



PARENT CONFERENCE

Getting the right fit

Wednesday
12 September 2018

Parent Conference: Getting it right summary

On 12th September 2018 the Department for Education's Disability, Policy and Programs (DPP) Directorate held its first Parent Conference an extension of the termly Parent Forums for parents and carers of children and young people with disability.

Parents want the opportunity to learn together and be empowered by knowledge and strategies to positively engage with their preschool /school and to share their experiences. A parent's in depth knowledge of their child's strengths and vision for the future needs to be shared and understood.

The Parent Reference Group (PRG), wants parents to focus on moving forward in education, not allowing disability to define their child. The PRG and DPP planned a conference for parents and carers, with presentations and workshops that understood the complexity of their journey and provided information that they could take away to imbed into their daily lives and routines.

Julie Rungie a member of the PRG led the conference for the day opening with a welcome and a message from Ann-Marie Hayes the Executive Director of Early Years and Child Development.

Anne-Marie introduced the musical performance directed by the music teachers Lucy Standish and Lily Gower and students from Kilparrin Teaching and Assessment School and Services, the South Australian School for the Vision Impaired and Errington Special Education Centre. This focussed the audience for the day, celebrating and enjoying the children's abilities.



Kirsty Russell, Parent, Positive Special Needs Parenting a keynote speaker and also workshop presenter from Newcastle set the tone for the day with her balanced and insightful presentation “Learning from a positive education journey”. The experiences she shared as a mother of three children resonated with her audience. As quoted in a testament by Ian May, Director DPP:

“Her presentation was wonderful and inspiring. She was able to explore sensitive issues in a way that reinforced that collaboration between parents and educators is a basis for success for any child. She deftly touched on complex issues, unpacked key elements and made positive suggestions for the way forward. Immediately following her keynote participants were wanting more.”

Manager, Disability and Complex Needs with the Department, Dr Emma Goodall’s keynote address, shared research from neuroscience in a visual and creative way and linked it to Interoception. Hands on activities demonstrated the research in a way that everyone could not only understand it but use in their everyday life. Parents have since shared the activities with their families and reported it was one of the top three things they had learnt from the day.

The parents were spoilt for choice with the range of topics and high quality afternoon workshops. Kirsty’s two workshops focussed on practical strategies and checklists to help parents in their decision making to find the right fit for their child’s education journey and managing their passage through the complexities of all levels of transition.

Fiona Rillotta and Pammi Raghavendra presented on ongoing research between Flinders University and the Department on an innovative disability awareness program connecting students with and without disabilities through inclusive physical activity and social media.

Kymerly Louise, behavioural psychologist from Learning4All, discussed how parents could achieve true empowerment when everyone on their child’s team are working together to meet the child’s needs. She provided information about communication skills, the rights of the child, team building and using an educational focused fact sheet to record key information about the child.

“Ideas for managing anxiety in their children” presented by Angela Falkenberg the President of the Primary Principal’s Association, analysed the impacts of anxiety and described a range of effective strategies and coping techniques for parents to support their children. Another topic where participants learnt new information to support their children.

Lee Munn Director Lobethal Community Kindergarten presented ideas for “limitless opportunities for children to learn through play as they discover, explore, experiment and develop concepts and relationships with each other, staff and the natural environment”. Jason Tyndall and Sarah Sutter from Nature PlaySA illustrated the values of nature play and risk taking.

The majority of the day was videoed so the parents who could not attend due to distance or other circumstances would not miss out and be able to view at a later date through the Special Education Resource Centre website <http://web.seru.sa.edu.au>

A special set of interviews including an introduction by Ian May Director Disability Policy and Programs, some in depth comments from parents attending and Ann-Marie Hayes Executive Director Early Years and Child Development acknowledging the value of parent involvement and encouraging others to join us in the future is also available from the website

The responses received from the participants survey (63% response rate) indicated the conference was a resounding success with over 90% of respondents stating they would recommend it and wanted to be informed of future events. All sessions were rated well. The highlights included the two keynotes; the children’s performance, the mindfulness workshop and the organisation of the day assessed as very good to excellent. The table below gives you an indication of the survey results.

Participants were asked to rate each session they attended on a scale on a 5 point scale.

not useful useful good very good excellent

Children’s musical opening by Kilparriin , SASVI and Errington	
Keynote : Kirsty Russell - Learning from a positive education journey	
Keynote : Emma Goodall – Interception	
Workshop: Sarah Sutter, Jason Tyndall, Lee Munn - Natural environment and play for children with a disability	
Workshop: Kirsty Russell - Finding the right fit	
Workshop: Flinders University Inclusion Research Project	
Workshop: Kirsty Russell - Managing transition throughout the education journey	
Workshop: Angela Falkenberg - Mindfulness and children with anxiety	
Workshop: Kymberly Louise - The Parent Role: Empowering parents within the educational team	
Rating:	0 1 2 3 4 5

The range of topics suggested by participants’ for future events will be taken into consideration by the planning group in preparation for forums and a conference in 2019. Parents particularly valued the opportunity to network ask questions and be with others who are taking new steps and have experiences to share.

We would like to thank the Parent Reference Group members Julie Rungie, Kate Annells, Wendy Hosking, Lesley Heinrich and Trish Jones for their hard work and strong contribution to the success of the Parent Forums and the Conference over the past two years.

We will be continuing next year with forums and a proposed conference so keep your eye out through the SERU website, your school or preschool or on your email for the 2019 dates and venues. Contact can also be made through our email address Education.DPP@sa.gov.au

