three are embodied in these quotes; the need for clarity of roles, shared understanding, quality processes, positive shared focus on the child and good communication between all parties.

5.10 SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR PHASE THREE

The Time and Place information gained from the six matrices gave clear indicators of changes of emphases for parents over two years of transition to school. There was useful information about what helped and what had hindered parents in their partnerships over two settings, as clear relationships emerged with type and kind of skills and behaviour that enabled them to meet their family and child needs, and to learn to negotiate education systems with confidence in themselves and others.

Within the limits of the study, a discussion can be had about what some of these indicators of positive partnerships were and any conclusions that can be drawn that are helpful to parents, teachers and people with a leadership role in education.
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION
The stated aim of the study was to explore in detail the experience of transition to school for parents of young children with disabilities in 2012-2013 in NSW, Australia. The quality of their partnerships with teachers in preschool and school was proposed to be important in achieving good transition outcomes for the children, in what was a complex investigation of people, processes, places and time, with children at the centre of both a home ecology and a school ecology, following Bronfenbrenner (Figure 1.1).

The scope of the data collected around eight families transitioning their children with a range of disabilities to school was centred on the transcripts from 35 participants in 64 interviews, and the 93 nodes derived from coding 145 sources. Matrices were created in NVivo by the researcher, from collections of nodes, called sets, designed to interrogate relationships of people, processes, place and time relevant to the three research questions of the study.

The resulting discussion of the results represented a timely picture of the experience of transition from the viewpoints of the significant adults in these young children’s lives, given that changes in education practices will only increase the number of families presenting at their local schools in the future to enrol their children, whatever their learning needs.

6.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS
There were three research questions focussing on three levels of the ecologies at which parents and teachers operated in their partnerships during the transition of children with disabilities to school; the interpersonal Partnership one-on-one level, the school-level of Professional Practices, and the larger milieu of Organisations based outside schools from where policies and practices devolved. In relation to the children at the heart of each partnership these were the micro, meso and macro layers of processes between adults working in their best interests, as described in bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).
The research questions were:

1. **What are the partnership actions and behaviours of parents and teachers that are associated with positive or negative child and parent transition outcomes in preschool and school?**

2. **What are the professional practices associated with positive or negative child and parent transition outcomes in preschool and school?**

3. **What are the organisational factors associated with positive or negative child and parent transition outcomes in preschool and school?**

The qualitative interviews used a framework derived from six themes; authentic caring, communication, child focus, knowledge of child characteristics, school climate and teaming (Angell et al., 2009). Time was the seventh area for questioning, to elicit information about changes in partnerships or transition processes from individual viewpoints over time (Appendix B). The secondary research tool themes were commitment, communication, equality, respect, skills and trust (Blue-Banning et al., 2004). A range of new themes were added during the four phases of data collection (Code Book, Appendix C).

When all data was in and coding completed, the researcher had increased the number of codes or nodes substantially, but then was able to group them into related clusters or sets which informed the three research questions; Partnership set, Professional Practice set and Organisational set. To test their usefulness to children and parents during transition another cluster was created and named the Family Care Framework. It contained nodes related to family needs, transition outcomes, emotions and feelings of isolation. Matrix queries in all phases of the study used the Family Care Framework to highlight prominent intersections with any key nodes in the three
research question areas. Matrix queries were also run with selected data pools such as for individual parents, all participants together, all parents together, or for each type of setting across the two years.

6.3 THE PIVOTAL SET FOR THIS STUDY: Family Care Framework

After a reading of the research literature it was clear that the family context was central to any understanding of the dynamics of transitioning a child with a disability to school. Researcher after researcher noted that individual family needs played an influential role in the success of transition, as they determined the consequences, very often, if they were either ignored and misunderstood, or incorporated and accounted for (Branson & Bingham, 2009; Dockett & Perry, 2004; Rous, Hallam, et al., 2007; Trivette et al., 2010). The importance of the family perspective was frequently presented in the literature as an idea that teachers may not have had included as part of their original training, and could therefore lack in their skill repertoire when partnering with the parents of children with disabilities (Emerson et al., 2010; Lord-Nelson et al., 2004; Rous, Hallam, et al., 2007). The parents in this study were reliant upon their teacher partners showing skill and understanding towards them and their child, as their closest associates in unfamiliar educational territory.

The Family Care Framework was created to reflect the issues at the heart of transition for parents (see Methods Chapter 3.7.3). It became the pivotal set against which all others were tested. Each of the nodes in this set will be discussed for their contribution to analysis in this study.

6.3.1 FAMILY NEEDS

The largest and most related-to node in the study was ‘family needs’. It was created very early in the study because parents and teachers were explaining many of their own actions and behaviour in terms of the particular circumstances of individual families. It was also quoted to explain the effects or outcomes of the behaviour of others towards families. The examples could have positive, negative or neutral overtones, as the node was indicative of the presence of family needs as a factor associated with other more specific partnership issues.
An understanding of the existence of unique family needs was apparent as an essential prerequisite for positive partnerships from the very early stages of the study. It was evident that recognition of the individuality of families was pivotal to explaining both positive and negative associations and outcomes, without having to define what the needs were specifically. At the local level, parents, teachers and other school personnel were engaged in their own ways in working around family needs, with their partnerships reflecting how well they achieved common understanding and benefit to children. The node ‘family needs’ was a catch-all repository for family-related matters, and did not describe specifics. When the other research matrices were created and designed, ‘family needs’ usually featured most strongly as a common factor with their most popular nodes, which confirmed the significance of family goals and circumstances in all aspects of partnerships over the two year period of transition.

The centrality of family circumstances and considered professional responses to them was as predicted by the research literature at the outset of the study, and as demonstrated most comprehensively by Trivette, Dunst and Hamby (2010). It cannot be reasonably disputed that family-centred practices have the best chance of being successful if and when individual family needs are understood and taken into account when partners are planning together. Participants in this study were drawn on open-ended questions about family concerns such as ‘authentic caring’, ‘child focus’ and ‘knowledge of child characteristics’ (Appendix B), and their responses always linked strongly to family needs as an important part of the story they were telling. It could be ascertained how well or poorly family needs were served even though it was assigned a neutral value as a node. For example, if the other nodes in a matrix about professional practices were largely negative, then a reading of the quotes inside ‘family needs’ for that case would reveal ways in which recognition of family needs was wanting. Many studies referred to parents’ wishes for understanding, and empathy for their situations (Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009; Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008; Murray & Curran, 2008; Spann et al., 2003). This study confirmed the view that family needs were a central concern in transition to school partnerships.
In theoretical terms, the evidence from this study demonstrated that the interactions of people, time and place in the transition to school context had a strong relationship to family needs. The quality of processes that parents experienced also emerged as influential, demonstrated by evidence of the types and kinds of partnerships they had over the two years of this study. The Bronfenbrenner based model devised for this study (Figure 1.1) had the child at the heart of its concerns and this discussion provided evidence for the significance of the ‘family needs’ as the central node in this study in terms of the children and their transition outcomes.

6.3.2 TRANSITION OUTCOMES
The Family Care Framework was primarily concerned with showing how families fared over two years, and particularly in finding links to help explain the possible iterations of transition outcomes for parents and children. In individual case terms, six of the children in the study had good or reasonable outcomes and settled into regular classes in their local schools. Another had been enrolled in a more distant school and was experiencing difficulties. That family left the study in early 2013. The eighth child was trialled in two schools before the parent opted for home schooling.

It was anticipated, from other research findings, that some of the families and their teacher partners may be conflicted about how they were working towards successful transition as they negotiated kinds of help-giving behaviour, their needs for feelings of competence or control, and confidence in their partner’s abilities and the children’s happiness (Keen, 2007; Summers et al., 2007; Woods et al., 2004). Part of the problem, for parents, could be expected to come from limited experience with transitions of this nature in themselves and their teacher partners, and the possibility that teachers understood the theory of it more than the practice (Woods & Lindeman, 2008). These findings found resonance in the present study, as follows.

*Parent transition outcomes* could be expressed in positive or negative terms and as a node it often had larger numbers of entries recorded against it than the *child transition outcomes* node. The parents were speaking as the primary person negotiating transition for their child, and they were usually open and expressive about their roles and their partnerships. Parents made clear connections between positive
attributes of partner, professional and organisational behaviour or processes and positive transition outcomes. Conversely, negative behaviours and processes aligned with negative personal statements about their experiences of transition outcomes. The specific features which assisted with getting it right- or wrong- for parents during transition will be elucidated in the discussion of the research sets to follow. The types of difficulties raised in previous research held true for some of the parents; poor communication, inadequate transition activities too late in the year, and a poor understanding of role and processes (Dunlop, 2003; Grace et al., 2008; Lilley, 2013). The types of beneficial practices that helped parents were also present in the research literature to date; welcoming school climate, individualised transition activities and good communication (Branson & Bingham, 2009; Lo-Casale-Crouch et al., 2008; Margetts, 2002).

Child transition outcomes were recorded in positive and negative terms and showed some overlap with the parents’ experiences. This node was populated when specific actions or processes had a direct relationship to the child, particularly in positive terms when the individual child’s needs were addressed with thoughtful and coordinated planning, and demonstrated teacher understanding of the child’s learning needs (Dockett & Perry, 1999; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). Poor transition outcomes for children were expressed in negative terms similar to those in the research literature, such as failure to consider specific child issues, to believe that the child should be ready for school rather than the school be ready for the child, and the failure to make reasonable adjustments (Petriwskyj & Grieshaber, 2011; Rimm-Kaufmann et al., 2000).

The transition outcomes nodes were rich and descriptive in their detailing of how parents and teachers interacted in their partnerships and the results for the children. The predictions of the research literature and the consideration of the influence of the adults closest to the child in theoretical terms were telling in their close fit with the experiences of the families in this study. Whether rated negatively or positively, there were partnership behaviours and actions which aligned to explain the outcomes.
6.3.3 EMOTIONS

A review of recent research literature showed awareness and recognition of the emotional nature of the experience of schooling issues, including transition, for parents of young children with disabilities. Trute et al. (2007) highlighted the emotional light and shade that many parents experienced, both within families and when negotiating the early years of childhood. Others have focussed on emotions in partnerships between parents and professionals, and the need for an understanding of the ways the effects of negative emotions may be mitigated (Brotherson et al., 2010; Lovett & Haring, 2003; Oliver, 2008).

The present study included emotions as nodes in the Family Care Framework to explore these ideas further, adding positive and negative nodes to give a deeper and more personal emphasis to the experience of transition. This proved to be validating for the ideas in the research literature, as the participants frequently added emotional detail and descriptions to their stories. Of even greater interest was the alignment of positive assessments of partnership behaviour and processes with positive emotions for parents, and the reverse when assessments were negative. The work of Brotherson et al. (2010) was confirmed in the present study, as partners who were more matched in emotional styles, with the time to listen and communicate, and with an appreciation of the complex issues, were more likely to report positive emotions and to achieve positive transition outcomes.

The coding of Emotions proved to be a useful addition to the Family Care Framework, as it provided a dimension to partnership research which should not be underplayed. Transition to school was clearly an emotional time for the families in this study and parents responded positively to support and understanding. Teachers could possibly find this an area of practice for which they felt ill-equipped, understanding the “why” but not the “how” of gathering and giving information (Woods & Lindeman, 2008). Sharing a close association with the child as they do, teachers and parents may need guidance and leadership in navigating what can be stressful partnerships during times of transition.
6.3.4 Isolation

There were instances in the literature and in the study where descriptions were given of the isolation and aloneness that many parents with small children with disabilities experience in social, medical, educational and other settings (Grace et al., 2008; Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008; Trute et al., 2007). As a node in the study, it provided a darker shade of emotion, and was most often associated with other negative nodes indicating difficulties in partnerships. There was some support for the findings of the above studies, as a sense of isolation was reported by some parents in this study. The numbers of mentions during interviews was relatively low, but when recorded, they substantiated the negative effects of other actions across the partnership experience.

6.4 Answering the Research Questions: Discussion of Phases One, Two and Three results in each of the three domains of partnerships

Three sets were created to help answer the research questions; Partnership, Professional Practices and Organisational Factors, and they were used in three phases of enquiry with the Family Care Framework set as the measure of quality of family experience of transition. Discussion will now focus on the important themes that emerged in each enquiry.

In Phase One of the Results, the matrices were run for individual parent experiences of Partnership, Professional Practices and Organisational Factors. This data included the partner and executive data relevant to each parent. In Phase Two of the Results, three matrices were run to find a combined participant view of the three research sets above. Phase Three combined all parent data but split it into two timeframes, called Setting 1 for preschool in 2012, and Setting 2, for school in 2013. When matrices were formed using that specific organising of data, six matrices were produced which allowed comparisons of parent experiences between the two settings in Partnership, Professional Practices and Organisational factors. These were examined for any evidence of change across time or settings.

Discussion will be focussed on the three research sets, looking for any indicators of deeper knowledge about the facets of partnership assigned to each set.
that may be drawn from the three phases of results. The numbers of matrices run for this study were designed to focus slightly more on parent views, individually and combined, than on their partners. This reflected their primary position among the adult roles when seeing through the transitions to school of young children with disabilities over two years. In theoretical terms, this also reflected the child at the heart of the family over Time, Place and Processes.

6.5 RESEARCH QUESTION ONE: DISCUSSION OF THE PARTNERSHIP SET

This set was designed to describe partnerships at an interpersonal level and contained the nodes communication, teaming, commitment, equality, friendship, mentoring, empowerment, lack of power, respect, understanding of own role, understanding of partner role, shared decision-making, shared understanding and trust. There were positive, negative and neutral versions of the nodes.

This set evolved as a gauge of close personal qualities that were present in partnerships that had come partly from the research literature and partly from the researcher listening to the participants talk about successful partnerships. Some of the themes from Blue-Banning et al. (2004) and Angell et al. (2009) were assigned to this set in a process of self-interrogation, where the researcher decided how to group original and new nodes to best address the research questions. It may not have been the selection of another researcher, but it was a considered response in this case, choosing markers of the kinds of behaviour and ideas that were helpful for establishing rapport and trust between parents and teachers. Discussion of the most important themes to emerge from the iterations of this set follows.

6.5.1 PHASE ONE: INDIVIDUAL PARENTS’ VIEWS ON PARTNERSHIPS

The eight parent cases were considered individually by looking at their eight partnership matrices and noting the most populous nodes and the kinds of things that they said about them (Chapter Four). Seven themes were important to them; teaming, shared understanding, understanding their own role, commitment, communication, lack of power and empowerment. Chapter Four can be read for its many examples of
what these themes looked like in the lives of parents and children when demonstrated to be present or absent. Clear connections were apparent between positive partner behaviour and positive transition experiences.

These themes were foreshadowed in the research literature as the kind of capacity-building, help-giving, family-focussed partner actions so strongly recommended for their contributions to family quality of life (Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009; Trivette et al., 2010; Woods & Lindeman, 2008). In this study the above themes were characterised by some clear needs by parents in their partnerships with teachers. They sought shared roles with common understanding and common goals, acting together as a team, and with a sense of commitment from the teacher. In their own personal roles they had a strong need to know what their role was and to feel that they knew how to be in charge and what steps to take. When this was experienced positively then family needs, positive transition outcomes and positive emotions were usually strongly related. The negative versions of these partnership qualities, often including disempowerment and feelings of isolation, showed relationship with negative emotions and negative transition outcomes. Type and kind of behaviour was felt at the parent, child and family level during transition to school.

Chapter Four’s case studies results contained many examples of the kinds of actions that parents found helpful, including facilitating teamwork between preschool and school, efficient and diligent communication practices, and supporting parents to help them make decisions. The kinds of actions described by them that were unhelpful, also found in Chapter Four, included communication that was not pitched to their level of understanding, lack of help coping with aspects of the school system they were unfamiliar with, unclear directions for their role and how to engage with partners about their children’s needs, and poor processes to include them as equal members of learning support teams.

The findings in this area are important for teachers and other partners to be aware of, and have echoed other research studies. Parents clearly do not expect to be passive partners, or to have uncertainty in their roles as primary decision-makers for their children. This is partly explained by the central role they have played in their
children’s early lives, and the ‘insider status’ they have enjoyed in working to build their lives as families (Podvey et al., 2013).

Changes in role, and adjusting to new roles, when partnering in both preschool and school have been recognised as difficult adjustments for parents, and as an area for teachers and others to address in their professional practices (Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009; Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008; Keen, 2007; Podvey et al., 2013). These researchers have highlighted the lack of understanding of their role changes by parents and some unawareness of this by professionals who have not questioned their roles in a changing landscape of service delivery to children with disabilities and their families. Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008), particularly, question whether professional skills have kept up with recent changes to procedures that require consultation with parents. Implementation scientists and other researchers would like to see more current knowledge from partnership research translated into understanding and practice by professionals in education and other fields associated with disability services (Odom et al., 2011; Trivette et al., 2010).

In theoretical terms, the kinds of quality processes that empowered parents at the interpersonal level included active roles by their partners in showing them how to team, communicate, and effectively play a role in their children’s education. The outcomes for children and parents were showing a direct relationship with positive processes that assisted families, in line with a Bronfenbrenner view of adult relationships and their influence on child development (Figure 1.1).

6.5.2 PHASE TWO: ALL PARTICIPANTS’ VIEWS ON PARTNERSHIPS

The four most reported aspects of partnership behaviour identified by the consensus combining of all participant data were teaming, shared understanding, understanding own role and communication. There was evidence that teachers and executive understood the importance of all of these and included them in their practices. The positive versions of the nodes were associated with family needs and positive assessments of transition outcomes and emotions. Conversely, negative versions of the nodes tended to relate to family needs, negative transition outcomes and negative emotions, with some mentions of feelings of isolation.
These results were encouraging for several reasons, and most importantly for the children at the centre of partnerships. Many researchers emphasised that teaming and shared understanding between parents and teachers maximised the chance that they shared a similar conceptual framework about the children that allowed realistic expectations and optimal strategies to be employed (Dockett & Perry, 2004; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). Success, according to some, was more about the adults than the children (Odom et al., 2011).

Another reason for encouragement was the evidence that all participants in this partnership matrix indicated awareness of the two-way nature of partnerships and the ideals of shared understanding and communication. The strongest node allied to the four above was family needs, which indicated recognition of its importance, at least to some extent, by all participants. Researchers have identified the need to build rapport between partners so that account is taken of individual family circumstances (Grace et al., 2008; Lilley, 2013; Murray & Curran, 2008).

Executive data was included in this node and was indicative of priorities directors and principals held in their leadership roles in their schools or preschools. There have been studies which emphasised the pivotal role executive have to play in addressing partnership factors at a school level; role confusion has been identified as an issue for both parents and teachers. Clarity of language, actions and procedures during transition to school is particularly important at the school and government level to provide a clear role guide for all participants (Chadwick & Kemp, 2002; Dunlop, 2003). Confusion, doubt and an array of different interpretations of guidelines and procedures have caused distress to families over the years and can be avoided (Grace et al., 2008; Lilley, 2013). Ensuring early success in transition is crucial for children, as it sets the pattern for school acceptance and success, and is dependent on parents and teachers understanding each other in terms of context and shared goals (Branson & Bingham, 2009; Dunlop, 2003; Lake & Billingsley, 2000; Rous, Hallam, et al., 2007).

In theoretical terms there were micro and meso levels of close partnership behaviour between the important adults in the child’s life during transition to school. They all valued strong ideals as the basis for their actions in partnerships, with strong
responses from parents if these four ideals (teaming, shared understanding, understanding own role and communication) were experienced in negative ways and not in keeping with their family needs. This phase of the results clearly supported the effects of positive quality processes by people in close association with the child being linked to positive developmental outcomes, both for children and parents. Conversely, there were instances where negative processes between people were related to negative outcomes.

**6.5.3 PHASE THREE: SETTING 1 AND SETTING 2 COMPARISONS ON PARTNERSHIPS**

The perspective for Phase Three was a refinement of the data to further test the elements of bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Matrices were designed for a comparison between a Setting 1 (preschool) parent-only set of Partnership nodes and a Setting 2 (school) parent-only set of Partnership nodes. The two settings were compared with respect to the Family Care Framework group of nodes to investigate family outcomes over the two years. The numbers of references in each node across the matrices were relatively low because of the restricting of the data sources, and summaries and conclusions were necessarily circumspect as a result.

Table 5.1 was constructed to show incidences of Partnership nodes with 25 or more references, comprising teaming, communication, understanding own role, shared understanding, shared decision-making and power. The table illustrated the relationship that was apparent across this study, with positive forms of the Partnership nodes aligning with positive forms of the Family Care Framework, and the reverse case of negative aligning with negative.

To achieve positive outcomes in transition it was apparent that parents looked for three main aspects for their own benefit—teaming, positive communication and understanding their own role—and for their children they looked for teaming and shared understanding. Their concern about understanding their own role over the two year period suggested that parents may need to be more explicitly included in the process of transition in the present schooling system. Woods and Lindeman (2008) surveyed similar partnerships to this study and reported findings including a gap in
understanding of roles. They said this often derived from professionals and services understanding the “why” of practices but not the “how”. Parents also struggled with their roles because they did not usually have the background and experience in disability services to understand either, and often experienced each phase of their child’s life as a first time. Another angle for understanding parents’ perspectives was derived from a study of parents in early educational transition (Podvey et al., 2013). They proposed the change for parents as an experience of ‘outsider’ status in school environments, after their early years of ‘insider’ status as the primary person responsible for their children. The effect of reduced involvement in planning and execution of programs could be felt as a both a loss and an emotional wrench (Podvey et al., 2013).

It is useful to note here that the strategies recommended by Woods and Lindeman (2008) for improved understanding between partners were highly related to the nodes in this study; holding interviews as conversations (positive communication, shared understanding); interactive and personal use of checklists (teaming, personal skills, understanding of own role); community mapping of families to understand their supports (family needs, empathy for partner, shared understanding, teaming); problem-solving together (teaming, shared decision-making, family needs, understanding of own role); and use of the family environment to maximum effect (family needs, shared understanding, empowerment). These strategies could be read as the types of partnership behaviour that parents in this study have enjoyed or are looking for.

Changes over time for parents could be noted over the two years, but not asserted strongly in light of the relatively low numbers in the data. The Family Care Framework node family needs reduced in Setting 2, as did emotionality and isolation, which may have indicated a settling of the family into the routines of school. The Partnership nodes which indicated change over time were teaming and communication reducing in Setting 2, and with less negative emphasis than in Setting 1. Personal change that was evident included more feelings of empowerment in Setting 2 and less of negative emotions. Parents also reported an improvement in
understanding both their own and their partner’s role in Setting 2. These suggested personal growth and learning over time, and some causes could be traced through positive reports of processes in case studies for individual parents.

It was evident that partnership behaviour could be influential to parents’ and children’s outcomes and well-being during transition to school, with the participants in this study identifying common areas of importance, particularly teaming, communication, shared understanding and understanding own role. These areas all deserve closer attention in assisting all partners in transition to fulfil their roles for the benefit of children with disabilities, as parents frequently reported experiencing the negative side of those nodes; lack of teaming; poor communication; lack of shared understanding; and not understanding their own role. The strategies of Woods and Lindeman (2008) had resonance with the issues raised in this area of partnerships, and have the potential to provide practical ways to make explicit the roles of both partners to each other.

In theoretical terms, the changes over time in Phase Three results for parents could not be clearly or definitively described, but their concerns over two years had clear common threads. They had in common a desire for quality processes with their partners in each setting; teaming, communication, understanding own role, shared understanding, shared decision-making and power. Table 5.1 demonstrated that the positive or negative quality of processes between adults at this close level had an impact on parent and child transition outcomes and also the emotions experienced by the parents. While not explicitly demonstrated in the table, the development outcomes of the child at the centre of each family could be inferred in the case studies, where positive processes were reported in positive terms in the Family Care Framework, and negative processes reported in negative terms.

6.6 RESEARCH QUESTION TWO: DISCUSSION OF THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES SET

This set was designed to describe Professional Practices at the interpersonal and school level, and contained the nodes authentic caring, child focus, knowledge of child characteristics, disability constructs, empathy for partner, knowing parent goals,
**exemplary practices, personal skills and partner skills.** There were positive, negative and neutral versions of the nodes. This set evolved as a gauge of participant assessments of the type and efficacy of partnership behaviour that was associated with educational professionals specifically. Some of the nodes were derived from the parent-focussed study of Angell et al. (2009) in the initial framing of the Interview Protocol (Appendix B) and others were added as the interviews progressed and the researcher refined ideas and responded to the content of the transcripts. The most important nodes emerging from the three phases of the enquiry will be discussed below.

**6.6.1 PHASE ONE: INDIVIDUAL PARENTS’ VIEWS ON PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES**

Across the case studies of the eight parents, seven nodes were most frequently identified; knowing parent goals, personal skills, empathy for partner, authentic caring, partner skills, child focus and exemplary practices by teachers. These nodes had the highest associations with family needs, and their positive or negative expressions were strongly associated with the same positive or negative mentions of transition outcomes and emotions. Chapter Four contains specific examples of parents’ experiences of Professional Practices and their role in enhancing or hindering the transition experiences of families.

The most important node for parents was knowing parent goals, and the other nodes showed a similar desire for empathy and understanding from their partners in education. Teacher appreciation of this empathetic dimension to their practice would undoubtedly enhance their partnerships with parents of young children with disabilities; evidence for this can be read in the case studies in Chapter Four. The experiment in teacher training by Murray and Curran (2008) also demonstrated the benefit of trainee teachers and parents spending time together to better understand parent and family perspectives of education. Several other studies have detailed the factors that militate against closer understanding, such as poor communication due to lack of time and structures for regular discussion, little training or background in disability education, and low emphasis on parent knowledge and collaboration (Brotherson et al., 2010; Grace et al., 2008; Lilley, 2013).
The expectations of parents in this study were quite clear, as they demonstrated their desires to be involved and informed in their children’s educational journey with many examples of how it could be well achieved or poorly achieved. They were appreciative of the efforts of teachers to work with them and understand their family circumstances. The researcher created the node *exemplary practices by teachers* to collect examples that were instructive in understanding good practices during transition to school. Examples of exemplary practices praised by parents included playgroups to familiarise parents and children with the new location before school started, meetings to ask parents for input, establishing links with people who would be important to the parent or child during transition, and activities which were tailored to be flexible and additional to what was usually offered.

There was support for the theoretical premises of this study in terms of reinforcing the importance to families of quality processes. They wished to be understood in their contexts, and to have meaningful relationships with their educational partners, whether teachers or executive. There were examples in the case studies of either teachers or executive not meeting these criteria for parents; good relationships with both were important to the parent’s well-being and positive experience of transition. Whole-school philosophies and the agreement and execution of school policies by all staff belong in the “meso” sphere of proximity in bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and will be discussed further in the chapter, when discussing the matrices which were run for organisational factors.

### 6.6.2 Phase Two: All Participants’ Views of Professional Practices

The combined participants’ most strongly supported nodes from the Professional Practice set were; *knowing parent goals, personal skills, empathy for parents* and *partner skills*. These nodes did not have positive or negative versions, but were areas of professional practice that could be related both positively and negatively to the elements of the Family Care Framework, particularly to *family needs*.

The nature of these nodes showed an overall concern by all participants about the skills and understandings that were needed to create and nurture good partnerships. They represented a step further; of participants thinking about how to
achieve some of the six elements of partnership chosen for the interview protocol (Appendix B), and what the professional practice priorities could be. Many researchers had identified gaps in teacher and other professional’s skills in eliciting an understanding of parent goals and viewpoints. For many teachers, it is possible their original training did not include skills to enable them to relate to families (Emerson et al., 2010), and for others it may be that old roles and power differentials were unquestioned or deeply ingrained (Gilman et al., 2009).

The researcher created the four nodes above (knowing parent goals, personal skills, empathy for parents and partner skills) in response to their emerging potential as areas of tension and misunderstandings in partnerships, as well as their association with expressions of growth and achievement by participants. Professional practices appeared to be in a state of flux during the period of this study, because both preschools and schools were subject to significant changes as reforms in line with the Australian Government’s Disability Standards for Education (2005) were being rolled out. There was evidence of variability of responses to the changes at an individual, school and regional level because parents, teachers and executive often referred to a need to learn and understand new processes while reflecting during interviews. Teacher training and familiarity with students with disabilities also varied within participants, with school teachers having the higher proportion of participants least trained and least familiar with disability issues. Many participants referred to the changes over time that they were experiencing, and acknowledged a growth of skills, but very few had had access to recent targeted learning for transition-related skills when enrolling children with disabilities. The two nodes, personal skills and partner skills, were strong indicators that participants valued the importance of specific skills which could help them in their transition roles.

The most important node in the Professional Practices set- knowing parent goals- was strongly related to family needs and also to both positive and negative versions of the transition outcomes and emotions nodes. Where negative Family Care Framework nodes were associated, isolation also was present, although in low numbers. It was understood by parents and educators to be a significant factor in
positive professional practices but was unevenly understood and executed. The node *empathy for parents* closely followed the associations of the *knowing parent goals* node. Many studies have drawn attention to the centrality of empathy for parents and knowing parent goals for their children in educational planning (Forlin et al., 2009; Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008; Woods & Lindeman, 2008). Parent well-being and confidence has been shown to be directly linked to good relationships with teachers and professionals, with a bearing on their parenting and their enjoyment of their children (Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009; Trivette et al., 2010; Trute et al., 2007). Examples from this study of positive measures to ascertain parent goals and understand the family included identifying and discussing goals explicitly early in transition, seeking to understand family context, being consultative at frequent intervals and actively seeking ideas and feedback at learning support meetings.

From a theoretical viewpoint, this study suggested that positive processes exemplified within this node of *knowing parent goals* had a direct relationship with positive family outcomes, and that overlooking or ignoring parent goals was detrimental to them. Several parents in this study were struggling with the unfamiliarity of school processes and the failure of teachers to understand what they were looking for, or to listen to them closely. The sample of parents in this study may be thought of as an older and more assured group than average, with some resilience to help them to cope. A wider and deeper appreciation of the value of teachers *knowing parent goals* and having *empathy for parents* could be a future goal of teacher training and skill development, before and during teacher careers. The means to assist teachers and other professionals in their practices to work more closely and efficiently with parents of young children with disabilities may need to be specifically taught, as lack of skills has been demonstrated here and elsewhere to be a concern of partners in transition.

An issue potentially preventing empathy with parents was that of emotions, and teacher ability to cope with the wide range of feelings that parents may exhibit; anxiety, eagerness, anger, disappointment and so on. Parents in this study were conscious of being at a disadvantage with their emotionality and several worried about
being characterised as “over-anxious” parents. The emotions of parents, particularly negative ones, were strongly tied to all the nodes in this set. Research studies have recognised that perhaps a focus on professional learning in this area may be needed, to acknowledge the role played by this facet of partnerships, and not just emotions within parents, but within teachers as well (Brotherson et al., 2010; Dillon-Goodson, 2005; Lovett & Haring, 2003; Oliver, 2008). The benefits of a deeper understanding of the role of emotions in partnerships appear to be supported by the connections made in this study.

### 6.6.3 PHASE THREE: SETTING 1 AND SETTING 2 COMPARISONS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

The perspective for Phase Three was a refinement of the data to further explore the elements of bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Matrices were designed for a comparison between a Setting 1 (preschool) parent-only set of Professional Practice nodes and a Setting 2 (school) parent-only set of Professional Practice nodes. The two settings were compared with respect to the Family Care Framework group of nodes to investigate family outcomes over the two years. The numbers of references in each node across the matrices were relatively low because of the restricting of the data sources, and summaries and conclusions were necessarily circumspect as a result. Table 5.2 was constructed to show incidences of Professional Practice nodes with 25 or more references, comprising knowing parent goals, child focus, empathy for parent, partner skills, personal skills and authentic caring. The table illustrated the relationship that has repeated across this study, with positive forms of the Professional Practices nodes aligning with positive forms of the Family Care Framework, and the reverse case occurred, with negative aligning with negative. This trend is well aligned with bioecological theory, in predicting how families fare during transition to school.

Examples of positive change over time allied to positive parent and child transition outcomes included trends upwards in personal skills and partner skills, as well as for authentic caring, child focus, knowledge of child characteristics and exemplary practices by teachers. These gave some suggestion of signs of parent
growth with partnering skills and resolution of major concerns, as *negative emotions* decreased in relation to that change. The school experiences of professional practices associated with successful transition were positively related to actions that fostered a good understanding of the child, even though *knowing parent goals* was less in evidence.

Examples of negative change over time allied to *negative parent* and *child transition outcomes* were allied to professional practices, which included *negative child focus, negative knowledge of child characteristics, lack of authentic caring, reduced empathy for parent, reduced knowing parent goals, and reduced partner and personal skills*. The biggest drop however, was for *family needs*, which along with reduced *knowing parent goals*, suggested a marked change in culture between preschool and school. At a personal level *negative emotions* were lower for these negative assessments of outcomes over time, but overall reports of emotionality whether positive or negative, were down. *Isolation* was reduced over time, but the reports were low in both settings.

These relationships, both positive and negative, were illustrative of the effects on families of professional practices which had the potential to foster good outcomes, or to delay or prevent good outcomes because of a lack of understanding of the types of practices which would benefit successful transition to school and better inform the teacher about the individual child’s needs. Mention has been made earlier of the crucial time factor in establishing good connections between the teacher and the child, so that acceptance in the class, both socially and educationally, can occur (Branson & Bingham, 2009). Another perspective, gathered from a large parent survey in the USA, showed that many parents lowered their expectations of professionals as time passed, and that systems frequently bypassed their wishes or contributions to programs (Prezant & Marshak, 2006). The ideas of critical theory are relevant here, because of the tendency of majority groups and institutions to be slow to take account of the effects of their own privileged knowledge, position and power, and to reduce that gap between themselves and their consumers (Kincheloe, 1995). Parents in this study
often mentioned being lost and intimidated by the complexity of the education system when enrolling their young child with a disability to school.

The small group of parents in this study were learning to adjust to two systems in two years as they left one for the other. The effect of Place, in Bronfenbrenner terms, was influential from a macro systems point of view—changing from early childhood education to school education. At a meso level, each family was investigating local options, meeting potential new partners, and working with them as best they could. They each encountered their own unique set of People and Places.

The effect of type and kind of professional practice was an individual experience for each of the parents, as teachers and their schools had their own variations on personal, class-level and whole-school practices. The major finding for this section on Professional Practices was that positive effects can devolve from teachers who consider family needs and parent goals, have empathy for the family, look closely at the child, and continue to develop their skills. They could also play a positive role in assisting the parents in understanding their roles and helping them to build their skills as advocates for their children.

6.7 THE ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS SET

This set was designed to describe organisational factors at the school level, as well as the larger sphere within which they operated; the meso and macro levels of the bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner and Evans, 2006). The set contained the nodes school climate, bureaucracy, funding, intentions and goals, leadership, policy detail and knowledge, training for staff, training available (for parents or teachers), training wished for and lacking (by parents or teachers) and quality of processes. There were positive, negative and neutral versions of the nodes.

This set was designed to capture participant experiences of factors outside their partnerships which may have been influential in positive or negative ways during the two year transition process. The school climate node was taken directly from Angell et al. (2009) and was a category in the interview protocol (Appendix B), and the quality of processes node was added to explore one of the underlying theoretical premises of the
study. The other nodes were added as the interviews progressed and the researcher found different categories of bureaucracy and other concerns during interviews and coding. Chapter Four can be read for direct examples of Organisational factors on family experiences of transition. The most important nodes emerging in this set during the three phases of the enquiry will be discussed below.

6.7.1 PHASE ONE: INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS’ VIEWS OF THE ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

The organisational nodes which all parents talked about frequently in terms of their transition experiences and their family needs were quality processes, intentions and goals, school climate and leadership. They were conceptual nodes characterised by their capacity to represent each parent’s version of that node’s role in contributing to successful transition for their children, and they have been fully described in the Code Book (Appendix C).

For all individual parents the positive and negative versions of the quality processes node were the nodes most strongly related to the family needs node from the Family Care Framework. This provided strong support for the importance placed by parents on their perceptions of the type and kind of processes they were dealing with during transition to school. In Results Chapter Four, in the matrix 3 sections of their case studies, each parent detailed both their positive and their negative examples of features of the organisational processes that they experienced in both preschool and school. For quality processes, the positive version of the node aligned with positive child and parent transition outcomes, positive emotions and few feelings of isolation. Negative quality processes, likewise, followed similar patterns found elsewhere in this study, and aligned strongly with the negative versions of nodes in the Family Care Framework. These trends were in keeping with the predictions of bioecological theory and the way that the positive behaviour of key adults will impact positively on children.

Many research studies cited in this thesis have detailed organisational factors which qualified as both positive and negative quality processes from the viewpoints of parents, and in terms of their family needs. They recognised that processes for enrolment, for example, were rich fields for study because of the often poor
experiences of parents with children with disabilities (Grace et al., 2008; Lilley, 2013; Villeneuve et al., 2013). Examples of inadequate organisational supports for parents and teachers were; processes that were difficult to understand or to access, lack of if time for partners to talk and exchange important information and lack of a cohesive whole-school approach to working with parents.

Other studies have looked for ways to better match parents with professional practices and organisational frameworks, because the implementation of family-centred approaches, whether by mandate or guidelines, is still poorly understood by many, and often characterised by a perception of shortcomings from both parents and teacher viewpoints (Dillon-Goodson, 2005; Epley et al., 2010; Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008; Pretis, 2011). These researchers have found that it wasn’t always well understood by staff and policy makers how they were going to be responsive to families as a core practice, or how to implement measures to support both parents and teachers to achieve effective adult cooperation on behalf of children (Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008; Lord-Nelson et al., 2004; Odom et al., 2011). In this study this was expressed in the node *intentions and goals*, where both parents and teachers- but particularly parents- registered experiences of uncertainty and confusion about rules, regulations and guidelines around enrolling young children with disabilities to school. *Negative emotions* and feelings of *isolation* were often associated with this node when parents were confused and annoyed by systemic problems which made little sense to them.

The individual parents’ experiences revealed some variation and lack of consistency with organisational factors at school and regional levels when transitioning to school. At their local levels they recorded many examples of the importance of *school climate* and *leadership*, in nodes that were expressed both *positively* and *negatively*. *Positive leadership* and *positive school leadership* were strongly related to *positive child* and *parent transition outcomes* and *positive emotions*. The study highlighted the need for a more unified approach to how transition is conducted, with widely varying practices and understanding of it as a process being apparent. In several preschools and schools in this study, *leadership* was cohesive and visionary, with
organisational structures which were facilitative and connected to the community; for instance positive networking between local preschools and schools, and playgroups on site in schools. The experience for parents, as a result, showed positive associations at many node levels. This could be contrasted to places where processes and structures were more poorly developed in the way they welcomed parents and their children with disabilities, resulting in negative node associations such as negative emotions and negative parent transition outcomes. Examples from Chapter Four’s case studies included lack of social supports in the school playground and no formal structures for parent involvement in planning. Several studies, on local and national scales, have recognised lack of certainty and consistency as an issue, for parents, particularly (Forlin et al., 2009; Grace et al., 2008; Lilley, 2013). The parents in this study had all experienced confusion about processes to some degree, often supported by their teacher partners in their negative assessments of organisational shortcomings.

In theoretical terms, a direct relationship with positive quality of processes and positive outcomes was frequently demonstrated, when adults at the meso level, particularly, were able to cooperate and constructively work together. The executive participants in this phase of the study were able to shed some light on their leadership issues and some of the reasons for variability of organisational factors; they were subject to a range of funding rules, operating guidelines, change implementation, and readiness of staff in terms of understanding and skills for partnering with parents of young children with disabilities. The many changes that were underway in NSW, Australia in 2012-2013 were a feature of discussion in interviews; issues of uncertainty and lack of knowledge were raised by many participants. Other studies have detailed problems to be solved as more children with disabilities transition to regular education; precise role definitions in transition, ways to incorporate meaningful parent participation, a community perspective on inclusion, and teacher understanding of their impact on families (Dunlop, 2003; Petriwskyj & Grieshaber, 2011; Summers, Hoffman, Marquis, Turnbull, & Poston, 2005).

The encouraging presence of many quality processes in this study was a result of key people imagining and implementing strategies at a meso and macro level to
directly benefit the families of children with disabilities. Some examples were; networking and sharing ideas between preschools and schools, generous and thoughtful orientation programs in the year before school and school-wide cultures where all families were welcomed and included in planning and programming.

This study supported the need for a more even response to change and implementation of policy, with support structures in place such as a professional learning community of teachers providing mutual help to each other to reduce disadvantage, difference and school failure in children (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Some of the preschools and schools in the study had realised the value of this approach and met regularly to support each other and the families of children with disabilities. Parents in this study showed direct and positive relationships with organisational structures such as this.

6.7.2 PHASE TWO: ALL PARTICIPANTS’ VIEWS OF ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS
The combined views of all participants produced the same list of important nodes; quality processes, intentions and goals, school climate and leadership. For teachers and executive it was clear that conceptually and intentionally their ideals regarding transition for young children with disabilities were on a par with those of parents. It was in the execution of these ideals, across the preschools and schools in this study, that the participants revealed many examples of mismatches in expectation and understanding, variation in skills of partners, and differing interpretations of ways to help children and parents through the process of transition to school. Using the Family Care Framework, and family needs as the main node, it was possible to further link the alignment of positive organisational nodes with positive outcomes and emotions and, conversely, to link negative nodes together in the same way.

This study was interested in analysing links between positive organisational processes and good outcomes for families, but further, in elucidating the kinds of actions that were positively associated with those results. The important organisational factors identified here lacked the precision of identifiable actions, but links in the chain of cause and effect could be made in each family’s case, by looking at their partnership and professional practice sets. When positive associations were
made with quality processes, intentions and goals, school climate and leadership, a picture could start to be built of the importance of good communication, teaming, knowing parent goals and so on. Some studies concerned with how organisations might implement good partnerships were cognisant of the need for support for teachers and parents. They have affirmed good leadership, common understanding, clear communication and teamwork as some of the goals of management (Epley et al., 2010; Odom et al., 2011; Petriwskyj & Grieshaber, 2011).

In organisational terms, the present approach to transition in schools in this small study has shown parents experiencing a very mixed range of approaches to transition to school. Type and kind of processes were also shown to be influential on parents’ positive or negative appraisals of transition, with explanatory associations being apparent in other aspects of their partnership experiences. The variations in each parent’s transition journey from an organisational perspective included; widely differing orientation to school practices, variable contact between schools and preschools to share information, absence or presence of buddies as social supports at the start of school, a wide range of teacher knowledge and experience around disability issues, very different leadership styles, and the presence in some schools, but not others, of structures facilitating kindergarten teachers to visit preschools. This study has highlighted what was revealed in other studies- that how adults at the school and systems level interpret and implement policies can directly affect parents and children during transition (Janus et al., 2008; Lo-Casale-Crouch et al., 2008).

In theoretical terms, the influence of more distant spheres in a child’s ecology may still be felt on themselves and their families. The period of transition to school interweaves the influences of two kinds of educational organisation, which can demonstrably be felt in different ways by families, even within a relatively small region such as this study. Not only are there child and family factors to take into account, but each preschool and school has its own teacher and leadership factors to consider. There are challenges for all individuals at all levels to work together within different systems of education for the benefit of the child.
6.7.3 PHASE THREE: SETTING 1 AND SETTING 2 COMPARISON OF ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

This phase of data, explained in 5.8.1 and 5.8.2, used a matrix which combined parent-only data, two settings, the Family Care Framework and organisational set nodes. Table 5.3 was also constructed to show the main features of organisation that were important to parents over two years, using data from matrix cells with 25 or more mentions by parents.

Five aspects were associated with family needs; quality processes, school climate, intentions and goals, bureaucracy and funding. Quality Processes and school climate had clear links of positive nodes with positives nodes in the Family Care Framework, and negative nodes with negative. Of the other three, only intentions and goals registered with nodes other than family needs in the Family Care Framework. It was a node that found negative effects for parents in parent transition outcomes and emotions. This was part of a trend in this study, where links to other difficulties for parents could be made to explain negative assessments, including to conceptual nodes such as understanding own role, shared understanding and knowing parent goals.

Parents’ positive or negative experience of organisational aspects of transition in this study were related to practices which were welcoming and clearly communicated, such as individualised attention and accommodation to design orientation programs, established inclusive school practices, regular and reliable communication, and support for teachers to give time to partnerships.

The data from the Organisational Factors matrix was also designed to reveal any changes over time and the two settings in terms of Family Care Framework and organisational factors for parents. Compared to preschool, the family needs of parents at school were less aligned with all of the above five nodes, which may have indicated some resolution and adjustment to the chosen school for families. This possibility was supported by reductions in reports of emotionality, along with a small rise in positive emotions at school associated with positive quality processes. In some cases, however, parents had lowered their expectations for their children in the new setting, a feature of other studies of transition, where parents reported adjusting to a new reality and a busy classroom (Prezant & Marshak, 2006; Villeneuve et al., 2013).
Changes that were negative over time were small, but there was maintenance of negativity across settings in the areas of negative parent transition outcomes, intentions and goals and negative quality processes, so for some parents their experience of transition continued to be less than satisfactory for them. In studies of the transition experience, a range of organisational solutions for preventing poor transition experiences were suggested, including early teacher access to knowledge about the child, adequate transition preparation using suitable activities and timing, and time together for parents and teachers to establish common goals and understanding (Branson & Bingham, 2009; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Janus et al., 2008; Lo-Casale-Crouch et al., 2008). These mirrored some of the experiences that parents in this study were fortunate enough to have and rate as positive quality processes.

Parents’ experiences of transition, interpreted from the above findings, could be seen to be dependent on their concepts of quality of processes which they encountered over two years. When they could rate what is a range of possible actions positively, then other important goals were usually realised in positive ways—family needs, transition outcomes and so on. Because of the relatively unusual nature of their circumstances, with children with very individual needs and characteristics, they were dependent on their meetings with teachers, executives and organisations to help bring them in as partners, and also to help them to understand a process that could be confronting, baffling and unpredictable. Some of the parents in this study did not feel, after two years, that they were at a place where they wanted or expected to be, with misgivings about quality processes, the intentions and goals of the school system and their own ideas of what transition to school for their child would look like.

In theoretical terms, the bioecological framework of Bronfenbrenner and associates (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2006), has provided a good explanation for the complexities of parent-teacher partnerships over time. In this study participants showed there was potential in the many positive aspects of their collaboration to achieve good outcomes for children. The fine-tuning of those relationships was particularly important, however, because the children and their families had a
different path to school than the one they had expected five years before, and they were discovering the difference good partnerships could make.

Figure 6.1 shows a model evolved from Figure 1.1 in Chapter One to help highlight the findings of this study as they relate to the conceptual framework. Positive processes in this study were closely tied to positive outcomes for parents and children, and to positive emotions. It provided evidence for bioecological theory being relevant to an understanding of the effect of the quality of adult interactions around children, because in this study there were clear links to child and parent outcomes over time. Through the lens of this model there is a view of the close connectivity between all levels of influence on children who are reliant on the adults in their lives working together in a positive way. In the case of children with disabilities it provides a reason to shift the emphasis away from the child needing to succeed in their own right, and towards the adults who are partners in their education. The responsibility for success rests largely with them being effective partners who communicate and share understanding of the child.
Figure 6.1: STUDY OUTCOMES

**POSITIVE PROCESSES**
- Teaming
- Shared understanding
- Understanding own role
- Communication
- Knowing parent goals
- Empathy for partner
- Partner skills
- Personal skills
- Quality processes
- Intentions and goals
- School climate
- Leadership

**NEGATIVE PROCESSES**
- Lack of teaming
- Poor shared understanding
- Not understanding own role
- Poor communication
- Not knowing parent goals
- Lack of empathy for partner
- Partner skills wanting
- Undeveloped personal skills
- Poor quality processes
- Unclear intentions and goals
- Poor school climate
- Unfocussed leadership
6.8 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

The discussion of findings needs to be tempered by the many limiting factors that pertain to the design and execution of the research.

First, the number of central informants - the parents - was small in number; eight in 2012 and seven in 2013. Five of them were urban dwellers of one city in NSW Australia, and three were from non-urban areas 20-30 kms outside that city.

Second, the parents were all mothers, or an adoptive mother, in the 30s and 40s age range. They were confident enough in their partnerships and their personal lives to agree to a two-year commitment with a researcher. Six were Anglo-Celtic Australians, one was Asian Australian, and one was Aboriginal Australian. They were the primary carers for their children, with only two working part-time outside the home.

Third, the children were all in the mild-moderate range of disability, and none had physical or multiple disabilities. One briefly attended a special class, but all eight children were able to be enrolled in regular classrooms, helped by the recent changes to enrolment with the Every Student Every School policy (NSW DEC, 2012). The majority were diagnosed on the autism spectrum with secondary learning disorders.

Fourth, convenience sampling of participants was utilised by first identifying four diverse kinds of early childhood settings whose directors would agree to the idea of the study. This was followed by directors finding teacher-parent pairs who would be interested in participating, knowing that each could be discussing the other when describing the kinds of partnership factors that were important to them in transitioning a child to school.

Fifth, the researcher had an essential role in decision-making about designing interview questions, transcribing, coding, matrix-forming and interpretation of results gathered. The design and execution stages were checked at several points along the research trajectory by impartial academics expert in NVivo and research methods, but ultimately the primary responsibility lay with this researcher.
Sixth, the interview protocol was not tested, except informally in a pilot interview with the parents of a child with a disability about to start school. The same interview framework was used for all interviews over two years. The seven topic areas provided ample scope for discussion and each of them could be explored for five minutes or more on average.

Seventh, participation was not even at all data points (Tables 4.6.5 i, ii, iii, and iv), due in part to illness, personal leave from work and other family matters. One parent left the study in 2013. The data collection remained within the parameters of adequate size and spread for this kind of qualitative study (Morse, 2000).

Eighth, the researcher was able to collect large amounts of recorded interview data from participants, freely and generously given, but the secondary forms of data, designed for corroboration purposes, were collected less consistently and with less impact than planned. The number of meetings attended as an observer, and the number of completed pairs of SIB-R’s that were returned and able to be used for comparisons between partners, were not high in number or available in all cases.

6.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF RESULTS
The success, or not, of the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness in data collection and analysis during this study warrants some consideration when judging the quality of the main findings. Qualitative researchers have a responsibility to detail thinking and actions that supported their methods and results, particularly in a small study in a defined locality and time frame- the ‘localism’ of Alvesson (2003), where veracity of detail in small samples and communities can lend credence to generalising to larger spheres. Some pertinent reflections on the data collection and analysis follow.

6.9.1 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS
The interviews proved useful to explore theory based on real events over time for eight families in their particular circumstances (Yin, 2009), with the same protocol, based on themes derived from research, being the framework for every interview conducted (Appendix B). This proved to be important for consistency of discussion, with the researcher and the participant able to reflect on past issues together,
particularly with parents over four interviews and a two year time frame. Giving participants copies of their transcripts was also a validating experience in the study, particularly for parents - some of whom expressed appreciation for the evidence of change for them as they navigated transition. All participants had the opportunity of responding to any concerns about the representation of their words and meanings (Freeman et al., 2007). There were no discordant or disputed interviews or transcripts and the researcher believed that each interview was fair and representative of the participant and their personal ideas and contributions. The researcher kept interview profiles on each interview as a reference and as an exercise in considering all aspects of interactions that occurred in the interviews (Appendix A). This was an additional method to aid trustworthiness of the interview data.

The researcher was conscious of questioning the quality and intent of the interviews and looked for evidence of their being transactional, with free and frank interchanges, transformational in their cooperative making of meaning together, and holistic in their sense of a wider relevance outside the interview (Cho & Trent, 2006). The rubric designed by the researcher for profiling each interview proved useful for reflection and providing a written record of each interview, detailing interaction, intention, identity, language and social realities [Appendix A, based on the work of Alvesson (2003), Myers and Newman (2007)]. These profiles were essentially one-sided in nature, but important for the researcher to add a level of examination to the process of recording practices and building evidence for credibility of results. The profiles showed that relationships with participants, parents particularly, were cordial and friendly over the two year period, with evidence of trust and empathy and agreement on common purpose. The parent who withdrew from the study in 2013 was very expressive in 2012 and had seemed committed to the goals of the research. Part way into 2013, however, she reported that transition to school was a time of ups and downs for her child, and that she expected that to continue for some time to come. Two of the school teachers who gave informative interviews early in 2013 did not re-interview at the end of that year, citing lack of time and satisfaction with the child’s progress rather than disinclination to talk.
6.9.2 CODING

The researcher kept a diary and a log trail of the sequences of data collection (Richards, 2009) and was reflexive and open to alternative ideas and new themes. Growing the number of nodes and designing groups of nodes to form matrix queries was a considered response to the immediacy and nuances of the interviews, combined with the long personal view of the researcher from life and professional experiences (Saldana, 2009). Some knowledge and familiarity with parent and teacher experiences of transition was undoubtedly influential for the researcher, however the overriding aim was to reflect meaning created by all participants in a reliable and accurate way (Roulston, 2010). With each phase of data collection new nodes and sub-nodes were added, so that coding was revisited to include and re-code early interviews (Code Book, Appendix C).

The early stages of coding were based on a limited amount of nodes derived from theory and described in detail earlier. To keep an open mind and to try to not pre-empt results, the process of expanding the number and type of codes involved the researcher reflecting on the progression and content of interviews, and naming new nodes that were of a higher order than the simple descriptors of the original nodes, such as communication, commitment, trust, teaming and so on (Bazeley, 2009).

The concerns of critical theory in qualitative research were influential, as the experiences of parents in an unfamiliar circumstance, with children who did not fit the usual parameters for enrolling to school, led to deep discussion with all participants in interviews about the issues of power and status and privilege, and the feelings associated with uncertainty and confusion and lack of insider knowledge (Kincheloe, 1995). The types of nodes that emerged which could describe deeper feelings and more complex relationships were also allocated the light and shade of positive and negative expression. Examples were nodes such as empowerment, lack of power, empathy for parents, lack of empathy, positive construct of disability and negative construct of disability.

Processes affecting partnerships also emerged as new nodes. Some were chosen to delineate actions between partners more precisely, such as shared decision-
making, lack of shared decision-making, shared understanding and lack of shared understanding. In this way a better and deeper quality of understanding of partnership behaviour and its effects on parents particularly could be explored, by adding more dimensions which might explain their relationships to child and parent transition outcomes. Other nodes were less precise, and named in general terms, such as quality processes, poor quality processes or exemplary practices. These will be summarised and discussed further in the chapter.

Decisions made about coding and building matrices reflected the personal understandings and expectations of the researcher. However, awareness of this possible source of bias was encouragement to look for negative cases and discrepant evidence, and to talk to others about findings (Maxwell, 1996). The study was characterised, happily, by participants who spoke at length, often, about their views on partnerships and transition to school.

6.9.3 ANCILLARY SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

The study utilised several sources of data besides the interviews as a means to widen the support for any discussion of results (Maxwell, 1996). Collecting and using some of the data was problematic.

Directors and Principals all allowed time for document profiling, and gave mostly sketchy examples of documents that they found useful. Entering them into the Document Profile rubric (Appendix E) proved indicative at best and inexact at worst. Documents which exemplified or even featured partnership values in the rubric such as Trust and Commitment were not readily evident. Coding the documents as a source for further evidence seemed to be of limited credibility, however the discussions with the directors and principals was of interest and relevance to the researcher as background to the study, and as information about the climate of change in the preschool and school systems in 2012 and 2013.

Meeting observations were pertinent and of value for coding partnership values using the rubric (Appendix D). The limitations on this data were the low number of meeting observations arranged and then attended, as intentions were not always actualised. Other possible limitations were the presence of the observer, the addition
to the crowd around the parent which had the capacity to alter the meeting, and the researcher’s own interpretation of the event (Freeman et al., 2007).

The last type of ancillary evidence collected was each partner’s assessment of the child’s capabilities expressed through the completion of a checklist (SIB-R, Appendix F). Only paired and completed forms were useful, and in many cases one partner did not return a form, so preventing comparison between parent and teacher. This data source, when intact, was helpful when reporting case by case results, as it served as additional information about the agreement between partners when talking and planning for a child in transition.

**6.10 Context for Drawing Conclusions from the Study**

The parents and teachers who participated in this study did so during a significant phase of change in the education of students with disabilities in Australia. The changes they were experiencing were at personal, school and government levels; meshing very well with the study’s aims of finding out how transition to school was experienced over two years by the adult partners of young children with disabilities.

This study gave some useful and coherent insights into the experiences of eight families, and very strongly illustrating the interplay of People, Processes, Time and Place, as each of the eight families negotiated their own pathways when transitioning their children to school. The effect of change throughout education systems was also evident in the four preschools and eight schools in the study; each had their own particular set of responses and practices that characterised the way they engaged with children and their families.

The researcher used her personal knowledge and background to design a study to explore how these partnerships were working for families and children in 2012 and 2013, given that she knew from past experience, as a parent and as a teacher, that their quality could have significant ramifications for educational outcomes. She had observed, as did Ferguson (2009, p.57), that there could often be a “doubting dance” between parents and teachers as they worked together in educational settings. How partners in that dance find their rhythm, and how the steps are shared, is highly
relevant at this time. This study has been able to profile the uncertainty, the lack of knowledge, and the complexity that partners in transition to school are working through together, in order to reach the goals that they all know are possible for young children with disabilities.

The changes in the education landscape in the 21st century in Australia have meant that teachers, executive and education bureaucrats have been given the task of learning, understanding and implementing a profound overhaul of teaching and learning practices. Every child in this study had access to preschool education that was inclusive, followed by their being welcomed at their local schools when they were ready to go to kindergarten. The crucial nature of partnerships with parents has been agreed by all levels of teachers, government and research bodies, but this study was interested in how they were understood and implemented at the classroom level, because of their direct relevance to children.

This study was able to show many examples of excellence in partnerships between parents and teachers, and the subsequent positive ratings by parents in their family contexts. It was affirming of the abundant knowledge that we have about the effects of empathetic and helpful behaviour from professionals on family quality of life (Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009). There was also support throughout the study for the notion that living with a child with a disability can be rewarding, enriching and joyful (Trute et al., 2007). Teacher partners in this study frequently shared a positive outlook with their parent partners, sharing common goals, intentions and insights about transition to school, and how to work in partnership for the child’s benefit.

The central theme running through this two year study of transition partnerships was undoubtedly the key role of family needs in understanding what adults needed to think about first and foremost in planning transition to school for a child with a disability. Knowing the context of the child in their family and community was shown at all stages of the research to be the best place to start when forming and firming educational partnerships. Acknowledging the individuality of each child and family turned out to be an essential basis for successful planning and programming
between partners, demonstrated by direct linkages between certain types of partnership behaviour and parent reporting of positive child and family outcomes.

A subsidiary theme which related to the period of change encompassed by this study was the idea of support for the key people involved in transitioning children with disabilities to school, as parents, teachers and executive partners had the frontline task of translating new policy into practice. All the partners in this study varied in experience and degree of familiarity with educating children with additional needs, but shared the same kinds of concerns about how it was to be best achieved in individual cases. Supports were not consistently in place for partners in this study, but where they were, there was evidence of positive transition outcomes for parents and children; examples being partnership training courses, Family Support workers making home visits, supported attendance at transition meetings for parents, and active local networks for teachers.

### 6.11 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following summaries need to be read in the light of the very strong linkages each node displayed with family needs. Foremost in an understanding of partnerships is a questioning and open-minded approach to seeing a child with a disability as a child first, then a child in a family, then a child in a school, in a community and so on. This study has supported a Bronfenbrenner-style view of how we relate to each other, and what each of the adults in a child’s sphere may do to enhance that child growing into their full potential.

Because the children in this study were beginning school in 2013, the process of change from one environment to another was under study, in terms of how the adults in education contexts, particularly, assisted children and families at this time. The larger context for everybody in 2013 in Australia was the impact of the implementation of state and nationwide reforms for children and families living with disabilities. This implied many levels of responsibility for ensuring that these reforms were family-friendly, and that all partners in education and other professions were aware of the importance of quality partnerships with families. This study has looked at the experiences of eight families in this context, and they and their education partners
have revealed aspects of partnerships that deserve further attention when transitioning children with disabilities to school.

The results featuring in the conclusion are the four main features of partnership identified in each of the three research questions by all participants; twelve in all. Overall, it can be said that a common understanding existed between parents, teachers and executive about positive features of partnerships. Because of the strong linkages between poor execution of some of these features of partnership and negative effects on families, it needs to be stressed that education and support for partners is warranted to build skills and understanding of roles. In a period of change such as this was, it was evident that the good intentions of new policies could not always be realised at the interpersonal, professional and organisational levels if supports, skills and knowledge were lacking.

6.11.1 Conclusion One: Partnerships

When asked to consider questions around Research Question One:

What are the partnership actions and behaviours of parents and teachers that are associated with positive or negative child and parent transition outcomes in preschool and school?

The overall consensus by participants was in four areas;

1. Teaming
2. Shared Understanding
3. Understanding Own Role
4. Communication

6.11.1.2 Implications: Partnerships

There was consensus by participants on the need for explicit role descriptions, assistance with their roles in education, and the involvement of a team around the child, where communication was efficient and effective between all parties. There was an obvious role for leadership in this area, particularly during a period of change in education, also suggested in the results of Research Question Three.
Clear guidelines, protocols and role descriptions for partners in transition could be incorporated in an updated approach which includes training for parents and teachers. The work of Murray and Curran (2008) gave an example of an exemplary initiative to improve the understanding and knowledge in educational partnership. They demonstrated positive links, as did this study, between quality partnership behaviour and parents and children enjoying successful and satisfying experiences of transition to school.

Websites such as the Australian Federal Government’s *Continuity of Learning* (Dockett & Perry, 2014) and Kids Count (2005) have gathered best practice ideas for transition partnerships to be accessed by parents and teachers. This study supports the promotion of these practices; as Odom et al. (2011) have noted, it is the collaborative relationships of partners that matter more than the characteristics of the children.

**6.11.2 CONCLUSION TWO: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES**

When asked to consider questions around **Research Question Two:**

*What are the professional practices associated with positive or negative child and parent transition outcomes in preschool and school?*

The overall consensus by all participants was in four areas;

1. Knowing Parent Goals
2. Personal Skills
3. Empathy for Parent
4. Partner Skills

**6.11.2.1 IMPLICATIONS: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES**

The node *knowing parent goals* was tied to *family needs and transition outcomes* very strongly. All participants were cognisant of this and supported the notion that parents be central to planning and consultation, however *knowing parent goals* was often expressed in the negative form, with negative family impact. It was often an idea better said than carried out in a way that parents liked. Many participants talked of the learning they needed to do in the new climate of education, and the skills that they either had developed, or were developing. The strong presence of negative version of
nodes indicated, however, that some partners were struggling with success in partnerships in these areas. Emphasis needs to be given to supporting parents and teachers to gain skills and confidence, through guidance and support, to be able to engage in partnerships as they would wish.

There was some evidence for a gap between professional practices and the goals of a collaborative transition process, given the connections that some families made between lack of skills, lack of empathy and lack of knowing parent goals and their negative assessments expressed in the Family Care Framework. The success of major reforms such as those happening in Australia will rest on the ability of practitioners to form quality partnerships with parents. Transition to school scenarios in this study demonstrated the direct links of professional practices to outcomes to children and families.

This study recommends more be done to support teachers to understand their roles in partnerships which enable successful transition to school and inclusion thereafter of children with disabilities. Teachers in this study were in a period of change in education which could be a challenge on several levels, including time, training and skills. It is targeted supports which Odom et al. (2011) suggest will enable teachers and parents to be able to convert good policy and practice into common use. Many of the partners felt underprepared and underskilled for the task of transition. Two of the parents in this study were the beneficiaries of the Parents As Case Coordinators training course (PAAC, NSW DEC, 2010), and reported benefits to them as they negotiated transition to school. An equivalent skill-based course for teachers and teachers in training may be called for, which will emphasise the elements of good partnerships with parents, and enable the best outcomes for children to be planned together.

6.11.3 CONCLUSION: ORGANISATION

When asked to consider questions around Research Question Three:

What are the organisational factors associated with positive or negative child and parent transition outcomes in preschool and school?
The overall consensus by participants was in four areas;

1. Quality Processes
2. Intentions and Goals
3. School Climate
4. Leadership

6.11.3.1 IMPLICATIONS: ORGANISATION

The findings here and for the other questions overwhelmingly support the notion of quality processes between adults over time maximising the developmental outcomes for children. In this study quality processes meant many things, as did family needs, but it was indisputable that when the partners in a child’s transition talked, networked, planned and created possibility for children with disabilities, they and their families benefited directly. The participants were in agreement about their aspirations for quality partnerships, however at an organisational level there is potential for more explicit support and guidelines to realise smooth transitions to school.

A major recommendation of this study is that we see transition of children with disabilities to school in totality, and provide support to all levels of interpersonal, intra-school and inter-school engagement. The major nodes of Research Question Three are indicators of where all participants saw strengths and deficits which impacted on families, and they are also indicators of where to begin a unified systemic approach to transition to school reform. These four areas were clearly linked in their positive forms to positive transition outcomes for parents and children, and in their negative forms they were linked to negative transition outcomes.

As Leadership featured strongly in this research area, the study recommends that transition and partnerships be a target area for directors and principals in their professional outcomes and responsibilities assessments. Supporting their staff and communities must be a priority in their roles in transition to school and the education of young children with disabilities.

The variability in School Climate, Quality Processes, making clear Intentions and Goals, and Leadership evident between locations in this study, also highlighted a lack
of consistency that existed at an organisational level, albeit seen from only 15 sites. This proved to be critical to some parents enjoying positive transition experiences, and others not. Examples of best practice and evidence and encouragement for their adoption need to be promoted at a systemic level to all schools and preschools.

In particular, interagency and inter-site cooperation was an ideal realised in the transition experiences of five out of eight parents, with clear lines of positive associations for them during transition. For others, even when preschools and schools were in close proximity to each other, the lack of coordination had negative effects for families. There are many studies evidencing the benefits of closer cooperation and understanding between sites, and citing the negative effects of a lack of developed relationships across settings on children and families (Dunlop, 2003; Rous, Myer & Stricklin, 2007).

It is a recommendation of this study that at the organisational level a greater consistency be achieved in meeting high standards of transition processes across schools and preschools. Collegial support and networking could promote this.

6.12 SUMMING UP
This study raises a question about practices in transition to school in NSW Australia at this time – how may we better and more consistently support parents and teachers to negotiate partnerships? It is evident that some parent-teacher partnerships in preschools and schools are achieving excellent outcomes for children, and they are to be commended for that. There were examples of effective leadership, relevant training and support for parents and teachers, and teaming at many levels, including between preschools and schools. There were great examples in this study of teaming, partners with shared understanding, partners who understood their roles, good communication, partners accounting for parent’s goals, good personal skills, empathy for partners, good partner skills, high quality processes, clear intentions and goals, positive school climates and good leadership.

By contrast, there were examples of all of these nodes expressed in negative or poorly executed terms, with direct negative consequences for families. All of the
parents had experience of both negative and positive partnership issues, but their children’s and their own outcomes were predominantly very good. Following the eight families over two years, it was evident that they each brought their own individual family qualities to their schooling needs, and all the schools had their own individual characters. The transition journeys were each very different and while there were only a small number of families, preschools and schools, it was noticeable how different were the approaches and interpretations of transition preparation and planning between them all.

6.13 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This study has demonstrated the importance of partnerships at three levels during transition to school and recommends the following principles and practices in promoting their effectiveness. The recommendations are in line with the major findings at each level of partnership and aim to link all parents, teachers and executive to mentoring, training, networking and exposure to best knowledge and research. This needs to be directed through national and state channels to support policy in practical terms. Attention can be specifically directed to:-

1. **TEAMING:** Promoting the time, space and skills for partners to work together interpersonally and across Person, Time and Place

2. **SHARED UNDERSTANDING:** Promoting the need to understand the other partner’s viewpoint and situation using communication, mentoring and modelling

3. **UNDERSTANDING OWN ROLE:** Assisting partners to effectively play their part on behalf of the child by education, skill-building and role definitions

4. **COMMUNICATION:** Ensuring all partners use optimum and timely means of communicating at the personal, school and organisation levels

5. **KNOWING PARENT GOALS:** Providing the means, at all levels, for parents to be consulted about and to be able to make clear their goals for their children

6. **PERSONAL SKILLS:** Making skills acquisition for partnerships a priority for parents, teachers and executive. Revise training courses accordingly
7. **EMPATHY FOR PARENTS**: Educating and modelling positive perceptions and empathy for parents to benefit partnerships

8. **PARTNER SKILLS**: Promoting skills acquisition for partners having difficulties by mentoring, modelling and good leadership

9. **QUALITY PROCESSES**: Ensuring all preschool, schools and partners have access to good information about best practices and have help to implement them

10. **INTENTIONS AND GOALS**: Clarifying processes to parents in straightforward language and at all stages of transition, clearly communicating how children and families will be welcomed into the education system

11. **SCHOOL CLIMATE**: Promoting a community of learners where all are accepted for their strengths and possibilities. Having a range of structures and facilitators which apply to all children and are supported by all members of the school

12. **LEADERSHIP**: Setting a high standard of inclusion and acceptance for all members of the school community by modelling, mentoring and educating

### 6.14 FUTURE STUDIES

The findings of this study could be used to help identify content for future teaching and learning about partnerships, as it has revealed the negative effects on children and families during transition to school when partners lack the skills and understanding to work together effectively.

Having provided evidence emphasising the features of good partnerships in the lives of families with young children with disabilities, other studies may follow up on the effects of targeted training in some of the areas known to be deficient, and assess the benefits for parents and children.

Implementing change in education has put pressure on partnerships and personal interactions, and using our understanding of a Bronfenbrenner-informed conceptual framework, we could further build practical evidence-based support for parents, teachers and executive by targeting positive Processes that are applied over Time, People and Places.

Children and families will be the winners.
REFERENCES


among parents of young children with and without early cognitive delay. 


### APPENDIX A: Round 1 Interview Profiles

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<th>INTERVIEW PROFILE</th>
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<td>ROUND: 1</td>
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<td>IDENTITY: EDA</td>
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<td>DATE: 23.7.12</td>
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<td>INTERACTION</td>
<td>EDA was brisk and business-like as part of a busy day, but gave detailed and articulate responses to the IV questions. Time was limited but adequate. J was conscious of moving along and added few prompts. EDA was keen to talk about a change of direction for location A and an investment in personal development and staff training to meet the emphasis on family-centred, strengths-based interactions with parents.</td>
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<td>INTENTION</td>
<td>EDA had a good grasp of the intent of the IV and understood the complexities behind the transition journey as her centre caters exclusively for children with additional needs. She explained some of the changes happening in early childhood to J, as there is a lot going on. Informing and empowering parents is always important but particularly now.</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDENTITY</td>
<td>EDA has a leadership role in a large centre with a large team. Her relatively recent appointment charged her with a job of renewal and she has set about that very purposefully. She related this to J in a neutral and professional way in order to emphasise that this was due to happen in the current climate. Putting parents and families first is a change for some teachers and she said this could be hard and that some had chosen to leave.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LANGUAGE</td>
<td>EDA has fluent expression and understanding of her role and the practices she wishes to encourage. She and J shared an abbreviated dialogue because of the time factor, but the questions were easily understood within her sphere of influence, and her answers gave clear emphasis to the importance of partnerships and communication.</td>
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<td>SOCIAL REALITIES</td>
<td>EDA manages people across a range of social realities and tries to keep open dialogue and understanding between them all. She and J share management experience and common ground, so that the IV was between equals, looking at the ways the interests of children are served in a large setting such as location A.</td>
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<td>ROUND: 1</td>
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<td>IDENTITY: ET5B</td>
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<td>DATE: 19.6.12</td>
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<td>INTERACTION</td>
<td>ET5B was busy, hurried and trying to fit in the IV, so spoke rapidly and vigorously to get her points across. She was happy to be talking to J about a topic she clearly cared deeply about. She is energetic and motivated in her drive to make location B a centre of excellence where families and children get the services they need and a good start to learning for life. She related to the study and the questions and made excellent points in a short time.</td>
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<td>INTENTION</td>
<td>ET5B had no doubt about the intention of the study and works hard in her community to engage all partners in transition, as she knows it is a hard road for families in a country town. She shows leadership and exemplary practices in action. She was clear in her answers and exchanges with J and could articulate facets of partnership that made a difference to children and families.</td>
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<td>IDENTITY</td>
<td>ET5B is both a teacher and a leader at location B and found common ground with J in those roles and their execution with children with disabilities. 25% of her students have identified additional needs so location B is a hub for information and support, with ET5B making it work for the benefit of the local schools and the community. There is a strong connection to all the issues of beneficial partnerships in transition throughout all of ET5B’s work.</td>
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<td>LANGUAGE</td>
<td>ET5B can speak hurriedly, thoughtfully and articulately with the assurance of a person who lives and breathes the issues of equality of opportunity for all children and families. Her knowledge of the jargon of the various systems that provide funding and direction in early childhood is conspicuously good and she uses it to find ways to support and fund good practice. She explained some of the newer aspects of change to J, and how she would work with it.</td>
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<td>SOCIAL REALITIES</td>
<td>ET5B is community and family-centred in her work and has made access to supports easier for families who would otherwise have to travel to a nearby city. It is an open-door centre with ET5B available to talk to parents from an early to a late hour. She has known PSB and her other children for many years. ET5B and J have worked in similar environments and had a good understanding of each other’s philosophies and practices.</td>
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## INTERVIEW PROFILE

### ROUND: 1

**IDENTITY: EDC**

**DATE: 26.7.12**

### INTERACTION

EDC was very supportive and interested in the study and had some small common history with J at another location. She was open and expansive on points about present and past perceptions and experiences as a director in an early intervention centre.

### INTENTION

EDC related to the topic and works in a region where there is good networking among early childhood workers to improve the transition outcomes for children with additional needs. They are making progress and are a motivated group—EDB being another member. She understands teamwork and good partnerships.

### IDENTITY

EDC has been in the field for many years, quite a few as a director. She is in a new area for her, where she has joined with other directors to make a difference to children and families going to school. Some of her ideas are in place at location C, but also parents are having a say in the centre’s looks and running. She wants staff to listen to parents too, and be sensitive to their needs.

### LANGUAGE

EDC has fluency of ideas and knowledge, though is sometimes difficult to understand with an accent originating from her cultural background. Her influence on communication in location C has been to increase news to parents, web pages, emails etc. and to direct staff to focus on parents’ needs and wishes. The language and questions of the IV were well understood.

### SOCIAL REALITIES

EDC is conscious of staff-parent mismatches in social realities and counsel them to be understanding and not judgmental. In location B there are families requiring assistance from a social disadvantage perspective and she works with community bodies to assist with transport etc. She also counsels against being overly involved and inviting dependency. She and J have had similar work environments to bring about a shared understanding of their management strategies and guidance.
**INTERVIEW PROFILE**

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<th>ROUND: 1</th>
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<th>DATE: 25.7.12</th>
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<td><strong>INTERACTION</strong></td>
<td>EDD was welcoming and generous with making time to talk, having some clear ideas about change that was in progress, processes she had seen and implemented elsewhere, and what she would like to see in parent partnerships at location D. She was interested in the idea of research in this area and had no problem relating to J or the questions.</td>
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<td><strong>INTENTION</strong></td>
<td>EDD had come from a long day-care background to location D and found very different funding, processes, teamwork and other practices. She saw support for children with disabilities that differ from preschool and has formed opinions about what is helpful and what is not. She gets the importance of partnerships and wants to improve the relationship between location D and the adjacent primary school. Her IV with J was animated and purposeful.</td>
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<td><strong>IDENTITY</strong></td>
<td>EDD has a clear leadership role during a time of change in delivery of services and is strongly allied to good outcomes for her families and children, while guiding staff through new requirements. She felt understood by J, who reflected knowledge of the issues in question. She is still identifying with former practices and hoping to make positive change at location D.</td>
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<td><strong>LANGUAGE</strong></td>
<td>EDD and J were on the same vocabulary and knowledge level of educational and partnership issues and conversed easily. J asked for clarification of some of the change issues, and the way location D differed from other early childhood models. EDD related to the questions of the IV and articulated thoughtful responses.</td>
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<td><strong>SOCIAL REALITIES</strong></td>
<td>EDD had experience of other leadership roles in other locations and was familiar with a range of supports for families that she felt delivered good results. She showed understanding of families’ lived experiences and could talk of the complexity of the transition to school journey and how location D might change some of its practices for the better.</td>
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<td><strong>IDENTITY: ET1A</strong></td>
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**INTERACTION**
ET1A spoke at length and enthusiastically to J because she has clear ideas about good partnerships and was interested in the study. She and P1A have a good relationship and both agreed to take part after talking to J. ET1A was interested in the questions and talked at length and with conviction. She was able to relate to J on a teacher level, but also as a parent.

**INTENTION**
ET1A was aware of the purpose of the study and being in a large team at location A, had many experiences to inform her ideas of partnerships with parents. She has seen P1A have 2 totally different experiences with her 2 children in their transition to school, much of which can be explained by the quality of partnerships involved. She has seen P1A change and grow in the 18 months she has known her. She loves her work and the team ethos of location A.

**IDENTITY**
ET1A strongly identifies as someone who makes a difference to young children with disabilities and their families. She related to J as a teacher and as a researcher with common interests and goals. Sharing and teamwork are part of her modus operandi and she talked at length and in detail about her ideas and experiences of partnerships.

**LANGUAGE**
ET1A has fluent education vocabulary and familiarity with the complex issues of transition to school in the lives of families and young children. She has a desire to make the processes clearer and more understood. The language of the IV was on her wavelength and she had many examples of how partnerships are able to help transitions to school, and where some of the deficits are.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**
ET1A has empathy for families of different backgrounds with the common problem of transition to school of a young child with a disability. Her job is to translate different rules and processes of schools and benefit the child. She and J have an understanding of that journey and the many ways it can play out. The IV was deep and engaging as the ultimate purpose is a better understanding of how partnerships can work more effectively.
### INTERVIEW PROFILE

| ROUND: 1 |  |
| IDENTITY: ET2A |  |
| DATE: 27.6.12 |  |

<p>| INTERACTION | ET2A was enthusiastic and motivated to talk as she obviously has an interest in her work and her families that makes her job at location A a pleasure. She talked to J openly and at length and seemed comfortable with the questions and being reflective about her practices. She was animated and easily encouraged to expand or explain or confirm points she was making. She liked that someone was taking an interest in a topic she cared deeply about. |
| INTENTION | ET2A understood the intention of the study very well and could relate to partnership practices and their effects on families, particularly over time. She felt that her shift in attitude and relationships with parents had changed over time for the better. There has been a move away from the teacher as expert and a much more family-focussed approach to working with children. The transition period is a time that she sees as still uneven and uncoordinated in its execution so she talked easily to J about her concerns and ideas. |
| IDENTITY | ET2A has had a shift in her idea of identity within partnerships and is articulate about the benefits of equality in team practices as well as family-centredness in planning and teaching. She strongly relates to location A as a centre that produces good results for children and families and gave examples of how support was discussed and provided with P2A. She could differentiate how her role played out compared to school teachers and wished for the means for their 2 roles to be more coordinated to benefit the child. ET2A sees research as an extension of her centre’s care for children. |
| LANGUAGE | ET2A spoke eloquently about her partnership with P2A and about teamwork and practices in general, sharing a similar vocabulary to J. She has seen change for the better and can describe that in terms that help our understanding of good practices, but she can also articulate problems that arise as a result of families having a lack of knowledge, support or coordinated efforts by the various services they work with. She sees that language ease and familiarity with jargon can be powerful. |
| SOCIAL REALITIES | ET2A has empathy for P2A and other families she works with, as she is aware of the difficulties they face during transition to school. Coordinating with schools and other team members is important to her to make the best contribution to those families’ journeys. Staff at location A can materially changes things for families e.g. accessing respite or home modifications, and ET2A realises what that can mean. |</p>
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<td><strong>IDENTITY: ET4A</strong></td>
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**INTERACTION**
ET4A was a motivated speaker to this topic as he loves his job. He came to it from another career, a common point with J, and has embraced the work with families and children. He was careful in his deliberations on each question and asked for clarification a couple of times. He was thoughtful and keen to be clear, and obviously cares about being a good partner and teacher.

**INTENTION**
ET4A understood the intent of the study and has a philosophy of taking the lead from his parents and children and what they require from the program. He works from a strengths-base and likes open communication to guide him, and the team at location working together for the best outcomes for children. J and ET4A frequently mirrored and checked meaning.

**IDENTITY**
ET4A strongly identified with the team and its philosophies at location A. He liked the way staff, in the room and afterwards, support each other and share planning, reflection and report writing. He also liked structure and hierarchy in the organisation to ensure good communication and practices.

**LANGUAGE**
ET4A was a careful speaker, thinking and answering in organisational terms to explain how and why things were done at location A. He also defended the DET procedures and tried to work with them as best he could. Good communication in partnerships was a basic for him and he had a good understanding with P4A, keeping closely in touch and focussing on the child.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**
ET4A was aware of different families’ needs and priorities and said he took the lead from them, working from a strengths base. The transition journey could be difficult but he took the view that the schools’ realities held some sway and that they were doing their best too.
### INTERVIEW PROFILE

**ROUND: 1**

**IDENTITY: ET5B**

**DATE: 19.6.12**

**INTERACTION**

ET5B was busy, hurried and trying to fit in the IV, so spoke rapidly and vigorously to get her points across. She was happy to be talking to J about a topic she clearly cared deeply about. She is energetic and motivated in her drive to make location B a centre of excellence where families and children get the services they need and a good start to learning for life. She related to the study and the questions and made excellent points in a short time.

**INTENTION**

ET5B had no doubt about the intention of the study and works hard in her community to engage all partners in transition, as she knows it is a hard road for families in a country town. She shows leadership and exemplary practices in action. She was clear in her answers and exchanges with J and could articulate facets of partnership that made a difference to children and families.

**IDENTITY**

ET5B is both a teacher and a leader at location B and found common ground with J in those roles and their execution with children with disabilities. 25% of her students have identified additional needs so location B is a hub for information and support, with ET5B making it work for the benefit of the local schools and the community. There is a strong connection to all the issues of beneficial partnerships in transition throughout all of ET5B’s work.

**LANGUAGE**

ET5B can speak hurriedly, thoughtfully and articulately with the assurance of a person who lives and breathes the issues of equality of opportunity for all children and families. Her knowledge of the jargon of the various systems that provide funding and direction in early childhood is conspicuously good and she uses it to find ways to support and fund good practice. She explained some of the newer aspects of change to J, and how she would work with it.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**

ET5B is community and family-centred in her work and has made access to supports easier for families who would otherwise have to travel to a nearby city. It is an open-door centre with ET5B available to talk to parents from an early to a late hour. She has known P5B and her other children for many years. ET5B and J have worked in similar environments and had a good understanding of each other’s philosophies and practices.
**INTERVIEW PROFILE**

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<tr>
<td>IDENTIFICATION: ET6B</td>
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<td>DATE: 12.6.12</td>
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| INTERACTION | ET6B seemed comfortable straight away and talked easily about her work at location B and her relationship with parents. She is a teacher there now, after a parent and children support role for special needs, and related to J’s interest in partnerships that assist them. |
| INTENTION | ET6B likes the family-centred philosophies of location B and her change of role to teacher where she gets to know children and families better. The focus of the study is of interest to her and she could quote practices that she has in her room which encourage good partnerships. She sees how the path to school can be difficult for children with disabilities and their families and actively supports them. She sees the need to empower parents. |
| IDENTITY | ET6B has had several career moves and locations and has a perspective where she sees parents having a complex road to negotiate and her role being to work in a team environment to give children the best start to school. She is aware of variable practices and availability of help that result in poor outcomes. ET6B seems to identify with being a change agent to provide better support and guidance to parents. |
| LANGUAGE | ET6B was comfortable in the language of education and early childhood issues and the changes that are taking place-explaining some of the terms to J. Her approach with parents is to encourage them to come into her room, stay a while, watch the children and talk over any issues that they are having. She feels the boundaries of some years ago are unhelpful to good communication. |
| SOCIAL REALITIES | ET6B has experience and understanding across social and system roles and works to reduce barriers to good results to children. Parents at location B are helped by a team effort to prepare their children for school. ET6B thinks skills and information provided early and often to parents is part of her role to help their path from preschool to school as she sees some of the shortcomings of the systems and how they work. |
**INTERVIEW PROFILE**

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<tr>
<td><strong>IDENTITY:</strong> ET7C</td>
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**INTERACTION**
ET7C was a bit nervous about the IV, worried she wouldn’t express herself well, but then settling down. She has enthusiasm for her job and admiration for P7C and all her families. She was keen to understand the questions and the intent and apologised if she asked for clarification, also worrying she wasn’t experienced enough. J and ET7C seemed to make a connection and make the IV work so that she was happy at the conclusion.

**INTENTION**
ET7C was new to transition to school but understood all the components of partnership and their significance. She is thoughtful and worries about doing a good enough job, but takes her lead from P7C and what she would like. ET7C gave good illustrations of how she makes the partnership work to the best of her ability, but checking with J for reassurance.

**IDENTITY**
ET7C is part-time at location C, and also works as an OT, her former fulltime profession. She feels new to teaching and location C but likes it very much and was keen to convey this in her expression and interchange with J. There is a parent element to her identity because she mentioned how that had changed some of her perceptions as a teacher.

**LANGUAGE**
ET7C was attuned to the language of the IV and gave thought to how she related to each question and her own practices. She asked for clarification and also reassurance at times, mainly because she seemed to feel like a newcomer and possibly not qualified enough to speak. She relaxed with J after a while and laughed quite a few times.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**
ET7C has admiration for the families she works with and seemingly, an empathy and a drive to understand how she can work with them and their children, and learn from them as well. Her reaction to J and the research was to feel a little intimidated, but this wore off part way into the IV.
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<td><strong>IDENTITY: ET8D</strong></td>
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<td><strong>DATE: 2.8.12</strong></td>
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<td><strong>INTERACTION</strong></td>
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<td>ET8D was very energetic and effusive in her interview. She has been at location D for a long time and her own children went there. She has a long vision of change in the preschool over the years. She was keen to describe the way the partnership worked for the benefit of the boy and she and J interacted at a very friendly and connected level. She gave detailed responses and was easily prompted to expand or explain any points.</td>
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<td><strong>INTENTION</strong></td>
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<td>ET8D understood the intent of the study and the importance to children and families. Her experience over the years gave a view of little done in the past to assist transition or to partner with the school next door in any significant way. She saw the value of working with them and was seeing recognition from the school as well. ET8D has changed her own practices at location D and sees the benefit to the children as the most important outcome.</td>
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<td><strong>IDENTITY</strong></td>
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<td>ET8D strongly identified as a teacher and change agent for better and more family-centred practices with a calm and happy environment. She knew the family issue with P8D and was working with her to minimise the effect on the boy. She and J related as teachers of young children with complex needs.</td>
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<td><strong>LANGUAGE</strong></td>
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<td>ET8D was articulate, fluent and fast-speaking as her enthusiasm for her work spilled out. Stories of old methods and attitudes, and efforts of the present day to improve practices further, were all described in detail. Parents at location D were given opportunities to talk and confide and stay with their children to watch for a while, as ET8D related to them as a local. She wanted to break the ice more with the school but was taking less initiative there, leaving some of that to the hierarchy, and just relating to a couple of teachers she knew.</td>
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<td><strong>SOCIAL REALITIES</strong></td>
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<td>ET8D was comfortable in her role at location D and her partnership with P8D. Her view of J and the study was as an involved, interested participant who had much to offer. She was firm in her ideas of doing more for children and families, particularly in difficult times and with additional needs.</td>
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INTERVIEW PROFILE

ROUND: 1
IDENTITY: P1A
DATE: 7.6.12

INTERACTION | P1A was shy and nervous, but happy to talk and generous with her time while her son was in his group. English is her 2nd language and she often asked for clarification as J was also nervous for her first IV and was unclear and hesitant at times. P1A was keen for her situation to be understood as she has 2 children with disabilities and life is hard for her and her husband. She was very open with J, sharing details of their life and detailing how the present location and partnership were providing much-needed help. She accepted J as a parent and as a researcher who wanted to let a wider audience know how hard life can be and talk about changes that will make a difference.

INTENTION | P1A was comfortable with the intention of the interview, and the fact that there would be 3 more over the transition to school journey. J felt a responsibility to do justice to her faith in the study. P1A’s experiences with her first child were much more difficult than for this one and she had a lot to say about how it felt to be rejected, alone and isolated when help was not forthcoming.

IDENTITY | P1A had several identity issues, one as a migrant with no family here, another as a mother of 2 children with high support needs, and another as a woman with skills who would like to get back into the workforce. She and her husband need the support of others and until recently had struggled with very little of the help they needed. Location A has been a source of support and networking, particularly with other parents of children with disabilities. It is still an effort to make time to contact them but location A is a start. She explained at length about life from her point of view and wanted J to understand it. Her confidence and purpose seem to be on the rise.

LANGUAGE | P1A asked J to slow down, explain, re-word on several occasions and said how Australian accents can still confound her even after 20 years, which included a job here in customer service. She related to the questions once they were re-worded and had good self-expression, though J didn’t always catch her words either. There were misunderstandings but P1A and J back-tracked and laughed as they worked it out. J avoided jargon and checked meaning and understanding throughout the IV.

SOCIAL REALITIES | P1A and J had the commonality of parenthood of a child with a disability and so P1A spoke willingly and openly. There was some contrast between the experiences of having her first and second child get ready for school and the services they were able to access. J was able to be very empathic about the difficulties as they form some of the basis for the reasoning behind the study. It shouldn’t be that hard! P1A had a story of significant hardship to tell and good detail of how services and systems were inequitable and unhelpful.
INTERVIEW PROFILE

ROUND: 1  
IDENTITY: P2A  
DATE: 23.7.12  

INTERACTION  
P2A is fostering and possibly adopting her niece's boy, so life has changed dramatically for her, as she had none of her own. She is getting to know a world she didn't expect to need to know and is approaching it with diligence and organisation. She and J were awkward and slow to connect at first, as she gave short answers and seemed unsure of her decision to talk. This seemed to improve as her degree of caring and focus on the best outcomes for her boy led her to talk more as the IV progressed. She agreed to continue in the study, which J was very pleased about, as she had interesting things to say.

INTENTION  
P2A was aware of the intent and said the best for her boy was the most important thing to her, and she was going to achieve it for him. She was taking the lead on a lot of decisions and worked with ET2A in a consultative and affirming way, to help her go ahead with actions. She was clear with J about her beliefs and wishes.

IDENTITY  
P2A felt a clear role in the transition to school of her boy. She related to J as someone who also had a child with a disability, but in addition, with an interest in how partnerships could help children. She gave the IV the time as someone with something to say on the subject.

LANGUAGE  
P2A and J spoke a little differently to each other, but P2A was emphatic about what she meant and what her intentions were. She wasn't intimidated by the role or language of J or the study, but put things in her words and with her emphasis. J tended to re-word and re-ask questions at times, thinking to be clear, but P2A was not in doubt about the elements of partnership, or the actions that she was prepared to take, that she wanted to talk about.

SOCIAL REALITIES  
P3A had been working in a responsible and well-paying job before she became a full-time carer. The ties of kinship were strong enough for her to give that up for her boy's benefit. She was navigating doctors, DOCS and other professionals in a no-nonsense and organised way and talked openly to J about making things work for the boy's path to school- their local school. The clash of roles or ideas were not her worry, just how to get around or work with them to get the best for him.
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<td><strong>IDENTITY: P3A</strong></td>
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**INTERACTION**

P3A was very open about her feelings about the last 5 years and all she had learnt and was learning. She found location A a year ago and was helped to make decisions about where and when her twin boys would go to school. She seemed happy talking to J, if a little nervous, but she explained and talked in some detail about how daunting it could be. A public meeting with the DEC in May, for instance, threw her because she found it hard to follow and ETA3 is a big help talking her through it all.

**INTENTION**

P3A understood the intent of the study and wanted to help others who were going down the same path. Her twins were diagnosed at 2 and have been taking up all her efforts ever since. She said J would be welcome at a planning meeting at the school (didn't eventuate) and she would like to help over the 2 years of the study. P3A values ETA3's input as they prepare the boys for school, particularly as one who has additional needs to his brother.

**IDENTITY**

P3A and J could talk about the worries and wishes for their boys with disabilities, and how good partnership can help. P3A felt intimidated by the language and procedures of the special education pathway, but supported by the program at location A to work her way through it and make decisions she was happy with such as deferring school for a year. She has issues with shyness and overcoming this to talk to teachers and other parents.

**LANGUAGE**

P3A and J had no trouble communicating about the issues of partnership in terms that were meaningful to them both. P3A made it clear that she needed support to navigate the big job of transition to school, was prepared to learn and do anything, but that it wasn't easy. ETA3 and others at location A were helping her in very practical ways, and her initial meetings at school were going well too.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**

P3A has needed help with the situation she and her family find themselves in and ETA3 has been there for her. She is meeting other parents and sharing mutual support. She and J were able to relate to each other's situations and share the common purpose of talking about the issues of transition and partnership in an open and useful way.
### INTERVIEW PROFILE

**ROUND: 1**  
**IDENTITY: P4A**  
**DATE: 25.6.12**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERACTION</th>
<th>P4A has the confidence of an older mother and related to J and the idea of the research with ease. She is direct and knows what she wants from ET4A and the centre her boy attends. She is happy with the way she relates to them and how they respond to her. In the IV she is able to laugh and express emotion about the journey of transition, and she and J share some common understanding as parents.</th>
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<td>INTENTION</td>
<td>P4A shares the interest of the study in talking about good partnerships and helping young children with disabilities transition to school. She knows the insecurity and the frustration of trying to make the best decisions and relies on ET4A and others in the team at location A to help her and her boy. P4A related to the questions and could give detailed responses.</td>
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<td>IDENTITY</td>
<td>P4A feels her responsibility as her son’s advocate and is conscious of the roles played in preparing him for school. Location A has a team with some flexibility in support including home visits and she is learning valuable partnership skills. In the IV she talks about roles and the helpfulness of others.</td>
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<td>LANGUAGE</td>
<td>P4A has good language skills and can describe complex issues, conversing at length with J and expanding on the experience of preparation for transition for her boy. She and J had a shared understanding of the issues and mirrored meaning and agreement during the IV.</td>
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<td>SOCIAL REALITIES</td>
<td>P4A and J had similar social realities as parents of children with additional needs and the questions of the IV evoked responses that illustrated the complexities of the transition to school experience. J was well aware of the kinds of feelings P4A was relating, and gained the kind of rich detail she was expecting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDENTITY: P5B</td>
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<td>DATE: 19.6.12</td>
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**INTERACTION**
P5B was shy and hesitant and this resulted in J being over-wordy, trying to help her feel more at ease. This didn’t seem to work that well, as her responses were brief and mostly in agreement with J, who checked for meaning and intent a little repetitiously. The overall feeling was, however, positive and pleasant, because P5B had good things to say about her partnership and her satisfaction with location B and ET5B.

**INTENTION**
P5B was clear about the intent of the study and how parents could benefit from helpful partnerships. She had older children at school and seemed to have a lot of confidence in both the school and location B to help her boys (twins) transition to school. J reworded some of the questions to elicit longer responses but P5B spoke simply and to the point.

**IDENTITY**
P5B has history with the preschool and school and identified with them in a positive way. She said her role and confidence as a parent had grown and she felt listened to in her partnership with ET5B. J made her parent status known but it didn’t feature particularly as a point of discussion. P5B accepted her interest in the transition journey and was happy to be in the study, inviting J to a planning meeting at the school.

**LANGUAGE**
P5B spoke quietly and simply and J tried to reflect that, with explanations of the point of the questions. P5B was thoughtful but not verbose. She has a good rapport with ET5B and speaks often with her, usually before and after session times.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**
P5B knows her preschool and school well and trusts them to do the right thing by her boys. She has known ET5B for a long time and is happy in their partnership. ET5B accompanies her to any meeting she asks her to, including transition to school meetings. J and P5B related on a parent level, caring about the future of their children.
**INTERVIEW PROFILE**

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<td>IDENTITY: P6B</td>
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| INTERACTION | P6B was very enthusiastic and animated in her IV with J as she described the progress for her boy and her family, in what was a difficult time. She was full of praise for location B and a speech therapist her son had there, and was thrilled with the progress he has made. She was open about the emotions she has felt along the way and seemed happy to be able to tell her story to J. Her boy loves location B and doesn't like holidays or time off. |
| INTENTION | P6B wanted to tell the positive effect on her boy of the programs at location B which were creative and interesting to him, and tailored to his needs. She understood the intent of the study and talked easily to J on the subject of partnerships and transition to school. There was a big adjustment her family had to make to come to terms with a diagnosis at age 3 and they are determined he go to regular schools and make regular friends. |
| IDENTITY | P6B has found it hard for her and her family to be understood by others and the support from ET6B and others at location B has helped her to come to terms with her identity as mother of a child with additional needs. She and J laughed about a few common themes they understood as parents. |
| LANGUAGE | P6B was articulate and effusive in her descriptions of the role of ET6B and others at location B in the education and preparation of her son for school. She and J could discuss facets of partnership with common understanding of the benefits for their families. She was thrilled with his progress in his time at the preschool. |
| SOCIAL REALITIES | P6B felt her partner at location B was in tune with her son's needs and that they were on track for his going to his local school. She related the progress to J with a sense of pleasure and gratitude that things were going so well. |
### INTERVIEW PROFILE

**ROUND: 1**  
**IDENTITY: P7C**  
**DATE: 8.6.12**

#### INTERACTION

P7C was very forthcoming and detailed about what the topic of this study meant to her. Preparing her 4th child for school is unlike the other 3 and her partnership with ET7C and location C is important to her. She and J related over the different journey to school that our children with disabilities presented. P7C related to the questions and gave good detail without much prompting as she has much to say about partnerships and how they can help.

#### INTENTION

P7C related to the aims of the study as she recognises the difficult path for her child and family as school approaches, and is worried about the school accepting and working with her daughter. Location C and ET7C have proved of great help and she is happy to IV over 2 years to explore partnerships. She feels very changed by her experiences and would like to see more understanding of children and families in her position.

#### IDENTITY

P7C sees a big change in who she is now compared to 5 years ago and does not judge other parents and children on behaviour so readily as she did. Her identity at her children’s’ school has changed too and she is nervous about her new role advocating for her child. She also sees her family as having to try very hard to meet the needs of all members. She was motivated in the IV to explain all these changes and how they coped. J was a willing listener and P7C appeared comfortable with sharing.

#### LANGUAGE

P7C has acquired a large vocabulary and knowledge of her child’s disability and was ahead of doctors and teachers in realising the issues and some of the strategies that could be used. She is comfortable with jargon and shorthand and could speak articulately about her experiences. The topics of the questions and their possible complexities were not a problem.

#### SOCIAL REALITIES

P7C has had a life-changing experience and is very clear about the before and after nature of the changes. She and J related to that and how personal and family change was inevitable. Explaining that and being understood by others is part of the work families do in making their adjustments to their new reality. P7C is able to express that and give recognition to helpful people and processes that improve her daughter’s and her family’s life.
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<td><strong>IDENTITY:</strong> P8D</td>
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<td><strong>DATE:</strong> 31.7.12</td>
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<td><strong>INTERACTION</strong></td>
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<td>P8D has 4 children, her youngest with additional needs. The family has had a big upheaval and she was very generous in still talking to J. She was clear and articulate about the issues around her boy in preschool and getting ready for school. She and J related well on a parent level of concern about wishes for their children. She was hopeful for her boy and the school she knows well.</td>
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<td><strong>INTENTION</strong></td>
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<td>P8D has a close ongoing relationship with ET8D and she understands the intent of the study to highlight aspects that help children. She was happy to help and to say she would be in it for 2 years and that J could come to a planning meeting if that worked out. P8D spelled out the difficulties of the funding rules and the access to therapy and the isolation she felt at times, so her intent seemed clearly to be to help others in the future.</td>
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<td><strong>IDENTITY</strong></td>
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<td>P8D and J established some common ground when identifying fellow feelings and understanding about planning for the future. She was having to be the main person advocating for her boy and was feeling some pressure in getting what she wanted for him. Only one other parent that she knew of was going through the same thing at location D preschool. She and ET8D have bonded as partners who care about her boy and they work and agree on common strategies.</td>
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<td><strong>LANGUAGE</strong></td>
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<td>P8D is articulate and somewhat confident in her seeking support and advocating for her son. She has opinions about her son’s diagnosis which don’t mesh completely with that of others she deals with. She has the vocabulary of special education issues but says she feels some of the lack of power in choosing or accessing what she wants for her boy.</td>
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<td><strong>SOCIAL REALITIES</strong></td>
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<td>P8D and ET8D are very close in background and familiarity with location D, and they also both feel some affiliation with the destination primary school for the boy. Catering for his additional needs is a team effort at location D, though they seem not to have close ties with any network of expertise in the area. P8D and J had empathy for each other as mothers interested in good partnerships to help their children and mirrored meaning and experiences to each other.</td>
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### APPENDIX A: Round 2 Interview Profiles

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<td>IDENTITY: ET1A</td>
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<td>DATE: 21.11.12</td>
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<td>ROUND: 2</td>
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<td>IDENTITY: ET2A</td>
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**INTERACTION**

ET2A approaches her work and this interview with enthusiasm, engaging easily on the topics raised and with the interviewer J. She regards herself as still learning and thinks about the processes and consequences of transition as someone who wants to improve outcomes.

**INTENTION**

The progress of the family during transition is central and ET2A and J focus on this. There is empathy for the difficulties experienced and the particular family circumstances, plus a common thread of desire for best outcomes.

**IDENTITY**

The role as teacher with a once/week role has its limitations, but identity as part of a larger team means sharing and additional input from others. The relationship with P2A is an equal one of respecting each other’s knowledge. J and ET2A have shared work experiences and values and agree with each other on many occasions.

**LANGUAGE**

There is common language and understanding, as well as mirroring, checking, agreeing and amusement at similar stories. The complexity of the partnership issue is explored with mutually compatible ideas and concepts.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**

ET2A and J have close intersection of worlds and discourses, and are motivated by similar beliefs about the value of good partnerships in working with families. ET2A acknowledged the lived reality of P2A and the practicalities of transition as they were evolving.
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<td><strong>ROUND: 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IDENTITY: ET3A</strong></td>
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<td><strong>DATE: 13.2.13</strong></td>
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**INTERACTION**

ET3A had been through a difficult personal time and spoke a little about this before the start of the interview. She had a desire to share her experiences in her early intervention centre, and her commitment to the goals of the centre. She was forthcoming and spoke in detail about all aspects of her work. After 19 years she is still enthusiastic, with plenty to say.

**INTENTION**

ET3A understood the intention of the interviews, and her part was to contribute in spite of time away in terms 3 and 4. She stayed in touch with the centre and the family and was strongly interested in the boys’ progress to school. Her reflections were sometimes a general view of the last year and what her own and the centre’s practices aim to achieve.

**IDENTITY**

ET3A strongly identifies as a key member of a team with clear goals for families and children. The job is important to her and returning to work was a goal to strive for. She has seen her work evolve over time and believes it is for the better.

**LANGUAGE**

ET3A is verbose at times, and familiar with jargon and concepts that position her in the teaching role. She and J were closely compatible in language terms. She spoke at length and with confidence on any question put to her.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**

ET3A and J were able to connect easily as to background, training and experience. Her knowledge of transition spans many years with a variety of families and schools, so she has perspective of its ups and downs.
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<th>INTERVIEW PROFILE</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IDENTITY: ET4A</strong></td>
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<td><strong>DATE: 15.11.12</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>INTERACTION</strong></td>
<td>Good rapport, ET4 likes discussing his work and finds it absorbing and rewarding. The commonality of teaching backgrounds is understood. Eye contact, smiling, a desire to answer well, not afraid to ask for a question to be repeated or rephrased. Thoughtful and involved in the subject matter, with a strong connection to the family. At ease with the interview and the interviewer, especially the second time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTENTION</strong></td>
<td>This is clear to ET4 as his job is the transition teacher at an early intervention centre and he cares about the processes and outcomes we are talking about. He is not wanting to be unprofessional or negative, but looks for the big picture of how all the players interconnect. The ideals of good transition are close to his own goals for families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IDENTITY</strong></td>
<td>The understanding between researcher and teacher are of people with a common interest in the narrative of transition. Belonging to different groups occurs within the roles of the interview for each person and these are acknowledged in stories told and nods of recognition and affirmation. ET4 identifies as a useful guide in the transition journey but does not place himself as more important or knowledgeable than the parent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LANGUAGE</strong></td>
<td>There is an equality of language and terms and jargon between education professionals, so both parties understand the complexities of transition and can express them to each other. ET4 did ask several times to have a question re-put or a concept rephrased as he was careful to understand what was being asked of him. The interviewer can be wordy and convoluted in trying to put a question with clarity. She asked checking questions often to be clear on responses, and to mirror intention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL REALITIES</strong></td>
<td>There are many common experiences and understandings with ET4 and the interviewer, which were demonstrated by cross-questioning and affirmations and nods. Discourse was clear between the two, with the interviewer seeking expansion on areas of change or procedure.</td>
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<td><strong>ROUND: 2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>IDENTITY: ET5B</strong></td>
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<td><strong>DATE: 10.12.12</strong></td>
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**INTERACTION**
ET5B is a keen networker and practitioner in transition for children with disabilities to school and can speak at length and great enthusiasm. She works to get the best outcomes for them and their families and speaks with J because this project is close to her own interests. They have plenty to say to each other.

**INTENTION**
There is an equality of intention and understanding, the common purpose being better processes to ensure success at school for children with special needs. ET5B has a lot to contribute and is very articulate on the subject.

**IDENTITY**
ET5B identifies strongly as a player in the local community, networking and improving knowledge and processes to improve the experiences of children, families. Schools, she believes, are somewhat behind preschools in appreciating the need for better preparation of children for school. She believes in empowering parents to advocate for their children and sees there is more work to be done in this process.

**LANGUAGE**
ET5B and J use words and complex ideas in very similar ways and communicated with frequent mirroring, agreement and enthusiasm for the subject. Some jargon or shortcuts occurred, as J is asking about Government and other bureaucratic change being rolled out at the moment.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**
ET5B and J share similar work and educational backgrounds and have little social or other dissonance, but more an enthusiastic shared interest and motivation in the study and its goals.
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| **ROUND: 2**  
**IDENTITY: ET6B**  
**DATE: 13.12.12** |

**INTERACTION**  
ET6B was well aware of the function of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} IV, but pressed for time, so it was more rushed than the 1\textsuperscript{st}. It followed P6B’s IV in a way that didn’t happen last time, so this may have made a subtle difference. ET6B seemed a bit more guarded, and privacy wasn’t as good either. She had no problems with talking on the themes in a meaningful way.

**INTENTION**  
The importance of partnerships is recognised by both ET6B and P6B. They may be a bit at odds at the moment as ET6 is part-time, P6 is anxious and worried, and ET6 sounds a bit impatient. Her ability to visit the school, for example, is limited. The tone of the interview was less upbeat than last time.

**IDENTITY**  
ET6B and J relate on a work level, and understand the responsibilities and demands of the job. The issue of partnerships is valued, but this one may be strained, and the reasons appear complex. J used empathy to draw out some of the ways ET6B was feeling, but just the immediate time concerns could have been at play.

**LANGUAGE**  
ET6B was talking around some of the complex issues, and was a little bit hard to pin down on her explanation of the transition difficulties experienced by P6B. It was not through jargon, more vagueness. J and ET6B spoke a lot more openly and frankly in IV 1.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**  
ET6B has not felt able to divulge the way she and P6B are really coping as partners, possibly because of the set-up of the interview this time. There seemed to be limits to what she would say in the circumstances.
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<td>IDENTITY: ET7C</td>
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<td>DATE: 6.12.12</td>
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<td>INTERACTION</td>
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<td>INTERVIEW PROFILE</td>
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<td><strong>ROUND: 2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>IDENTITY: ET8D</strong></td>
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### INTERVIEW PROFILE

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<td>IDENTITY: P1A</td>
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#### INTERACTION
- P1 was happy to talk for the second time and was less shy than last time. She had more to say as a lot had been achieved in that time and she felt good about sharing. She smiled and laughed a lot, but also freely communicated difficulties and frustrations as her life has improved but there is still much to achieve. She believes she is doing a service by talking about it and possibly helping others in the future. She said she would be there to talk in 2013 and says she likes my job. She is hoping to find work next year.

#### INTENTION
- P1 understands the intention of the interview and feels good about contributing to the study. There is a sense of common purpose, to make clear what parents' journeys are like. She has had hardship in her road but a lot of practical help from the centre, so she shares a belief that we can help families to have better lives. She is not bitter or angry but feels part of a process where good things can happen if we work and communicate together.

#### IDENTITY
- P1 was very shy and uncertain in the early days at the centre, and without close family, plus English as a second language. She has made friends and seen her son blossom, so she feels a strong affiliation to the program and the people. They have helped empower her in many ways and she is also more confident in this second interview as the issues are very real and important to her. We share an identity as parents of children with disabilities.

#### LANGUAGE
- P1 has a strong accent even after learning English as a child and working in Australia for many years. She finds our accents difficult at times but says she asks people to repeat themselves. She is articulate about her son and her concerns and shares personal details openly. Some questions are repeated or re-put in the interview, but then she is able to speak at length.

#### SOCIAL REALITIES
- P1 has a lot to share about a difficult world with 2 children at home with significant problems. She is open about the problems she has encountered but also has positive stories to tell and is aware of the complexities of education and life issues that arise.
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<td>IDENTITY: P2A</td>
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<td>DATE: 8.5.13</td>
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<td>(catch-up after P2A postponed on several occasions)</td>
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**INTERACTION**

P2A made time in a busy life after several other events had prevented the IV. She was generous with her time and responses and was happy to share some difficult times she and her child had experienced. She was blunt and forthright and she and J stayed on track with each other as she confirmed her meanings and explained sequences of events. She and J shared the funny aspects of her story, as well as the frustrating.

**INTENTION**

P2A understood the purpose of the interviews, and in spite of the failed attempts to talk, had every intention of participating eventually. She had experienced setbacks in her preparation for transition and wanted to be clear about her reasoning for acting as she did and finding a way to team with the school. She had a lot of determination to get a good result and was happy to tell her story.

**IDENTITY**

P2A was strongly motivated by her identity as advocate for her boy in a system which did not always respond to her and him as she would have liked. She spoke very clearly from this perspective and made valuable observations of difficulties she encountered and how she went about dealing with them. She trusted J to listen and record and empathise, possibly as J had identified her own status a mother of a young man with disabilities.

**LANGUAGE**

P2A was plain-speaking, and J avoided overly wordy academic-phrased questions. J checked meaning often and P2A used the phrase “exactly right” on frequent occasions. J also checked chains of events and people in question as P2A would speak quickly and jump ahead or back at times. She says she can get nervous or emotional in meetings and so makes sure to bring supporters who “speak the language of degrees.”

**SOCIAL REALITIES**

P2A brought up her cultural Aboriginal heritage in a few examples that indicated its importance to her in her dealings with schools, DOCS etc. She is strong in her beliefs about her boy getting the best that is available for his education and holds others to account. She feels certain that there are times when people with degrees and positions of power do not listen to her, so she brings support people to meetings with her.
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| **ROUND: 2**  
**IDENTITY: P3A**  
**DATE: 12.11.12** |

**INTERACTION**
Trust was established with P3A in the 1st interview, so she was happy to talk and had a lot to report. Eye contact and body language both good. There was laughing and smiling and a good number of storied examples. We had common ground as parents, which was mentioned indirectly and directly. Empathy was apparent as we talked about boys and milestones and the feelings experienced as something new was being entered into.

**INTENTION**
The purpose of the interview is referred to many times, regarding aspects of partnerships and transition to school. The experience of this parent is referred to as a part of a whole study that will help others understand what the journey is like with young children with disabilities starting school. There is respect for both sides of the partnership and care taken to see things in perspective. Bias or elitism is not evident, but care for the outcomes for the children is uppermost.

**IDENTITY**
The parent was shy last interview but has a positive role and identity in the lives of her children as they start school, and has gained skills and confidence. She has a plan and some optimism, based on good meetings and direction from her old and new partner. She relates to the purpose of the interview and her role in talking about her experiences. She seemed comfortable with the interviewer and the lines of questioning.

**LANGUAGE**
P3 was articulate about her boys and their progress and introduction to school. She talks to a range of people about them and has become familiar with jargon and bureaucracy. She has had coaching on working with others from a Family Worker, and plans questions and lists concerns to raise with them. She looked for words at times, but was very familiar with the concepts and the language of the interview. The interviewer asked if she meant this or that a few times, and mirrored ideas as well.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**
P3 showed understanding of various viewpoints and talked about being active in establishing a relationship with the new teacher for 2013. She will be welcome in the school as a helper and demonstrated how she understood the ways in which she could team with others. She has a sense of others being important in her world as networks of positive support.
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<td>IDENTITY: P4A</td>
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<td>DATE: 4.12.12</td>
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<td>INTERACTION</td>
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<td>SOCIAL REALITIES</td>
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## INTERVIEW PROFILE

**ROUND: 2**  
**IDENTITY: P5B**  
**DATE: 13.12.12**

**INTERACTION**  
P5B was less shy than in round 1, with more to say as the preschool year ends and the school experiences are taking effect. J went to a meeting at the school and P5B seems comfortable with the research relationship. She is also familiar with the school and is happy to talk about the processes as they are evolving.

**INTENTION**  
P5B is clear about the intention of the study and continuing into 2013. Although a quiet speaker, she has an assuredness about how to navigate transition, and her belief in the good intentions of everyone involved. She has not been disappointed so far and is optimistic for the school year.

**IDENTITY**  
P5B is a member of the preschool and school community over some years and has enjoyed a good relationship with ET5B and the school, although the principal is new to her. Talking to J seems an extension of her belief that the interests of her sons (twins) are being cared about. She describes herself as coming out of her shell over the years and seems to have acquired a quiet confidence.

**LANGUAGE**  
P5B would pause, or ask for something to be put again, while she thought about the intention of the question. J would use too many words or speak too much at times, and so slowed down and simplified. This was fair, as P5B understood the concepts, but wanted to be clear before answering.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**  
P5B and J have some intersection of experiences, so related to some extent. Their two worlds held a common desire for a good school experience for young children with disabilities so they had similar interests and motivations. J often had to ask for more description, as she is wordy and P5B is less so.
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<td>DATE: 13.12.12</td>
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<td>INTERACTION</td>
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<td>ROUND: 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDENTITY: P7C</td>
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<td>DATE: 3.5.13</td>
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<td>(re-interview after lost audio 21.2.13)</td>
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### INTERACTION
P7C was generous in agreeing to re-interview and was happy to speak at length. She shared a range of emotions from her transition story and she and J often both laughed. J has found parents happy to be listened to, and being a parent of a young person with a disability helps. P7C was forthcoming about personal change and growth and lessons she has learned in 6 years.

### INTENTION
P7C shared the intent of the IV- to shed light on good partnership practices- and she had many examples of benefits and downfalls during transition. Direct benefits to her daughter were detailed and praise given where it was due. She offered positive ideas and insights to good practice.

### IDENTITY
P7C was clearly the advocate for her daughter receiving the best schooling with the most support she could offer. She understands the different roles that are played and tries to work with them. She has few illusions about the road ahead for her daughter. Good support from the preschool helped P7C in initial meetings at the school.

### LANGUAGE
P7C is articulate and well-versed in the language of her child’s disability and learning needs. She persevered against others’ opinion to get the right diagnosis and is not intimidated by other professionals’ opinions. She has an attitude of wanting to work together for the one goal. The questions in the IV were clear to her in their purpose and intent.

### SOCIAL REALITIES
P7C has lived through difficult times with her daughter and feels like a changed person. She empathises with others who have children with special needs and has a broader outlook on life. This study has meaning to her and she is a willing participant.
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<td><strong>DATE:</strong> 13.11.12</td>
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<td><strong>INTERACTION</strong></td>
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### INTERVIEW PROFILE

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<td>IDENTITY: P1E</td>
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<td>DATE: 31.7.13</td>
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**INTERACTION**

P1 was happy to talk, and had positive things to report about her child settling in to school, so her mood was pleased and hopeful. She and J shared news about the family and the strides P1 had made and was making, going to TAFE and making friends with her classmates. She is still shy, but able to count the ways her life is better and her son is being enabled to do well at school.

**INTENTION**

P1 has a clear idea about the intention of the series of interviews and agrees happily to talk each time. She acknowledges the importance of the people and networks that have helped her son and her family achieve good outcomes, and she likes to emphasise the features of partnerships that work for her. She is contributing to the study in an intentional way.

**IDENTITY**

P1 has strong issues of identity with her wishing for a good life for herself and her family in the context of communication and her NESB, her recent naturalisation as an Australian citizen, her going to TAFE and seeking work and friends, and her involvement in a study she values highly as she sees the university taking an interest in the difficulties she has had with her 2 children with special needs.

**LANGUAGE**

P1 speaks English as her second language and is shy and halting at times. She is educated and is furthering her qualifications at present at TAFE. She feels a barrier to good communication with some people’s accents, or when they have a problem with hers. The questions in the interviews are explored and clarified to avoid misinterpretation.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**

P1 has a difficult life at times, as her elder child has significant needs. She has an upbeat attitude and a lot of gratitude for the people and schemes that have made a difference to the family, and this comes across in the interview. Her partner may not know the detail of her reality.
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<td><strong>IDENTITY:</strong> P3G</td>
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<td><strong>DATE:</strong> 25.7.13</td>
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**INTERACTION**
P3 has agreed willingly to talk and has a positive story to tell. She has contributed to her boys’ success with a practical understanding of partnerships and her own role with the teacher. She has found personal validation in describing the aspects of transition to school, and has a strong sense of achievement, because she is a shy person and has to work at this. She interacts personally and with feeling during the interviews.

**INTENTION**
P3 has a clear idea about the purpose of the interview and it is her intention to tell her boys’ story- and hers- with a view to helping others to have good outcomes. She intends to talk again in Round 4.

**IDENTITY**
P3 is devoted to her boys’ education and has made it her full-time job. She sees herself as an important agent and advocate in their lives. Her efforts have paid off and she is a more confident person than she was in Round 1.

**LANGUAGE**
P3 is articulate, if shy, and has learned the language of schools and disability in order to get the best for her boys. She describes situations and events well and has no problem with understanding or communicating during the interviews.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**
P3 has followed an unexpected path with the birth of her twin boys with additional needs and has acknowledged challenges and personal growth that have followed. Her partner shared some of her experiences as a mother of twins, and she enjoyed communicating her story of transition and the features that helped during the interview.
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<td>IDENTITY: P4H</td>
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<td>INTERACTION</td>
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<td><strong>ROUND:</strong> 3</td>
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**INTERACTION**  
P5 is quietly spoken but secure in her telling. She is not effusive, but responds and smiles when drawn out with expanded questions. With prompting she adds details and thinks of examples of her own.

**INTENTION**  
P5 seemed wary initially- in round 1- but has come to each interview with interest and a sense of shared purpose. Her boys are doing well and she can articulate what has helped them and the family, and what she has learned to do as a partner.

**IDENTITY**  
P5 has a strong sense of community identity and a strong family unit. She also has an older boy with more significant needs than the twins in this study, and she has learned a lot through experience since he was born. She participates in the interview as a person with valid ideas and contributions to make.

**LANGUAGE**  
P5 speaks simply and economically, and sometimes has asked “do you mean...?” so as to be sure she has the right idea of a question, because J is more verbose in her wording. She tells stories, but not in an embellished way.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**  
P5 has a grounded community context and has navigated life with her children within that network of friends and family, and the preschool and school. She connects with the sense of the study and its purpose.
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<td>SOCIAL REALITIES</td>
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INTERVIEW PROFILE

ROUND: 3
IDENTITY: P8L
DATE: 30.7.13

INTERACTION P8 was articulate and forthcoming about her experiences in the last 6 months and spoke with feeling and passion about the journey to school for her and her boy. It has been harder for her and her family than other participants on some levels and she seems to appreciate having a voice and a record of how they have coped.

INTENTION P8 is clear about the intention of the study and is agreeable to meeting each time to continue the 2 year overview of transition.

IDENTITY P8 is confident in her identity and relates to the interviewer as a fellow parent, but also appreciates the research aspect and the many voices involved.

LANGUAGE P8 expresses her views and experiences as one who has negotiated many encounters with a wide range of professionals, and has some frustration with the way she has been communicated with and spoken to, and their sharing of information with each other and herself. She is aware of language and status and the particularities of viewpoints and specialisations in the different vocations.

SOCIAL REALITIES P8 has first-hand examples of the different social realities of all the people in her son’s life and the impact they have. She relates these to the researcher as someone who is interested in all those interplays, and it makes for an informative interview.
INTerview profile

Round: 3
Identity: SP1E
Date: 9.8.13

Interaction

SP1E was enthusiastic in his participation. He had not long been at the school but praised it and embraced it for its inclusive and caring character. He had much to say about the way partnerships are nurtured and valued and seemed to enjoy the exchanges of the interview. He had other school experiences to compare this one with and was forthcoming with illustrations of points.

Intention

The intention of the study coincided largely with SP1E’s take on the value of partnerships and as a leader he had practical knowledge of how schools could engender good relationships with parents and other key parties in a young child’s successful transition to school.

Identity

SP1E was an experienced leader and confident in his ideas and practices. He was open to this research interview and gave his time willingly as he described his leadership philosophies and the means he used to implement them. He identified as a people person who was considerate of ways to suggest change that had the best chance of success.

Language

SP1E was fluent and articulate about all the interpersonal aspects of partnerships and ways to facilitate them. He conversed easily about what was a positive story at his school.

Social Realities

SP1E was speaking on an equal level with the interviewer on a topic dear to his heart and he was able to show empathy for the families of children with additional needs, as well as practical measures employed by his school.
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<td><strong>IDENTITY:</strong> SP2F</td>
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**INTERACTION**

SP2F was acting principal for the first 6 months of 2013 and had good knowledge of the school and the families. She was proud of the community and parent focus of the school and its close relationship with the on-grounds preschool, so she was happy to talk about partnerships and share her enthusiasm for good outcomes for kids.

**INTENTION**

SP2F understood the intention of the study and was able to demonstrate how the school addressed facets of partnerships in positive ways. She had examples of poor management too, and ideas for change.

**IDENTITY**

SP2F identified as a committed school member who was engaged in positive change. She related to the interviewer as a person also interested in what she believed were better outcomes for families and kids. Staff changes were unsettling things somewhat, but she cited projects she helped instigate as having a life because of family involvement.

**LANGUAGE**

SP2F was articulate in all areas of this interview and needed no prompting to come up with examples and opinions.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**

SP2F was very inclusive in attitude and sensitive to family differences and circumstances. She valued the school’s open door and welcome to the community and was concerned should that be eroded by different management practices. She was tuned to the goals of this research and identified with the search for best practice.
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**INTERACTION**

SP4H was adamant in his belief in the goals of the study and shared his personal experience as a father of a young woman with a disability. He was not influenced by official policy and funding so much as by a belief in all people as individuals with goals and potential to be nurtured. He had the deep-seated convictions and the pro-active examples in his school to make for a very interesting interview.

**INTENTION**

SP4H understood the intention very well and had plenty to say about the ways in which he found ways to make the school welcoming to all parents and children. He encouraged P4 to enrol her son on very flexible terms and was at all times keeping options open to make the enrolment work. He wasn’t able to solve the situation at the classroom level, but maintained an open door with other possibilities available.

**IDENTITY**

SP4H saw himself as a facilitator and enabler for children and families in a high needs community and he was rightly proud of the resources and the facilities he has found and built, and the support the school provides to all members. He was happy to share with the interviewer as someone who appreciates positive partnerships on many levels.

**LANGUAGE**

SP4H was clear and articulate, even passionate. He seeks innovation and change for the better and is trialling a new system for tracking students, among other initiatives.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**

SP4H lives across several social realities and is empathetic and motivated to do the best by all those within his sphere of influence. His strong sense of what is right comes across, as well as a willingness to be innovative and to run counter to perceived wisdom or practice that he doesn’t agree with.
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**INTERACTION**

SP5I is a new principal in promotion terms, and to location I. He is enthusiastic, motivated and able to talk at length. He was involved in the enrolment of the children of P5 in 2012 and was welcoming and positive about what the school could offer.

**INTENTION**

SP5I was in tune with the purpose of the study and offered every cooperation to the researcher. He could relate actions and support that would foster good partnerships and saw himself as a facilitator in a school that valued every member.

**IDENTITY**

SP5I is a young principal with a desire to build on the strengths of the school and participate in innovation and research. He is trying to learn the implications of all the changes in funding and management that are occurring at this time and he relies on experienced staff around him to help as well. He talked and related to the interviewer quite candidly and openly.

**LANGUAGE**

SP5I has executive management experience in a different kind of school and took lessons from there as he could, but there is a pace of change that he is feeling the need to come to grips with. He is articulate and caring about the school and its close community atmosphere.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**

SP5I showed empathy for the family of P5 and was an enabler with structures and practices, some his own, some inherited.
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**ROUND:** 3  
**IDENTITY:** SP8L  
**DATE:** 5.8.13

**INTERACTION**  
SP8L is acting principal, and young and enthusiastic. He enjoyed talking about the school and the particular character that comes from its diverse community. He was generous with his time and interested in the nature of the research, offering examples of some of his reading material that supported an inclusive view of schooling.

**INTENTION**  
SP8L understood the intention of the study and had positive examples of school nurturing of partnerships and support for parents. He has a preschool in his grounds which has potential for better partnership with the school, and he may have time or opportunity to work on this if he stays in the position.

**IDENTITY**  
SP8L is approaching his tenure with an enthusiasm for staff learning and innovation, so he is trying to tackle the resources of staff to deal with a complex community of children, including quite a few with additional needs.

He identified with the researcher’s aims of defining positive partnerships with parents and named practices that he encouraged or used himself.

**LANGUAGE**  
SP8L was well-read and articulate and able to discuss all aspects of partnerships with the interviewer. The school did not have clear lines of communication in some areas such as regular LST meetings with P8, and teaming with the preschool was an area for future development.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**  
P8L was in caretaking mode, but keen to innovate and develop skills within the school. He recognises the diversity of families and the difficulties that children with additional needs face, and has a positive view of the school’s ability to be inclusive and caring.
**INTERVIEW PROFILE**

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<td>IDENTITY: ST1E</td>
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**INTERACTION**  
ST1E was interested and engaged with the topic of the interview, and had a background in special education, which she said informed her transparent and open-door approaches to working with parents and teachers alike. She was quick to respond and enlarge upon questions as they were put, and had a deep understanding of the processes of partnerships and her part in them.

**INTENTION**  
ST1E understood the intention of the study and its significance in the first year at school. She promotes good parent partnerships to student teachers and her fellow staff as part of her executive position, but also because of personal convictions.

**IDENTITY**  
ST1E sees herself as an enabler of good parent communication and collaboration and talked at length about the ways this happened in her practices and the in the school’s generally. The principal SP1E and this teacher both talked about the school identity as one of caring and inclusiveness.

**LANGUAGE**  
ST1E was fluent and articulate in her thoughts and beliefs, and had ease of use of practitioner terms and jargon. She was also conscious of communicating well with P1 who has English as a second language and took the time to converse regularly with her.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**  
ST1E and the interviewer were close in social and professional realities and talked easily about the issues and the changes in practices and ideas over the years in teaching. ST1E also has empathy for the family circumstances of P1E and has worked cooperatively on family goals.
INTERVIEW PROFILE

ROUND: 3
IDENTITY: ST2F
DATE: 17.9.13

INTERACTION
ST2F is an early phase teacher and was a bit nervous about expressing her thoughts and opinions. She was able to engage with the topic and the interviewer however, after initial uncertainty about the goals of the study and the interview direction. She could relate well, she found, due to her experiences with the family in the study, and she had many illustrations of how the partnership was working as she saw it.

INTENTION
ST2F understood the intention of the study very well and was enthusiastic about the value of partnerships and good communication. She used the word “humble” on several occasions, and as a younger teacher was very conscious of listening and learning in her role.

IDENTITY
Any identity issues between ST2F and the interviewer were about age and experience and confidence, but were reduced as the interview progressed and ST2F felt the value of her contribution. As she was encouraged and reinforced by the interest in her responses, she spoke with conviction about what she was learning, seeing and doing.

LANGUAGE
ST2F had a bit of uncertainty as she expressed her experiences and views but she was well-considered and thoughtful in her responses. She understood the questions and the situations under study and articulated her grasp of the different viewpoints and needs in the partnerships at school.

SOCIAL REALITIES
ST2F seemed to feel the academic nature of the study as a cause to be self-conscious about giving her views and opinions, but as the interview proceeded she relaxed more.
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**INTERVIEW PROFILE**

**ROUND:** 3  
**IDENTITY:** ST4H  
**DATE:** 6.8.13

**INTERACTION**  
ST4H was happy to talk as she was assured the study was interested in all aspects of partnerships and did not judge individuals or their ideas. This partnership had broken down and P4 withdrew her son from the school after close association and teamwork in the classroom. ST4H gave her account and her views as they have evolved over 18 years of teaching, so she was open to reflection and accountability in her responses to questions. She did avoid direct reference to the negative aspects of this partnership, which included some difference in the perception of the dynamics with a teacher’s aide.

**INTENTION**  
ST4H understood the intention of the study and recognises the importance of partnerships in working with children with additional needs. She portrayed a positive view of this partnership as far as possible and the interviewer did not try to draw out the aspects of the breakdown in great detail, but relied on ST4H to offer her thoughts. Her view of the teacher aide role did not accord with P4’s and a triangulation of views was not possible.

**IDENTITY**  
ST4H is an executive at the school with long experience, and identifies as busy and competent, but working in a school with complex family and child needs. She spoke confidently about the school’s achievements in meeting these needs and her own part in being responsive and adaptable.

**LANGUAGE**  
ST4H is fluent in educational language and ideas about inclusion, and has practical experience of modifying her classroom to accommodate a range of needs. The interview was pitched to capture that knowledge and expertise, but it also revealed oversights of the experience of others and the negative outcomes that can occur.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**  
ST4H and the interviewer share experience and training, and the complexity of a school where extra child and family needs are an everyday feature of teaching. Her caring and competence were evident, but a breakdown in communication had occurred between 3 adults in the classroom and had not been resolved before P4 decided to withdraw.
## INTERVIEW PROFILE

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<td>IDENTIY: ST5I</td>
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### INTERACTION
ST5I was friendly and forthcoming, with an obvious love of her job and her school. She has a good level of support for the children with additional needs in her class, including the twins of P5. She had little lead-up to the interview, but responded thoughtfully and in detail to the lines of questioning.

### INTENTION
ST5I quickly understood the intention of the study, despite not having read any material in detail. She had many years of teaching experience and was confident in her replies.

### IDENTITY
ST5I had a strong identity as a long-term teacher of kindergarten and as a leader in that area. Her practices were honed over time and her belief in the school as a long-term staff member was strong. She related to the interviewer as someone with some, but lesser, experience, as recent times have seen considerable change in kindergarten goals and practices.

### LANGUAGE
ST5I is fluent in educational language and communicated her thoughts in a very articulate way, assuming a shorthand knowledge in the interviewer as well. She speaks as a leader and mentor of others would, in expounding the practices employed in her classroom and in the school.

### SOCIAL REALITIES
ST5I was comfortable with her understanding of her school’s social milieu, her part in it, and her relationship to an academic investigator talking about partnerships.
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**INTERVIEW PROFILE**

**ROUND:** 3  
**IDENTITY:** ST8L  
**DATE:** 15.8.13

**INTERACTION**  
ST8L was a little reluctant when asked by SP8L to participate but made a time and agreed to talk. She warmed up very quickly as she liked her job and had obvious enthusiasm for everything to do with it. She had known P8 for a long time and the boy since he was a baby and she spoke with confidence about his time in her class and her understanding of partnerships.

**INTENTION**  
ST8L related to the intention of the study and gave positive examples of her own approaches to working with parents. She has some responsibility as part of the school executive and has a long view of the school and the neighbouring preschool, as one who has been there for a long time.

**IDENTITY**  
ST8L has a strong identity as a long-term teacher and still has enthusiasm for the job, which she loves. She embraces change, training and young students coming in for internships. She feels confident with university staff as she is often involved in research and training exercises.

**LANGUAGE**  
ST8L has fluency in educational language so that the line of questioning during the interview was in areas in which she felt well-versed. P8 is an articulate person and ST8L felt they had a strong understanding of each other, particularly as P8 spent many hours as a classroom volunteer over the years.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**  
ST8L has been at location L for a long time and feels she knows the family of P8 and has been of help settling the boy into school. She feels comfortable in the interview situation too, talking about what she loves to do.
## APPENDIX A: Round 4 Interview Profiles

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<td><strong>IDENTITY:</strong> P1E</td>
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**INTERACTION**
P1E has become comfortable talking to the interviewer and can reflect on good processes that have led her and her family to this place, where her son has enjoyed his first year at school and she can mark changes for the better, some of which result from good partnerships. She is looking forward to reading the final report she says.

**INTENTION**
P1E has a very good idea about the intention of the study as this is her 4th interview in 2 years. She has provided a difference in perspective as a speaker of English as a second language and has valued having her voice heard.

**IDENTITY**
P1E is aware of differences in life experiences and hardship between her and the interviewer, but also sees some similarities with parenting a son with a disability. There was good empathy during the interviews.

**LANGUAGE**
P1E has a disadvantage with language at times but puts herself forward and makes friends at the school and at TAFE. She has good comprehension and would like a job but she has to deal with others’ perceptions of her language ability. It is clear after 4 interviews that she is a bright woman.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**
P1E has a difficult life with 2 demanding children but she has a positive attitude and has made personal and family gains in the last 2 years. She and her husband have made every effort to seek help and good partnerships.
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**INTERACTION**
P3M has spoken with the interviewer 4 times in total and a warm relationship has developed as she has not only gone through 1 transition, but 2, changing schools halfway through 2013. P3M has grown in confidence in that time and has shared her worries and concerns, along with accounts of doing everything that she can for her boys, even against an inclination to shyness. The interviews have been funny and warm and materially useful for their exploration of partnerships and what they mean to this parent.

**INTENTION**
P3M is well aware of the intent of the study and has been a willing participant 4 times. She has realised that being a good partner herself is a key to getting the best education for her twin boys. She took a parent training course at location A in 2012 and understands the benefits she gained from it.

**IDENTITY**
P3M is devoted to the “whatever it takes” role of seeing her boys through their schooling. She has seen the difference early intervention made, and over the course of this study has reported progress that is gratifying to her and other people’s efforts. In talking to the interviewer she is emphasising her belief in the power of cooperation and communication to benefit her children.

**LANGUAGE**
P3M is plain speaking and articulate about the time it takes her to forge partnerships and the difficulties she has to overcome to feel confident in them. She is an advocate who has to prepare and plan her actions, but she has learned to get her meaning across and communicate in situations or with people who might normally intimidate her.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**
P3M and the interviewer relate on a parent level and have seen the funny side together of many stories over 2 years.
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**INTERACTION**

P4 and the interviewer have spoken 4 times over the time she and her boy have sought a good result starting his formal education. There is no location tag as her boy is being home-schooled at present. P4 has been an engaging source of anecdotes about her and her son’s experiences and she has given her time generously, sharing disappointments and progress over a series of changes of venue. She and the interviewer have had in-depth discussions of the sources of her frustration and dissatisfaction, and have built a trusting relationship.

**INTENTION**

P4 understands the intention of the study very well and is articulate on the facets of partnership, particularly when not executed well, or to the detriment of her boy. After 4 interviews P4 has shown resilience and personal growth, as well as thoughtfulness about the issues of partnerships.

**IDENTITY**

P4 relates to the interviewer as a parent, but also as someone interested in teasing out the elements of partnerships that are helpful and not helpful. She quickly grasps the point of questions and expands upon them.

**LANGUAGE**

P4 speaks clearly and reasonably about often difficult choices or situations and has good information and networking to back her up. She is a good researcher and communicator on behalf of her son.

**SOCIAL REALITIES**

P4 is comfortable in her role as home-schooler and advocate for her son, and has fostered positive relationships with people who can support her do that. She and the interviewer have formed a trusting and equal relationship as people interested in the welfare of young children with additional learning needs at school.
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| INTERACTION | P7K has talked to the interviewer 5 times, one extra than planned because of a misadventure with a recording. The interaction is friendly, lengthy and with much detail and laughing. Parents of children with additional needs walk a different road at times. |
| --- |

| INTENTION | P7K is very familiar with the intention of the study and has many anecdotes and experiences with partnerships to relate. She is good-humoured about the trials and grateful for the successes. |
| --- |

| IDENTITY | P7K is the main advocate for a girl with very particular needs and has recognised the changes that this has brought about on her life and her character. She talked to the interviewer frankly about the hits and misses in partnerships, as one who was interested in what can be learned from experiences like hers. |
| --- |

| LANGUAGE | P7K speaks eloquently and articulately, making good points and observations, and having positive suggestions about what could be done differently. She has learned to talk to all partners as an equal and to hold her ground on an issue if she has reason. |
| --- |

<p>| SOCIAL REALITIES | P7K is a strong believer in all partners communicating openly with each other on common ground and for the benefit of the child, and her variety of experiences have taught her what works and what doesn’t when managing her child’s needs. She has learned to be less fearful of position and standing than she used to be in order to get a point across. |</p>
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**ROUND:** 4  
**IDENTITY:** P8L  
**DATE:** 25.11.13

### INTERACTION
P8L has talked to the interviewer 4 times and has a rapport with her based on the sharing of stories about her boy’s progress over 2 years. Family issues have meant change for P8L and she has been generous in making time for the study.

### INTENTION
P8L understands the issues of partnerships well and has been open and forthcoming about her experiences and her thoughts on how to work together for the child’s benefit.

### IDENTITY
P8L is the main advocate for her son and has had to find strength in difficult times. She also had to prioritise her time in 2013 and make pragmatic choices. P8L had a sense of doing her best in the circumstances and building self-reliance, with not very high expectations of others to reach out and help.

### LANGUAGE
P8L is articulate and knowledgeable and able to show balance in a complex situation. One of her contributions is to show that empathy and understanding of personal situations have a place in successful partnerships.

### SOCIAL REALITIES
P8L is a social realist dealing with changing personal circumstances by doing her HSC, among other things. She spoke to the interviewer as someone who knew some of her difficulties, but with no self-pity.
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## INTERVIEW PROFILE

### ROUND: 4

### IDENTITY: ST2F

### DATE: 3.12.13

### INTERACTION

ST2F was nervous and hesitant in giving some of her opinions and recollections, but wanted to be clear and helpful at the same time. She had a challenging year with several children in her class with additional needs and had to find her way forward with some experimentation and imagination. She was happy to recount the achievements of the year, but modest at the same time. She and the interviewer shared the emotional component and personal satisfaction that she was feeling about the way the year evolved.

### INTENTION

ST2F was fully understanding of the intention of the interview and her contribution to a discussion on partnerships. She had a respectful approach to her relationships with parents and used the word “humble” several times, not believing she was more of an expert than parents when it came to understanding additional needs of children.

### IDENTITY

ST2F seemed worried about being clear and coherent and had the modesty and uncertainty of a younger teacher. She was certain, however, of the overall value of her experience with P2F as a partner, and of the success that the young boy experienced in his first year at school. She had been challenged by a few older teachers and their opinions about managing his needs, but persevered with her own ideas and gained the results she was looking for. ST2F appeared to have had a significant boost to her own teacher confidence.

### LANGUAGE

ST2F chose her words carefully and slowly at times. She was measured in how to represent events and progress during the year, but her overall message was one of having learned quite a bit about communicating and cooperating with a parent partner. There was a professional and a personal element to her feelings of satisfaction, expressed in straightforward language rather than teacher jargon.

### SOCIAL REALITIES

ST2F was not relaxed at first in the interview situation (age? status?) but settled into the talk on common ground about teaching and managing a class with diverse needs. She had the measure of the interview’s purpose and had many stories and examples that she and the interviewer enjoyed talking about together, laughing being a measure of understanding and common ground.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEW PROFILE</th>
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<tr>
<td>ROUND: 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDENTITY: ST3M</td>
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<td>DATE: 13.12.13</td>
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### INTERACTION
ST3M spoke at the end of 6 months teaching twin boys who’d changed schools, so this was not her second interview. She spoke positively about the experience, both in a class and a school context. She was relaxed with the interviewer as a result, and felt confident about the partnership aspects and her role.

### INTENTION
ST3M understood the intention of the study and agreed to talk in an open spirit. She has nephews with similar special needs and is empathetic to children and families and their school experience.

### IDENTITY
ST3M was confident in her role in the classroom and was very pleased with the boys’ progress and the school’s processes for flagging the boys in the future. She was also someone who kept up with knowledge and training for teaching students with additional needs, having a family connection. Talking to the interviewer about the various aspects of partnership was not a difficulty for ST3M.

### LANGUAGE
ST3M used some shorthand and jargon, assuming knowledge and common ground with the interviewer. Her overall use was more personal and child-specific, however, as she recounted specific events.

### SOCIAL REALITIES
ST3M was clearly fully involved in the role and process of kindergarten teacher and was happy to share how she related to the boys and P3, knowing how the interviewer shared some of her experiences and knowledge of partnerships as a former teacher.
APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PREAMBLE:
We are seeking your perspective on ways that partnerships work well, and ways in which they face difficulties. We are looking for your help in identifying knowledge and skills that you use to keep a partnership working for you, with the best outcomes for the child in mind. We hope we will add to knowledge and practice for other people in the future.

COMMUNICATION:
• Tell me how you share information and keep in touch in this partnership?
• How have you become better at this over time? How have your experiences helped you with communication?
• What are examples of good and useful communications that have occurred?

CARING:
• Tell me about what caring for this child is means to you?
• What things do you do that this child especially needs?
• How has caring been shared over time with your partner?

CHILD-FOCUS:
• What do you plan together that is specially for this child?
• Do you speak often with your partner about the specific needs and progress of the child?
• Would you say you have kept up a shared focus over time?

KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD CHARACTERISTICS:
• Tell me how you share information about the child?
• How does your partner show knowledge of the child?
• Do you update each other about what is happening in the child’s world over time?

SCHOOL CLIMATE:
• Tell me the ways the school has a welcoming atmosphere?
• How well is the child able to fit in? How is the family made welcome?
• Are there differences over time?

TEAMING:
• Tell me how you approach working as a team?
• How do you work through differences?
• Are there differences in places you have been in? What are the good aspects of teaming you look for?

TIME:
• In what ways have you changed and over time, as you learn about yourself, your child and your partnerships in education?
• In what ways have you mentored or helped others to negotiate partnerships?
• In what ways are you hopeful for change in educational partnerships, and what would it look like?
APPENDIX C: CODEBOOK

The study began with 6 main themes of partnership taken from the findings of Angell, Stoner and Shelden (2009) framing the interviews with parents and teachers- *authentic caring, child-focussed orientation, communication, knowledge of child characteristics, school climate and teaming*- and when building on these while coding, additional themes elucidated by Blue-Banning et al. (2004) were anticipated from the research premise- *commitment, equality, respect, skills and trust*. *Time and Quality of Processes* were also added to help measure change and the propositions of bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2005) over the 2 year period. These were the principal nodes in NVivo.

Many more themes emerged as components of partnership during the coding of transcripts, until there were 34 separate themes, or parent nodes, often with sub-themes, or child nodes; usually positive and negative aspects of the main node (such as *positive and negative communication*), or as for *bureaucracy*; four child nodes that described significant features (*funding, intentions/goals, policy/knowledge and training for staff*). This resulted in a total of 93 nodes from 145 sources (transcripts, interview profiles, meeting observations and document analysis over 2 years and 35 participants).

Following is the summary of all parent and child nodes, their descriptions as used in the study, criteria for inclusion and exclusion of text for coding, and samples of text that exemplify the particular aspect of partnership described by the node.

**NODE CRITERIA AND EXAMPLES**

1. **AUTHENTIC CARING**

   **Description:** any comments by partners about care shown to the child which demonstrates aspects of caring specific to his/her needs

   **Child Nodes:**

   **Negative signs:** partners commenting on lack of caring-type actions

   - *Inclusion:* oversights, lack of care, failure to carry out action
   - *Exclusion:* doubt about intentionality of oversight

   **Text example:**
“I’m explaining the consequences; if you fail it once more, then I will just send...I did the right thing before school started, I had her on the medication so that her transition to school was as easy as possible for her and for the staff! I said I’ve put the staff ahead of my initial thoughts on medication, so now you need to make sure you’re not failing your duty of care to her!” (P7, R3)

**Positive signs**: partners commenting on specific caring-type actions

Inclusion: specific, exceptional actions related to the child

Exclusion: vague or generic actions

**Text example:**

“I care for the mother as well, and, um, don’t always talk business, but am quite genuinely interested in how their week has gone, and what things that child is up to and interested in that particular week. We comment on all sorts of things outside of what her learning goals might be” (ET7C R1)

**Overbearing**: a type of caring action that is unhelpful but well-meant

Inclusion: over-thinking or overdoing helping actions

Exclusion: where helping actions are appreciated or well-received

**Text example:**

“I think there’s a fine line between authentic caring and overbearing! So I guess that’s something that we discuss all the time- don’t own families! Families know that we are available, that they can reach us when they need us- so making that available. That’s a challenge though because it is a caring industry- people really want to be of help” (EDC R1)

2. **CHILD-FOCUSSED ORIENTATION**

Description: all actions by partners portraying specific child focus

**Child Nodes:**

**Negative signs**: partners see lack of focus in words or actions

Inclusion: particular child needs overlooked or forgotten

Exclusion: vague or doubtful intent

**Text example:**
“I think a lot of them think that they don’t want to take a lot of information— that they’ll just get
to know the children as they do, like to a degree is fine, but when there’s strategies and skills
you’ve used that work, or…” (ET6 R2)

**Positive signs:** actions and words which relate specifically to the child

*Inclusion:* examples given by partners of positive focus on child

*Exclusion:* vague or generic or group-focussed actions

*Text example:*

“They can see—in the handbook it has references to outcomes, so that they can see it does
underpin everything that we do. All our observations of children have references to those
outcomes or to the principles and practices that we as educators must- we are implementing so
we can achieve those goals for those kids” (ETDS R1)

3. **COMMUNICATION:**

**Description:** all forms of communication between partners

**Child Nodes:**

**Negative:** poor exchanges of meaning between partners or schools

*Inclusion:* partner perceptions of breakdown of communication

*Exclusion:* vagueness of intention or outcome of partner action

*Text example:*

“In the past, you’ve had a busy start to the year and you haven’t gone through their file enough
and you might have missed something about their past, like things that have happened in the
past that you need to be aware of” (ET2 R1)

**Positive:** all forms of communication reported as satisfactory and useful

*Inclusion:* partner examples of positive exchanges of meaning

*Exclusion:* vague or generic actions, not exemplifying understanding

*Text example:*

“If something’s happened during the day…when I pick him up we’ll try to work out
why, or if something happens over the last couple of days, we’ll try to work out why he’s having
tantrums or throwing something, and what we can do to eliminate that from happening again,
or reduce it from happening again - so there's always problem-solving, there's got to be between the two” (P2 R1)

4. KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD CHARACTERISTICS:
   Description: demonstrable evidence of child knowledge by partners

   Child Nodes:-

   Negative signs: examples of oversight, or mistaken views or actions

   Inclusion: partners cite how poor knowledge of child can play out

   Exclusion: where poor knowledge cannot be attributed to an action

   Text example:
   “one of the things, and that definitely goes hand in hand with the changing of the whole system at the moment in terms of “that person being responsible for that child”- I’m slowly getting people around to, “no, everyone works with that child”. And “we all have knowledge of that child, and we all need to have knowledge of that child” (EDD R1)

   Positive signs: partner views and actions which accord with known facts

   Inclusion: demonstrable use of good information for the child

   Exclusion: tenuous links between partner action and knowledge

   Text example:
   “I’ve tried a few different things. We worked out through trial and error and courses I’ve taken, that if I just put a book over his face so he can’t see the children, then he will talk and say whatever he wants! Loud and clear and for a long time!” (ST2F R4)

5. SCHOOL CLIMATE:
   Description: partner perceptions of school ambience and reputation

   Child Nodes:-

   Negative signs: practices within the school viewed negatively by partners

   Inclusion: examples of negative actions, and opinions about them
Exclusion: vague or uncertain attribution of negative judgement

Text example:

“I’m not sure! Because you’d hear from the preschool that the school didn’t want to know anything, but then you’d hear from the school that the preschool weren’t telling them things, so…” (P8 R4)

Positive signs: practices within the school viewed positively by partners

Inclusion: examples of positive actions, and opinions about them

Exclusion: vague or uncertain attribution of positive judgement

Text example:

“Well it’s a culture, not an event. This whole school is very child-centred and we have lots of things in place. Every teacher knows every child, because we’re small enough to be able to do that. My place in it is to make sure the right people are going to meet them and greet them... our school rules are based around care; we have a care program. So care is a critical ethos of the school!” (SP3 R3)

6. TEAMING:

Description: all aspects of teamwork around the child discussed by partners

Child Nodes:-

Lack of team: team absence or failure to act as a partner may have liked

Inclusion: any scarcity of team action or cooperation

Exclusion: team actions deemed not wholly lacking or negative

Text example:

“...set up meetings...”yes, we’d be invited”, but anyway, the guy was there so they just did it without us, the parent wasn’t involved...and it was absolute chaos! This child destroyed the room...um, next day I got a phone call to ask me to go up and could I please give them the strategies that we were using” (ED5 R1)

Networking: teams working for the benefit of child/partner

Inclusion: actions and evidence of useful teaming and networking
Exclusion: any vagueness about team efficiency or benefit

Text example:

“Now I see that I need- I would like to share what we do with other places and work with other places, so that it’s enriched, so that we can actually learn from each other, that we can have those very strong networks. And they’ve grown. You know, we’ve built very strong relationships with an early learning centre, and aboriginal centre... there’s all of the local schools” (EDC R1)

7. BUREAUCRACY:

Description: external processes to partners which affect their partnerships

Child Nodes:-

Funding: all references to money and how it affects child and partners

Inclusion: funding decisions as relevant to the partner/child

Exclusion: money matters not relevant to the focus partnership

Text example:

“There are usually no children in kindergarten who have funding support- this child was an anomaly because he came with funding support. But the other children don’t usually get funding support so we put extra time down there onto all the kindergarten classes” (SP2 R3)

Intentions/Goals: stated government/educational objectives and rules

Inclusion: references to system and school objectives

Exclusion: non-bureaucratic and personal goals

Text example:

“the values that you see on those big pencils out there are the values we focus on and teach...it’s a practical approach to the way we develop those good citizen values in children, and we really do see it!” (ST3 R3)

Policy/Knowledge: references to the type, amount and complexity of policy
Inclusion: partner comments about school and system policy

Exclusion: non-bureaucratic and personal examples

Text example:

“we’re a pilot school in Repairing Local Schools, so we’re waiting for what they call our Resource Asset Management Allocation coming out- our RAAM- which is supposed to have a component of looking at indigenous children, children with special needs and all, but my beliefs will have to wait until I see what is in that package, because it’s fine to say we’re using this data, but where did that data come from? And how real is that data?” (SP4 R3)

Training for Staff: references to staff updating and training for change

Inclusion: all staff training references

Exclusion: non-staff references

Text example:

“the professional learning of our staff is also being adjusted. I have individualised learning support programs for all the staff, and with the introduction of the NDIS – Disability Australia- we’re looking at being in launch zone (pilot region) and raising awareness of differentiation for all students that require from the smallest adjustment to the biggest adjustment. And that’s some of the work that we’re doing now. We’re doing online training- everything seems to be going online- but we have a facilitator” (SP8 R3)

8. CHILD TRANSITION OUTCOMES:

Description: how children’s outcomes in the study are reported over time

Child Nodes:-

Negative: any negative references to children’s experiences of transition

Inclusion: examples of actions, reactions impacting on child poorly

Exclusion: anything not relevant to child transition outcomes

Text example:

“Last time, there was. At the school, they just weren’t interested in our thoughts and “this is the child you’re going to get in kindergarten, can you hear him in our playground? Have you
watched him?” He’ll be alright when he’s at school- it was like they just weren’t interested. When he’s in kindergarten he’ll toe the line! Like, yeah…” (ET8 R2)

**Positive:** all positive experiences for children during transition

*Inclusion:* examples of actions, events helpful to children

*Exclusion:* anything not relevant to child transition outcomes

**Text example:**

“they’re putting together a social story for him, so when we were there on the orientaitions there were some photos taken of the school and it’s going to be put into a social story for him to take home over the holidays and look through and read through” (P5 R2)

9. **COMMITMENT:**

**Description:** evidence of partner assiduousness in carrying out their role

**Child Nodes:-**

**Negative:** lack of follow-through and attention to role tasks

*Inclusion:* examples of omissions, slowness, inattention in role

*Exclusion:* any vague or uncertain assignation of motive or interest

**Text example:**

“And I found there was a lack of enthusiasm amongst the teaching staff. I think the older teaching staff- my experience- is they’ve been there for a while and it’s a little bit blasé.” (P4 R3)

**Positive:** showing care and attention to role, and due focus on child

*Inclusion:* examples of actions positively reported for assiduousness

*Exclusion:* any vague references with doubtful relevance

**Text example:**

“P2 is so...committed to supporting him! She does everything, and everything’s perfect. (interruption) So she’s an expert, so I did take note of a lot of anecdotal experiences of what has upset him in the past and know to anticipate and be pre-emptive, and to avoid situations arising rather than having to deal with something after it’s happened. That has been my
strategy with him, so it was very helpful because she was such an expert and she is so heavily involved” (ST2 R3)

10. DISABILITY:

Description: any concepts of disability stated by participants

Child Nodes:-

**Negative constructs**: negative views or actions in any aspect of disability

*Inclusion*: examples of unhelpful ideas or practices given by partners

*Exclusion*: neutral or positive takes on disability

*Text example:*

“I first worked in a model of inclusion- it wasn’t inclusion- there was this child and we got funding and we got a worker and “you work with that child and that’s your job, and you do all of that”. And I’ll just sit back. It really wasn’t helpful to anybody because, you know, how do we learn?” (EDD R1)

**Positive constructs**: useful, progressive ideas and actions regarding disability

*Inclusion*: examples of positive views and strategies by partners

*Exclusion*: neutral or negative examples

*Text example:*

“ST7K has been amazing; skills of noticing that girl has some control issues, so giving her small jobs within the classroom that she had full control over! She was the pencil person in the morning and she could choose another classmate who could help her. In the afternoon it was her job to collect them all up, and again, choose someone to give her a hand- so she had something that she could control, and it expelled some of that need to control, so she was more open to take more guidance, and ST7K has had lots of students that are like that” (P7 R4)

11. EMOTION

Description: the range of feelings elicited by the transition experience
Child Nodes:-

**Negative:** sadness, anger, disappointment etc. expressed by participants

*Inclusion:* all references to the negative emotions felt by partners

*Exclusion:* neutral or positive emotions

*Text example:*

“she was very stressed, she said she had an anxiety attack around it, so there’s also that part of it...her reaction as well” (ET2 R2)

**Positive:** joy, relief, exultation, satisfaction etc expressed by participants

*Inclusion:* all references to positive emotions felt by partners

*Exclusion:* neutral or negative emotions

*Text example:*

“I thoroughly enjoy that- thoroughly enjoy it. I’ve always had interns- practice teachers- and I love speaking to young teachers who are going into public education!” (ST8 R3)

12. ENGAGEMENT OF PARENTS:

**Description:** perceptions of parent inclusion in the transition process

Child Nodes:-

**Empathy for partner’s life experience:** depth of relating to the partner

*Inclusion:* evidence of direct understanding of other’s situation

*Exclusion:* vague or poorly conceptualised idea of the other’s life

*Text example:*

“And this child on this piece of paper has a lot more things written under their name (laughs), but there’s more to it than that! They’re a son or a daughter, and they have parents and they have siblings and, you know, they have a wider community- bigger than their name on a piece of paper!” (ET2 R2)
Knowing parent’s goals: depth of understanding of parent’s wishes/hopes

*Inclusion:* evidence of having heard the other and what they want

*Exclusion:* vague opinion or hearsay

Text example:

“I approached our LST and said can I have special permission to notify P3M and the boys and to arrange some visits to where they were going to go. So I did speak to P3M before I did that though; I’d rather ask her first and say did she have the same feeling as I did- that I felt they’d benefit from that- and she agree. So I approached the LST via my AP and SP3M, so I got their class teacher.” (ST3 R4)

13. EQUALITY:

*Description:* a sense of level ground in dealings with partner and school

Child Nodes:-

*Negative:* unease or status anxiety in interactions for participants

*Inclusion:* examples of actions or situations which felt unequal

*Exclusion:* unclear or vague references

Text example:

“but the way things operated before ESES, they hummed along and every school did its thing, but it was about time something was shaken up and the DEC really looked at how spending has occurred, and they looked at trends on how children with additional needs had been supported within the school- it didn’t seem to be the best possible outcome for them. Their skill level wasn’t increasing according to the amount of money that was flowing in!” (SP8 R3)

*Positive:* partner feelings of equal participation and value

*Inclusion:* examples of satisfaction with status relating to others

*Exclusion:* unclear or vague references

Text example:

“It’s a bit about all children have to be treated equally, but not the same. So as long as they’re all treated equally, then that’s probably where I’m coming from” (ST1 R3)
14. **EXEMPLARY PRACTICE:**

**Description:** noteworthy actions and strategies appreciated by participants

**Child Nodes:**

**By Parents:** when parents exhibit extra effort and attention to detail

*Inclusion:* parent actions and strategies highlighted by the researcher

*Exclusion:* average everyday actions

**Text example:**

“my attitude is that if there is something that I can do that will make it easier for them to adapt and to thrive at school, then I will do it!” (P3 R4)

**By Teachers:** when teachers exhibit extra effort and attention to detail

*Inclusion:* teacher actions and strategies highlighted by the researcher

*Exclusion:* average everyday actions

**Text example:**

“this school is a very parent-oriented school, so parents have a very big voice. And that’s why, when P2 was upset at the end of last year, it was tackled straight away. They took it seriously and didn’t brush it aside. So they said “this is what happened, the parent’s not happy, we need to fix it to show we’re really committed to making a smooth start!” So I have noticed that- it’s very... it can be a lot of extra work for the teachers, but it’s really worth it, because you get great relationships with parents, which makes things easier in the long run!” (ST2 R3)

15. **FAMILY NEEDS:**

**Description:** any facet of family life where extra needs are noted

*Inclusion:* any particulars of family life where need is stated

*Exclusion:* non-family references

**Text example:**

“now we’re asking for respite, we’re having a hard time in the afternoon and (teacher) told me that they talked to somebody who can help” (P1 R1)
16. FRIENDSHIP:

**Description:** when partnerships acquire the extra dimension of friendship

**Inclusion:** examples from partners of a change over time to friends

**Exclusion:** a lack of evidence of friendship

**Text example:**

“One thing I have found through transition, which has been an absolute godsend, and it’s really helped towards the end of the year- I’ve actually found another mother. And I actually went to school with her but I didn’t know anything about her child. And her little boy has actually the same traits as (boy) and so we’ve sort of clung together and (boy) has also through the last transition clung to her child, and it’s just been lovely! And there’ve been things, you know, just as simple as I didn’t know anything about Carer Allowance” (P6 R2)

17. GREAT QUOTES:

**Description:** text collected by the researcher as exemplars of ideas/actions

**Inclusion:** the researcher likes the quote

**Exclusion:** the researcher found a better one

**Text example:**

“Making sure that diversity is acknowledged, and it’s in the centre- every child can work towards their own goals- and these kids are capable of setting their own goals, so working with them to set those- what is it that you want to know? Not what is it that I want you to know” (EDB R1)

18. INHIBITORS TO SUCCESS:

**Description:** when partners identify actions etc which proved unhelpful

**Inclusion:** attributions of reasons by participants for poor outcomes

**Exclusion:** ideas given, but not directly linked to poor outcomes

**Text example:**
“I think I’d like to see those outside agencies that are working with children and parents- I’d like to see a little bit more communication between, say, the clinical psychologist and the classroom teacher, because often we communicate through a checklist, or we communicate through the parent, and I think they may see more of the child if we had a little bit more communication. I’ve often written reports for parents to take to the clinical psychologist, and I think sometimes feel overawed by some of the professionals they work with” (ST3 R3)

19. ISOLATION:

**Description:** any expression by a participant of feeling alone or unsupported

**Inclusion:** all comments about isolation and feeling unsupported

**Exclusion:** where isolation is equivocal or unclear

**Text example:**

“well P8D has been very relieved to have someone to talk to about it. She’s very relieved that she’s actually found someone that will help her. She’s always had problems about his anxiousness and his anxieties, but every time she goes to a doctor, or she goes to speak about it, um, the boy is not like that. No-one’s seen him the way- and I’ve- we’ve seen it here, so I think she feels quite comfortable talking to us about it” (ET8 R2)

20. MENTORING:

**Description:** either helping others, or being helped, in a mentor role

**Inclusion:** direct examples of mentoring in the study context

**Exclusion:** vague or not relevant to the study context

**Text example:**

“there is another level of responsibility and you don’t want to step in so much, telling people, bringing in too many changes or telling them what you want to do, so I think it’s leading through example or open communication” (ET6 R2)

21. PARENT TRANSITION OUTCOMES:

**Description:** parent thoughts on the outcomes of transition in these 2 years
**Child Nodes:**

**Negative:** poor transition outcomes from the parent perspective

*Inclusion:* results, actions etc not in accord with parent wishes

*Exclusion:* neutral or positive experiences and outcomes

*Text example:*

“It’s only in the last 3 weeks of term that it’s all gone downhill, and now it’s up in the air around where he’s even going! So it’s sort of like, yeah, it was looking...and because the orientation process had started so early, and he was very involved, I would have presumed- I have presumed- that the school was very aware of him and his needs, and it sounds like maybe that hasn’t happened.” (ET2 R2)

**Positive:** good transition outcomes from the parent perspective

*Inclusion:* results, actions etc satisfactory to parent wishes

*Exclusion:* neutral or negative experiences and outcomes

*Text example:*

“I think he’s in a good place. I’m really happy. I’m happy with his aide, and I know he’ll have the same aide next year” (P5 R4)

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**22. PERSONAL GROWTH OVER TIME:**

**Description:** acknowledgement of personal development over time

*Inclusion:* reports and examples of personal growth in 2 yrs

*Exclusion:* comments about no change

*Text example:*

“It’s my belief that you don’t ever stop doing those things, and you never stop learning and finding out more about children! After all these years!” (ST8 R3)

**23. PERSONAL SATISFACTION:**

**Description:** attribution of feelings of personal satisfaction in own role
Child Nodes:-

**Positive:** good and rewarding feelings of satisfaction in own role

*Inclusion:* examples of achieving personal satisfaction

*Exclusion:* neutral or negative feelings

*Text example:*

“what she displays with the effort she puts into her reading is very fulfilling for a teacher, and I know P7 has been very surprised with how she’d developing with her reading in particular, so that’s great!” (ST7 R3)

**Negative:** unhappy and frustrated feelings of thwarted satisfaction

*Inclusion:* examples of failure to achieve personal satisfaction

*Exclusion:* neutral or positive feelings

*Text example:*

“That was when it was the start of confusion for me! (laughs) I came in and I went away from that meeting overwhelmed and confused! I didn’t feel any clarity, any understanding. It was just lots of different organisations, lots of options, but I didn’t seem to take it in.” (P4 R2)

24. **POWER:**

**Description:** the differential of influence, status or role between partners

Child Nodes:-

**Empowerment:** when power is experienced by a partner in a positive way

*Inclusion:* examples of reducing the power differential for the better

*Exclusion:* negative effects of power

*Text example:*

“the way I feel it’s done most effectively is empowering the family to actually transfer those ideas of genuine care to the school, other than us doing it directly” (ET4 R2)
Lack of Power: when power is experienced by a partner in a negative way

Inclusion: examples of poor power differential and limited options

Exclusion: positive effects of power

Text example:

“I kind of felt inferior - compared to my support person from location C and the preschool aide and the speech therapist. They kind of almost made me feel like I was secondary in information” (P7 R2)

25. QUALITY OF PROCESSES:

Description: partner assessments of existing routines and protocols

Child Nodes: -

Negative: poor assessments of the way things are done by participants

Inclusion: examples of poor quality processes and reasons why

Exclusion: vague attributions, little reasoning

Text example:

“I don’t know if it’s a realistic wish, but I would like to see that transition between us and school to be bridged a lot better, and for us to be supporting these children and families and schools, at least into 1st term of their first school year” (ET1 R1)

Positive: endorsements of current processes by participants

Inclusion: examples of good quality processes and reasons why

Exclusion: vague attributions, little reasoning

Text example:

“I personally believe that transparency and keeping parents in the loop - and not just keeping them in the loop but giving them power to make their own choices for their children, and using them as an expert!” (ST2 R4)
26. RESPECT:

Description: the status of mutual or personal respect in a partnership

Child Nodes:-

Negative: poor levels of respect between people or places

Inclusion: examples of low regard for person or place

Exclusion: when low respect is not the issue

Text example:

“you want people to recognise that it is in fact, a condition that will impact on him (J: absolutely). It’s not just me! You know, that’s the brick wall I keep hitting! Everyone just goes, oh no, you’re just being an over-anxious parent!” (P8 R2)

Positive: high levels of respect between people or places

Inclusion: examples of high regard for person or place

Exclusion: when high respect is not the issue

Text example:

“I think changing my view that this centre belongs to the families rather than it’s our centre and you’re coming to us. We’re here in your centre. Yep, shifting the ownership more than anything else, onto families. And I’m here just to listen and contribute where needed” (ET4 R1)

27. ROLES:

Description: participant perceptions of roles during transition to school

Child Nodes:-

Understanding Own Role: how a person perceives their role

Inclusion: a person directly revealing their personal ideas of role

Exclusion: any other person speaking to this

Text example:

“I do think that when I first started (laugh), I thought I was the teacher, I knew everything, um, and now I’m sure I know nothing! (laughs) And the older I get I’m fairly certain I know less and
less, so it’s nice to be able to work with those people, families, the children and learn together, and know that we are learning together and I think that’s really important” (EDB R1)

**Understanding Partner Role:** empathy and understanding of partner role

*Inclusion:* a person indicating insight into their partner’s role

*Exclusion:* talk of a role not their partner’s

**Text example:**

“the mum particularly, came and talked to us openly right from the start. She knew we were interested, and she also knew we wanted the kids here- there was no resistance to that, so that helped” (SP3 R3)

**28. SHARED DECISION-MAKING:**

**Description:** facets of partner behaviour around making decisions together

**Child Nodes:-**

**Negative:** poor shared decision-making and possible reasons

*Inclusion:* comments about failure to make this happen successfully

*Exclusion:* unclear assessments of decision-making process

**Text example:**

“It’s always seen as us the preschool- even though we all work together for the same thing, I think that sometimes maybe schools see preschool as just a bit of play, and a bit of fun, and it’s more than that! I’d like to see them take on that role more, and know a bit more about it” (ET8 R2)

**Positive:** good level of share decision-making and ways it occurs

*Inclusion:* comments which demonstrate success in this area

*Exclusion:* unclear assessments or attributions

**Text example:**

“it’s just a matter of working together and meeting the same goal and looking after the same person, and it’s always putting them first” (P2 R1)
29. SHARED UNDERSTANDING:

Description: partner behaviour which achieves shared understanding

Child Nodes:-

Negative: partners not achieving good rapport or shared purpose

Inclusion: comments about misunderstandings and reasons for them

Exclusion: unclear assessments or attributions

Text example:

“I think the main thing I got out of it was I should have pushed more and followed through more, instead of just waiting for the school. Don’t take that from the school and just let them dictate, otherwise you’re just letting them ride over you. I think it’s part my fault for letting them push me into that position.” (P2 R3)

Positive: partners with good rapport and shared purpose

Inclusion: examples of how and why it works well for partners

Exclusion: unclear assessments or attributions

Text example:

“I think they’re just all friendly and approachable. I guess another example is when Boy 1 started to wear shorts and short sleeves I asked to work on the sleeves first, and asked the aide to get other teachers to say something to him- “I like your shirt!” And they did! The principal would pass him in the playground and say “I like your shirt”, and I think that builds his confidence and morale” (P5 R4)

30. SKILLS:

Description: relevant skills partners bring and their pertinence to transition

Child Nodes:-

Partner Skills: one’s perceptions of the others skills and abilities

Inclusion: examples of relevance of partner skill levels to transition

Exclusion: general comments on skills

Text example:
“our staff- if they identify a particular thing they’re not comfortable about being able to support- we make sure we get that support to best help the child and family” (EDA R1)

Personal Skills: assessment of own skills which are relevant to transition

Inclusion: mention of own skills which impact on transition

Exclusion: general comments on skills

Text example:

“I’ve probably... become more open...in myself. And the families’ needs, realising that there are many different types of people, families, morals, ideas...what’s important to different families, what isn’t important to different families” (ET8 R1)

31. TIME:

Description: the facets of time which impact on the 2 year study of transition

Child Nodes:-

Change over Time: any noting of change over time by any participant

Inclusion: personal and system change due to time passing

Exclusion: change not evident

Text example:

“I can see how P1 has grown, I can see the social aspect of coming to the group and her gaining support and strength and understanding from other parents that she’s met during the group. When she first started at the beginning of last year she was very quiet and very isolated. One of the biggest things last year was she was isolated, she didn’t drive or have any extended family here” (ET1 R1)

Future: references to the future relevant to the present of the interview

Inclusion: allusions to possible or expected future events

Exclusion: past or present thoughts

Text example:

“So most of that will be handed over in writing...um, it’s hard for me to guess what would happen at this point, whether they would contact me after reading that, or whether I would hear from them next year to go through things” (ET7 R2)
Lack of Time: references to perceived or real lack of time

Inclusion: any suggestions that time is inadequate for a purpose

Exclusion: time in other contexts

Text example:

“I think more visits would be more beneficial. I don’t think 2 at the beginning of November really is enough to keep them focussed to February next year “ (ET8 R2)

Past: references to the past relative to the time of interview

Inclusion: any allusions to a past time

Exclusion: time in other contexts

Text example:

“I found by experience last year that the more knowledge I had the better, because I went in without a lot last year and, sort of trusting of the school we were dealing with and came away thinking, no, I needed to be more of an advocate for this family because the school is not providing them with the information and the options that were available to them” (ET6 R1)

32. TRAINING:

Description: any form of training relevant to partners in transition

Child Nodes:-

Useful and Available: when training has been accessed successfully

Inclusion: accounts of relevant training and its usefulness

Exclusion: training not accessed

Text example:

“It’s going really well! I’ve been talking to (the family worker at loc A) and she’s been doing an advocacy course with me just to give me a bit more confidence.” (P3 R2)

Wished-for and Lacking: wanting a kind of training but unable to find it

Inclusion: details of types of training and why it is wanted

Exclusion: training already attained

Text example:
“It really needs to be simplified! And even if it was over a longer period of time, rather than just one information session. If maybe somebody from this organisation came into the group of a morning or afternoon group, and then gave you the opportunity to talk directly to them” (P4 R2)

33. TRANSITION:

Description: the year before school and the first year of school (2 years)

Child Nodes:-

After School Starts: features of the 1st year of school

Inclusion: all remarks that add to knowledge of starting school

Exclusion: before-school comments

Text example:

“We’ve got all that, the pencil grips, the special cushion and the slope board, and I also moved his table away from the glare. A lot of the things were recommendations at the beginning of the year that I’ve just kept all through the year, and that was more to do with anxiety” (ST2 R4)

Before School Starts: features of the year preparing for the start of school

Inclusion: all remarks pertaining to the lead-up to school

Exclusion: after-school comments

Text example:

“We’ve done what we can do, that there’s a good chance that she might cope just fine. You don’t want to overdo things too. I’ve found we’ve been able to back off a little bit with the visuals aids this year and she’s coped probably better than what P7A has expected. So you just don’t really know...” (ET7 R2)

34. TRUST:

Description: the feeling of belief in and security between partners

Child Nodes:-

Trust Eroding: when actions betray the feeling of trust in some way

Inclusion: examples of actions that instil unease and insecurity
Exclusion: actions which are neutral or trustworthy

Text example:

“I suppose the big thing I got from her was just that loss of confidence. She was so confident that she’d made a good choice, it was the right school. She’d put everything into place, and she felt, well, I don’t know if that trust... I don’t know if I do trust you like I did” (ET2 R2)

Trust Building: when actions affirm trust and security

Inclusion: positive actions that enhance partner experience and trust

Exclusion: actions that are neutral or negative

Text example:

“That was just a long slow process of building trust between people, and getting the right people in the right classroom, and creating a line of learning for the kids.” (SP3 R3)
APPENDIX D: OBSERVATION RUBRICS

OBSERVATION Rubric Location A

(Field notes recorded by the researcher of events and quotes that can be recorded in one of 6 categories of behaviour below that have been identified as important to partnerships)

meeting time/place codes----8.5.12 loc A information giving to parents by DEC staff

parent/teacher codes-----P1A, P2A, P3A, P4A--------

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>PARENT</th>
<th>TEACHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMITMENT</td>
<td>All looking for understanding of the enrolment process and the choosing of the right school</td>
<td>ETs 1,2,3 and4 would like the evening to be helpful but must spend time afterwards making it understandable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>Perplexing, daunting, scary, worrying etc reported emotions on hearing a large amount of info about a complex process</td>
<td>ETs 1,2,3 and4 had thoughts about the accessibility of the information provided, the language used and the skimming of detail and effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUALITY</td>
<td>Parents do not feel an equality with the presenters or with the enrolment process</td>
<td>ETs make links with the DEC to help Ps but see all kinds of obstacles and inequities to enrolment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPECT</td>
<td>Parents did not feel a rapport with the presenters, but a distance</td>
<td>ETs have helpful contact with DEC people but see the process as impersonal and subject to rules and luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKILLS</td>
<td>Parents felt there was a lot to learn to become familiar with DEC processes and to get what they wanted</td>
<td>ETs try to break down the process into steps and make it less daunting and work hard to get results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUST</td>
<td>There was little to base trust upon in this meeting. It was complex and impersonal and revealed a huge challenge</td>
<td>ETs hope the meetings will get better each year but the same process of exposition continues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(based on Blue-Banning et al, 2004)
**OBSERVATION of Transition Meeting for Parents; Location C**

30.5.12 parent/teacher codes-ET7C and P7C in a Transition meeting with DEC, Catholic Ed, Independent schools and other personnel including a parent with a child at school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>PARENT</th>
<th>EDUCATION PERSONNEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMITMENT</td>
<td>The parent was there to learn about her options and what she needs to do to enrol etc. so she could take the next steps. She will use her early childhood partners to help.</td>
<td>Some were honest about the difficulties ahead and tried to prepare parents for potential difficulties through a big change period, with not all teachers ready to include</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>P7C was comfortable with the type and style of communication and was already making plans</td>
<td>Plain speaking about parents having choice and explaining Every Child Every School. No promises of a smooth road and supported teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUALITY</td>
<td>Some feeling of a power gap evident in body language and shyness with questioning and a knowledge gap in coming to grips with the processes</td>
<td>Some effort to bridge the gaps, naming likely problem areas. Parents may need some info earlier to put things in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPECT</td>
<td>Appreciation for this opportunity but some frustration with the size of the task of transition</td>
<td>Apologetic about the realities that parents face and recognition of change not sitting well in some schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKILLS</td>
<td>P7C has the ability to work through the steps and use her networks of support</td>
<td>Clear presentation, being real about the variability of skill level with schools and teachers in transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUST</td>
<td>P7C has put her trust in ET7C and the preschool teacher to forge a strong partnership</td>
<td>Aware that they can’t promise all will go well and suggesting a strong team approach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**OBSERVATION RUBRIC LOCATION I**

(Field notes recorded by the researcher of events and quotes that can be recorded in one of 6 categories of behaviour below that have been identified as important to partnerships)

**meeting time/place codes** 22.8.12 Location I  

**parent/teacher codes** P5B/ET5B/SP5I/ST5I  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>PARENT</th>
<th>TEACHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMITMENT</td>
<td>P5 keen to have child go to local school with twin and siblings.</td>
<td>ETS gave a detailed account of child strengths and needs. School team keen to know in advance. Positive vibe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>Not directly questioned much at first but had an opportunity later in meeting. Offered useful information but shy.</td>
<td>A thoughtful plan devised for the boy to attend at different times and for the K teacher to visit him at preschool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUALITY</td>
<td>Slow to be heard in room with 6 school reps but as meeting progressed P5 had more to say.</td>
<td>School team talked to ETS more at first and she led with ideas and requests e.g. for photos. School wanted to talk about funding support $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPECT</td>
<td>P5 asked for opinions and preferences many times e.g. twins in same class or not.</td>
<td>ETS took an active and supportive role on basis of consultation before meeting on agreed goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKILLS</td>
<td>P5 has skills in teaming with therapists and linking to teachers. Had useful ideas for school and this recognised.</td>
<td>ETS offered strategies and school open to social story, blanket, OT and other ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUST</td>
<td>P5 has a good ally in ETS, who in turn has a good rapport with the school team so P5 is optimistic.</td>
<td>ETS was the linchpin in this meeting and offered two-way support which school accepted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(based on Blue-Banning et al, 2004)*
**OBSERVATION RUBRIC LOCATION K**

(Field notes recorded by the researcher of events and quotes that can be recorded in one of 6 categories of behaviour below that have been identified as important to partnerships) (based on Blue-Banning et al, 2004)

**meeting time/place codes-----10.10.12 Location K----------**

**parent/teacher codes---P7C/ET7C---------and new teacher ST7K**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>PARENT</th>
<th>TEACHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMITMENT</td>
<td>P7 gave detailed information about child to help with teaching and programs and offered to be available</td>
<td>School looking for info and flexible solutions, offering extra time for transition if needed. ET7 agreeing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>Fully included in all aspects of meeting, asked for direct communication with the school</td>
<td>ET7 and all team members gave info and added to plan. Active communication promised with parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUALITY</td>
<td>P7 recognised for central role as expert manager. She asked questions and made suggestions</td>
<td>7 Team members present sharing their thoughts and responding to P7 and ET7 input in a positive way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPECT</td>
<td>Two-way attention given between contributors, P7 had ideas which were expanded upon and added to plan</td>
<td>Team turned to P7 for info, took notes and paid due credit to her and ET7. School apologised for clerical error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKILLS</td>
<td>P7 emphasised specific needs and skills that will aid child. Took a photo for child, led by example in planning.</td>
<td>New approach and training in kinder classes in progress and ET7 gave ideas to meet specific needs of child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUST</td>
<td>P7 was given a good reception to her ideas, plus has other children at school, so has some early confidence in the school</td>
<td>P7 and ET7 a strong team and felt the school team was showing good signs of a collaborative approach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX E: DOCUMENT PROFILE RUBRICS**

**DOCUMENT PROFILE RUBRIC**

| DATE: Nov 2012 | LOCATION CODE: A |

**COMMUNICATION**
- Sharing of information for the benefit of child and family. Links between agencies, therapists, schools and community emphasised to assist best outcomes for child. Recording and sharing information openly and ethically. Centre part of Families NSW and other networks, stays current.

**CARING**

**CHILD FOCUS**
- All children are treated as individuals with a unique role in their families and with a right to full participation in the community. UN conventions quoted. Early Years Learning Framework quoted. Least restrictive environment sought. Early Childhood Position Statement 2012 followed.

**KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD**
- Teachers understand and respect the child and work from strengths, needs and interests together with parents. Share progress and planning with team members.

**SCHOOL CLIMATE**
- Centre is non-categorical and open to anyone who will benefit from an IEP. Parents are supported and empowered. Ethical code of conduct and respect for families. Family centred policies and practices (DADHC, 1997).

**TEAMING**
- Parents are foremost in advocacy and decision-making and teachers work with what they want. All team members collaborate and see the wider picture of the child and the family.

*(based on Angell et al, 2009).*
### COMMUNICATION
- Preschool Handbook; EYLF (2009) for partnership goals. Special emphasis on community goals - preschool runs with a strong community focus. Newsletter, emails, communication books etc. Wide networking in community with schools/preschools.

### CARING
- Preschool Handbook states primacy of child and family. DOCS checklists for positive relations with child, family and colleagues, positive behaviour plans and creating supportive child environment.

### CHILD FOCUS

### KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD
- Preschool Handbook, policy and practice of meetings, consultation, family profiling and input. Sharing info with schools during transition routine. Incorporation of family priorities and interests into programming.

### SCHOOL CLIMATE
- All parents are members and can participate in management as part of set-up and funding rules. Open door policy, parents welcome in rooms. Transparent practices with parent scrutiny. Complaints Policy in handbook. NSW Health info for rules on infectious diseases etc. OH&S standards. Workcover, Hazpak.

### TEAMING
- A hub for therapists etc, using SCAN funding to give parents local access and a resource for community. Prof Devp via DADHC and UoN. Transition to School (DEC, 1997) gives ideals rather than specifics. Local networking active to create useful practices. Schools turning to this network and recognising its value.

(based on Angell et al, 2009).
**COMMUNICATION**

Parent handbooks give info on transition process. IFSP meetings, group time and IEP goal-setting held regularly. Code of conduct signed plus confidentiality agreement. Sources are Early Childhood Aus (ECA) and Early CH Intervention Aus (ECIA) documents/ position statements/UN convention

**CARING**

Family-centred practice comes from ECIA originally as ADHC only just catching up. Policies on relations with families come from ADHC standards in action and newly introduced National Quality Framework (NQF)

**CHILD FOCUS**

IEP and ISFP process plus observations, play-based assessment and parent input. ECI services operate outside standards but will join National Standards by 2015. ADHC has always monitored but more on governance than practice detail.

**KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD**

Profiles of children built up by all team members, strengths based, family-centred. Applied standards of ECA and ECIA with inclusion and high expectations at core.

**SCHOOL CLIMATE**

No one document but the philosophy of welcome is spread through policies and practice. A parent committee has been formed to add features that they want to see.

**TEAMING**

Parents acknowledged as central, FCP the basis of planning using all team knowledge. Teaming across to school not formalised and is not set in any document location C is aware of. They want it to become a feature of transition and best practice for families.

(based on Angell et al, 2009).
**COMMUNICATION**

Family Handbook; EYLF; National Quality Framework. Recent training from Inspired Early Childhood - documents on communication included transition to school. Exchange of paperwork with schools for transition varies, details not always sought on students with special needs. Loc D does daily displays of photos of children at play to help parent discussion and understanding of the programs at work.

**CARING**

Handbook includes a centre philosophy and values. Parents on management board. EYLF. National Quality Framework; Education and Care Services National Regulations. Loc D welcomes parents into rooms and to talk daily.

**CHILD FOCUS**

Programming guidelines EYLF. NQF. New guidelines for goals for swsn overseen by SCAN. Parents do a goal sheet for child, updated regularly. School readiness info night held for parents.

**KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD**

Profile on each child filled out by parents, staff share knowledge. Centre policy on transition to get parent permission to exchange info (local and outside agencies) with school and go to meetings if needed. Trying to be more interactive with school next door.

**SCHOOL CLIMATE**

EYLF, NQF, centre philosophy, policy manual all drive fostering of good relations with parents and welcoming their presence. Orientation package given out. Portfolios, photos, on display. Less formal set-up than past years to enable parents to stay and talk.

**TEAMING**

Policy and procedures manual, staff meetings, prof development. Try to build relationship between agencies, work with SCAN additional needs worker. Transition a local arrangement, staff and Principal talk, child goes to school once or twice term 4. Kindy teacher might visit. Reliant on staff - new Principal may be more open than last.

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*(based on Angell et al, 2009)*.
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<th>DOCUMENT PROFILE RUBRIC.</th>
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<tr>
<td>date--9.8.13--</td>
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<tr>
<th>COMMUNICATION</th>
<th>SP1E expressed a philosophy of “know when to ask and know when to tell”, to encourage respect and empowerment.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CARING</td>
<td>Recognising individual needs, whether for gifted and talented or learning disabilities, is the school’s job, and the principal guides the manner in which the school meets with individual families and plans children’s programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILD FOCUS</td>
<td>“Every Student Every School” mandates that schools be open and accommodating to individual children’s needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD       | Curriculum differentiation is the guideline and tool for meeting the specific needs of students.  
                          | 2009 Strategic Planning cycle spells out the formal processes to adjusting curriculum. |
| SCHOOL CLIMATE           | “Learning and managing the school” document. |
| TEAMING                  | Disability Standards are the guide for all staff members to know their responsibilities in making adjustments and accommodations |

*(based on Angell et al, 2009).*
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<tr>
<th>DOCUMENT PROFILE RUBRIC.</th>
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<td>date- ---2.8.13- location code----F (SP2F)-----</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNICATION</strong></td>
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<td><strong>CARING</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CHILD FOCUS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SCHOOL CLIMATE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TEAMING</strong></td>
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(based on Angell et al, 2009).
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<th>DOCUMENT PROFILE RUBRIC.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>date--25.11.13--</td>
<td>location code-------SP3G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNICATION</strong></td>
<td>SP3G has a personal approach of staff and parents belonging jointly to a “brains trust”. Loc G uses an app to send information home, keeps noticeboards up to date, and welcomes parents to come in before and after school. Teachers are released to talk to parents and honesty and candidness are emphasised with “no surprises”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CARING</strong></td>
<td>School Wellbeing Guide document started by SP3G in 2007 and revised every year by consensus. On display are 5 values on large pencils- Care, Harmony, Respect, Honesty and Achievement. Consistent language is used with students and teachers. There are “care groups” of vertically streamed children running activities, guided by teachers. School is a safe place for kids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHILD FOCUS</strong></td>
<td>School Wellbeing Guide is there to see that everything is done to benefit children and to create cohesion in the community of the school. It is central to the purpose of the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD</strong></td>
<td>Personnel more than documents. Counsellor 1 day/wk is a good communicator. LAST is 0.9 allocation, helped by FOEI (family occupation and education index) funding. Staff seek training, including online training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCHOOL CLIMATE</strong></td>
<td>PSFP funding used to be more prescriptive than new way and SP3G will bring teachers ‘aides back into classrooms, as well as buy private speech pathology and other ways to support swsn. It’s a village school with an open door, responding to needs as they arise. He doesn’t ask if the child is ready for school, but is the school ready for the child?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEAMING</strong></td>
<td>SP3G accepts people as they are now and works with them to change, taking a non-cooperative staff to a team by offering backing trust and support. He teams with staff and parents to make good plans for swsn. Has used IEP’s since long before they were officially recognised.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(based on Angell et al, 2009).
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<th>DOCUMENT PROFILE RUBRIC.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>date- --16.12.13--</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNICATION</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CARING</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CHILD FOCUS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SCHOOL CLIMATE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TEAMING</strong></td>
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<td>date- ----7.8.13</td>
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<tr>
<th>COMMUNICATION</th>
<th>No one document could tell SP4H how to relate, communicate, build rapport or create a caring school. He was guided by life experiences with his daughter and personal beliefs, and tried to lead by example and sharing his deeply held beliefs on inclusion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CARING</td>
<td>SP4H put caring above DEC guidelines and documents and made a practice of enrolling students with disabilities even when advised not to by DEC staff. He is very involved in the community and with families and goes to local businesses and industry to fund equipment and technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILD FOCUS</td>
<td>SP4H is familiar with the “People with Disabilities Statement of Commitment”, DEC policy #20050243, but personal experience of children with disabilities informs his actions as principal. He sees the person not the disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD</td>
<td>SP4H encourages teamwork, consultation and a whole school approach to inclusion, so that everyone is informed about children and their needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL CLIMATE</td>
<td>NSW DEC Disability Action Plan 2011-2015 is a guide but SP4H has always acted inclusively. He operates Big School for Little Kids to enhance transition to school and takes anyone who tries to enrol who has a disability. Every Student Every School policy suits his ethos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEAMING</td>
<td>2004 “Students with Disabilities in Regular Classrooms” # 20050243 outlines support, funding and management of teachers and teachers’ aides. SP4H actively recruits community and business support to add funds and equipment to the school. A local preschool runs a session in his school 1 day/week.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(based on Angell et al, 2009).
SP5I has developed a Communication Flowchart for parents and teachers, so that channels are clear and understood. He also cited a school information booklet and a kindergarten information booklet as useful to parents. The big change for him is availability of any document he needs on the DEC website, in the latest form.

SP5I cites empathy and understanding for other people’s situations when implementing ESES. The LAST position has created better ability to support needs as well.

SP5I sees good processes happening in transition between preschool, DEC and school staff in response to swsn, with prior information and planning. Location I took part in a national survey on swsn which SP5I found instructive.

The LAST helps link knowledge to action and supports the classroom teacher. Small size of location I helps the spread of understanding of swsn.

The school is flexible on extra transition visits both to the class and the playgroup. Close family feel to school built on relationships not documents.

Teaming in the area is supported by National Partnerships, though now a self-managing model of funding. Principals meet regularly, keep minutes, attend courses. Thinking of including preschools in their network.

(based on Angell et al, 2009).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOCUMENT PROFILE RUBRIC.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>date- ---5.8.13-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNICATION</th>
<th>SP8L is engaging the staff in regular (once a fortnight) staff development and uses “Better Teacher Appraisal and Feedback in Improving Teacher Performance”, 2011, Grattan Institute.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CARING</td>
<td>SP8L has a diverse community with complex needs and no guidebook he uses, but a belief in welcoming all parents through the door. Personal philosophy of caring for all children, and being aware of the difficult and transitory nature of some children’s lives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| CHILD FOCUS              | Disability Standards 2005 and the Federal Govt response to the review 2005 were significant to SP8L for agreeing to make substantial changes to everyone’s approaches to educating students with disabilities.  
The Melbourne Declaration, (DEETYA,2008) on Educational Goals for Young Australians, is forward looking and important to SP8L. |
| KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD       | ACARA; Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority’s “Student Diversity and the Australian Curriculum”, 2013, is guiding SP8L’s approach to knowing how children are performing.  
Hattie’s “Effect size does matter” explains the differences in learning that occurs for each child for SP8L. |
| SCHOOL CLIMATE           | SP8L says a small school allows everyone to know each other and build positive relationships. School renewal is supported by Gonski research and the 2008 Melbourne Declaration by DEETYA. |
| TEAMING                  | DEC document, the Learning and Support Team Planning Matrix, is of use to SP8L in organising school responses to planning for the needs of students with disabilities. |

(based on Angell et al, 2009).
**RESULTS TABLE FOR SIB-R**

(Scale of Independent Behaviour-Revised)

This table allows comparison of Parent and Teacher perceptions of the child in raw score and age equivalent terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2012 SIB-R Pairs</th>
<th>2013 SIB-R Pairs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>ET1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>3y10m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>ET2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>2y1m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>no pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>ET4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>4y2m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>ET5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>3y8m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>no pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>no pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>no pair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>