CHAPTER 1:

An Introduction To The Area Of Study

1.1 Introduction

Transitions are important times of change in people’s lives. There is emerging interest in the importance of transitions for all students as they move from one care or educational program to the next. The transition from secondary school to work has received attention, and to a lesser extent, the transition from primary school to secondary school. The transition into school has received less attention. The group of children commencing school will also include a proportion who have special needs and for whom the transition may be especially complex. At the heart of successful transitions is continuity for participants; in the case of young children commencing school, continuity of educational philosophy, continuity of pedagogy, continuity of perception about the role of families, and continuity of procedures within the transition process itself.

In this chapter the process of transition to school for children with special needs and their families will be introduced. The complex nature of this transition will be discussed and the essential elements of the transition process outlined. The stakeholders and programs involved in the process will be described and defined. Reference will also be made to the essential role of continuity in the delivery of effective transitions. In the following chapters theoretical and practical issues relating to the essential elements of transition will be examined. In each of these chapters research issues and questions will be raised. These will be discussed from the point of view of one major group of stakeholders in the process - early childhood teachers.
1.1.1 Elements of transition

In general, transitions are complex and may be particularly so for families of children with special needs when their children commence school. The transition to school must be examined in terms of management of the process itself and in terms of the stakeholders. The main stakeholders include families and professionals from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds. Management of the transition process occurs within a wide and diverse range of contexts; accordingly, each successful transition must be individually planned and will evolve differently. Examination of literature about transition reveals three important conceptual groupings around which the transition process revolves: curriculum planning, particularly the teaching and learning process; families and their role in the transition process; and the management and implementation of transition policy. The issue of "continuity" is integral throughout each key conceptual grouping.

The importance of continuity is accepted, but in order to achieve comprehensive and effective continuity it is important to understand the elements of which it is constituted.
1.1.2 Continuity in transition

The issue of continuity for children with special needs and their families in transition from pre school and early intervention services to school is important. If families are to move across and between service delivery systems with little stress, and if children are to maintain their rate of academic and social progress, continuity is critical. If continuity is to be developed and extended between areas of service delivery as is advocated for all children (e.g. Bauch, 1993), a full understanding of the elements that constitute continuity in transition is essential. The need for continuity is particularly pertinent in early childhood education in NSW as the internationally accepted early childhood age group (0-8 years) spans at least two totally independent service delivery systems under the auspices of different government departments. This means that there may be no coherence in funding structures, philosophy, staffing or curriculum delivery. As yet, there is no official communication between these sectors about children with special needs who will commence school. It is commonly implied in the pre school area of early childhood education, that when children reach school they may be involved in curricula that are developmentally inappropriate, and delivered by teachers who are untrained in early childhood education. Literature on developmentally appropriate practice and continuity makes this implication explicit (e.g. Bredekamp, 1987). In order to develop an understanding of continuity it is necessary to subdivide the complex concept into its component elements.
In this thesis it is proposed that continuity consists of the following elements:

* Continuity of teaching and learning:
  - a match between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and their daily practices;
  - continuity between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning for children, as they move from one program to another;
  - continuity of teaching and learning practices for children are they move from one program to another.

* Continuity for families as they move from one program to another:
  - a match between teachers' beliefs about the role of families and their daily practices;
  - continuity of beliefs between teachers about families, as they move from one program to another;
  - continuity of family practices between teachers in different programs.

* Continuity of transition management:
  - a match between teachers' beliefs about transition management, and their daily practices;
  - continuity of beliefs about transition management between programs;
  - continuity of transition management practices between programs.

Once the elements of continuity have been established it becomes pertinent to examine the role that teachers have in ensuring its success. Effective continuity practices are at the heart of exemplary transitions. The first step for teachers in ensuring continuity is to achieve a match between their own beliefs and practices, that is, the difference between their espoused theory and their theory in use. This match may not occur, and furthermore, people may not be aware of this (Argryis & Schon, 1974). If a match is to occur between
teachers' own beliefs and practices, teachers need to understand what their beliefs are, be able to articulate these, and then be able to demonstrate the links between their beliefs and their daily practices. When teachers have achieved this match, they are then in a position to take the next step in the process of achieving continuity. This is to explain their beliefs and practices to colleagues in other programs. It is not until teachers in different areas of service delivery can discuss clearly their beliefs and practices with colleagues, that they can aim to develop and facilitate continuity between their programs. When teachers can articulate their own beliefs and practices in regard to the essential elements of transition (Teaching and Learning, Family & Transition Management) they are then in a position to initiate or facilitate the dialogue which will result in a level of communication that will lead to continuity in transition.

As yet there have been few attempts to explore the process of continuity of philosophy and resultant teaching and learning between Early Childhood Education and Early Childhood Special Education (McLean & Odom, 1993) and there is only a little debate in Australia about continuity for children moving from pre school programs into school.

Understanding and promoting continuity is important both for children and families and for the well being and job satisfaction of professionals. There is, however, little current information on beliefs and practices of the staff working in early childhood programs in NSW. Little is known about the knowledge and theories that underpin the daily curriculum decision making of the teachers who work with young children with special needs in centres and classrooms. How their knowledge of, and beliefs about, theory influences their decisions is unclear. Whether their espoused theories match their actions is unknown. Research that has been done has not been in teacher education (Walker, Personal communication, 14 November, 1995). Similarly, there is a
dearth of knowledge about teachers' beliefs and practices in regard to their work with families and in planning for the movement of families and children from one program (early intervention/pre school) to another (Kindergarten). There is a wealth of literature explaining the theoretical basis of teaching, but how it is applied in daily practice, and the relevance of this to transition is less well documented. Continuity in transition will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 2.

1.1.3 **Children with special needs**

The exact number of children with special needs is difficult to ascertain as the enrolment of students with disabilities is not specifically delineated in national census figures on school enrolments. Numbers differ according to the definition used and the nature of educational provisions. Estimates vary from two percent (DeLemos, 1994), to ten percent (Pieterse & Bochner, 1990) and to as high as twenty five percent (e.g. Raver, 1991), according to definition. Even at the most conservative rate, there is likely to be at least one child with special needs in almost every school class.

Increasingly, children with special needs, will have attended pre school services and may also have attended specialised early intervention services. The process of transition from early intervention services to school has received increasing attention over the last two years and this has been reflected in recent NSW government schools policy statements. However, the introduction of policy has rarely been preceded by attention to theoretical considerations. Australian research literature is rare and the overseas literature base on best practice in the area of transitions to school while strong, is not accompanied by descriptions or evaluations of successful transition programs in operation.
In NSW, there is a need for a better understanding of the transition process. Investigation of transition practices in schools and centres is urgently needed. It is important to know what the major stakeholders in this process are thinking and doing if transition is to be successful. Further, it is important to know whether best practice guidelines as outlined in the literature are possible and practicable in other than model services. Government policy is rarely successful if the people who are to implement it are unfamiliar with its content and procedures and/or do not believe in its importance or the possibility of its success. This study aims to investigate some aspects of the transition to school process for children with special needs and their families.

Early intervention and early childhood teachers have, for many years, discussed the prospects for children as they leave their care to enter the regular school system. Some of the children and their families may have been known to the teachers for up to five years and close professional and perhaps personal bonds develop. A protective attitude towards "their" children can lead these teachers to look towards the school system with a mixture of doubt, uncertainty and often a dash of cynicism. As they see "their" children move from programs with intensive individual education planning which involves extensive one to one experiences, they understandably express concern for the prospects of children "graduating" to a classroom with one teacher and thirty children. Perhaps these concerns are justified, but how much do teachers working in the pre school sector, communicate with the school sector and how much do they really know about practices in the classrooms "their" children will enter? Conversely, how much do teachers working in Kindergarten know about the philosophies and practices of early childhood centres and programs?
1.1.4 Teaching and learning in inclusive settings

All teaching processes and classroom practices are founded on a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are unique to each teacher. The beliefs that underlie these are articulated by the teacher as "espoused theories". When asked how they would behave under certain circumstances, a person usually replies with their espoused theory of action for that situation - what they believe they should/would do in certain circumstances. This is the theory of action to which they give allegiance and upon request, communicate to others. However, the theory that usually governs action is the "theory in use", which may or may not be compatible with the espoused theory; furthermore, the individual may or may not be aware of the incompatibility of the two theories (Argyris & Schon, 1974). There is little information currently available about the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers working in the pre school and early years of school, their resulting beliefs and practices, or their espoused theories and their relationship to theories in use. Specifically, information on awareness of the previous or future care/education settings of their pupils is limited.

This information is important to continuity between the pre school and school sectors which is essential if the transition process is to be a stress free one in which children maintain their rate of social and academic progress.

1.1.5 Definitions

The term "children with special needs" is used in this study as a generic term to describe a group of children who have been involved in early intervention programs. The term "special needs" frequently refers to three groups of children:

(a) those with identifiable conditions that interfere with their development and learning;
(b) those with developmental delays but no apparent biological
impairments; and
(c) those who are at risk of developmental delays or disabilities
because of a variety of environmental and/or biological factors (Harbin,
Gallagher & Terry, 1991).

As early intervention programs often adopt a "non-categorical approach" the
population is usually defined by attendance at a service, rather than by type of
special need.

In this study the term "Kindergarten" refers to the first year of formal
schooling. "Preschool/daycare" refers to services for 3-5 year olds prior to
school entry. Where the term "pre school" is used it is meant to refer to the
years before school in a generic sense rather than referring to a type of service
delivery system. "Early Childhood Education" (ECE) refers to the care and
education of children in their first eight years. "Early Intervention" (EI) tends
to be used commonly in Australia to describe services for children with
special needs before they commence school. The American literature also
uses the term "Early Childhood Special Education" (ECSE) and in America
the difference between EI and ECSE denotes the age of the children served.
The names are used interchangeably in this study.

Throughout this paper Salisbury's (1991) term "inclusion", is used to refer to
the placement of children with special needs into the regular classroom
setting. The more commonly used terminology in Australia at present is
"integration" but Salisbury makes some pertinent points about the differences
in use of the two terms and the philosophical base from which the terms
emanate. Integration carries with it an understanding that one group
constitutes the mainstream (the term mainstreaming is also common in the
literature) and another group (the children with special needs) will be allowed
to become a part of that group under certain circumstances. The implicit understanding of this definition is that one group is inherently different and if lucky enough, may be privileged by joining the mainstream. Salisbury further explains the implications of "integration" as being an inherent endorsement of possible exclusion from age appropriate settings bringing with it the acceptance of a philosophy of hierarchical structures according to biology or rate of development.

Inclusion, on the other hand, is a value which infiltrates all planning, promotion and conceptualisation of the education of young children. The underlying supposition is that all children will be placed in an age-appropriate, regular classroom which includes children with special needs. All stakeholders in a child's education will see the school and classroom culture as including children from a diverse range of backgrounds in terms of ability, culture and contribution.

1.2 The Context

In NSW, pre school aged children with special needs will commonly be attending one, or several early intervention programs as well as integrated programs in regular Preschools or Long Day Care centres. They and their families may have encountered a range of experiences related to services availability and suitability of personnel, and philosophy and management of services. Some children and their families, however, will not have been involved in formal early intervention programs.

When the time comes for the critical move from early intervention programs into school, there are multiple and complex issues to be considered. Changes are known to cause uncertainty and stress for families of children with special needs (Fowler, Chandler, Johnson & Stella, 1988). These stresses are likely to be a feature of the process of school selection, acceptance and transition. The transition to school for children has been widely discussed (e.g. Kakvoulis, 1994; Logue & Love, 1992), but when the child
starting school also has special needs, transition issues gain complexity as both families and professionals are involved in a long and sometimes emotional process. For children with special needs these professionals may include pre school/daycare teachers, early intervention teachers, Kindergarten teachers, speech pathologists, occupational and physiotherapists, psychologists and more. There may have been strong emotional and practical support from the professionals the family is leaving and this loss is exacerbated by uncertainty about the future. A transition from one service provider to another may involve changes in the auspicing body, structure and philosophy of services; changes in eligibility requirements; changes in content of programs e.g. from family centered to child centered focus; and changes in staffing across disciplines (teaching, speech pathology) or certifications (early childhood, primary, special education). These changes may affect pedagogy and philosophy. Planning for that change, while maintaining continuity and quality of services, is a critical element of the transition process (Fowler & Ostrosky, 1994). Researchers have identified the need for much more research in the area of transition to school for children with special needs (Fowler, Schwartz & Atwater, 1991). The lack of Australian research makes this call particularly pertinent and with our education systems state based, contextual research is needed in NSW.

1.2.1 Early intervention services

In NSW, early intervention services are now a well established feature of the provision for pre school care and education. They cater for children in centre-based group and individual programs, home-based programs and in settings where children are "supported" in their integration into regular services. The efficacy of early intervention has been widely discussed. Safford (1989) and Bennett (1993), for example, have both reviewed a range of programs which have demonstrated effectiveness and the potential benefits to children and families.
1.2.2 The historical context of early intervention

Since the early 1960s early intervention programs aimed at minimizing or overcoming the impact of delays or disabilities in early development (or the risk of) have been established. They provide carefully designed educational and therapeutic services to children with special needs in their formative years. The origins of early intervention can be traced back to the work of researchers such as Bowlby in 1951 and Spitz in 1949. In the 1960s Hunt and Bloom had challenged the notion that intelligence is fixed and determined solely by hereditary factors. This notion had already been raised by Maria Montessori in Italy at the turn of the century. She had sought to remedy the deficits she had observed in poor Italian street children by providing structured teaching programs in Preschools. From this movement came initiatives in other countries which primarily had a health and welfare orientation. Later, this was evident in programs established under Headstart, initiated by President Kennedy in the USA in the 60s as part of the "War on Poverty". Headstart aimed to provide medical, social and educational input to socially disadvantaged pre schoolers. This marked the beginning of "early intervention" as we now know it.

Curriculum planning models are usually based on underlying theories of child development and as theoretical perspectives have shifted, so too has program planning progressed. Changes in programming can be paralleled with theoretical developments.

As Headstart began, biologically based programs framed on maturationist theories were replaced by programs based on behaviourism. In contrast to the fixed nature of development of maturationist views, behaviourist techniques achieved changes in learning for children not previously expected to achieve as well as they did. However, it became apparent that highly structured
teaching did not always result in learning that was generalised to settings outside the classroom, and greater focus was given to factors within the learner (e.g. motivation, stage of cognitive development), and interactive teaching and learning evolved. Current programs are working towards models of learning that incorporate all aspects of the child's environment, including the family. The framework has shifted from the focus of concern being the developing child to a focus upon the total context of development within a social systems framework (Pieterse & Bochner, 1990).

1.2.3 Integration/inclusion

Researchers in recent years have been interested in the integration of children with special needs into the regular classroom (e.g., Center, 1987; Hayden, 1978; Salisbury, 1991; Scott, 1988). The actual transition of children from the early childhood or early intervention programs in which they have been involved is a relatively new area of investigation within the broader context of integration.

Interest in integration has stemmed, in part, from changes in policy and regulation regarding the rights of children with special needs to be educated in the "least restrictive environment". Australian initiatives have followed the introduction of USA laws PL 94-142, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act, (1975) and PL 99-457 (1986). In the United States of America laws have mandated the provision of services for young children with disabilities (Hebbeler, Smith & Black, 1991). Services for young children with special needs are differentiated by age, with Early Intervention being provided for children under three years of age, and Early Childhood Special Education for children from three to five years of age. They are administered by different government bodies, but come under the same Office of Special Education Programs requiring interagency coordination at the community and state level (Fowler & Ostrosky, 1994).
Similarly, in Britain, acceptance of the Warnock Report (1978) has meant that the concept of normalisation, and integration into regular schools has become accepted practice. The significant impact of the report resulted in revision of the fundamental principles underlying educational provisions. In particular, the principle of non-categorisation has gained acceptance and there is more emphasis on developing programs based on educational need rather than on categorisation according to different forms of disability (Center, 1987; DeLemos, 1994).

1.2.4 The current context in NSW

Presently, NSW schools are a long way away from the implementation of full inclusion practices. Some reasons for this include insufficient funding to provide an appropriate level of support for all children with special needs, school and teacher attitudes towards children with special needs and teachers’ lack of confidence in their ability to cater for children with special needs. The mismatch between teachers’ espoused theories of Teaching and Learning, the role of Family and Transition Management, and their theories in use is also an issue (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

Funding has been provided by the Commonwealth Government since 1975 to support the enrolment of children with special needs into primary and secondary schools. However, with the current estimated number of children in schools officially recognised as having disabilities, at around two percent, and with recent moves towards more and fuller inclusion, there is still much room for improvement as stakeholders continue to strive towards the goal of full inclusion (DeLemos, 1994).

In the last two decades the major shift away from segregated settings, towards inclusive schooling has involved changes for families and teachers. Many
teachers are still undergoing their first experience with inclusion. In a recent study for the Commonwealth Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET), DeLemos (1994), says that "in the move towards integrated schooling, there is need for greater emphasis on the professional development of classroom teachers to provide them with the skills and techniques required for teaching students with a range of abilities"... She goes on to say: "Relatively few of the primary or secondary teachers studied had had specific training for teaching students with disabilities, and most expressed a need or a desire for further training or professional development activities to assist them in their work with disabled students" (p.xxvi).

1.2.5 The transition to school in NSW

In NSW the current process for enrolment within a Department of School Education (DSE) school can be described as an "assessment model" (Doherty, 1987) in which children with special needs have the right to be enrolled in their neighbourhood school, following "assessment" by school personnel. Enrolment will proceed if this is "appropriate and practicable" (NSW Education Department, July, 1981, November, 1985).

The importance of the transition to school is beginning to gain attention. Recently, the New South Wales Department of School Education has employed Early Learning Consultants (Senior Education Officer Class 2) whose responsibility it has been to implement the "Early Learning and Prevention of Learning Failure" initiative in schools (NSW Department of School Education, 1994). This program aims to develop the skills of teachers and parents in meeting the educational needs of young students with disabilities and those at serious risk of learning failure. Initially this was a two year program and in June 1995, shortly after a change in State Government, readvertissement of the Early Learning position was frozen leaving the future of the initiative in doubt (Lunn, 1995).
An important aspect of this initiative was to develop policy for the transition from early childhood services to schools (DSE Document BS66:KB). This recognised the importance of the transition process. It can be seen as an entity which can be separated from both previous and future service provision and aims to bridge the gap between the two. During 1993 and early 1994 each DSE regional consultant, after a process of community consultation, developed draft guidelines for the transition to school. In the Metropolitan West region of Sydney, the *Early Childhood Services to School* document outlines the aim, rationale, objectives and outcomes for the transition to school. It was first implemented in 1994 and is currently available for use by early childhood personnel, families, school counsellors and other school personnel. It provides a comprehensive outline of how the transition process should work and includes procedures, explanations and a glossary of terms. This policy is due for evaluation in 1995.

In recognition of the current lack of co-ordination and communication within the early intervention sector in NSW, The Early Intervention Coordination Project was commissioned by the state government in 1991. The group responsible for the project, has recently released findings and recommendations. These resulted from a pilot study in three areas of NSW by representatives of the Departments of Community Services, Health and School Education, under the guidance of an executive officer seconded from the Department of Community Services. The final report, entitled *Disability Directions: Tomorrow's Blueprint* (1994), fulfills the project's objectives which were to:

- identify and assess the planning and delivery patterns of early intervention services; and
• develop strategies to improve planning and delivery of these services to families in need of them, in particular by coordinating service planning and delivery across agencies.

It clearly defines early intervention by listing the objectives, the scope and target groups who will be involved with the delivery of services. The philosophical base is strongly identified as family centered and this is operationalised in a series of "Principles for Early Intervention". "Draft Outcome Standards" are also supplied (Early Intervention Coordination Project, 1994).

These two initiatives have addressed a pressing need in the delivery and continuity of early intervention services in NSW and their links with school. They will hopefully alleviate the current situation in which anecdotal evidence suggests that most early intervention teachers and early childhood teachers have little communication with other professionals and school systems and indeed often feel unwelcome in attempts to initiate a process of communication and co-ordinated transition prior to a child's school placement.

As Conn-Powers (1990) points out, a major goal of early childhood special education programs is to promote the entry of children with special needs into Kindergarten. There is little research in NSW on transition practices and research on the outcomes of programs that have been run overseas is hard to find. There are many aspects of the process of transition to school that need further investigation. Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) discuss the beginnings of a research base on transition from early intervention to school but concentrate on parent involvement in this process. There seems to be little information on the experiences of teachers who receive children with special
needs when they arrive for their first years at school. Conn-Powers (1990) points out that:

“teachers who have not had the experience of educating children with a wide range of needs and handicapping conditions may feel challenged in working with other professionals and adapting their classroom program. If the transition from ECSE into the elementary school mainstream is poorly planned, each of these challenges may become an obstacle that can significantly and negatively affect the outcome” (p. 92).

1.2.6 Transitions

Major life changes can be stressful for people. One of these changes occurs when children commence school. If the child starting school has special needs, the change may be even more difficult, especially if the family has not been given definite confirmation of their child's school acceptance. The stress involved for the families of children with special needs in the movement from one program to another has been well documented (Fowler, Schwartz & Atwater, 1991).

One stress arises from the differences in personnel, philosophy and curriculum that are experienced upon entering a new program. If continuity is to be facilitated, then it is essential that the teachers working with children before they start school have a good understanding of what will be expected and required of the child at school. It is equally important that the teacher who receives the child at school knows about the child's history, the family strengths and needs and the pre school curriculum with which the child has been involved.
The literature on the transition to school for families and children with special needs identifies best transition practices (Noonan & Kilgo, 1987) and these practices include formal transition planning, family involvement and continuity of curriculum. These are the three conceptual elements of transition addressed in this study. There is little if any information however, that describes operating transition programs in Australia or elsewhere.
1.3. The Role Of Teachers In Inclusion

Inclusion is complex and no one factor stands alone as the determinant of its success. The role of the teacher, however, is extremely significant. Considering teachers' relative lack of experience with inclusion practices, combined with the probability that they will be asked to include a child with special needs in their class, their views and experiences are of paramount importance.

To date research on the inclusion of children with special needs into regular classrooms has focused on the area of teachers' perceptions and the effect that their attitudes have on classroom practice. It has been recognised for some time that teachers' perceptions can influence students' achievements (e.g. Carr & Kurtz-Costes, 1994). It has been well documented that teachers report that children with special needs take more preparation and teacher time and are more disruptive. Teachers also recognise their lack of training in the area (Scott, 1988). There is a perception that classroom "support" is lacking, despite the presence of policy and regulation encouraging the enrolment of children with disabilities (Center, 1987; Scott, 1988). In making a commitment to providing an inclusive program, one important aspect is a dedicated staff effort in the planning of shared goals. Salisbury (1991) stresses that specific, measurable outcomes are part of the process of ensuring that this vision is attained.

1.3.1 Early childhood curriculum for children with special needs

The philosophies and curriculum practices of early childhood professionals, in Preschools and Long Day Care centres have been well documented (e.g. Morrison, 1991; Arthur, Beecher, Dockett, Farmer, & Richards, 1993) and are widely known and practised. Similarly, the philosophies and resulting teaching strategies which form the basis of early intervention programming are well described in the literature (e.g. Safford, 1989; Ashman & Elkins, 1990). Recently, however, discussion has arisen about continuity (or
discontinuity) between these areas of care and education and the implications of discontinuity for families and children (e.g. Bredekamp, 1993; McLean & Odom, 1993). As previously discussed, the importance of continuity in contributing to successful transitions is essential for children and families and so this is a critical debate.

This important dialogue gains complexity when a child with special needs makes the transition from early intervention into Kindergarten at school. Not only will there be similarities and differences between the early intervention service and the regular early childhood service, but these services will also have varying degrees of continuity with the school the child hopes to attend. Teaching and Learning within early childhood curricula will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

1.4 The Purpose Of This Study

With the increasing emphasis on inclusion of children with special needs into schools has come associated change for teachers and families.

It is only in the last few years that teacher education institutions have introduced compulsory special education subjects for all teaching students. This means that many teachers have had no training to care for and teach children with special needs. Another aspect of change has been a growing awareness of the importance of transitions for children with special needs and in particular transition to school. The teachers who work with children with special needs before and after they commence school come from a range of training backgrounds and discipline areas. Few, however, have special education training or experience.

Paralleling movement in inclusion and training practices has been a philosophical shift in early intervention teaching. Early intervention teachers are strongly committed to the idea of providing family centered services. This ethos is not as strongly held or emphasised in
the pre school or school sector. There is potential for discontinuity which may become evident during transition between services.

The result of a poorly managed transition for families can be lack of continuity resulting in confusion, poor communication and resulting stress. Even in the smoothest and most well coordinated transition to school there are natural stressors for children and families. If these are exacerbated by service providers who do not or cannot communicate, do not speak the same professional language, or disagree on philosophies or practices, the stresses can increase dramatically.

This study has been designed to describe the process of transition into school for children with special needs and their families, as experienced by early childhood teachers in Western Sydney who have had involvement in the process. Specifically, it investigates:

a) the continuity in transition processes as children move from the early intervention sector into school, focusing on beliefs and subsequent practices of three groups of stakeholders: pre school teachers, early intervention teachers and Kindergarten teachers in three important conceptual areas of transition: Teaching and Learning; Families; and Transition Management; and

b) factors affecting patterns of continuity e.g. the Program in which teachers work and teacher Qualifications.

The notion of continuity is discussed in terms of Beliefs and Practices in each conceptual area. Pre school and early intervention teachers and Kindergarten teachers are integral to successful transition management and continuity between these teachers is critical for effective transitions. Implications of the findings are discussed in later chapters and recommendations made in order to help improve the transition process for children, families and teachers in the future.
1.5 In Summary

In this chapter the process of transition to school for children with special needs and their families has been introduced, with the notion of continuity explored.

A child with special needs may have seen a range of teachers, occupational therapists, speech pathologists etc. over his or her four or five years, with families playing an integral, if not leading role in the implementation of their individual learning programs. The process of facilitating successful transfer from one service provider to another without the loss of valuable information, skills and emotional security is critical if effective transitions are to occur. Indeed, the success or otherwise of the transition process could influence many things including subsequent interactions within the school system, children's ability to transfer and maintain the skills and behaviours acquired in preschool, as well as their motivation for school (Fowler, Schwartz & Atwater, 1991). The teacher who sends the child to school, and the one who receives the child for the first formal school experience, play a key role in this transition process.

The purposes of the study have been outlined. The elements of continuity, teaching and learning, families and transition management have been introduced and will be discussed in greater depth in subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER 2:

Continuity In The Transition To School.

For all children, beginning school is a major milestone. It marks the change from being a young child, to one who is beginning to grow up. The transitional period between home, pre school programs or early intervention, and school is one that requires planning and consideration. Continuity in this experience must take account of past experiences and modify new school experiences to minimise change and reduce stress (Briggs & Potter, 1990).

Continuity is seen as the most essential element around which effective transitions revolve, and its study is important because "most educational authorities now espouse continuity in transition in their policies, and highlight the importance of liaison between pre-school, home and school. In practice, the quality of transition depends largely on the quality of the physical environments provided by those authorities, the quality of the teachers who are directly involved, that is, the early childhood teachers who receive the new entrants and the pre-school personnel responsible for the children in transition" (Briggs & Potter, 1990, p.17), and the quality of transition management.

If children have special needs there will be more services involved in transition, more careful planning is required, and the need for effective communication and continuity becomes a complex process.
It is critical for children with special needs to experience continuity between the services in which they have been involved and those in which they will commence as they may experience stress, and disruption to their learning, and continuity ensures successful adaption to the new environment (Johnson, Chandler, Kerns & Fowler, 1986; Fowler, Schwartz & Atwater, 1991).

The provision of continuity in transitions of all kinds can reduce potential stress. This according to Thurman (1993), requires a proactive position which is preventative in nature and does not subscribe to the common practice of responding after an event has occurred. The concept of continuity is gaining attention with "authorities increasingly concerned about the family's initial contact with school, its importance to future relationships, parent cooperation and involvement as well as children's long term educational progress" (Briggs & Potter, 1990, p.16). This is reflected in NSW by the development of transition policies in recent years. Concern about continuity is reflected not only at a program level but also at the level of international reporting such as the Council of Europe's Declaration of Pre-School Care and Education (1979) which found that "all services with a contribution to make to the development of young children ... should work with and through the family to provide continuity of experience for the child" (p.17). Recently, major studies in New Zealand and England have also investigated continuity in the change from home and pre school programs to school (Briggs & Potter, 1990).

In this chapter continuity of teaching and learning practices will be examined between pre school and school programs. As children with special needs commonly attend both pre school and early intervention programs in the years before school, continuity between these programs will also be examined. The transition between pre school programs and school occurs at a critical period in
the lives of children with special needs and their families, as they are seen at this time to be changing from a young, dependent child into a school student.

Teachers of children with special needs are the link between the child and the program provider, the family and other professionals. Their role in facilitating, and showing commitment towards, continuity in transition is of paramount importance. In the present study, continuity is examined from the perceptions of teachers because of their critical role. For example, Briggs & Potter, (1990) say "it is easy to see why the attitudes of teachers to new entrants depend substantially on the type of training they experienced..." as "pre-school and primary school teachers were markedly different in their philosophies...the early childhood educator who has been trained to work with the child from birth to eight years is clearly in the best position to offer continuity of experience from pre-school to school, because initial training involves teaching in both sectors. In addition, early childhood teacher education in any country implies a curriculum based on a foundation of knowledge in child development, that differs substantially from primary teacher training with a class and subject focus" (p.42). As the importance of continuity is evident, it is clearly relevant to examine the experiences of children as they move between programs that are perceived to be so different.

2.1 Continuity of Teaching and Learning between Pre School and Early Intervention

Although it may be assumed that pre school and early intervention programs share the same philosophies and goals, as well as personnel and premises at times, this assumption bears scrutiny. Continuity between pre school and early intervention programs has recently received attention. Both are recognised as early childhood programs and, superficially, it may be assumed that there is
agreement on beliefs and practices. Children with special needs will commonly be attending both pre school and early intervention programs, sometimes in the same building. Early intervention programs are commonly staffed by teachers with training in early childhood education. However, recently a debate has emerged in the literature about continuity between such programs. The field of early intervention teaching is currently reflecting on its practices. Bredekamp has been widely criticised for not considering the needs of a diversity of children and families in her seminal document Developmentally Appropriate Practices (1987) and has responded in the literature (Bredekamp, 1993), and with the publication of a follow up document (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992). She explains the points of convergence and divergence between the two fields of early intervention (or ECSE) and regular early childhood services in the areas of individually appropriate practice, the concept of early intervention, family centered services, advocacy, transition and the use of interdisciplinary approaches. Controversially, she suggests that the field of Early childhood education (ECE) could learn a lot from the field of early childhood special education (ECSE). Cavallaro, Haney and Cabello (1993) go even further than Bredekamp, seeing the practices of ECE and ECSE as being in opposition to each other, differing in their "emphasis and in their views on the role of both the learner and the role of the teacher". They call for "these seemingly opposing perspectives" to be reconciled, "bringing the fields of ECE and ECSE together in a working partnership for the benefit of all children" (p.295).

To the contrary, McLean and Odom (1993) see the two approaches as being much more compatible. After a review of important conceptual areas within both fields, they conclude that "considerable similarity and agreement exist in virtually every area" (p.289). A spirited debate on these similarities and differences is healthy for both areas of the field as it allows and encourages researchers and practitioners to examine, identify and articulate their
philosophies, conceptual frameworks and resulting practices more clearly. This can only benefit the children with whom they work daily and this debate should continue as clarification of the issues has still not been achieved.

2.2 Continuity Between Pre School and School

Both Australian and international literature record research and reports that acknowledge the importance of continuity in the transition from home and pre school programs to school. Essential elements for continuity have been identified and include social, physical environment and pedagogical issues. Families are also of paramount importance in the provision of continuity (Briggs & Potter, 1990).

The transition from pre school programs to Kindergarten can involve change across a number of dimensions. These changes can be organisational and may include the size of the program, the adult-child ratio, peers, the physical environment and the program goals. They may also be pedagogical with differences in the role of the teacher, the strategies used for teaching, and the role of the child in the classroom, being obviously different than in the previous setting. Unfortunately discontinuities in experience, social interactions, physical environment and pedagogy, between the pre school and school sector have been regularly documented. Among others, Hains, Fowler, Schwartz, Kottwitz and Rosenkoetter (1989) found that the expectations of pre school and Kindergarten teachers were different. The pre school teachers were more concerned with social interactions and communication skills, whilst Kindergarten teachers emphasised functional classroom skills relating to conduct and independence such as routines and participation in group activities. A recent local study had similar findings (Croxen & Rouse, 1992).
Clyde (1991) sees the debate about transition as a recognition that it is a process, not a single one-off event and needs to be made as productive as possible. She emphasises the importance of transitions, saying that "the child's continuing adjustment to the new situation may well be decided at the transition point" (p.6). Clyde sees successful adaptation as revolving around the variables of the child's previous experiences, the smoothness or otherwise of the transition and the degree of similarity or difference between the previous and the new program. Difficulties may be experienced by children coming from day care settings in which they have spent a large proportion of their time directing their own play and learning and interacting socially with peers. The contrast of a classroom which is largely teacher directed may cause the socially assertive behaviour of children to be labelled as aggressive and inappropriate by Kindergarten teachers who organise their classrooms in a manner unfamiliar to these children. Clyde suggests that teachers can take advantage of independent and assertive attributes by offering more typical pre-school type experiences in the early years of school, which allow children to meet challenges with their peers and form the basis for further developing their literacy, oracy and numeracy skills.

2.3 Elements Of Discontinuity

Some discontinuities in transition experience may be the result of differing philosophies and pedagogical styles held by teachers with different qualifications (Fowler & Ortesky, 1994). In Australia pre-school/early intervention programs may be staffed by teachers with degrees, diplomas or associate diplomas in early childhood education/special education or both, primary teaching qualifications, nursing or welfare qualifications or no qualifications at all. There are many changes for children as they move into Kindergarten. Classes may be staffed by teachers with early childhood or
primary teaching qualifications. The size of Kindergarten classes increases along with the fact that there is usually no longer a classroom assistant. Children are more likely to be asked to move as a group rather than individually, they may have less opportunity to choose their own activities, and may be expected to show both increased compliance and independence. There may be greater demands for social competency and language use. Activities may be longer, with more time spent on classroom organisational aspects and transitions. Systemic factors will determine many environmental arrangements and thus teaching methods, the timetable and the roles of the teachers and the students. There may be more group, rather than individualised instruction, and this is likely to be predominantly teacher directed. While typically in a preschool classroom, the teacher will follow the lead of the children, encouraging them to initiate interactions and involvement in activities in which the adult will become involved, the Kindergarten teacher is more likely to direct activities, encourage compliance and talk to the children to initiate and organize activities for them (Fowler & Ortesky, 1994).

Perceived or actual discontinuities between programs have implications for preparation of the child, by preschool personnel for the next program. Preparation is one of the essential elements of transition planning. The role of the preschool/early intervention provider should, in part, be one of identifying the skills (and dispositions, attitudes etc) that are required for the next program, developing those skills and demonstrating that the child does indeed possess them, and will be able to use them in the next setting. As previously mentioned however, there is an inherent danger that the sending program will reformat, to make itself exactly like the receiving program. This may be at the risk of providing the child with the developmentally appropriate activities that would otherwise have been planned. Appropriate activities may be replaced by more academically oriented lessons. If preschool programs replicate
Kindergarten activities in the quest for continuity, it is at the expense of appropriate pre school activities. Whilst planning for continuity is important, it is essential that transition planning be embedded in the curriculum, not totally replacing the child's previous individual planning. Guidelines for best practice in transition include maintenance of developmentally appropriate curriculum at each level which includes individually appropriate planning for children. Research has shown that some teachers and administrators, in an attempt to improve continuity between pre school and Kindergarten programs by extending primary school practices into pre school programs, have planned programs that were not appropriate to the developmental levels of the children involved. Continuity of curriculum was achieved at the expense of developmentally appropriate practices. Poor continuity also occurred when the pre school program was developmentally appropriate, but the Kindergarten program was structured more like a grade one program (Mitchell, Seligson & Marx, 1989). Transition models should show provision for the transition plan to be one part of the child's overall individual plan. Fowler and Ortesky (1994) point out that it is important to determine what level of support the child will need to demonstrate knowledge and skills. Instruction and support can be viewed as a continuum, from the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, through expanding their use to the ultimate goal of independent application of the new knowledge and skills. Teachers need to plan for acquisition of skills but also need to include in their programming ways of ensuring opportunities for generalisation of skills - mastery and confidence to use the skills in a wide variety of situations, with different people and in different contexts. Preparation of children is another important element of continuity that needs to be considered by both sending and receiving teachers.

Clyde (1991) is by no means the only author to point out the discontinuities encountered by children entering the school system for the first time. A recent
American study found that "transition activities are not widespread in US schools despite the fact that research has suggested that greater continuity can enhance the benefits of preschool programs, which may not endure beyond the early elementary grades" (p.1) (Love, Logue, Trudeau & Thayer, 1992). There is no reason to believe that the record of Australian schools would be any better on this issue. Love et al attribute the relatively low emphasis on transition to the belief of school personnel that most children do not have much difficulty adjusting to school. Perhaps the criteria for teachers' definitions of "good adjustment" need to be challenged when the numbers of children with learning and behaviour difficulties in the early years are taken into account.

In a plea for "developmental continuity" from preschool to school programs Barbour and Seefeldt (1992) point out that early childhood instruction should provide learning experiences based on children's prior knowledge, following a natural progression across preschool and the early grades. They see this continuity as coming under pressure as schools increasingly need to demonstrate children's success in a behavioural sense through the use of performance standards and competencies.

There is considerable literature devoted to this issue (e.g. Bauch, 1993; Lombardi, 1992; North Carolina University, 1993) in which it is apparent that the area of transition to school is problematic and disorganised for all children. It seems that all early childhood educators need to allocate greater importance to transitions in order to provide a seamless transfer between programs for all children, regardless of special needs or abilities.

Discontinuity for families may also be an issue inherent in the change from preschool services to school. Pre school and more particularly, early intervention programs, may hold a philosophy of service delivery within the context of the
family. It is not uncommon for families to develop close relationships with services and service providers. Families experiencing a reduction in contact and support as they move to a program which has less of a child centered philosophy may experience conflict or stress if they are not prepared for this change (Fowler & Ostrosky, 1994). Traditionally, schools have not encouraged the same level of parental involvement and decision making that is familiar in early intervention services.

This chapter has outlined the importance of continuity for children with special needs and their families and as continuity is critical in the transition process, this element of transition will also be considered in the following chapters on families and transition management.

2.4 Best Practice Guidelines For Continuity

Best practice guidelines may be found in the literature, with available lists covering various areas of continuity in transition. The goal of exemplary transition planning must be to strive for continuity across all conceptual areas: Teaching and Learning, The Role of Families and Transition Management. Each of these elements need to be considered in the production of best practice guidelines. However, there is a gap in the literature, in respect to identification of a comprehensive set of best practice guidelines. The following list of guidelines has been developed, with these criteria in mind, from the literature on transition and available transition models (see Table 2.1).
Table 2.1
Best Practice Guidelines for Continuity in the Transition to School for Children with Special Needs and their Families

1. Transition requires a longitudinal plan with a written timeline
2. Transition has a goal of smooth/efficient movement from one program to the next
3. Transition is a process that includes preparation, implementation and follow up
4. Transition has a philosophy that movement to the next program implies movement to a program that is inclusive or less restrictive than the previous program, wherever possible
5. Transition involves transdisciplinary teaming in which all personnel are aware of the transition process
6. Families receive support and information to enable them to participate as equal partners in planning transition
7. Developmentally appropriate assessment and curriculum planning are incorporated into the transition process
8. There is interagency cooperation and transfer of information to all team participants
9. Individualised transition plans are developed
10. Transition is evaluated periodically by all team members
11. The transition team determines the communication policy and program of potential receiving programs
12. The transition team obtains information about the skills seen as important in the receiving program
13. The child is prepared for successful and independent inclusion in Kindergarten
14. Information is sent to receiving program and receipt is verified
15. Program continuity is ensured by providing developmentally appropriate curriculum for all age levels
16. The school prepares to successfully integrate and educate the entering child in the kindergarten and primary school mainstream
17. The school staff provide the necessary services to promote and support the child’s placement, integration, and education in the kindergarten classroom and primary school mainstream
18. Family consent is obtained for release of information
19. The child’s eligibility for transition and the receiving program is determined
20. Development of the Individual Education Program and Individual Family Service Plan in which family strengths and needs are determined
21. Identification and organisation of the training and resources needed to establish and support the transition process
22. Identification of program options and planning visits

2.5 Research Issues And Questions:

Continuity is essential for effective transitions and involves communication between programs about modifications to each which will make the transition as seamless as possible. Some important questions for children and families in transition are evident. There is a current dearth of Australian literature, documenting, describing and evaluating the transition to school process. If improvements are to be made in the continuity of transition to school, informed practice must be based on a wider and deeper understanding of the current Australian context. The importance of continuity has been outlined in this chapter and if transitions are to be facilitated greater continuity must be a goal. The research questions generated are as follows:

- What continuity is there for children with special needs and their families as they move between sectors of early childhood education - pre school to early intervention; pre school/early intervention to school?

This question can be explored by asking the following specific questions:

- What continuity is there between early childhood teachers' Beliefs and their subsequent daily Practices?
- If differences exist do they vary according to the undergraduate Qualifications of the teacher?
- If differences exist do they vary according to the Program in which the teacher works?
CHAPTER 3:

Teaching and Learning in the Early Years

For continuity of educational experience to occur for young children with special needs, there needs to be continuity of curriculum between early intervention programs and Kindergarten programs. Developmentally appropriate experiences should be provided for all children in the early childhood age bracket (0-8 years), regardless of program. There are both implicit and explicit suggestions that some children do not participate in developmentally appropriate programs when they start school, even in situations where preschools and Kindergartens are the responsibility of the same government department. "Where preschool programs emphasise the development of the whole child as an individual, primary schools concentrate on subjects, intellectual development and the class" (Briggs & Potter, 1990, p.41). Like all children, children with special needs are vulnerable and continuity of teaching and learning is essential if they are to maintain their previous rate of social and academic progress. The program philosophies and approaches, pedagogy and environment should be as familiar as possible so that children with special needs will not lose valuable learning time readjusting and "settling in" to a new style of program. Teachers too, cannot afford to spend months at the beginning of the school year ascertaining children's special needs, levels of development and preferred learning modes.
Discontinuity can occur within programs and between programs. Within programs there can be a mismatch between theory (or teachers' beliefs) and practices. The provision of a rationale for the strong links between theory and practice is clearly articulated by Almy (1984) who explains that:

The experienced teacher, who knows how the theories of early childhood education have evolved, can evaluate current trends and the forces that are precipitating them. He or she can judge whether such trends are mere fads, represent nostalgia for old ways of doing things, or stem from important and well integrated increments to the knowledge base of early education (p.x).

Discontinuity between programs can be evident as children move from pre school to school and is manifested in the aims of the program, the physical environment including the materials provided, the hours of attendance, the program structure, the numbers of children, the staff to child ratio and in pedagogical methods (Briggs & Potter, 1990).

In this chapter, the pedagogical or teaching and learning elements of continuity in the transition from early intervention programs to school will be examined. In NSW, most children attending early intervention programs also attend regular pre school programs. Early childhood theory has also played a large part in the development of early intervention pedagogy. For these two reasons of concurrent attendance and similar curriculum influences, it is important to also discuss early childhood pedagogy and its relationship to early intervention and Kindergarten teaching and learning practices. Discussion will focus on the teacher's role in providing continuity of teaching and learning. Through an exploration of the historical and contemporary influences on early intervention programs and Kindergarten programs the pedagogical influences on teachers practices will be highlighted.
Teaching and learning are a fundamental element of curriculum. In Australia, as most early childhood teachers work in systems that are divided by government funding bodies and beauracratic organisation, it is incumbent on them to communicate effectively with each other in order to establish continuity between programs that do not have "official links".

Both "teacher talk" and the contemporary literature of early childhood education suggest that there is a mismatch between the programs that children attend before they commence school and those they will be involved in upon school commencement (e.g. Briggs & Potter, 1990). This discontinuity is seen to occur primarily in the areas of teacher expectations (e.g Davies & North, 1990) and curriculum (e.g Bredekamp, 1987) for children commencing school.

The literature suggests that this mismatch is a problem for children and families as continuity of curriculum and experience is desirable in order to maximise learning and minimise the stress of transition (e.g Fowler, et al., 1991). If the transition to school for children with special needs is to be made more effective the continuity between the services they attend must be optimised.

The teaching and learning aspects of early childhood curricula, result largely from pedagogic decisions made by individual teachers. If this suggested discontinuity occurs in practices between sectors of early childhood education a first step in facilitating continuity is a detailed examination of the curriculum planning processes and expectations of early childhood teachers. The relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices and how these are incorporated into their daily work of teaching and learning, relating to families and then managing transitions for children with special needs will provide useful information needed for the promotion of continuity in transition from early intervention to school.
3.1 Developmentally Appropriate Practice

For continuity to occur between programs, both sending and receiving programs need to agree on issues of practice. As philosophies and practices are known to be different between pre school and school programs (Briggs & Potter, 1990), a benchmark for desirable practices is needed. This has been provided by the U.S. based National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and is widely accepted and used as a basis for early childhood programs in Australia (Bredekamp, 1987).

"Developmentally appropriate practice" as identified by Bredekamp is a framework for programming which promotes the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of all children in the 0-8 years age range, while responding to the needs of families. It is predicated on the notion that a major determinant of program quality is the extent to which knowledge of child development is applied to program practices. "Developmental appropriateness" consists of both age and individual appropriateness and covers the elements of curriculum, adult-child interactions, relations between home and the program and developmental evaluation of children. The NAEYC document provides comprehensive guidelines for practice in programs for children from three to eight years of age with appropriate and inappropriate examples outlined. Principles contained in the document are widely recognised and applied in pre school programs, but are not commonly recognised or used in school programs for children from five to eight years of age. Recent moves towards competency based assessment approaches in NSW are currently school based and there is no discussion about introduction into pre school programs. These two different approaches are examples of potential or probable discontinuity between programs where teachers' decisions about practice have fundamentally different foundations.
3.2 Teachers as Decision Makers

All teachers regularly make decisions about their practices. Having the responsibility of decision making can be seen as one criterion of professionalism. Decisions emanate from both experience and belief based on training and philosophy. In order for teachers to facilitate continuity of teaching and learning between programs, they need to firstly understand and articulate their own beliefs and practices. They will then be in a position to make the necessary negotiations between programs that are essential for continuity. This process is problematic if teachers cannot clearly outline the philosophies and practices of their program. A concrete example is the difference in belief that Preschool and Kindergarten teachers have about the importance of children lining up. Preschool teachers commonly see this routine as regimented, time wasting and unnecessary. In Kindergarten it is common and expected practice. If children with special needs are to be prepared to fit easily into the school culture on arrival, they need to be taught, and to practice this skill, despite their Preschool teacher's beliefs about its validity. Compromise is necessary for the child's well being and although this is a very simple and perhaps superficial example there are many others that strike at the core values of teachers and might generate heated discussion and reluctance to compromise. For continuity to occur, dialogue and compromise is vital.

An important area of pedagogy to study and understand is whether teaching practices, and decisions on which practices are based, are made on a pragmatic basis, by applying habits acquired along the way, or as the result of reflection on the application of thoroughly understood theory. Teachers are frequently independent decision makers, particularly when programming. The processes teachers employ when making the decisions on which they base their daily practices is of great relevance to teachers themselves, their supervisors and employing bodies and teacher education institutions. Further understanding is needed about their knowledge base and decision making if continuity between programs is to be developed, and formally facilitated.
The mismatch between what teachers say they believe and do, and what they actually do in the eyes of an impartial observer, can be described as being the difference between "espoused theory" and "theory in use" (Argyris & Schon, 1974). This is particularly relevant as teacher training courses increasingly encourage reflective teaching practices which are intended to afford teachers the opportunity to examine and improve their own links between theory and practice (Schon, 1987).

Unfortunately, several studies indicate that teachers are not easily able to articulate their espoused theory or to demonstrate it's application in daily practice. Miller (1991) expressed the concern that "teachers and administrators may know little about theoretical underpinnings of curriculum implementation in early childhood programs" (p.315), leading to "service development undertaken in reactionary haste... (which) may disregard the longstanding wisdom of our field and result in the continuation of fragmented program practices that offer little in the search for integrity of service delivery..." (p.324).

Sigel (1984), also gives explicit illustration of discontinuity between belief and practice. A group of teachers who asserted that they did ask questions that encouraged children to think for themselves as an enquiry based learning strategy, were really asking structured questions, requiring single answers. Although they believed they were encouraging creative thinking, they were really "checking" the children's knowledge. If this example is typical of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices as is implied, there is a need to raise awareness of this mismatch in order to improve teachers' own theory to practice relationships. Only then can continuity be achieved with teachers in other programs.

There is a need for careful and critical scrutiny of, and debate about, what teachers say they do, what they actually do, and why they do it. This is necessary in order to improve
a situation in which teachers are not sure, or cannot articulate the connections between theoretical perspectives and daily teaching.

3.3 Teaching and Learning in Early Intervention

In the last fifteen years in Australia there has been a burgeoning of programs for children with special needs and their families. This has followed the pattern in the U.S. where these programs are mandated by law and the positive effects for children and families have been well documented and recognised as a good investment of resources (e.g. Bennett, 1993: Council for Exceptional Children, 1993). Contemporary practices in early intervention programs have been informed by both early childhood traditions and special education.

Defining early intervention precisely is problematic because of the wide range of both children served, and service delivery types. In an overview of early intervention in Australia, Moore (1990), described it as having several interlocking aims. He saw these as the promotion of social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth of young children with developmental problems which takes maximum advantage of their potential for learning; the prevention of development of secondary disabilities; and the support of families of young developmentally disabled children. With the necessary broadness of these aims, there is unfortunately no clear focus on curriculum issues, with the specifics left very much in the hands of individual program planners. This leaves the flexibility that is vital when working with individuals, but does not give the guidance that could lead to greater understanding, cohesion and continuity between teachers. As in other areas of early childhood education, the articulation of curriculum practices by early intervention practitioners is often very vague.
A concise outline of early intervention curricula is offered however, by Sandall (1993) who sees a common goal as the promotion of the development of infants and toddlers who have, or at risk for, developmental disabilities. She also stresses a strong family focus. Sandlar defines early intervention curriculum as a "master plan of activities and experiences" (p.134) designed to reach the goals of maximising self esteem, problem solving capabilities and behaviours that lead to greater independence. It includes content and methods. The necessary components of a sound early intervention curriculum are: a philosophical framework, a scope and sequence, sound instructional methods, a variety of activities and experiences, methods of promoting generalisation, strategies for the use of the physical environment, systems for adapting to unique needs, and methods for data collection and use.

The theoretical underpinnings of early intervention programming have been drawn from both Special Education and Early Childhood Education. Influences come from child development research and changing theoretical perspectives. According to Sandall (1993), the following perspectives have been particularly influential:

3.3.1 The maturational perspective

Particularly influenced by Gesell the maturational perspective perspective sees development as biological and linear. The interventionist's role is to create a warm, stimulating environment in which age appropriate enrichment activities will allow the child to act out their innate tendencies.

3.3.2 The behavioural perspective

Mainly associated with the work of Skinner, the behavioural perspective sees the environment and its manipulation as the cause of development. The goal of the interventionist is to teach the child skills and information that are useful and considered valuable. The learning environment is carefully organised and activities
sequenced to maximise the acquisition of targeted behaviours, with children being reinforced for production of those behaviours.

3.3.3 The interactional perspective

Typically associated with the work of Piaget, the interactional perspective views environmental and biological factors as having mutual influence. The child is seen as continually reorganising mental structures as this interaction occurs. The interventionist's role is to carefully organise the social and physical environment to continually provide the challenges to allow children to initiate interactions and actively experiment. Sameroff and Chandler expanded the notion of mutual influences to include the "transactional " effects of familial, social and environmental factors.

3.3.4 The ecological perspective

Espoused by Bronfenbrenner, the ecological perspective recognises the fact that children are members of different ecological settings. Interventionists must recognise the multiple contexts and interrelationships of infant and family life and work to institute systems change. The infant is not the sole focus of intervention. The ecological settings must also change to support the child's changing capabilities and to buffer stressful events. The child is viewed as a dynamic and interactive learner.

3.3.5 Developmentally Appropriate Practices

It has been agreed that "developmentally appropriate practices" (DAP), generally advocated for use in early childhood education, are an appropriate base for programming for young children with special needs (Carta, Atwater, Schwartz, & McConnell, 1993). However there is also agreement within the EI/ECSE field that this approach alone is insufficient for young children with special needs. The field of ECSE/EI has a history of advocating certain principles which are seen as
essential additions to DAP. They include the emphasis on comprehensive, multidisciplinary, outcome based intervention; the importance of specific intervention targets; the use of frequent assessment for program monitoring; the emphasis on transition and the criterion of the next environment; the importance of empowering the family; and the importance of interagency collaboration (Carta et al, 1993). Again these authors do not give specific guidance about curriculum development.

In an attempt to clarify and condense the wealth of literature in the field, the U.S. based Council for Exceptional Children has formulated a set of guidelines to be used as a basis of "best practice" as program developers make decisions about their daily practices. A set of criteria have been selected as these can be seen as identifying the essential and unique aspects of this industry. They are:

- Recommended practices are both research and value based;
- Services are family centred;
- Practices reflect a multicultural emphasis;
- Services adopt a team approach and are cross disciplinary;
- Programming is developmentally as well as chronologically age appropriate; and
- A philosophy and practices of normalisation are adopted (p.4-6).

3.4 Program Delivery
Several approaches to the "delivery" of early intervention services can be noted in NSW and elsewhere. All approaches are team based but vary in some details. Recently there has been a move towards adopting a transdisciplinary approach to service delivery (e.g. Linder, 1990).

In a "multidisciplinary approach" separate assessments are carried out by team members from different disciplines, parents meet individually with team members, members develop and implement their plans separately, while recognising the importance of other team members, and communication is informal. An "interdisciplinary team", differs in some respects with parents meeting with the team or team representatives, who share their plans with each other, case meetings are held and members are willing to incorporate the plans of other team members. A "transdisciplinary team" has as its goal continuity in programming with fewer people working directly with the child and family. The team members, along with the family, conduct a comprehensive assessment together, with parents being full, active and participating members of the team. The family's priorities, needs and resources are considered when a service plan is being developed. There are regular team meetings where continuous transfer of information, knowledge and skills are shared among team members (Raver, 1991).

3.4.1 Teaching strategies

For best practice in teaching the strategies or instructional methods used by teachers should be clearly linked to the theoretical perspective espoused. These links should be apparent to an informed observer, and able to be explained by the teacher. They should be effective, efficient, functional and normalised (Sandall, 1993). Terminology is inconsistent in the literature and strategies will not always be used independently. "Direct instruction" methods are associated with a behavioural perspective while "active learning" and "responsive" techniques are associated with interactional and ecological perspectives. "Enrichment" strategies are not directly instructional, with the child setting the pace, through play and self
expression. The teacher's role is to provide a stimulus rich environment with age appropriate toys and activities and to be supportive and nurturing.

"Direct instruction" involves the provision and systematic analysis of objectives, sequenced learning steps and systematic reinforcement of targeted objectives. It is teacher directed.

"Incidental teaching" is a naturalistic method in which targets are preselected and prompts are used in a particular sequence. The environment is carefully arranged and the adult responds to the child's initiation, to elaborate and reinforce the child's use of the targeted behaviour. "Activity-Based Intervention" is a child directed transactional approach that embeds intervention on child's individual goals in routine, planned or child initiated activities. It uses natural events and routines to develop functional and generative skills. "Response-contingent learning" enables children to learn that their behaviours have an impact on the environment. They "learn to learn". The interventionist observes for the child to perform the desired behaviour, after which the consequence is consistently provided. The child's responsiveness is the focus.

3.5 Teaching and Learning in Preschool/Long Day Care

In order to fully understand contemporary early intervention programs it is necessary to also be familiar with the influences that come from early childhood education. Many teachers working in early intervention programs have early childhood teaching qualifications and may not have further qualifications in special education. Many children attending early intervention programs also attend regular early childhood programs or receive their intervention in integrated settings only. Many early intervention programs are located in preschool or long day care premises. These historical and practical links mean that the influence of early childhood philosophy and practice on early intervention are substantial.
Pre school aged children in Australia, whether or not they have any special needs, will frequently attend some form of organised care/education service. Whether it be Preschool, Occasional Care, Long Day Care, Early Intervention or any of a range of other services offered, program planners who aim to provide quality services should be devising, recording and implementing comprehensive, teaching and learning programs. These programs form an integral part of the overall curriculum. The program is the teaching and learning plan which is included in a curriculum which also includes such elements as the situation analysis, philosophy, long term aims, etc., to name but a few of the many elements included in a well written curriculum document.

Planners of contemporary programs for young children in Australia tend to adopt an unwritten code of an "eclectic" approach to curriculum design. Underpinning this approach, are a range of theoretical positions including a philosophical or moral approach based on the work of Froebel; a developmental approach identified by Gessell; a psychoanalytic approach identified with Freud and Erikson; a compensatory education approach influenced by project Head Start in the USA; the behavioural approach influenced by Skinner; and the cognitive approach applying Piaget's constructivist theory (Safford, 1989). In recent years there has also been a predominance of emphasis on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (Bredekamp, 1987) and sociocultural perspectives influenced by Vygotsky (e.g. Rogoff, 1990).

Many program planners deliberately or subconsciously combine one or more of these approaches. While some people do subscribe exclusively to one theoretical viewpoint most combine approaches (Kostelnik, Soderman & Phipps-Whiren, 1993).

It is interesting to trace and monitor teachers' development of pedagogical views and practices, as they become more experienced teachers. Although there are many books now available about teaching and learning in the years before school, a scan of the bookshelves in a University offering courses for students of early childhood education
shows that most tend to take a very superficial approach to curriculum design. Titles abound which use the words curriculum or learning (e.g. Eliason & Jenkins, 1977; Trister-Dodge & Colker, 1992; Feinberg & Alexander, 1984; Debelak, Herr & Jacobsen, 1981) but most take the approach of using an introductory chapter which deals with theoretical aspects and then leave this behind to get on with the "nitty gritty" issues of subject content and activity planning. There is rarely any attempt made to demonstrate how the philosophies and theories that have guided the development of early childhood education are actually applied and interpreted in everyday teaching. There is little surprise in the fact that most early childhood teachers have difficulty in articulating the philosophies and theories which guide their daily choice of activities (Barnes, 1994; Lay-Dopyera & Dopyera, 1987). Indeed, many books for early childhood educators make no attempt whatsoever to present any theoretical base at all, let alone link this clearly to daily practices. They are merely a "cookbook" of activity ideas and as such, appeal to some teachers in the search for the new, the novel or the easy (e.g. Innes, 1985; Herr & Libby, 1990).

In contrast, Developmentally Appropriate Programs in Early Childhood Education (Kostelnik, Soderman & Phipps Whiren, 1993), stands out as a text that does make an attempt to link theory and practice more obviously by incorporating objectives and teaching strategies into chapters on each of the developmental domains. In each of these chapters teachers are offered guidance as to current educational issues and shown how they can incorporate objectives into activity plans. Teaching strategies for each area are listed with further explanations showing how these can be incorporated into teaching. Unfortunately, strategies are not incorporated into the sample activity plans. Even though this text is clearly an advance on many published in previous years, it still does not offer a clear and concise linking of theory, through objectives and strategies to daily practice.

Perhaps daily teaching strategies should assume greater importance in the planning and implementation of teachers. This may be the area on for early childhood teachers to
concentrate on as the avenue through which they could more clearly articulate their practice. Clearly teaching strategies are one of the most important pivotal points around which successful teaching revolves. They can be seen as the "how" of teaching that relates to the "what" that is taught. In other words they are the means by which objectives are taught. In an early childhood curriculum which is based on play (Fromberg, 1987), the objectives may not always be overt, and hence, the importance of clearly delineated and articulated strategies assumes even greater importance. A frequently heard rationalisation for the lack of coherent planning in early childhood centres is "it's all in my head" or in the more sophisticated words of Lay-Dopyera and Dopyera (1987) "the teacher as artist is assumed to create teaching strategies in response to each new situation". As a successful visual artist works from a groundwork of accepted theory, so a successful "teacher/ artist" also needs to have a very clear conceptualisation of their theoretical roots. According to Lay-Dopyera and Dopyera (1987) this knowledge, along with reflection on their actions leads teachers to "better clarify to themselves, and communicate more effectively to others what works, how it works, and with what children". They explain that teachers needs to have a systematic planned expansion of their repertoire of strategies, requiring a shift away from the assumption of a "best" way to do things. This leads to a gradual adoption of additional strategies for potential teaching situations, allowing greater flexibility in decision making. These authors suggest that some early childhood teachers are so closely tied to their preferred orientation towards child development that they may not scrutinise their methods. In order to create a desirable "canvas", and exhibit to the world the teacher/artist needs to be able to explain their approach, much as a visual artist would write catalogue notes. Early childhood teachers who are striving for continuity between programs may be in communication with school teachers whose theoretical foundations are not based in child development theory and may therefore have difficulty making these explanations to them.

Many children with special needs attend both regular early childhood programs and early intervention programs before they start school. Continuity of teaching and learning
between these programs is currently the subject of debate. In order to better understand the relationship between early childhood and early intervention approaches, a closer look at the theoretical foundations most commonly influencing the work of early childhood teachers, and related strategies is useful at this point:
3.5.1 Cognitive-developmental theory

Sometimes referred to as interactionism or constructivism, this theory largely rests on the work of Jean Piaget. It has had massive impact on the thinking and behaviour of all those who deal with young children. The effects can be seen in curriculum design, research, products for children and the way parents approach the intellectual development of their children. It explains how children develop knowledge of their world, how they think and interact with their environment to solve problems. Piaget saw children as active, exploring and manipulating their environment in a persistent quest to understand the world. He assumed that all children are intrinsically motivated to improve their understanding of the world around them. Piaget said that for optimum cognitive development a challenging and rich environment is needed for active exploration (Krantz, 1994). In explanation of the use of constructivism in teaching Sigel (1984), saw it as a way of teaching, supporting the view that the strategies of teaching should be clearly grounded in a theoretical perspective. He focused on the role of the teacher as a decision maker, involved in problem solving processes in their work with children. The process of constructivism is seen to focus:

more on the teacher than the materials. It is a teacher-child interactional perspective where materials are only a means to enhance that relationship.

Materials become a vehicle for learning. It is how the teacher and the child interact with the materials that constitutes the learning environment (p.xvi).

Constructivists see learning as an active process in which the mind constructs relationships among objects, events or bits of information, which results in knowledge. The constructivist concept is central to understanding Piaget’s theory in which children actively explore and manipulate materials, making intellectual decisions to construct their knowledge of the world. Experience provides a basis for constructing, organising and restructuring schemes. Knowledge is built by an
active child from the inside rather than being transmitted from the outside (Morrison, 1991).
3.5.2 Learning Theory

In contrast to the theories of enrichment through a non-directed approach, the behaviourist approach concentrates on the direct teaching of skills. The child is viewed as a passive rather than an active learner. Behaviour is shaped through the manipulation of environmental circumstances that produce specific, rewarded responses. Skills, usually academic are analysed, and the component skills sequenced. This sequence forms the curriculum content (Cook & Armbruster, 1983).

Learning theory or behaviourism was originally defined by Watson to allow for the prediction and control of human behaviour. It is based on the use of conditioning in which a child responds to a stimulus, such as a reward or punishment. The work of Skinner introduced "operant conditioning" which is still commonly used in classrooms. An "operant" is a behaviour that exists in a child's repertoire. The behaviour may be a physical one such as climbing, a perceptual one such as looking or a social one such as hitting. The teacher aims to modify these behaviours by consistently providing consequences linked to the behaviour. These consequences may include punishment, reinforcement (such as praise or rewards) or ignoring to cause extinction of the behaviour (Krantz, 1994). As a theoretical perspective it is arguably the approach most likely to raise strong emotions in critics and proponents. The use of the label behaviourism or the description of the identifiable teaching strategies will invariably lead to negative comments from early childhood teachers. There is a strong feeling that the methods attached to this theory are inappropriate for use in early childhood classrooms, particularly in pre-school settings. Weber (1984) gives an example of the strength of this feeling in the following analysis of behaviourism:

It leaves out any capability of man (sic) to shape his own destiny...Effective education for this century cannot be based upon behaviourism...it can only teach
what is already known, promote conforming behaviour, and prepare children to
live in a world exactly like the one of the designers. In a world of rapid change
where adaptable, creative people are needed to deal with a host of unpredicted
problems, these children will be ill prepared to cope (p.84).

However, there is some doubt as to whether these strong opinions are founded on
a comprehensive understanding of the method, or a limited knowledge fuelled by
prejudice against a technique which has traditionally been based in Special
Education. Classroom observation will usually reveal the use of "time out" or
reinforcement strategies aimed at changing the behaviour of children in the class.
In an examination of the current applicability of this approach Strain, McConnell,
Carta, Fowler, Neisworth & Wolery (1992), go as far as to say that there is a
"consistent and persistent devaluation and misunderstanding of behaviourism, the
behavioural approach, and its application to early childhood special education"
(p.121). They focus on special education settings but as most children with special
needs in NSW will attend integrated settings at some time their arguments are
applicable across all areas of the field. In their opinions, "behavioural" is too often
equated with "bad" without solid foundation for this reasoning. The teachers who
think this way are likely to be ill informed, categorising all behavioural techniques
together, ignoring empirical data and casting aspersions on those who advocate
and practise behavioural approaches. The authors make a case for the use of
informed behaviourism, showing that it does still have a place in early childhood
special education. All early childhood educators should be fully conversant with
behaviourist theory and be able to understand and articulate their use of its
strategies.
3.5.3 Sociocultural perspectives

In recent years there has been increasing debate about the shortcomings of Piaget's theory and among other criticisms is the lack of specific guidance for teachers on the use of strategies to further cognitive development in children. Interest has grown in the work of Vygotsky and his followers who suggest that cognitive development occurs in a "zone of proximal development" which is the gap between what a child can accomplish independently and what the same child can accomplish with support and guidance from adults or older peers. As an adult and a child share responsibility for solving a problem together, (such as a puzzle), they achieve "joint collaboration". In the early stages of learning the adult takes primary responsibility for guiding the learning process, but as the child grasps the nature of the problem the adult "transfers responsibility", decreasing their role and allowing the child to learn more independently. This process of allowing the child to operate at the upper level of their zone of proximal development, and gradually allowing them to perform more independently is known as "scaffolding". If this is successful, the child solves the problem independently and is ready to be challenged at a higher level of difficulty (Krantz, 1994). Proponents of this perspective extend the nature/nurture debate embedded in other theories by postulating that the skills and behaviours that children learn are rooted in the specific cultural and historical activities of the communities in which they and their companions interact. Biology, environment and social interactions are inseparable and together lead to individual thinking processes. Cognitive development is seen to occur through guided participation in sociocultural activity (Rogoff, 1990).
3.5.4 Integrating perspectives for curriculum planning

In an attempt to clarify the term "curriculum" as it applies to early childhood education, Williams (1987), concedes that educators outside of this specialist field may find its usage idiosyncratic. To the initiated the term is synonymous with the idea of "the whole child". The child and the curriculum are inseparable. The curriculum is not an external set of documents to be applied at the discretion of the teacher, but evolves from the teacher's knowledge of child development theory as it is applied individually to each child. Blended with this is a knowledge of how each child learns within a particular context. With this knowledge in hand the teacher then integrates his or her knowledge of teaching and learning theories with curriculum content to facilitate meaningful learning for each child.

3.6 Teaching and Learning in Kindergarten

As in all early childhood programs, the debate on the structure of Kindergarten curriculum hinges on discussion as to how young children learn best.

When children commence school they will experience changes in social and pedagogical experience. Socially, children will be exposed to much larger numbers of children, both within their own class and in the wider school setting; they will have fewer familiar adults around, particularly in the playground and at toilet times; there will be organisational differences which will involve lining up and waiting more than they have previously done; they will have to compete more for adult attention; they have less opportunities to interact with peers during work; they lose individuality, becoming more of a group member (e.g. the koalas reading group); and there are more time constraints as routines and timetables must be adhered to (Briggs & Potter, 1990).
Pedagogically, there is a difference of opinion as to how Kindergarten programs should be planned. This discourse is not new, having been the cause of changes to promote continuity between British nursery and infants schools as far back as 1912 (Briggs & Potter, 1990).

On the one hand there are advocates for the argument that children in the early years of school are still in the early childhood period (0-8) and therefore learn best "by doing". But there are those who believe that these children are at the beginning of their primary school education and the more formal approaches, strategies and methods used across the primary school are appropriate for adaptation to a Kindergarten class. These approaches usually involve little "hands on learning". In NSW the majority of children attend Kindergarten in schools run by the Department of School Education. The Kindergarten curriculum is largely based on a document entitled *Kindergarten - the first year at school* (1986). The importance of continuity from home is emphasised and the essential role of play and individual development as the basis of Kindergarten programming is outlined. There is much discussion, however, as to how widely, and how closely, this philosophy is adopted in schools.

A teacher's approach will vary according to individual viewpoint. He or she may believe that school subjects should be presented as soon as possible so that academic achievement can be accelerated.... and that the key to proficiency in the use of basic skills is "time on task". Conversely teachers may believe that more important than promoting facility with the use of symbols is developing young children's underlying thinking processes - the foundations for problem solving that can be applied later to traditional academic learning (Williams, 1987).

Despite this debate over appropriate pedagogical styles, Morrison (1991) emphasises that the current focus is on teaching of the basic skills - reading, writing and arithmetic with other content areas included only if there is time. This practice is deemed
inappropriate curriculum planning by Bredekamp (1987). Safford (1989), also strongly challenges this approach calling for early childhood teachers to exercise ethical responsibility and question the fact that because children can learn to read in Kindergarten that it is necessarily the best thing for them to do at this time.

Ironically however, a belief in a developmental approach to teaching is not necessarily sufficient. Love (1992) points out that based on his American study, "school staff need a clearer understanding of developmentally appropriate practice. Most schools consider their kindergarten programs to be "developmental", yet they rate themselves relatively low on some of the key classroom activities that early childhood educators define as developmental practice" (p.7). The implications of this for classrooms are that: "If school administrators and teachers believe that they have already adopted a developmental orientation, they are less likely to see the need to change, yet their self reports suggest that there is a considerable gap between classroom practice and the strategies needed for achieving quality kindergartens" (p.7).

Love's view further highlights the need for teachers to achieve a greater depth of understanding when applying theories and philosophies to daily practice. There is a dearth of literature for teachers that deals with this matter in a straightforward, yet meaningful manner.

In this chapter the importance of pedagogy in the early childhood curriculum has been highlighted. Further, concerns have been raised as to teachers' understanding of the pedagogical foundations of their teaching and the continuity between these and their daily practices. The idea has been raised that if teachers are to engage in a discourse between programs that will allow for continuity they must firstly be able to understand and articulate their own beliefs and practices. Continuity of pedagogy is of particular importance to young children with special needs in transition from early intervention programs to school. If they are to maintain their rate of academic progress their teachers
must aim for continuity between programs so that they do not suffer setbacks as they waste precious time becoming acquainted with the mores of a totally new and different teaching approach.
CHAPTER 4:

Families

In recent years parents have become more actively involved in the education of their children and as advocates on their behalf. They have become more sophisticated consumers of services, knowing more about the dimensions of services that they and their children require. This growth has been paralleled in parental recognition of the need for early intervention for children with special needs (Simeonsson & Bailey, 1990).

In this chapter the transition to school will be examined from the point of view of families of children with special needs. Although the present study does not examine transition from a family viewpoint it explores the beliefs and practices of teachers with regard to families and so examination of current perspectives on the role of families is essential. In order to inform the study, the role of families in the transition to school will be discussed in relation to current thought about their contribution to the transition process, their relationships with professionals and family systems theories.

The adjustment of the family to the idea of having a child with special needs will be briefly discussed. This will be followed by a review of the current literature on the role of families in the education of their child with special needs. More specifically, the role of families in the transition of their child to school, will then be outlined.

4.1 Families of Children with Special Needs
It is recognised that families who discover that their child has a special need, go through a grieving process for the loss of the "normal" child they expected to have (Pueschel, Bernier & Wiedenman, 1988).

Perhaps it is easier to understand this process when it is put in context. In an eloquent description of a major role shift in her life, Belinda Epstein-Frisch (1990) described her own experiences and feelings as she came to terms with the fact that her child was born with cerebral palsy. From being a professional involved in disability services, she became a client and was able to stand back and analyse the feelings, fears and emotions involved. This account provides an insight into the experience of many families, most of whom are much less familiar with the system than Epstein-Frisch. All professionals working in this area can benefit by reflection on her account:

The self worth of many women takes a nose dive when they give up work, even temporarily to care for a baby. The independence and confidence of employment is traded for the identity of Jack's wife or Yaël's mum.....The vulnerability, anxiety and loss of self confidence is usually exacerbated if your child does not seem to be doing the same as all the other babies or if the early diagnosis of Spina Bifida or Down Syndrome has thrust you into a new and terrifying world. It is easy to slip into relationships of unequal status...Prior to the birth of my daughter and two days per week thereafter, I was seen in the social welfare field as a competent manager of the largest non government agency in NSW, overseeing a budget of $5 million dollars and thirty professional staff. However, while waiting in the queue for therapy, my sense of powerlessness and vulnerability were keen. I had crossed the great divide from competent service provider to fragile client, from independence and self control to dependence on the availability and expertise of others. It felt most uncomfortable!!!!!!!

The social workers at the hospital NEVER invited me in for coffee although if we had met on my work days such informal courtesy would have been expected (p.5).
It is not difficult or uncommon for professionals, however caring and empathetic, to presume that they know what is going on in the lives of individual families. The public image of the family is often a far cry from the truth as typified by the words of Marelle Thornton (1990):

"We were, except for the empathy of my mother, quite alone in our emotional turmoil. I was able to tend to Katie's needs in a caring and loving way but I would cry at her cot-side while she slept and spent many hours dwelling on a future that I projected to be full of gloom and doom for us all. I tested to the limit the patience and skills of Katie's physiotherapist whom I saw as my only real point of reference. I couldn't discuss my true feelings with her - that would expose me too much. I couldn't talk about my husband's finding solace in a whisky bottle - that would reflect poorly on both of us. I couldn't join in the "nappy-bucket" conversations of my friends - I felt I had nothing to offer. I couldn't boast about Katie's meeting of those important baby milestones - they didn't come" (p.31).

As can be seen from the preceding descriptions, the adjustment of families who have a child with special needs can be immense. The role of professionals in the lives of families becomes a major consideration and in recent years this role has changed, considerably.

4.1.1 Professionals and families
In recent early intervention theory and philosophy there has been a major shift in the way professionals see their role in relation to the families of young children with special needs. Rather than the child being seen as the major client who the professional "acts upon", or trains the parent to "work with", the child is now seen as one part of a family system. This recognises the fact that a family is a dynamic system with the potential for change (Ashman & Elkins, 1990; Dunst, Trivette, Starnes, Hamby & Gordon, 1993; Sameroff & Fiese, 1990). Along with this shift in thinking comes the recognition that the professional is not necessarily the best person to be the decision maker when it comes to future planning for
young children with special needs. Families are encouraged to take a much more prominent role than in the past. A strong rationale for this approach is that if professionals rather than families "determine what children and their parents need and what services they have, conflictive encounters between the professionals and families will almost certainly ensue, and the likelihood of parents making any commitment to prescribed regimens will decrease considerably" (Dunst & Trivette, 1989, p.98). The role of the professional is now more to identify needs and mobilise resources which leads to family empowerment.

In an overview of these changes Simeonsson and Bailey (1990) point out that the earliest services were "focused on the amelioration of developmental deficits through general programs of sensory stimulation"(p.428). Infants were the primary target of intervention with a program of stimulation or therapy administered by an interventionist, with parents in the role of passive bystander. In the early seventies the importance of parent involvement was recognised, but not formalised and the level and nature of involvement varied from program to program. In an extension of this involvement parents, and sometimes siblings, were later trained to extend the teaching and therapy roles of the interventionist. In the early eighties the family as a unit came to be seen as participants in the services offered. The current approach to early intervention, of family empowerment models is an example of this, in which family assessment, goals and services are identified.
4.1.2 Family systems and family support theories

Family support theory is predicated on a social systems definition which recognises that all families, not only those with members who have disabilities, need and benefit from the resources provided by informal and formal social supports. The definition embraces an empowerment ideology, which emphasises the provision of supports and resources in ways that promote competence and specifically avoid creation of the long term dependency of families on others for meeting their needs (Dunst, et al., 1993). In a review of America's Family Support Programs (Kagan, Powell, Weissbourd, and Zigler (Eds), 1987), researchers indicate that the shape of American families has changed, and that the higher divorce rates, maternal employment, teenage pregnancy and the conditions of poverty for many families has resulted in growing trends towards both formal and informal family support programs (Bronfenbrenner, 1987). These American changes are mirrored in Australian society.

Social welfare policies introduced by U.S. government on a grand scale during the 60s and 70s, and allied to Headstart programs, were unequal to alleviating problems as demographic, socio-economic and political changes swept away the traditional family and support structures (Bronfenbrenner, 1987). It has been suggested that these changes contributed to the dependency of families upon external support, and stigmatised relationships of unequal exchange (Bronfenbrenner, 1987; Moroney, 1987).

In the 1970s investigators had already observed that families operated as "systems" involving interdependent relationships between family members, and that the quality of marital relationships also affected parenting capacities (Bronfenbrenner, 1987). Bronfenbrenner also found "that the family, to a greater
extent than any other context, influenced the capacity of individuals at all ages to learn and succeed in other settings" (p.xiii).

So when in the 1980s many existing social welfare policies and programs serving families in need were severely cutback, informal locally based family support programs began to emerge throughout the United States (Bronfenbrenner, 1987). Programs aimed at helping the children of needy families had already moved from a child centred to a family centred approach. This ecological systems approach emphasised and supported the roles of parents, other family members and community in the development of children (Weiss, 1987). It is based on the ecological principle of the child as part of a social and cultural system, with the family as the primary institution that shapes a child's development. Therefore family support and education programs aim to promote child development by helping parents to provide the best possible environment for their child (Weiss, 1987).

The authors of America's Family Support Services suggest that family support programs today are innovative in that they "respond to flaws in the traditional social service system...while recognising that contemporary families need support" (Kagan & Shelley, 1987, p.5). These programs seek to empower the family, and provide contexts in which the families can help themselves. "Help should augment family life rather than diminish it" (Featherstone, 1979; cited in Moroney, 1987, p.28).

Similarly, family centred support theories have become central to much early intervention and special education (e.g. Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1988). Emphasis is on the need to establish the strengths of individuals and families, and consequently help them to help themselves: The aims of family resource programs are to enable and empower people by enhancing and promoting individual and
family capabilities that support and strengthen family functioning (Dunst & Deal, 1990; Dunst, et al., 1993).

In a recent review of family support initiatives in the U.S. Dunst et al. (1993) found that support programs had proliferated in response to the renewed recognition that supporting and strengthening the family unit was in the present and future best interest of society. In an attempt to operationalise the definitions of family support, which commonly include key words such as "improve", "promote", "enhance", "empower", a list of distinctive program characteristics was provided:

- treating parents as capable and competent persons who have different developmental needs at different life stages;
- building on family strengths rather than focusing on what the family cannot do (i.e. deficits or weaknesses);
- employing health promotion and competency enhancement rather than treatment models for guiding provision of support to families;
- treating families as partners and active participants in developing and procuring needed supports and resources rather than as clients and passive recipients of aid and assistance;
- employing a broad based definition of support that recognises the diverse needs of families and the full range of supports and services necessary for meeting needs;
- building programs within the context of supportive communities that enhance the integration of the family into the mainstream of society; and
- promoting the independence of the family in making informed decisions and the interdependence of the family and community in ways that produce health and growth (p.4)
And further, in a review of the literature Dunst et al, (1993) have identified key characteristics of programs offering family support:

- adoption of, and adherence to, family support principles that reflect a philosophy that places the family in a pivotal role in directing all aspects of program policies and practices;
- adoption of individualised, responsive, flexible, and "fluid" approaches to meeting the broad based needs of all family members;
- adoption of resource based approaches to intervention practices that recognise and mobilise the full range of informal and formal supports available to families from their personal and community social networks;
- adoption of intervention practices that promote the flow of resources and supports in ways that provide families with the necessary knowledge and skills, and time and energy, to perform parenting duties and other family functions;
- adoption of intervention practices that enable families to become more capable of building and mobilising informal and formal network support systems that are responsive to their needs; and
- adoption of policies and practices that give, to the maximum extent possible, decision making power to families (p.5).

Researchers (e.g. Deal, Trivette & Weeldreyer, no date) highlight the importance of families in early intervention programs in order to promote their acquisition of skills and competencies and make them more self sufficient and able to deal with their child's future. A family systems approach has become an accepted philosophy in early interventions services in Australia and would commonly be used as the basis of planning for service delivery. This is in contrast to schools where family involvement is only more recently being encouraged through such avenues as participation in classroom activities and school councils.

4.1.3 Families and the transition of a child with special needs
The periods in a person's life where he or she moves onward from, or exchanges one set of living, schooling or working structures for another, has been labelled "transition". Transitions are often stressful times due to the changes in routine and situation that they involve (Fowler, Schwartz & Atwater, 1991). However, a review of the literature on the transition of a child with special needs from one set of service providers (early intervention professionals), to another (the school system), strongly emphasises that this is a particularly stressful period for the child and the family as a whole (Fowler, 1988; Conn-Powers, Ross Allen & Holburn, 1990; Rice & O'Brien, 1990; Speigel-McGill, Reed, Konig, McGowan, 1990; Fowler, et al., 1991). Much transition research discusses the stresses placed on the family during the process, with disruption to family routines, time needed to locate new service providers, preparation of the child to enter the new environment and concerns for the child's successful adaptation to the new environment (Conn-Powers, et al., 1990; Fowler, 1988; Fowler, et al., 1991; Rice & O'Brien, 1990; Speigel-McGill, et al., 1990).

The theoretical shift in perspective towards a family centred philosophy is a major consideration when it comes to planning transition for families. Transition involves changes in service providers who may or may not share the same philosophy. It places extra demands on both families and professionals. It can be both difficult and time consuming (Johnson, Chandler, Kerns & Fowler, 1986; Pinkerton, 1991; Rice & O'Brien, 1990; Speigel-McGill, et al., 1990).

With careful and cohesive planning it is possible to reduce the stress of transitions for families. Recommendations include the provision of essential information, resources and support during the transition which will ensure a higher level of family satisfaction with the overall process (Fowler, Schwartz & Atwater, 1991; Rice & O'Brien, 1990).
A child with special needs will typically be not only attending a preschool or long day care centre, but will also often be receiving various other forms of early intervention or other assistance such as speech or physiotherapy, medical or counselling help. During the transition the family and child needs to adjust to the new system, to the roles, philosophies and personalities of the new service providers, and juggle appointments to fit new routines (Johnson, et al., 1986). Thus the demands placed on families are great, and the stresses involved in finding a school which will accept their child, enrolling their child in school, communicating their needs and special problems to the new service providers, and ensuring that their child gets the support needed can be enormous (Rice & O'Brien, 1990).

Alongside these concerns and demands is the need to facilitate a smooth transition for the child in order to minimise the risk of disruption to the child's learning, and to ensure the child's successful adaptation to the new environment (Fowler, et al., 1991; Johnson, et al., 1986).

Transition planning has become common practice in the U. S., for example, the Transition into the Elementary Education Mainstream (TEEM) model described by Conn-Powers, et al. (1990). Researchers and practitioners have determined that families should play a key role in the their child's transition, and that their inclusion in the process will reduce their stress, help them to gain skills for the future, and influence their overall satisfaction with the process. As yet there is very limited research on Australian transition experiences. Transition planning policies are just beginning to be put into practice in NSW, (Brewer, O'Neill & Ellevsen, in press; KU Children's Services; NSW Dept. of School Education) however, there is no legislation requiring formal transition practices.
4.1.4 Family centred transition planning: addressing family needs, concerns and stressors

The workers in family centred services are involved in stressful events along with the families they serve. The professionals who form partnerships with these families need to be aware of these events and their potential for causing stress. Stress can be reduced by facilitative and supportive professional partnerships and by the provision of continuity. This according to Thurman (1993), requires a proactive position which is preventative in nature and does not subscribe to the more common past practice of responding after an event has occurred. Thurman argues that this retrospective approach to managing family stresses during transitions is the basis of many transition models.

A number of models for family centred transition planning are already in existence in the United States (see Fowler, 1988; Fowler, et al., 1991; Noonan, 1992; Pinkerton, 1991; Rice and O'Brien, 1990; Conn-Powers, et al., 1990; Kirby, no date). These programs are based on best practice in family involvement in transition and aim to incorporate literature based findings about the means of overcoming the difficulties and stress factors already discussed.

Researchers stress the importance of family involvement in the process because of it's value to the child, professionals, and families themselves. In a review of the literature Johnson, et al. (1986) stated that:

Parents have much to offer as well as gain by becoming active in their child's transition. Parents can (a) provide information to professionals, (b) teach their child skills at home which can be generalised to the preschool and kindergarten, (c) act as advocates for their child and program, and (d) provide social and emotional support for other parents (p11).

Similarly, Fowler, et al. (1991) emphasise the common views that
a) stress can be reduced if parents have adequate information about the process and a systematic means of addressing their concerns;
b) families can facilitate the transition by providing the programs with information, helping the child adjust and learn skills, and participate in decisions and planning; and
c) families would gain valuable information and skills for dealing with future transitions.

Transition planning must attempt to do a number of things:

a) minimise disruption to the teaching and learning process;
b) minimise the risk of failure; and
c) maintain the child's skills and enthusiasm.

These aims can be achieved by:

d) collaboration between family and professionals;

e) co-ordination between sending and receiving agents; and

f) communication between all parties.

If families are given every opportunity to be involved in the transition process to the extent that suits them, U.S. researchers have shown that overall satisfaction with the process is greater, (Fowler, et al., 1991; Pinkerton, 1991; Rice & O'Brien, 1990), and suggest that the education parents gain as a result of being involved in the processes will empower them in their future dealings with the professionals surrounding their child, and enable them to deal more effectively with future transitions. Families should be able to act as partners in this process to a greater or lesser extent according to their own choice (Johnson, et al., 1986)
However, despite the fact that much has been written about the transition to school, there are gaps in the research and literature. In a review of literature on transition in 1990, Rice and O'Brien noted that no consistent theoretical framework on transition had yet been established, though the need had been noted. Research efforts were either child centred, family centred, or service provider centred, and a comprehensive transition model should incorporate all three approaches as well as social/cultural influences.

Another identified gap is lack of reference to family centred transition in texts commonly used for teacher training (e.g. Dunst, et al., 1993; Meisels & Shonkoff, 1990). The implications of this are important as future teachers and organisers of transition processes may complete their training without being exposed to the shift of thinking in the philosophy of organising successful transitions.

It can be seen in this chapter that the role of families in the transition process is of the utmost importance, and that if continuity of transition is to be facilitated, early childhood teachers must have consistent views and practices with regard to the role of families in the education and transition of their child with special needs. The perceptions of early childhood teachers about the role of families in transition will be explored through the following research questions.
4.2 Research Issues and Questions

In this chapter continuity for families in transition has been shown to be critical. The literature has identified the need to enable and empower families and encourage them to act as partners in the transition process. This needs to be a continuous process from children's years in pre school programs through to their commencement and initial involvement in school. If this continuity is to be facilitated it is important to examine the Beliefs and Practices of the early childhood teachers who work with families both before children with special needs commence school, and after they start in Kindergarten. The specific questions to be asked are:

- What are the most strongly held beliefs of early childhood teachers in their work with families?
- What are the most frequent practices with regard to families, carried out by early childhood teachers?
- What continuity is there between early childhood teachers' beliefs and their subsequent daily practices with regard to their work with families?
- If differences exist do they vary according to the undergraduate qualifications of the teacher?
- If differences exist do they vary according to the system in which the teacher works?
CHAPTER 5:

Managing the Transition to School for Children with Special Needs

The planning and management of the transition process may be the pivotal point on which the other elements of successful transitions depend. In this chapter the management of this process will be examined with reference to the literature on best practice in this area and goals of continuity for children and families.

A successful transition can be seen as an important first step in the achievement of successful inclusion outcomes for children with special needs. The management of a successful transition is a complex and time consuming process which involves the coordination of families (which are sometimes extended), a number of professionals and a variety of services.

In order to enable continuity, it is first necessary to ascertain what effective transitions consist of, by looking to the principles of best practice.

Unfortunately in texts dealing with the education of young children with special needs, the transition to school still is given very little (e.g. Brown, Thurman & Pearl, 1993; Safford, 1989;) or no, emphasis (e.g. Ashman & Elkins, 1990; Casey, 1994; Meisels & Shonkoff, 1990). Surprisingly, considering the introduction of transition policy into NSW schools in
1994, only a very brief paragraph of a recently released government report on *Schooling for Students with Disabilities* (DeLemos, 1994), deals with the transition - from secondary school to later life. There is no mention at all of the transition into school. As this is an area of concern for many thousands of children, families and teachers in Australia, its omission from this report is unfortunate.

Along with the principles of best practice, the realities of daily life at a grassroots level for families and professionals must also be considered. A wealth of anecdotal and research evidence is supported by the words of Fowler and Ortesky (1994), who remind us that the best laid plans of services can be impeded by lack of time and finances. These limitations can be exacerbated by the lack of a common framework amongst agencies to ensure that programs and families have a mechanism for planning and communicating about program changes that must occur.

### 5.1 Best Practice in Transition Management

Principles of best practice are clearly identified in the literature, albeit, not easily accessible to teachers and parents. The work of prominent international authors appears in professional journals but these are not readily accessible to all teachers. For a comprehensive list of guidelines it is necessary to embark on a literature review and then combine and condense several lists of guidelines to produce a useful outline which could be accessed by stakeholders in transition processes.
Transition is defined by Noonan and Kilgo (1987) in a review of early intervention and special education literature as:

(a) a longitudinal plan;
(b) a goal of smooth/efficient movement from one program to the next;
(c) a process that includes the preparation, implementation and follow up; and
(d) a philosophy that movement to the next program implies movement to a program that is less restrictive than the previous program (p. 26).

Similarly, six key elements of successful transition projects have been identified by Noonan and Ratokalau (1991) as forming the basis of effective transition programs. They are:

(a) trans disciplinary teaming;
(b) family support and involvement;
(c) assessment and curriculum;
(d) inter agency cooperation;
(e) individualised transition plans; and
(f) program evaluation (p. 391).

Interestingly, however, they do not mention the classroom teacher specifically as one of the elements in this model.
Conn-Powers (1990) identifies five elements of best practices in planning transition from early intervention to school and two of these are directly related to the receiving Kindergarten teacher.

- The elementary (primary) school prepares to successfully integrate and educate the entering child in the kindergarten and elementary school mainstream.

- The elementary school staff provide the necessary services to promote and support the child's placement, integration, and education in the kindergarten classroom and elementary school mainstream (p.95).

Another relates to the teachers who see the child in pre school settings:

- The early childhood program prepares the child for successful and independent participation in the kindergarten and elementary school mainstream (p.95).

One relates to the role of families:

- Family members receive the necessary information, support, and opportunities for enabling them to participate as equal partners in planning their child's transition.

The final principle relates directly to the management of transitions:

- Planning the child's transition from an early childhood program into the elementary school setting occurs in a systematic, individualised, timely and collaborative fashion (p.95).
Fowler and Ortesky (1994) suggest that a framework for transition take the form of written interagency agreements between sending and receiving agencies. These agreements should be designed to clarify steps, time lines and agency roles as a child moves from one program to another and should cover the elements of transition identified by Fowler, et al. (1991):

- Obtaining family consent for release of information.
- Conducting additional evaluations.
- Determining eligibility.
- Developing the IEP or IFSP.
- Transmitting records.
- Identifying program options and planning visits.
- Setting dates for beginning new services and ending current services.

For the purpose of this study a set of guidelines for best practice have been compiled from the literature and transition models and can be found in Chapter 2 on Continuity in Transition

5.1.2 Managing exemplary transitions

Of course best practice principles are a set of aspirational guidelines which need to be viewed in the context of the daily realities of time, stakeholders and management issues such as finance and the structure of organisations. In order to achieve the aspirational goals of exemplary transitions the people involved need to be committed to continuity of service delivery and able to obtain the resources to deliver such transitions.

Continuity between programs requires the sending and receiving agencies have consistent and clearly identified goals (Renwick, 1984). This is further emphasised by Davies and North (1990) who demonstrate discontinuities in expectations between preschool and school teachers. Further, Fowler, et al. (1991) discuss the wastage of
previous effort when transitions are not co-ordinated and stress the critical need for continuity, calling for more research in this area. The need for release time (supported by finance) is also identified by Fowler and Ortesky (1994). For continuity in transition teachers need planning and release time to meet with families and other professionals, and as appropriate, visit sending or receiving programs. Funding is needed to pay casual staff to make this possible as well as for inservice programs.

5.1.3 The teacher's role

Teachers who are involved in transition are, of course, only taking the first step in a long term process of which successful inclusion or maximum integration is the ultimate aim. The role of teachers in the attainment of successful inclusion practices was examined by Center (1987) who raised concerns that the implementation of policy in NSW may be hindered by an "ad hoc" approach. There is unlikely to be any systematic modification to a school's organisation by administrators and furthermore, teachers' instructional expertise is not considered. She described a scenario in which a teacher with no more preparation than a sympathetic attitude is put in a position of accepting a child with a special need into a class with no guaranteed or ongoing support. She further proposed, based on studies in the US, that if growing apprehension about the process of inclusion is to be addressed, teachers will have to be alleviated of some of the responsibility for its success. Unsupported integration may actually impede teachers' pedagogical success due to anxiety about their own competencies with children who have been labelled as having special needs, but may not differ markedly from other children in the classroom who remain unlabelled.

Teacher perceptions can be a powerful determinant of classroom success (e.g. Carr & Kurtz-Costes, 1994) and Center (1987) stressed the need to understand the attitudes of
classroom teachers towards children who have been labelled as having special needs as they may be a determinant of the success of the inclusion process.

The role of the teacher, both in terms of pedagogy and management of transitions should be an overt and well considered issue in the planning of successful transitions.
5.1.4 The child in transition

Of course the system related logistical elements of transition aren't the only ones to be considered. There is also the child. As with their teachers, children with special needs in transition, are at the beginning of a process - hopefully one of inclusion into school. Although not the focus of this study, it is important to remember that exemplary transitions should include individualised preparation of the child with special needs for school. The child's progress through the first months of school should also be monitored.

Fowler and Ortesky (1994) discuss some more personal elements of the process. They stress that planning should involve identification of the social, behavioural and cognitive demands of the new program. It is also necessary to understand how the new program differs. Consideration needs to be given to how children may feel in the new setting - their sense of competence and self esteem, their dispositions of curiosity, persistence and ways of responding. Are the expectations of the child similar or different across programs? The amount of support needed may depend on how vulnerable the child is to stress or change. In order to achieve this depth of knowledge and perception about individual children, the transition planning process must be extremely comprehensive.

However these authors sound a note of caution as there may be a temptation inherent in the desire for a successful transition. An issue in the quest for continuity is how much should each program change to become more like the other. Some pre school programs attempting to prepare children for school may present a "school like" program in the mistaken belief that this is the best method of preparation for the next setting. The expectations of the new program should not be regarded as readiness criteria, which may carry with them the risk of exclusion. Responsibility for the preparation of the
child should be shared by the sending and receiving programs, with neither one having to make all the changes to accommodate the other.

A solution for continuity between pre school and school programs is offered by Bredekamp (1987), who explains that "the more variation that exists in developmental expectations and teaching practices between different groups, the more stressful the transition will be for young children. When the Kindergarten program is more like a second grade with desks and papers than like a preschool with blocks and dramatic play props, the change is so abrupt that many children have difficulty adapting" (p.60). She also, cautions the pre school program not to alter its practices inappropriately in order to prepare the child for an inappropriate Kindergarten curriculum. She asserts that it is the Kindergarten program that needs attention and calls for greater continuity to facilitate successful transitions.

5.2 Model Transition Programs

Several transition models, based on the best practice literature, have been established in the US. For example the Building Effective School Transitions (BEST) model and the Sequenced Transition to Education in the Public School (STEPS) model amongst others incorporate best practice guidelines in their practices (Fowler, 1988).

In NSW in the past two years there have been three transition models developed. The Lapstone Transition Policy (Brewer, Ellevsen & O'Neill, in press) was developed and piloted in 1993. During 1994 the NSW DSE formulated Guidelines for the Transition to School (NSW DSE, 1994), and KU Children's Services developed Transition Policy for all its services. These programs are currently being implemented and evaluated. In the Goulburn
Cluster several innovative approaches towards transition programs are currently being implemented also (Barnes, 1993).

5.2.1 Individual education plans and individual family service plans

Best practice in the management of effective transitions involves documentation of the process of transition itself to facilitate effective communication and transfer of records between all team members, including the school. Documentation of the strengths, needs and goals for individual children and families is also most important.

The individually planned programs that are written for children and families, identified as essential elements of the transition process, are known as Individual Education Plans (IEP) and Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP). Every program for children with special needs should maintain comprehensive IEPs and IFSPs for effective long term planning and monitoring of children's progress and communication between multidisciplinary team members. For the child in transition, the careful maintenance of these records is of paramount importance as they will accompany the child when he or she starts school and are the key to transfer of data, which will allow continuity as the child "picks up where he or she left off".

*Individual Education Plans (IEPs)* are education programs usually written by professionals for each child. They should include the following elements:

a) a statement of the child's present level of educational performance;

b) a statement of annual goals, including short term instructional objectives;

c) a statement of specific special education and related services to be provided to the child, and the extent to which the child will be able to participate in regular education programs;
d) the projected dates for initiation of services and the anticipated duration of the services; and

e) objective criteria and evaluation procedures and schedules for determining achievement of objectives.

Recently Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) have become evident in Australian early intervention programs following introduction of law in the U.S.A. mandating their use (PL-457 Part H). Although not mandated by law in Australia the concept of IFSPs has been widely accepted in early intervention services. They are more comprehensive than an IEP and indeed may include or replace the IEP. An IFSP should contain the following elements:

a) information about the child's developmental status (physical, cognitive, psychosocial, language, self-help) based on professionally acceptable objective criteria;

b) family information, which with the concurrence of the family, includes a statement of the family's strengths and needs related to the enhancement of the development of the child;

c) outcomes expected to be achieved by the child and the family with criteria, procedures and timelines to determine progress towards achievement and the necessity for revisions or modifications;

d) early intervention services needed to meet the unique needs of the child and the family in order to meet the identified outcomes;

e) other services such as medical needed by the child;

f) dates anticipated for the initiation and duration of identified needed services;
g) case manager of transition to be from the profession most relevant to the child
and family's needs to be responsible for the implementation of the IFSP and
coordination of other agencies and services; and
h) transition to the next service including preparation of the child and transfer of
information (Brown, 1991, pp 11-13).

5.3 The Need for Further Research

It is typical of the literature on transition planning to describe proposed or operational
programs, but not to follow up with an examination of how the transition processes have
worked. Descriptions are not accompanied by evaluations of effectiveness or otherwise of the
policies and procedures, descriptions of which personnel have taken responsibility for
coordination of transition, and where the finance has come from to make this all possible.
The ideal models of transition presented in the literature, come at a price and it is unclear
whether ideal models are possible for all services with children with special needs attending.
There is clearly a gap in the literature and further research is needed to show whether the
proposed models of transition to school are possible or practicable in other than model
programs.

In a study designed to investigate one element of the transition to school, Lawton, Fitzgerald
and Marshall (1995) discuss their findings following a six year longitudinal project with two
cohorts of Head Start and non Head Start children. The group was followed from
Kindergarten and through to Third Grade. The paper focuses on the children's school
performance, teachers' practices and classroom observations. Although interesting data
emerge about the children's experiences at school, the report does not discuss the transition
process which was (or was not) carried out in the year prior to school commencement. It is
unclear as to whether the receiving teachers were prepared for the children's arrival, or
communicated with their Head Start (sending) teachers. This information would have provided a valuable insight into children's subsequent school experiences and their teachers' attitudes and predictions for their success.

If the management of successful transitions is to be facilitated in NSW participants in the process need to strive for continuity in all elements of that process and look to best practice for guidance.

5.3.2 Research issues and questions

In order to facilitate continuity of beliefs and practices in transition management it is important to examine the views and experiences of teachers in the process. Specifically, it is important to identify current discontinuities. The following questions are important:

- What are the most strongly held beliefs of early childhood teachers about the management of the transition to school?
- What are the most frequently carried out transition management practices of early childhood teachers?
- What continuity is there between early childhood teachers' beliefs and their subsequent daily practices with regard to the management of transitions?
- If differences exist do they vary according to the undergraduate qualifications of the teacher?
- If differences exist do they vary according to the system in which the teacher works?
CHAPTER 6:

Research Design

6.1 The Purpose of This Study

The present study was designed to provide a snapshot of current processes of transition to school for young children with special needs in NSW. As this is a relatively new area of study, with the need for grounded theories to emerge, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in an attempt to provide a rich and meaningful picture of the process and the people involved in it.

Anecdotal evidence and previous research (Brewer, 1995a) suggested dissatisfaction and concern amongst early childhood teachers in schools about the transition to school for children with special needs. Prominent writers in the field also call for examination of transition processes saying "the field of early childhood education needs to assess the extent to which transition planning procedures are or are not implemented, and whether their implementation makes a difference in services received" (Fowler, et al., 1991, p.143).

The transition to school was selected as an area of study as the importance of successful transitions for children's future success at school is recognised. The potential stress for families of children with special needs if this process is not acknowledged and successfully planned and implemented ensuring continuity has also been shown (e.g. Fowler, et al., 1991).
Transitions in other areas of education have received attention in recent years (Elrod & Franklin, 1994; Greenwood, 1992; Kraemer, 1993), but there has been little attention paid to the transition into school. There is even less research about transitions for children with special needs. If the implementation of transition policy is to be successful in NSW it is important that current, local research provide data on many aspects of the transitions that are occurring.

Recent policies developed in NSW by the Department of School Education attempt to address concerns about continuity in the transition to school for children with special needs (NSW Dept. of School Ed., 1994). Research with families, however, shows that even after introduction of this policy, there are still many areas for concern (Brewer, 1995b). In this study, continuity is examined through the Beliefs and Practices of some teachers involved in the implementation of the policy.

Definitions for programs and "children with special needs" are given in Chapter 1.

Although the broad focus of this research is on the transition to school for young children with special needs and their families, it is recognised that transition is a complex and dynamic process, with many elements and a wide range of stakeholders. It needs to be examined in a variety of ways and from the viewpoints of a range of stakeholders as experiences and views will differ. In this study, one aspect of the transition process, continuity, was studied. It was examined from the point of view of early childhood teachers - one of the major groups of stakeholders in the process. Teachers' perceptions of continuity between programs was examined by looking at three main conceptual areas within the transition process: Teaching and Learning; The Role of Families; and Transition Planning.

An understanding of the process of transition, which recognises the importance of continuity, is essential for exemplary transitions to occur. The provision of maximum continuity should afford teachers and policy makers the opportunity to facilitate future
transitions in order to reduce stress and maintain the rate of learning by children with special needs.

This investigation of continuity in transition was framed around the following important research questions:

- What are most strongly held beliefs of early childhood teachers, working with children with special needs, about:
  1) teaching and learning?
  2) the role of families in the transition of their children to school?
  3) the management of the transition process?

- What do these teachers report their most frequent daily practices to be in the areas of:
  1) teaching and learning?
  2) the role of families?
  3) the management of the transition process?

- Is there continuity between the beliefs and practices of early childhood teachers working with children with special needs in the transition to school?

- Is there continuity of early childhood teachers' beliefs and subsequent practices in the conceptual areas of teaching and learning, families and transition management?

- Do early childhood teachers' beliefs, and subsequent practices vary according to the program in which they work?

- Do early childhood teachers' beliefs, and subsequent practices vary according to their undergraduate training?
• And ultimately ... what continuity is there for young children with special needs, as they move from early intervention and other pre school programs to enter the school system for the first time?

And further, an exploratory question:

• Is an "ideal model" for transition possible or practicable in current programs?

6.2 Methodological Considerations
This study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis. The application of qualitative and quantitative methodologies was considered desirable because of recognition that the transition process is complex and dynamic and involves a range of stakeholders and pedagogical issues. Hence, it cannot be treated as a single event or variable. Several approaches to data collection and analyses allow a richer picture of the transition to school to emerge.

6.2.1. Methodology in special education research
Much research in the area of special education has in the past been of a quantitative nature. It has been suggested that this was a reaction to "Freudian psychoanalytically oriented introspection and the almost clairvoyant examination of inner mental, emotional and feeling states" (Stainback & Stainback, 1984, p.400). Greater emphasis on the use of qualitative methodology in special education is an attempt to generate more theory development in the field. Using an inductive approach the researcher hypothesises and theorises as the investigation proceeds, as opposed to setting out to prove a theory or hypothesis as in quantitative research. The teachers in this study can be seen as learners attempting to come to terms with philosophies and processes that are relatively new to them. As such the qualitative methodologies proposed by Marton, Hounsell and Entwistle (1984), as they study and analyse the learning processes of tertiary students can be usefully applied in this context. Entwistle (1984) suggests that the implications of their approach can be seen in a general way to apply to other areas of education.
6.2.2. Qualitative methodology

The advantages that Stainback and Stainback (1984) identify for the use of qualitative methodology in Special Education can be usefully applied to this study.

"Qualitative researchers focus on the insider's perspective. Through close first hand experience with the people involved, meaningful data is (sic) collected." (p.402).

As the transition for children with special needs can be complex and emotional, involving a wide range and number of stakeholders, Stainback and Stainback's comments suggest that qualitative methods are particularly useful for research in transition. Meaningful data can more readily be obtained with varied and evolving methodologies. Quantitative methodology alone, could not provide as meaningful a picture of the strong emotions felt and expressed by both families and professionals undergoing the transition process. As Entwistle (1984) explains in making the case for the use of qualitative methodology the alternative paradigm involves approaches to research rooted in phenomenology which derive from a direct exploration of... experiences of learning. The traditional research paradigm involves explaining ...behaviour from the outside, as a detached, objective observer. The alternative approach seeks an empathetic understanding of what is involved in ... learning derived from .... descriptions of what learning means to them.

"Qualitative researchers consider the changing or dynamic nature of reality. Peoples' perceptions of educational concerns are complex and involve change" (p.402). These perceptions are considered as the basis for further change. The whole process of the inclusion of children with special needs into the school system is a relatively new one. Many teachers are still having their first experiences of this. Older teachers received no training in including children with special needs. The nature of the reality of inclusion is complex, multidimensional and dynamic. If inclusion is to become successful, and transition is an important element of this,
then teachers' perceptions of how they are dealing with this process are a valuable tool in documenting and improving the present reality.

"Qualitative researchers attempt to gain a holistic picture of what is happening through the collection of a wide array of data, including quantitative data" (p.402). In the present study quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire, which was able to survey a large group and wide range of teachers. However, these data alone do not give a holistic picture of the process; do not give voice to powerful and important individual experiences; do not give the insight afforded by personal involvement, emotions and views, so important and relevant when dealing with families and professionals involved in a potentially stressful time of life.

"Rather than aiming to verify or disprove hypotheses, qualitative researchers use a flexible, discovery and exploratory approach. The study can evolve as it progresses in order to gain a deeper more valid understanding of what is being investigated" (p.402). Hypotheses could be developed about what is best practice in the transition to school, but to find out what teachers think and what is really happening in services, supplementary approaches are necessary. In order to predict if the process will work it is essential to know the perceptions and views of the major stakeholders in the area.

"Qualitative data are collected in naturalistic conditions. Programs and procedures are investigated in context as they naturally occur" (p.402). In the area of transitions there is such a wide range of people, policies, settings, views and possibilities that it would be impossible to conduct an investigation that was truly controlled. Every case is completely different, no matter how similar the superficial conditions.

"Qualitative researchers aim for validity through the presentation of a thorough, rich and deep understanding of the topic" (p.403). By surveying and talking to a wide
range of people from many areas of the transition process, this study will achieve this validity. When a wide range of data are gathered in natural education settings, the probability of the development of theory that is relevant and functional to educational theory is enhanced. By using an inductive approach, grounded theories are likely to emerge. These will subsequently have social validity which:

- will have socially significant goals;
- will be considered by teachers, families, students and other consumers to be worthwhile; and
- will have socially important outcomes which will satisfy consumers (Stainback & Stainback, 1984).

As professionals and families will determine whether the transition policies are used, discarded or modified it is imperative that they have input into their development and evaluation. The qualitative and quantitative approaches employed in this study are an attempt to give voice to the experiences and concerns of teachers involved in the transition process.
6.2.3 A phenomenographic approach

Phenomenography is an approach to research which aims to identify peoples' qualitatively different experiences and understanding of the world, and systematically describe them in terms of categories of description (Marton, 1981, 1986). Prosser (1993) explains that phenomenography is not in itself a theory of learning but a view of learning that incorporates a number of principles for the practice of teaching and learning. People understand and experience the world in qualitatively different ways and the "how" of experiencing and understanding the world is inseparable from "what" is experienced and understood. Learning occurs when something is seen and understood in a qualitatively different way to the way it was seen or understood previously. Learning is seen as a conceptual change. It is generally accepted that people learn from their experiences and teachers are no exception to this accepted truth. While phenomenography is more usually used to describe the process of student learning, in this case it was used to analyse the learning that teachers go through in the process of including children with special needs into regular classrooms. It would be commonly accepted that teachers come to their teaching from a range of backgrounds, conceptions of education and predispositions towards teaching derived from personal experience and philosophy, coupled with subsequent training. Teachers' learning is a human activity that occurs in a cultural context. Their approach to learning may be analysed in terms of a deep or a surface level approach. Phenomenographic research describes the qualitatively different ways subjects relate to a phenomena (Crawford, Gordon, Nicholas & Prosser, 1994). Their model of phenomenographic analysis was adapted in this study. There is recognition that acting, thinking and feeling are all part of one coordinated system that interacts in reciprocal ways with known objects. The social context for all activity is important and collective external activity precedes individual internal activity. In the case of teachers, engaged in the inclusion of children with special needs, perhaps for the first time, their teaching can be seen as a learning process. I have applied Crawford et al's analysis of student learning to teachers' learning and their subsequent teacher decision making processes. The
experience can be conceptualised in terms of a conception of teaching and learning and an approach to teaching and learning. The conception can be analysed in terms of what the teachers focus on when reporting their conception of teaching, for example a quantitative increase in the amount of knowledge they have or a changed understanding of reality.

The approach used can also be analysed in terms of the focus of research; a surface approach versus a deep approach. In a surface approach the teacher's attention and activity is centred on short term instrumental goals - in this case, survival in the classroom, achievement of management and learning goals. Self evaluation addresses the question "How can I manage with this child/children as well as thirty others in the classroom?" In deep approaches teachers adopt a more global and personal perspective on teaching and learning. Teaching strategies are aimed at making sense of new information and experiences in terms of existing conceptions and opinions, which may be revised if necessary. This can be related to Marton's (1981) description of students who either seek to memorise bits of information in order to reproduce that information or they seek to abstract meaning with the intention of understanding the material they are studying. Using this as a reference point it can be assumed that an atomistic approach to teaching is where teachers deal with routines and children's learning in an unconnected way, while a holistic approach is where teachers concentrate on forming a cohesive view which takes account of the new ideas.

This phenomenographic perspective provides a basis for the identification of the categories of description of teachers' experiences of learning to teach children with special needs in inclusive settings. Prosser (1993) explains that from a phenomenographic perspective it is the subject's perception of the experience that is vital. Teachers will experience the process in different ways, focusing on those aspects most relevant to their own context. The explanation of the teachers' learning process not only has ecological validity within the "real world" of the early
childhood context, but also allows the researcher to make an interpretation of the findings which does justice to the totality of the teachers' own experiences (Entwistle, 1984). If teachers are to optimise their understanding of the phenomena (in this case transition) then we need to seek to change their perceptions. In order to do that, we need to be clear on why it is important for teachers to engage in certain activities, to be clear about what aspects of those activities we want the teachers to focus on, and then to help teachers focus on those aspects. We need to help teachers undergo a conceptual change of what they think teaching children with special needs is all about, as well as developing the strategies to see and understand the process clearly. We need to recognise that "learning and teaching need to be considered in relation to both content and context. Teachers...have to reflect on their own individual needs and circumstances" (Entwistle & Marton, 1984, 211).

6.2.4. Quantitative methodology

Quantitative methodology allows the researcher to test hypotheses against reality. The researcher can decide which variables might cause certain results and carry out a test to either support or reject the hypothesis at some level of probability (Leedy, 1993). Quantitative methodologies were employed in this study in order to provide data about the reality of the current transition process and to test hypotheses suggested by anecdotal evidence and literature.

6.3. Subjects

A representative sample of 45 early childhood teachers in Greater Western Sydney were involved in the study. The teachers came from 90 services for young children approached to participate. Services nominated the teachers who would complete a questionnaire to describe their transition Beliefs and Practices. Following initial analysis of the questionnaire six elite interviews were conducted with teachers. Two pre school teachers (one Preschool one Long Day Care), two early intervention teachers and two Kindergarten teachers were selected for interviews. They
were chosen from the respondents who had previously agreed to take part in further stages of this study.

For the purpose of this study, interview subjects have been assigned assumed names to protect their anonymity. The area in which they work (pre school (P), early intervention (EI), Kindergarten (K)) has been noted to facilitate integration and understanding of their views. It is shown in brackets after each use of their name.

**Anne (K)** is a primary school teacher whose initial teacher training was done at a Sydney university. She holds a Diploma of Teaching (Primary) and has done no further formal study. She has completed a short non-accredited course on early childhood education. She has taught Kindergarten for the last three years and for the previous two years taught Years One and Two. Anne teaches in the Mt. Druitt region in a NSW Department of School Education school.

**Sylvia (IE)** has been teaching for fifteen years. She holds a Diploma of Teaching (Primary) and a Bachelor of Arts from overseas institutions. After teaching in special schools for four years, Sylvia has worked in early intervention for eleven years. In her current position she is an itinerant advisory teacher who visits Preschools and Long Day Care centres in the Penrith area to assess and provide programs for children referred with special needs.

**Nellie (P)** received her initial qualification of Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood) from a Sydney university. She has since completed her Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) at the same institution. She has been teaching for five years, with the first four at an inner city Long Day Care centre and the last year at a community based Preschool in the Penrith area. She is about to commence a new position at a Long Day Care centre in the Blue Mountains.
Pat (P) is the Director of a community based Long Day Care Centre in the Parramatta area. She holds a Diploma of Teaching (EC) and a Bachelor of Education (EC). She has been teaching for seventeen years, with nine years in her current position.

Sally (K) is a Kindergarten teacher in a NSW Department of School Education school in the Penrith area. She holds a Diploma of Teaching (Primary). Sally has been teaching for sixteen years with six years experience as a Kindergarten teacher.

Kathy (EI) is an early intervention teacher who works for a major charitable organisation in the Campbelltown region. She holds a Diploma of Teaching (EC) and a Bachelor of Education (EC). She has been teaching for seven years and at the time of interview had just commenced in a new position.

Services were selected by accessing the data base of services used for practice teaching placements at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean. The first thirty services from each of the relevant lists (pre school, early intervention, school), were approached. Table 1 shows the number of approaches made to each service type and the number of responses. Relevant percentages of the total number of responses are also given for each service type. The total response rate was 50%.
Table 6.1
Services Approached for Research and Responses Received

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Surveys Sent</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage % of total response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool/daycare</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Services included State schools (n=11), community based services (n=17), private services (n=2), local government services (n=2) and 6 "other" services (e.g. charity).

The number of children with special needs taught by each respondent was noted. As some teachers were itinerant their case loads were large and thus there was a big variation in the total number of children each teacher taught. The number varied from 0 (4% of respondents) to 80 (2% of respondents) (Mean 15.28, standard deviation of 20.12).

Of the 45 participants in the survey 58% held their first qualification in early childhood education (Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood) or Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood)). A further 24% held undergraduate primary teaching qualifications (Diploma of Teaching (Primary)). None of the teachers working in Kindergarten held undergraduate early childhood qualifications. Two teachers who worked for the Department of School Education in early intervention classes both held undergraduate...
early childhood qualifications with one also holding a postgraduate diploma in early childhood special education.

Twenty of the participants also held a second or third qualification, with 27% being early childhood, 2% primary, 11% special education and 4% "other".

When asked if they considered themselves to be predominantly a "regular teacher" or a "special teacher", 60% reported that they classified themselves as "regular teachers". The total years of teaching experience of the participants ranged from 1-30 with the mean being 10.75 with a standard deviation of 7.63.

6.4 Instrumentation

6.4.1 The questionnaire
A questionnaire was used to obtain information on demographic details of participants and ratings of their Beliefs and Practices in the conceptual areas of Teaching and Learning, Families and Transition Management.

Descriptive surveys of this kind allow the close scrutinisation of the population being studied in order to develop records which allow the recorder to return to the observations (Leedy, 1993). The transition to school for children with special needs in NSW has not previously been described and the current upsurge of interest in the area makes this description important and justifies the use of descriptive data collection approaches. The survey approach is commonly used in many areas of life and its design requirements are rigorous. It aims to do a thorough job with a small group of people which is seen as being preferable to doing a poor job with a big group of people (Anderson, 1990). In this case a representative group of teachers within Greater Western Sydney, a metropolitan area of the biggest city in NSW, was surveyed.
The questionnaire had two main sections (see Appendix 2).

Section 1 sought demographic information such as qualifications, area of work, years of experience and familiarity with the guidelines for transition to school introduced by NSW Dept. of School Education during 1994. In Section 2 the items focused on the three anticipated conceptual areas of best practice: Teaching and Learning; Family; and Transition Planning.

Section 2 consisted of 44 items. These were derived from the literature on best practice in early childhood education, early childhood special education, continuity and the transition to school. For example, six elements of transition projects have been identified by Noonan and Ratokalau (1991) as forming the basis of effective transition programs. They are:

(a) transdisciplinary teaming
(b) family support and involvement
(c) assessment and curriculum
(d) interagency cooperation
(e) individualised transition plans
(f) program evaluation (p.391).

These and other similar best practice guidelines for transition to school were used to formulate items. Initially, over one hundred items were derived from the literature. These were grouped to form representative questions and the number reduced. As there were still too many questions it was decided that questions fell into two main categories - those asking about the teachers' philosophies and beliefs, and those asking them what they actually did on a day to day basis - their practices. To facilitate teacher response, it was decided to limit the overall number of items by making each question consist of two parts - a belief section, followed by a practice section. As this meant wording became quite complex, it became critical to ensure
that questions were not ambiguous or unclear. Items were read by methodological
daider and teachers in an attempt to achieve clarity of meaning.

The three conceptual groups were referred to as subscales, although items were not
separated in the questionnaire.

Each item within the three sub-scales in Section 2 was written in two parts. Part (a)
asked about the teachers' **Beliefs** in each of the conceptual areas and part (b)
asked about their related daily **Practices**. The survey was introduced by a
statement acknowledging the multitude of reasons why daily practices may not
align with strongly held beliefs and asked teachers to be as honest as possible in
responding to items. It was further explained that this was in the best interest of
presenting a realistic picture of what is happening in the transition to school for
children with special needs.

In Section 2, a six point Likert-type scale was used. For Beliefs, responses were
rated from "don't believe at all" to "very strongly believe". For Practices responses
were rated from "never" to "always". A six point scale was chosen to eliminate
neutral responses.

The approach to asking for responses on beliefs and practices in one question
served the dual purpose of limiting the number of questions, while at the same time
asking teachers for their reports of the continuity between their beliefs and their
subsequent daily practices.

The order of questions was randomised.

It was anticipated that the items in Section 2 would conceptually form three sub-
scales: Teaching and Learning; Family; and Transition Management.
Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning questions were based on concerns about several critical issues which have direct impact on the implementation of programs for young children: Miller's (1991) finding that early childhood teachers had little understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of curriculum implementation. Wolery's (1991) concerns about the amount of detailed knowledge that exists regarding the use of appropriate and effective teaching strategies with children who have difficulties with learning and the manipulation of the environment to ensure that the child needs to perform the functions that have been identified as necessary in the curriculum design process. He identified the need for further research to extend the knowledge base in the area of curriculum development. And finally, Argyris & Schon's (1974) concern that people exhibit discontinuities between their espoused theories and their theories in use. When questioned, they are not aware of this discontinuity. Concerns about how theory and practice link are relevant to the inclusion of children with special needs in the classroom and led to questions to ascertain whether the discontinuities described above, exist in this sample of NSW teachers; for example: question 7. (I a) can and (b) do meet the learning needs of young children.
Family

Items probing teachers’ perceptions of families were included because changes are known to cause uncertainty and stress for families of children with special needs (Fowler, et al., 1988). These stresses are likely to be a feature of the process of school selection, acceptance and transition. If transitions are to be effective, change and the ensuing stress needs to be kept to a minimum through the provision of continuity in transition processes, for example, question 9. *(It is a) important *(b) happens that parents’ specific concerns about their child are determined and addressed)*.

Transition Management

Transition Management items were included reflecting the concerns of Conn-Powers (1990), for example, who points out that teachers with little experience in inclusion of children with special needs area may see minor challenges as major obstacles. The management aspects of the transition process may be seen as the practicalities of the process on which success in the other areas rely, for example question 2 *(In the transition from one program to another continuing communication between professionals (a) is important (b) happens)*.

The assumption that questions within each group were consistent and would prove to form a cohesive thematic, conceptual grouping was tested empirically during data analysis and will be detailed later in this chapter.

One additional blank page was left at the end of the survey asking for open ended comment about any aspect of transition on which the teachers would like to contribute further.
6.4.2 The interviews

The questionnaires were supplemented by a series of elite interviews with six of the respondents.

Interviews are frequently used and can vary in type from informal to careful scripted discussions which are used as the primary source of information in a research study. Anderson (1990) sees the interview as going beyond what he describes as mere conversation to become a purposeful process of data gathering which is done well by very few people. He discusses the advantages and disadvantages of this methodology. On the positive side the interview is more likely to receive a response than the questionnaire and also allows the interviewer to clarify and probe if the responses are in doubt. As interviews are frequently face to face, more complete communication can take place with the possibility of non verbal cues, tones of voice etc., also allowing the interviewer to probe more deeply if required.

Disadvantages of interviews include the logistical difficulties involved with a single interviewer trying to accurately record the information, whilst still appearing attentive to the respondent. The question of reliability and validity also arises. This can particularly arise if questions are not standardised. Some qualitative researchers would negate Anderson’s (1990) concerns on this issue, seeing this as a strength of this methodology - "giving voice" in a full and meaningful manner without concerns for reliability. The context of the interview can also greatly effect the outcome, with interruptions and pressure of time being common drawbacks. In this study the interviews were semi structured as standardised descriptive data had already been collected and so the issue of reliability was less relevant at this stage of the study. The aim of this stage was to use qualitative data collection processes to provide an in depth description which could add richness to the previously collected data.
The elite interview was chosen for this study. It aims to probe the views of a small number of people. It is aimed at a respondent who has specialised knowledge or experience of the subject being discussed (Anderson, 1990).

Although normative interviews can be successfully carried out by people less familiar with the subject under discussion, but trained to interview with reliability and validity in mind, elite interviews need to be carried out by researchers familiar with the topic of research. This is the reason that this method of interviewing was chosen as the researcher has a breadth of knowledge from the literature and professional experience to conduct the interviews in this manner. Anderson (1990) explains that the elite interviewer needs to be able to grasp new information and pursue new directions to build understanding. The interviewer is being taught by the respondent about events and personal perspectives. This depth was being sought at this stage of this study to add information to that already collected by questionnaire.

A proforma was developed which consisted of semi-structured, open ended questions. The questions were taken from the three conceptual groupings used in the questionnaire and were based on the original questions from this (see Appendix 3).

6.5 Procedure

6.5.1. The questionnaires

An initial request to participate in the study was made by mail to Directors, Coordinators and Principals. A follow up letter was sent to all services. Two follow up letters were sent to schools. The first 30 services in each group were chosen alphabetically from a data base used for placement of student teachers and were all in the Greater West Region of Sydney.
After approval by the University of Western Sydney, Nepean Ethics Committee, and the NSW Department of School Education, questionnaires were mailed to services with a covering letter and reply paid envelope. Participation by individual teachers was voluntary. Respondents were asked if they would be willing to partake in further stages of the study. The questionnaire was piloted with a group of teachers attending an a course of further study at UWS Nepean.

6.5.2 The interviews

When all questionnaires had been returned and analysed six teachers were selected for elite interviews. Selected respondents were chosen for interview according to their mean scores on Beliefs and Practices in the three conceptual areas of Teaching and Learning, Families and Transition Planning. Of the participants who were willing to participate in further research, those with the highest mean score and the lowest mean score on difference between transition Beliefs and Practices were selected from each teaching group. This method of selection was chosen in order to facilitate understanding of discontinuities in Beliefs and Practices revealed in this study. It was surmised that teachers at the extreme ends of the mean scores may provide insight as to why the teachers in this study reported a mismatch between Beliefs and Practices.

For the second phase of the study, teachers were contacted by phone at their workplace and invited to participate. Interviews were carried out at work sites, so that interviewees would feel comfortable in a familiar context. Interviews took place after school or at the end of the day in Long Day Care. The duration of interviews averaged one and a half hours. Consistency of questioning was not aimed for as these were elite interviews and my aim as interviewer, with a comprehensive knowledge of the subject, was to explore and draw out the participants’ experiences, views and feelings.
Interviews were audio tape recorded, with the permission of each respondent. The interviews were later transcribed for analysis.

It was explained to respondents that the questions were loosely based on the questionnaire that they had already answered. Their original was given to them to remind them of its contents and what they had written. It was further explained that the questions were open ended and meant as a trigger to elicit their thoughts, feelings and experiences. They were told that if they wanted to add anything or digress from the question that it was acceptable to do this. It was anticipated that as teachers talked their views would emerge and issues important to them which may not have been anticipated by the researcher would become apparent.

6.6 Analysis

6.6.1 Questionnaire analysis

Teachers' responses to questionnaire items were analysed by quantitative and qualitative methods. Demographic responses and the Likert-type scales were analysed quantitatively using SPSS for Windows. ANOVA techniques were used to determine whether independent variables (Program or Qualification) could be used to predict continuity (or lack thereof) in dependent variables (teachers' beliefs and practices). Open ended questions were analysed to provide more detailed descriptive, interpretative and evaluative information on experiences and perceptions of the transition process. A phenomenographic approach was taken to analyse teachers' responses to the open ended questions. The first stage of this analysis was to identify categories of description from responses. The categories that emerged, reflected characteristics of the data and perspectives on transition drawn from the literature.
Initially, it was planned to analyse data on dependent variables (beliefs and practices) in Section 2 of the questionnaire by using a three (Program) by two (Qualification) by two (beliefs and practices) ANOVA with repeated measures. This proved to be inappropriate as the poor response rate from Kindergarten teachers meant that some cell sizes were too small to allow for the use of this method.

Subscale conceptual groupings were tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha techniques.

As the questionnaire items were devised from the literature in three important conceptual areas of transition, it was anticipated that the items measuring beliefs and practices could be collapsed into three sub-scales (Teaching and Learning, Family, and Transition Management). It was further anticipated that empirical testing of these conceptual groupings would show that the responses to items in each would reveal strong conceptual links within each group.

Reliability analyses were carried out to test a priori conceptual groupings using Cronbach Alpha technique. Alpha coefficients were high on the three subscales showing internal consistency. The results were as follows:

**Teaching and Learning** - Beliefs (.86), Practices (.76); **Family** - Beliefs (.85), Practices (.79); **Transition Planning** - Beliefs (.85), Practices (.82).

These analyses revealed that indeed, these carefully considered questions did work together as independent conceptual groupings which elicited consistent responses indicating clarity and lack of ambiguity in question design. As the items in each subscale were internally reliable, it can be assumed that the teachers in this study believe and practice consistently within these subscale areas. An abridged version of this questionnaire would be useful to further investigate the work of early childhood teachers.
Aggregated results were analysed using t-tests, ANOVA and ANOVA with repeated measures on the dependent variables.

6.6.2 Interview analysis

A phenomenographic approach to data analysis was employed in order to examine and give voice to the experiences of teachers from their own viewpoint as they implemented transition processes.

The method of qualitative analysis is rigorous. It sets out to identify concepts which describe important differences in the ways in which different teachers adapt to the transition and inclusion of children with special needs. The specific differences give rise to distinct categories and each category is defined, or delimited, in terms of those extracts from the interviews which together constitute its meaning.

In this way other researchers are able to follow similar procedures and then make detailed comparisons between the concepts and categories identified in the various studies. This procedure thus carries "the hallmark" of scientific research, while not following the methods of the natural sciences (Entwistle, 1984, p.17).

The interviews were transcribed with each transcription analysed to break comments up into separate categories. After initial analysis it was decided to analyse these comments in four separate ways:

1. Emergence of themes

From the separated comments themes and sub themes were formed as they emerged from the teachers' comments. Thematic group headings were influenced by the literature of transition. Comments were then sorted, according to theme, with all comments recorded. As this data was copious, and sometimes repetitive where individual teachers made similar comments, it was decided to reduce the amount of data by "delimiting" the statements.
2. **Delimiting of themes**

After summarising and recording all comments according to theme, the summaries were re-examined in order to delimit the data. Comments that were of a similar nature were collapsed together in order to develop a final summary of concerns according to category. For example, comments such as "class sizes are too big" and "there are too many children in the class", would be delimited to produce one overall comment on class size. These statements appear as the final analysis of teacher experiences and concerns according to the themes which emerged from the research.

Examination of these statements showed that the majority of statements were of a "problem" based nature. It seemed important to recognise this important characteristic of the data and to further classify the "problem statements" in order to produce a useful analysis of the perceptions and experiences of the teachers who were involved in elite interviews. In order to do this, best practice guidelines for the transition to school were developed.

3. **Best practice guidelines**

In an attempt to address one of the research questions raised in this study about whether exemplary transitions can be organised in other than the model services which are described in the literature, it was decided to develop a series of "guidelines for best practice in transition to school". These were drawn from the literature, and the researcher's experience in writing transition policy for two early childhood organisations. The result was a list of twenty two "principles" in best practice in the transition to school for children with special needs and their families. These principles were then used as the basis of categorisation of teachers' comments. Teachers' perceptions of problems in the transition to school were classified according to the area of best practice they aligned most closely with. Similarly to the treatment of data in the "emergence of themes", comments were collapsed and delimited to identify major issues (see Table 1).
4. **Identification of significant transition issues**

As with the emergence of themes, a feature of the classification of problems was the repeated recurrence of some issues. When the data were delimited it was apparent that there was a need to identify "significant problems". A list was generated of the problem statements that most frequently reoccurred and these were considered to be representative of the major concerns of the teachers who participated in the elite interviews (see Table 7.26).
CHAPTER 7:

Results and Discussion

7.1 Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this study was to describe the process of transition into school for children with special needs and their families, as experienced by early childhood teachers in Western Sydney. Specifically, it investigated: a) the continuity in transition processes as children move from the early intervention sector into school; focusing on Beliefs and subsequent Practices of three groups of stakeholders: pre school teachers, early intervention teachers and Kindergarten teachers in three important conceptual areas of transition: teaching and learning; families; and transition planning; and b) factors affecting patterns of continuity, e.g., teacher Qualifications, and Program.

This study was conducted in two phases; a) a survey and b) elite interviews. Results are reported to correspond with these phases. Firstly, the results of empirical analyses of data obtained through a survey of teachers' transition Beliefs and Practices by questionnaire are presented and discussed. These results led to further investigation through elite interviews with selected participants. Secondly, the qualitative analyses of these interviews are presented to explain and interpret the quantitative data. Selected comments from teachers, obtained from both the questionnaire and the interviews, will be used to "give voice" to the teachers who participated in the study.

Results are reported in three major sections:
Section 1 — 7.2 — background information and synopsis of results
Section 2 — 7.3 — survey results
Section 3 — 7.4 — interview results

Section 1 contains a synopsis of results and information on teachers' involvement in the NSW Department of School Education's transition process.

Sections 2 and 3 focus on three identified conceptual areas: Teaching and Learning, Family and Transition Management. The conceptual groups are referred to as subscales and results will be reported according to subscale.

Section 2 focuses on quantitative analysis of empirical data collected in the survey. These data are examined to ascertain teachers' most strongly held Beliefs and their most frequent Practices. In each conceptual subscale, Program type and teaching Qualification are explored in relation to Beliefs and Practices.

In Section 3 qualitative data gathered through elite interviews are presented and analysed. Results of phenomenographic analyses will be reported and discussed. Teachers interviewed will be described by name, after which the Programs in which they work will be shown in brackets: pre school (P), early intervention (EI) and Kindergarten (K). Further to this, data are summarised to present an outline of teachers' perceptions of problems in the transition to school process.

Results are discussed in relation to the literature on continuity in Teaching and Learning, Families and Transition Management for children with special needs and their families as they make the transition from early intervention programs to school.
7.2 Background Information And Synopsis Of Results

The results of quantitative analyses of data indicate that there are significant differences between the teachers' transition related Beliefs and their Practices on each of the identified conceptual subscales of Teaching and Learning, Family and Transition Management.

In order to examine the relationship between continuity of Beliefs and Practices and the Program in which teachers worked or their Qualifications, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedures using Program and Qualification as the independent variable, were employed. All subscales were analysed using oneway ANOVAs and then ANOVAs with repeated measures on Beliefs and Practices as a function of Program and Qualification. Initially, it was planned to analyse data on dependent variables (Beliefs and Practices) in Section 2 of the questionnaire by using a three (Program) by two (Qualification) by two (Beliefs and Practices) ANOVA with repeated measures. This proved to be inappropriate as the poor response rate from Kindergarten teachers meant that some cell sizes were too small to allow for the use of this method. Results will only be reported where significant.

Results indicated that teachers' own Beliefs and Practices were markedly different, as predicted by the literature (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Further, as predicted, differences between teachers were related to the Program in which teachers work (pre school, early intervention, Kindergarten)(e.g., Hains, Fowler, Schwartz & Kottwitz, 1989).

Some reasons why such differences occurred were later revealed in the interviews. Many areas of concern in regard to transition to school emerged from interview data. A set of "problem statements" was therefore generated. Summaries of problem statements were
grouped according to the area of "Best Practice Guidelines" with which they were most appropriately aligned (see Table 7.26).

There were no relationships between teachers' Beliefs and Practices and their Qualifications (see Tables 7.14, 7.15, 7.21).

Qualitative analyses were intended to further investigate issues that may help to explain the discontinuity between Beliefs and Practices revealed in empirical analyses. While all teachers interviewed were positive about the idea of systematic transition processes, few had experienced them in operation. Further, problems in many of the essential elements of transition were described. Teachers reported a lack of communication between pre school and school Programs. As a pre-requisite of continuity is effective communication, this study has highlighted important areas of concern.

7.2.1 Background information on teachers and their transition experiences

Forty five teachers responded to the initial survey. This was a response rate of 50%. The group consisted of twenty five pre school teachers, sixteen early intervention teachers and eight Kindergarten teachers.

During 1994 the NSW Department of School Education introduced draft Transition Guidelines for Educators and Parents (NSW Dept. of School Education, 1994). In this study teachers were asked if they were aware of these guidelines and if they had been involved in using them during 1994. Table 7.1 indicates there was a relatively high level of awareness of the existence of the guidelines. However, the number of people in this study actually involved in implementation during 1994 was low, particularly in schools. In order to determine whether Program had an
effect on awareness or use of guidelines, Chi Square analyses were performed, and revealed no significant difference (see Table 7.1). However the two Kindergarten teachers who later participated in elite interviews (Sally and Anne), had not seen the guidelines nor heard anything about them within their schools, although they both had an interest in the area of transition. One survey respondent, (EI), felt that transitions would work effectively, "if done according to the guidelines" which she saw as a good basis for planning transitions. Pat, a Long Day Care Centre Director, agreed with this, as she felt that the guidelines had made her aware of the importance of beginning to plan early for transition and she had done this with one family during 1994, with the cooperation of the Department of School Education.
Table 7.1
Awareness and Use of Department of School Education Guidelines - 1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(N)</th>
<th>Aware of DSE Guidelines</th>
<th>Using DSE Guidelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre school</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14 (73.7%)</td>
<td>10 (52.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early intervention</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
<td>10 (66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 (83.3%)</td>
<td>2 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 (df=2), =4.8, p=ns \quad \chi^2 (df =2), =1.5, p=ns \]

The low number of teachers who are becoming involved in formalised transition Programs is an area of concern. As early intervention staff are most directly involved in transition it is to be expected that involvement is highest for them, but certainly the number of teachers from all Programs involved in the process needs to dramatically increase if effective transitions for children with special needs are to be implemented. Best practice guidelines suggest that largely, this effectiveness will come from formalised transition management and thorough communication between all stakeholders. Teachers in this study have indicated that this is not yet happening to any large extent. Qualitative data presented later in this chapter will show that communication between pre school and school programs is virtually non-existent.
7.2.2 Inservice

Best practice guidelines in the transition to school address the notion of Teaching and Learning in integrated classrooms by including in the roles of the transition team, the preparation of teachers through the organisation and provision of appropriate training programs. Special Education related inservice programs would meet this criterion.

While this survey did not specifically ask if inservices had been organised by transition teams, the involvement of special education staff in inservice programs is an important element of developing successful inclusion and transition practices.

Respondents were asked if they had attended any special education related inservice programs during 1994. Most teachers (73%) had attended a program with participation being higher for early intervention teachers than for other teachers: (pre school-58%; EI-93%; Kindergarten-83%). Chi Square analysis showed that pre school teachers were significantly less likely to attend inservice courses than teachers from other programs ($\chi^2 (df=2) = 9.4, p < 0.01$). When asked to rate the usefulness of these programs, only 24% of teachers found them "extremely useful" with a further 42% finding the inservices "useful".

Sylvia, (EI), had very definite ideas about how the training for Kindergarten teachers should be improved: "Yes I would say there's a need for more training, more inservice training. Not only about the major disabilities that they might come across but also the more subtle learning difficulties like visual perception problems and auditory processing problems and whatever".

One pre school teacher suggested that her undergraduate training in special education had been very broad and that now she was working with children with
special needs she wanted more specific information about areas of special need such as Down Syndrome and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Increased attendance at in-service programs by pre-school teachers may facilitate and increase their participation in the transition process.
SECTION 2

7.3 Survey Results Of Conceptual Areas

7.3.1 Teaching and Learning

Continuity of Teaching and Learning
This section reports on the continuity of Beliefs and Practices of teachers in
different early childhood Programs: it focuses on the conceptual area of Teaching
and Learning. Beliefs and Practices are examined using the independent variables
of, firstly, the Program in which teachers work (pre school, early intervention,
Kindergarten) and secondly, teacher Qualifications.

The literature on continuity suggests a mismatch between curriculum and teaching
strategies in pre school and school settings with one possible cause of
discontinuity being different undergraduate training pathways of teachers (e.g.,
Briggs & Potter, 1990). In this study, most teachers in the pre school sector held
specialist early childhood Qualifications (e.g., DipT (EC)), and most in the
primary sector (K-2), held primary Qualifications (e.g., DipT (Prim)). The
literature further suggests the change from early childhood perspectives of child
centred, developmentally based curriculum to the content based curriculum of
primary schools may contribute to discontinuities. According to the literature, it
would be expected that the Qualifications of the teachers in this study would affect
their Beliefs and Practices in the area of Teaching and Learning (e.g., Briggs &
Potter, 1990; Elkind, 1991). However, as teachers working in Programs may
have different Qualifications, it is also necessary to examine differences according
to the Program in which teachers work (pre school, early intervention,
Kindergarten).
Teaching and Learning according to Program

The literature suggests that there will be differences in philosophy and pedagogical approaches between different early childhood Programs (e.g., Briggs & Potter, 1990; Carta, Atwater, Schwartz & McConnell, 1993; Hains, Fowler, Schwartz & Kottwitz, 1989). It is expected that these differences will be reflected in Teaching and Learning Beliefs and Practices.

In order to explore the similarities and differences in Beliefs and Practices according to the Program in which teachers worked (pre school, early intervention, Kindergarten), means for the Teaching and Learning subscale were calculated. Table 7.2 contains the means of the subscales by Beliefs and Practices for each Program (pre school, EI, Kindergarten).
Table 7.2
Mean Scores for Teacher Reported Teaching and Learning Beliefs and Practices by Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Preschool</th>
<th>EI</th>
<th>Kinder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$sd$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inspection of the means revealed differences in Beliefs and Practices according to Program which lead to the further examination of the differences between Beliefs and Practices as a function of Program (pre school, EI, Kindergarten) using a 3 (pre school, EI, Kindergarten) by 2 (Beliefs, Practices) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last factor for the Teaching and Learning subscale (see Table 7.3). Results indicate differences between Beliefs and Practices shown in a significant main repeated measures (within subjects) effect, $F(1,41)=61.3$, $p <.001$. However this was qualified by a significant interaction effect, $F(2,41)=3.3$, $p <.05$ (see Table 7.3). In order to determine the precise nature of the differences between the groups, practice means were regressed on belief means and the standardised residuals were saved. Post hoc multiple comparisons on the residuals using the Student-Newman-Kuels test indicated that there was a greater difference between Beliefs and Practices on this dimension (Teaching and Learning) for early intervention respondents than for pre school respondents. Early intervention teachers reported significantly stronger Beliefs than pre school teachers on this subscale, while their corresponding Practices were lower (see Table 7.2). That is,
they reported their Teaching and Learning Beliefs to be high, but their actual corresponding Practices to be relatively less frequent. The translation of Beliefs into Practices is not apparent. This raises an area of great concern that needs further investigation.

Table 7.3
Repeated Measures Analysis of the Teaching and Learning Subscale Using Program as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between subject effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within subjects effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>61.31*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program by Rating</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>3.31*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05    ** p < 0.001

In surmising why there is a mismatch between the Beliefs and Practices of individual teachers, the reports of both the Kindergarten teachers (Sally and Anne) interviewed for this study may provide a clue. They both mentioned a lack of systematic transition planning and classroom support. These pragmatic features may be directly linked to the Teaching and Learning Practices in classrooms.

Differences in Beliefs also exist between Programs in the Teaching and Learning dimension as shown by means (see Table 7.2). Qualitative analyses provided
specific illustrations of the nature of discontinuities between teachers in different Programs which help to explain the empirical findings.

In an example of discontinuity between Beliefs and Practices, Anne (K), who espoused a "needs base" to her programming, rejected the notion of play being the fundamental basis for curriculum implementation in the early years. The NSW Department of School Education policy outlined in Kindergarten. The first year of school (1986) states that "play is the great medium for learning with joy and an informal program based on play enables the teacher to observe the child's development and plan accordingly". However, Anne is not convinced of this early childhood play based philosophy stating: "originally I think it came out of the Kindergarten plan years ago. They wanted kids to free play all the time. But the way things are at the moment ... we can't do that. They're not allowed to just go and play. They don't need to do that anyway, they want to get into it - to do some "real work" and that's when we'll have our story writing and reading activities". Anne does not see "play as the child's work" which is a fundamental premise of early childhood education. In contrast to this statement, Nellie (P) explained that she tried to keep curriculum areas in mind, but did not formally plan for them or keep track of what had been covered. Instead she observed individual children and planned for their needs and interests: "if he wants to do maths - then we'll do maths". It is easy to see how children in transition between these two Programs could experience discontinuity of philosophy and experience.

One Kindergarten teacher revealed frustration at her lack of time to satisfy needs of all children:

I had a Kinder of 33 children and two integrated with behaviour disorders. I spent 87% of my time dealing with these children to the detriment of the rest of the class. While I support integration fully - what is the cost? not only in dollars but to the education of
other members of the class and also to the teacher in terms of time and job satisfaction?

This teacher has voiced a view which is often heard or alluded to amongst teachers. Inservice support could be the key to addressing this concern. If this teacher had access to regular, effective training and support sessions it is possible that the strategies she uses for the management of children with "behaviour disorders" could be developed to a point where the children do not present such a "problem" in class. As discussed in previous chapters, teacher attitudes are powerful. If this teacher is at her "wits end" it is likely that the behaviour problems of which she speaks are partially attributable to teaching strategies that could be improved by increased knowledge and professional support.

Responses to the question on teacher satisfaction with inservice courses showed, satisfaction was low. These results suggest that further evaluation of both amount and content of inservice courses for teachers working with children with special needs is required.

Differences in pedagogical practices between early childhood education (ECE) and early childhood special education (ECSE) discussed in Chapter 3, may perhaps be the reason early intervention teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning are higher than those of pre school teachers. Although it is often assumed that pre school and early intervention programs share the same philosophies and goals, this assumption bears scrutiny in the light of the results previously outlined. Early intervention programs are commonly staffed by teachers with training in early childhood education, but practices are also strongly influenced by special education methodologies. The field of early intervention teaching is currently reflecting on its Practices. There has been ongoing debate about how regular early childhood Programs should cater for children with special needs (e.g., Bredekamp, 1993; Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992; Carta, et al., 1993). There are
points of convergence and divergence between the fields of early intervention and regular early childhood services in the areas of individually appropriate practice, the concept of early intervention, family centred services, advocacy, transition and the use of interdisciplinary approaches. Cavallaro, Haney and Cabello (1993) even suggest that the practices of early childhood education (ECE) and early childhood special education (ECSE) are in opposition to each other, differing in their "emphasis and in their views on the role of both the learner and the role of the teacher" (p.294). They call for "these seemingly opposing perspectives" to be reconciled, "bringing the fields of ECE and ECSE together in a working partnership for the benefit of all children" (p.295). The results of this study, indicating differences in Teaching and Learning Beliefs between preschool and early intervention teachers, would support these contentions.

Despite early intervention teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning being stronger than those of teachers in other Programs, the frequency of related Practices was not higher (see Table 7.2). There are several reasons why this finding may have occurred, but it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate in detail. One possibility is that many early intervention positions are of an itinerant nature, where the early intervention teacher provides a program to preschool staff in regular Programs. As the preschool staff in this study have been shown to hold Teaching and Learning Beliefs that aren't as strong as the early intervention teachers, their implementation of programs would reflect this. In effect, the early intervention teachers who do not implement the programs they have written themselves, reported the Practices of other teachers. Although they report high Beliefs, their program delivery is the responsibility of preschool, rather than early intervention teachers. The differences between these two groups in philosophy and pedagogy have previously been discussed in Chapter 2.
Further possible reasons for the reporting of lower ratings on Practices may again reflect the notion of differences between espoused Beliefs and actual Practices as predicted by Argyris & Schon (1974). However, explanation of this finding, which is of major concern, is complex and without detailed examination, can only be hypothesised. One possible explanation is offered by Preston and Kennedy (1995), who link the difference between Beliefs and Practices to preservice education courses. They say that "pedagogy has not been addressed with any seriousness" in traditional preparation courses with the result being teachers who have gained limited knowledge and understanding at the expense of other attributes and lack the ability to put their knowledge and understanding into practice in professional contexts. They suggest that a competencies approach to professional education would facilitate experiential pedagogy which would develop a diverse range of pedagogies and the ability to combine and apply them in effective professional practice. Teachers prepared in this manner may be more likely than those in this study to achieve "pedagogical content knowledge" which is described as "that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding which allows them to communicate effectively with learners and stimulate and support learning in a way that will be appropriate to the particular teaching context" (Walker, Hughes, Mitchell & Traill, 1995, p.16). As applied to this study, the teachers who reported such differences between their Beliefs and Practices in the transition of children with special needs, may have achieved a greater congruence of Beliefs and Practices if their teacher education or inservice had focused more effectively on the application of appropriate pedagogical approaches for the inclusion of children with special needs into integrated settings. This may be achieved by linking the teaching of pedagogy more closely to practicum. Further research is needed, focusing on teachers, specifically (J. Walker, personal communication, 11 November, 1995).
Another factor to be considered when discussing the differences between Beliefs and Practices is that the Practices reported were based on teachers' self reports and not confirmed by independent observation. Self reporting as a research methodology needs to be considered. How teachers think they behave in the classroom can be affected by many factors. Teachers' self reports about their behaviour are partly shaped by their ideals irrespective of their actual behaviour (Wubbels, Brekelmans & Hooymayers, 1992).

A further consideration is that teachers participating in the transition of children with special needs, irrespective of teaching experience, are likely to be undergoing a new, or relatively new experience, as the inclusion of children with special needs into integrated settings has only become common in recent years. Their participation in this process can be considered a learning experience, in some ways akin to that of beginning or novice teachers. It is recognised that teachers' knowledge structures or schemata, may influence their behaviour (or practice) and that these schemata change as teachers make the transition from novice to expert; "schemata become more elaborated, more organised, and it is this organisation which may influence what teachers do" (Winitzky, 1992, p.1). It is possible that the teachers in this study, although experienced, are at the novice stage in the transition of children with special needs, and will develop more organised schemata as their experience in this new process increases, thus bringing their Beliefs more closely into alignment with their Practices.

**Teaching and Learning according to Qualifications**

Results of this study indicate differences in Beliefs between pre school and early intervention teachers. The literature of continuity also suggests that there are discontinuities between pre school and school settings in Teaching and Learning and that a cause of this difference between Programs is the Qualifications of
teachers. In order to investigate continuity from the perspective of the relationship between Beliefs and Practices and Qualifications, responses to questionnaire items focusing on Beliefs and Practices related to Teaching and Learning, were examined. The two most frequently reported Qualifications (DipT (EC) and DipT (Prim)) were chosen for analysis as the numbers represented in other groups (e.g., Occupational Therapist) were low.

Table 7.4 contains the means and standard deviations of the Teaching and Learning subscale for DipT (Prim) and DipT (EC) subjects separately. These scores were derived by aggregating results and calculating mean scores in the Teaching and Learning subscale as a function of Qualifications (see Cronbach Alpha results in Research Design Chapter for reliability of subscales).
Table 7.4
Mean Scores for Teacher Reported Teaching and Learning Beliefs and Practices by Qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DipT(Prim)</th>
<th>DipT(EC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 11</td>
<td>N = 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M   s     d</td>
<td>M   s     d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching &amp; Learning Beliefs</td>
<td>5.4 .54</td>
<td>5.3 .42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>4.7 .70</td>
<td>4.7 .54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inspection of Table 7.4 shows similarities in the Beliefs or the Practices of the teachers in this study regardless of their undergraduate Qualifications. This is contrary to the view espoused in the literature that the Practices of teachers with early childhood Qualifications will differ from those of teachers with primary Qualifications. When surmising why these results are at variance with the literature, it must be remembered that the number of Kindergarten teachers responding to the survey was low. In addition, this study looks at teachers' reports of their own Practices and it is quite likely that these may not be the same as the ratings that an outside observer would give as "espoused beliefs" can differ from actual practices (Argryis & Schon, 1974). Teachers who believe in a philosophy or principle, while believing that their Practices demonstrate their belief may, in fact, be practising in a contradictory or discordant manner. Teachers' reporting of their own practices and the difference between their espoused Beliefs and their Practices needs further investigation. Independent observation of Kindergarten teachers' Practices would add useful data to those found in this study. The difference between Beliefs and Practices will be further examined at the end of this section and in the qualitative analysis of this study.
To more closely examine Beliefs and Practices by Qualifications a 2 (DipT (Prim) & Dip T (EC)) by 2 (Beliefs, Practices) (rating) ANOVA with repeated measures on the second factor (Beliefs and Practices) was performed for the Teaching and Learning subscale (see Table 7.5).

Consistent with the trends of means (Table 7.4), the repeated measures ANOVA confirmed that Qualifications did not have an effect on Beliefs and Practices. The between-subject (early childhood or primary) effect on Beliefs and Practices due to Qualification was not significant. However, the analysis yielded significant main repeated measures (within subject) effects, $F(1,34)=37.7$, $p<.001$ showing differences between Beliefs and Practices. However, there were no significant interaction effects.
Table 7.5
Repeated Measures Analysis of the Teaching and Learning Subscale Using Qualifications as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Subjects effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qual</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within subjects effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>37.72*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qual by Rating</td>
<td>by 0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*\(p < 0.001\)

Even though the above analyses did not indicate significant effects by Qualifications, inspection of mean responses for each item (Table 7.6) does reveal interesting variations which are later supported and elaborated by qualitative data. In the interest of brevity, questionnaire items presented in Table 7.6 have been summarised. Some questions referred specifically to children with special needs and others to children in general. This was made clear in the full wording of the questions, but may not be apparent in tables (see Appendix 2 for full wording).
Questionnaire items were ranked according to mean scores for each group (early childhood or primary) (see Table 7.6) to ascertain which items were considered to be most important by each group (examples of the highest ranked items will follow).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>BELIEFS DipT (Primary)</th>
<th>BELIEFS DipT (Early Childhood)</th>
<th>PRACTICE DipT (Primary)</th>
<th>PRACTICE DipT (Early Childhood)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>sd</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Children with special needs make a contribution to class.</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Classroom meets safety needs.</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I meet learning needs.</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Communicate with multi-disciplinary teams.</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Cognitive development through active exploration.</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Children observed and actively guided.</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Teachers observe and take children on to next step.</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Teach skills and reinforce.</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Identify the needs of individuals by interacting.</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Identify skills, strategies and processes best for individuals.</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Target behaviours identified, observed in natural settings,</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTIONS</td>
<td>BELIEFS</td>
<td>PRACTICE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DipT (Primary)</td>
<td>DipT (Early Childhood)</td>
<td>DipT (Primary)</td>
<td>DipT (Early Childhood)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>sd</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Plan for development of persistence and independence.</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Teach skills for children with special needs to use outside school.</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Structure situations to facilitate meaningful social interactions.</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Structure small groups where individuals work towards common goal.</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Planned activities responsive to individual differences.</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Children under eight learn best through active exploration</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Children with special needs receive regular individualised teaching.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Young children learn best when teaching is integrated.</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Standardised group testing is not appropriate.</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.7
Teaching and Learning Belief Rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rank and $M$</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q.13a. cognitive development through active exploration</strong></td>
<td>18 (4.9)</td>
<td>EC qualified teachers have shown that they believe more strongly in giving children the opportunity to work individually in response to this item, based on the theories of Piaget. Both Pat (P) and Naomi (P) spoke about individually based learning whereas Sally (K) and Anne (K) didn’t recognise a place for play in their Programs. Similar difference was noted in the response to the item (16a) based on Vygotskian theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.25a. identify needs by interacting</td>
<td>15 (5.3)</td>
<td>6 (5.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Again EC qualified teachers placed greater importance, by rank, on this item than primary qualified teachers. Despite this espoused belief in the survey, neither Kindergarten teacher, Sally (K) or Ann (K), implemented an individualised Program in their classrooms, whereas Nellie (P) and Pat (P) did.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teaching and Learning Practice rankings

Examples of teacher Practices carried out most frequently follow in Table 7.8 (mean ratings are shown in brackets), with illustrations and discussion of differences drawn from elite interviews.

Table 7.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rank and $M$</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.3b. I meet learning needs</td>
<td>15 (4.2)</td>
<td>EC trained teachers practised this more frequently and those interviewed talked much more about identifying needs and Programming to meet these needs. Primary teachers implemented small group work more frequently than individual and Anne (K) explained this as her only opportunity to attempt individualisation in a large class, describing the use of small group time (Q.39a) to follow through speech Programs developed by a speech pathologist. Sally (K) saw individual work as remedial in nature, and to be commenced in Year 1 rather than Kindergarten.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28b. individual skills, strategies and processes</td>
<td>11 (4.5)</td>
<td>1 (4.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7.3.2 Family

#### Continuity of family Beliefs and Practices

The importance of continuity between Programs for families of children with special needs is discussed in Chapter 2. The professionals who form partnerships with families need to be aware of the stressful nature of transitions and work to reduce stress through facilitative and supportive professional partnerships. Stress of transition can be reduced by facilitating continuity which, according to Thurman (1993), should be proactive, with family involvement which is beneficial to the child, professionals, and families themselves. Parents can provide information to professionals, teach their child skills at home which can be generalised to the pre
school and Kindergarten, act as advocates for their child and program, and provide social and emotional support for other parents (Johnson, et al., 1986).

They can also help the child adjust and learn skills, participate in decisions and planning, and gain valuable information and skills for dealing with future transitions (Fowler, et al., 1991). If families are given every opportunity to be involved in the transition process to the extent that suits them, overall satisfaction with the process is greater (Fowler, Schwartz & Atwater, 1991; Pinkerton, 1991; Rice & O'Brien, 1990).

Continuity goals can be achieved by collaboration between family and professionals, co-ordination between sending and receiving agents and communication among all parties. However, if aims are to be implemented and continuous between services, the teachers involved should demonstrate similar Beliefs and Practices.

**Family Beliefs and Practices according to Program**

The literature suggests that there will be differences between Programs in approaches towards family centred Practices (e.g., McLean & Odom, 1993). These differences may be reflected in teachers' Beliefs and Practices about working with families during transitions.

To explore the similarities and differences in Beliefs and Practices according to the Program in which teachers worked (pre school, early intervention, Kindergarten), means for the Family subscale were first calculated (Table 7.9).
Table 7.9
Mean Scores for Teacher Reported Family Beliefs and Practices by Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>pre school</th>
<th>EI</th>
<th>Kinder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One way ANOVAs on Beliefs and Practices using Program (pre school, EI, Kinder) as the independent variable, were performed. The results showed significant differences between groups on the Family Beliefs subscale, $F(2,41)=4.7, p<.01$ (Table 7.10), but no differences for Practices. Post hoc analyses of Beliefs utilising the Student-Newman-Kuels test indicated that the early intervention respondents more strongly believed than did pre school and Kindergarten respondents that families should play a central role in the transition planning process and in their children's education (see Table 7.9 for differences in means). These findings indicate that early intervention teachers are demonstrating their belief in family systems theory (e.g., Dunst, et al., 1988) but are not yet reflecting their Beliefs in their Practices.
Table 7.10
One way ANOVA Analysis of Family Beliefs Using Program as the Independent Variable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>4.68*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01

An example illustrating the difference is given by Sylvia (EI) and Nellie (P), who see the role of the family as of great importance, but hold different views on how to involve families. Sylvia sees the family's role as central to the process of planning for children. "It's paramount, obviously. The child is no longer perceived as an individual but very much as part of a family". She follows this through with a truly family centred approach to planning:

Well, there's been a definite move over the past ten years to bring the family into the picture of early intervention. The role ten years ago was very much that the early intervention specialist was seen as a professional who would hand down pronouncements and decisions, but now the role is much more consultative, much more parent friendly, and much more family orientated and really that would be through most early intervention services now.
Sylvia's view reflects a family systems approach (e.g., Dunst, et al., 1988) which forms the basis of current early intervention perspectives, but is not prevalent in general early childhood approaches.

Nellie (P), also sees the family's role as important. "I think it is fundamental, most definitely. I'd be at a loss without it, that's for sure". In her interpretation of involvement however, she sees the family's role as one of approval and acceptance of plans which largely originate from the professionals involved. She illustrates this by saying

We have a special needs teacher who works largely with the children with special needs. And it's in consultation with the teacher, especially the normal teacher, that those objectives are made. That's by policy of KU (KU Children's Services). They're written down on a separate form at the end of each term and they're shown and discussed with the parents and their approval is requested in the form of a signature.

To further examine the differences between Beliefs and Practices as a function of Program (pre school, EI, Kindergarten), a 3 (pre school, EI, Kindergarten) by 2 (Beliefs, Practices) ANOVA with repeated measures on the Family subscale was performed (see Table 7.11).

Results indicate that there were no between subjects effects. Program was not revealed to be significant at the between subjects level, however, it may affect within subjects findings. There was a significant main repeated measures (within subject) effect, $F(1,41)=157.4, p<.001$, revealing differences between Beliefs and Practices. Inspection of the means indicates that respondents report stronger Beliefs than frequency of Practices would suggest (see Table 7.9). Although all teachers rate their Beliefs more
highly than their Practices, there is no difference according to the Program in which a teacher is based.

Table 7.11
Repeated Measures Analysis of the Family Subscale Using Program as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main effect</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within subjects effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>157.41*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program by Rating</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .001

In surmising why the Beliefs of teachers about the importance of family centred transition processes might be different to their Practices, the literature on family systems needs to be considered. If families are to be partners in the planning process, professionals need to
relinquish some "power". Sally (K) has difficulty having parents in the classroom, as she feels that they will be judgemental of her ability to control children and Nellie (P) plans objectives and asks parents if they agree with them. Although these teachers recognise the importance of the family's role, in practice, they are not yet able to relinquish the more traditional role of teacher as "expert". This shift in perspective is reflected in Beliefs in early intervention Programs but has not yet been shown in their Practices or those of teachers in other Programs.
Family according to Qualifications

The literature on continuity suggests that a factor contributing to discontinuities between pre school and school settings may be the preservice Qualifications of teachers (e.g., Briggs & Potter, 1990; Elkind, 1991). Continuity of Beliefs and Practices according to Qualifications was examined. The two most frequently reported Qualifications (DipT (EC) and DipT (Prim)) were chosen for analysis.

Table 7.12 contains the means and standard deviations of the Family subscale for DipT (Prim) and DipT (EC) subjects separately. These scores were derived by aggregating results and calculating mean scores in the Family subscale as a function of Qualifications (see Cronbach Alpha results in Research Design Chapter for reliability of subscales).

Table 7.12
Mean Scores for Teacher Reported Family Beliefs and Practices by Qualification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DipT(Prim)</th>
<th>DipT(EC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N =11</td>
<td>N =25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>sd</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inspection of Table 7.12 shows that there is little difference in either the Beliefs or the Practices of the teachers in this study as a function of their undergraduate Qualifications.

To more closely examine the differences between Beliefs and Practices as a function of Qualifications, a 2 (DipT (Prim) and DipT (EC)) by 2 (Beliefs, Practices) ANOVA with repeated measures on the second factor (Beliefs and Practices) was performed on the Family subscale (Table 7.13).

Consistent with Teaching and Learning items, there were no significant differences in Beliefs and Practices by Qualifications. The between subject effect due to Qualification was not significant. The analysis again yielded significant main repeated measures (within subjects) effects, F(1,34)=134.7, p<.001, showing differences between Beliefs and Practices. However, there was no significant interaction effect (see Table 7.13). All teachers showed differences between Family Beliefs and Practices, regardless of Qualification.
Table 7.13
Repeated Measures Analysis of the Family Subscale Using Qualifications as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Between subjects effect</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qual</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within subjects effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>30.96</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30.96</td>
<td>134.7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qual by Rating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .001

Although overall differences according to Qualifications were not shown by empirical analyses, inspection of the mean responses to questionnaire items showed interesting variations on rankings, between teachers with early childhood and primary Qualifications.

Teachers' mean responses to each item are presented in Table 7.14. In the interest of brevity, questionnaire items have been summarised in the tables. Some questions referred specifically to children with special needs and others to children in general. This was made clear in the full wording of the questions, but may not be apparent in tables (see Appendix 2 for full wording).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>BELIEFS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>PRACTICE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DipT (Primary)</td>
<td>DipT (Early Childhood)</td>
<td>DipT (Primary)</td>
<td>DipT (Early Childhood)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$sd$</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$sd$</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Families informed at every step in</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transition process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Families have input into transition</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Parents' specific concerns about child</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determined and addressed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Families evaluate transition process.</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Family support is an important part of</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher's job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Strengthening family functioning is</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important part of transition process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Involvement of parents in all aspects of</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decision making.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Involvement of families is stressful for</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Families have input into assessment.</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Parents' knowledge is important to</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identify intervention targets.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questionnaire items were ranked according to mean scores for each group (early childhood or primary) (see Table 7.14) to ascertain which items were considered to be most important by early childhood or primary qualified teachers (examples of the highest rank items will follow).

Inspection of the tables shows that there are noticeable differences in some of the responses by Qualifications. This is illustrated, for example, in the responses to the importance in belief of parents having input into the transition Program which is ranked at number five in early childhood responses and number fifteen in primary responses.

Examples of the most highly ranked Family Beliefs Practices are shown in Tables 7.15 and 7.16.

Examples of differences in ranking of Beliefs that the teachers held follow (mean ratings are shown in brackets), with illustrations and discussion of differences drawn from elite interviews. It is interesting to note, however, that the rankings given to the frequency of family related Practices are low for both groups. This serves to highlight the difference between Beliefs and Practices (see Table 7.14), a finding also noted in the previous section on Teaching and Learning.
Table 7.15
Family Belief Rankings by Qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>rank and M</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q.6a.</strong> Family input into transition</td>
<td>15 (5.3) 5 (5.7)</td>
<td>EC qualified teachers believed more strongly in this item than Primary teachers who also believe that this should happen, according to best practice guidelines, but as they are infrequently involved in the transition process at present this would limit their access to families. Again the difference between Beliefs and Practices is highlighted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q.21a.</strong> Involve parents in all aspects of decision making.</td>
<td>13 (5.4) 5 (5.7)</td>
<td>Early childhood qualified teachers appear more committed to this underlying principle of Family Systems and as Sally (K) explained, when children are in class for six hours per day, the teacher knows as much about them as their parents. This implies lack of necessity for parent involvement in decision making.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most frequent Family Practices

Examples of Practices that the teachers surveyed carried out most frequently follow (mean ratings are shown in brackets), with illustrations of differences drawn from elite interviews.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>rank and $M$</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q.18b.</strong> Family support important</td>
<td>Primary 18(3.9) EC 32 (3.5)</td>
<td>Although Primary qualified teachers showed higher ranking for this item, Anne(K) agreed with this statement but felt that other teachers didn't always, and this was supported by the thoughts of Sally (K), who said that other teachers would be annoyed if one teacher raised the expectations of families. She clearly expressed the view that her job was teaching and that if support was needed, she should refer the family on. Sylvia (EI) also felt that families should become more independent of teachers' support when they commenced school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q.30b.</strong> Parents knowledge for intervention targets</td>
<td>4(5.00) 20 (4.24)</td>
<td>Primary teachers reported frequency of this practice, but this was not evident in interviews where teachers did not have individual intervention Programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3.3 Transition Management

Continuity of transition management

This section focuses on the conceptual area of Transition management and reports on the continuity of Beliefs and Practices of teachers in different Programs.

The literature of continuity in transition management as discussed in Chapter 5 establishes best practice guidelines that are largely related to the management of transitions (e.g., Conn-Powers, Ross-Allen & Holburn, 1990). Communication between the professionals involved in transitions and transfer of information are essential features of management leading to effective transitions.

Transition Management according to Program

As Programs for children in transition to school do not often have formal links or communication processes (Caldwell, 1991), it is important to examine continuity of transition management according to Program. In order to explore the similarities and differences in Beliefs and Practices according to the Program in which teachers worked (pre school, early intervention, Kindergarten), means for the Transition Management subscale were first calculated (Table 7.17).
Table 7.17
Mean Scores for Teacher Reported Transition Management Beliefs and Practices by Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>preschool</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>s d</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>s d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inspection of the means indicates that respondents rate Beliefs more highly than the frequency of their Practices (see Table 7.17).

To more closely examine differences between Beliefs and Practices as a function of Program (pre school, early intervention, Kindergarten), a 3 (pre school, EI, Kindergarten) by 2 (Beliefs, Practices) ANOVA with repeated measures on the Transition Management subscale was performed (See Table 7.18).

Results indicate that there were no between subjects effects indicating that Program is not significant at the between subjects level. However, there was a significant main repeated measures (within subjects) effect, F(1,41)=221.7, p<.001, indicating higher ratings for Beliefs than Practices. Consistent with previous subscales, there were differences between Beliefs and Practices for all teachers, but these were not affected by Program.
Table 7.18
Repeated Measures Analysis of the Transition Management Subscale Using Program as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between subject effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within subjects effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>59.37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>59.37</td>
<td>221.68*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program by Rating</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * p < .001

In surmising why there is a difference between Beliefs and Practices, best practice guidelines as outlined in Chapter 5, can be informative. Long term planning for transitions is advocated and yet all teachers agreed that they are rarely or never involved in this. Despite introduction of policy about the transition for children with special needs, communication between Programs appears to be ad hoc according to Kathy (EI). Sally (K) also admits that she "hasn't made the effort" to contact pre schools. This study has revealed problems in most areas of best practice in Transition Management.

**Transition Management according to Qualifications**

As with the previous subscales, Teaching and Learning and Families, continuity from the perspective of the relationship between Beliefs and Practices and
Qualifications was examined. Again, the two most frequently reported Qualifications (DipT (EC) and DipT (Prim)) were chosen for analysis.

Table 7.19 contains the means and standard deviations of the Transition Management subscale by Beliefs and Practices for DipT (Prim) and DipT (EC) subjects separately. These scores were derived by aggregating results and calculating mean scores in the Family subscale as a function of Qualifications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.19</th>
<th>Mean Scores for Teacher Reported Transition Management Beliefs and Practices by Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DipT(Prim)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N = 11$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inspection of Table 7.19 shows similarities in teachers' Beliefs or Practices by Qualification.

Further examination of Beliefs and Practices by Qualifications using a 2(DipT (Prim) and DipT (EC) by 2 (Beliefs and Practices) ANOVA with repeated measures on the second factor (Beliefs and Practices) indicated no between subject effect due to Qualification.
However, the analysis yielded significant main repeated measures effects, \( F(1,34) = 172.6, p < .001 \), indicating a difference between Beliefs and Practices. Inspection of the means indicated that respondents rate Beliefs more highly than frequency of Practices would suggest (see Table 7.19). There were no significant interaction effects (see Table 7.20).
Table 7.20
Repeated Measures Analysis of the Transition Management Subscale Using Qualifications as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between subject effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qual</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within subjects effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>172.58*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qual by Rating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .001

Although empirical analyses did not show significant differences according to Qualifications, inspection of rankings for each item reveals interesting variations for early childhood and primary qualified teachers.

Mean responses to each item are presented in Table 7.21. In the interest of brevity the main topic in each questionnaire item has been summarised in the tables. Some questions referred specifically to children with special needs and others to children in general. This was made clear in the full wording of the questions, but may not be apparent in tables (see Appendix 2 for full wording).
Questionnaire items were ranked according to mean scores for each group (early childhood or primary)(see Table 7.21) to ascertain which items were considered most important by each group.

Transition Management Items  (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>BELIEFS</th>
<th>PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DipT (Primary)</td>
<td>DipT (Early Childhood)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>sd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Teachers attend inservice about inclusion of children with special needs.</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Transition team visits schools.</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Kindergarten teacher is informed of strategies that have been successful.</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Transition team works out how effectiveness will be evaluated.</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inspection of the tables shows that there are noticeable differences in some rankings by Qualifications. This is illustrated, for example, in the responses to the importance in Belief of transition procedures being in writing and available to all, which was ranked fifth in early childhood responses and eighteenth in primary responses.

**Most strongly held Transition Management Beliefs**

Examples of Beliefs that teachers held most strongly follow (mean ratings are shown in brackets), with illustrations of differences drawn from elite interviews. It is interesting to note that the rankings given to the frequency of Transition Management related Practices are low for both groups, highlighting the difference between Beliefs and Practices (see Table 7.21)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>rank and $M$</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q.11a. Know philosophies and Practices of previous environment</strong></td>
<td>Primary: 9 (5.5)</td>
<td>Primary teachers recognise the importance of this and interviewed subjects (Anne and Sally) were willing to communicate, but initiation of this communication appears to be a problem. Perhaps the lower ranking on this item by pre school teachers is an indication of why they are not succeeding in initiating contact with schools either.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EC: 27 (4.6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q.23a. Written transition procedures available</strong></td>
<td>Primary: 18 (4.9)</td>
<td>Although EC trained teachers have given greater importance to this item, Kindergarten teachers complained about the lack of information and preparation they received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EC: 5 (4.7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.22  
Transition Management Belief Rankings by Qualification
Most Frequent Transition Management Practices

Examples of Practices that the teachers surveyed carried out most frequently follow (mean ratings are shown in brackets), with illustrations of differences drawn from elite interviews.

Table 7.23

Transition Management Practice rankings by Qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rank and Means</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.5b. Know philosophies and Practices of next environment</td>
<td>Primary 25 (3.2) EC 35 (2.9)</td>
<td>Early childhood teachers rate this item lower than Primary teachers. This is reflected in their lack of knowledge about Kindergarten Programs, which they claim to be because getting information from school is very difficult. Previous approaches to schools have not always been welcomed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.17b. All have input into transition goals</td>
<td>16 (4.0) 30 (3.6)</td>
<td>Primary trained teachers saw this as happening more frequently than EC teachers did. However, interviewed subjects Sally and Anne had never had this experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Questionnaire Item

At the end of the questionnaire, an open ended question asked participants to record any further comments they may have about the transition to school for children with special needs. Responses were coded and categorised according to themes that emerged in the literature and the results are shown in Table 7.25.

Table 7.24
Classification of Responses to Open Questionnaire Item

\[ N = 66 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCES</th>
<th>TEACHING &amp; LEARNING</th>
<th>COMMUNICATION</th>
<th>FAMILIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Classroom Support</td>
<td>Long Term Planning</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From these responses it became evident that there were themes and issues which had not been fully explored in the quantitative results and it was decided to conduct a series of elite interviews.
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SECTION 3

7.4 Interview Results

From the quantitative and qualitative (see Table 7.24) findings of the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview format was developed to further probe and investigate the issues raised by respondents (see Appendix 3). Key questions were planned but teachers were encouraged to digress from the question if they wished as some divergent thoughts and descriptions can be effective in revealing issues and themes important to teachers and not included in the interview format. It was intended to gain some insight into the theories and Beliefs which guided the Practices of these teachers.

Elite interviews were conducted with six of the survey respondents who indicated willingness to participate in further research. Selection methods have been outlined fully in Chapter 6 - Research Design. The teachers interviewed were two itinerant early intervention teachers, two pre school (one Long Day Care, one Preschool) teachers and two Kindergarten teachers. Both Kindergarten teachers worked for the NSW Department of School Education. Those with the highest mean score and the lowest mean score on difference between transition Beliefs and Practices were selected from each Program. This method of selection was chosen in order to facilitate understanding of continuities and discontinuities in Beliefs and Practices in this study. It was surmised that teachers with mean scores at the highest and lowest ends of the difference between Beliefs and Practices may provide insight as to why there were discontinuities in Beliefs and
Practices on each of the subscales (Teaching and Learning, Families and Transition Management).
7.5 Interview Analyses

At the completion of the six elite interviews, interview data were transcribed and analysed using four different methods. These were: 1) the creation of emergent themes; 2) the delimiting of themes; 3) the retrieval of "problem" statements and subsequent classification of these according to best practice guidelines in the transition to school; and finally, 4) the development of a list of "significant transition issues".

Interview analyses were intended to consider the changing or dynamic nature of reality. "People's perceptions of educational concerns are complex and involve change" (Stainback & Stainback, 1984, p.402). These perceptions are considered as the basis for further change. The whole process of the inclusion of children with special needs into the school system is a relatively new one. Many teachers are still having their first experiences of this process. Older teachers received no training in including children with special needs. The nature of the reality of inclusion is complex, multidimensional and dynamic. If inclusion is to become successful, and transition is an important element of this, teachers' perceptions of how they are dealing with this process are a valuable tool in documenting and improving the present reality.

Creation of Themes

Each interview was analysed in order to break data down into separate thematic statements. A statement was considered to be a sentence, or group of sentences (naturally occurring "chunks") expressing one main idea (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Following the creation of separate thematic statements in each interview, each statement was given a code using categories generated from teachers' responses. If an interview contained more than one statement that was considered to be making the same point, this was recorded as one statement only. Thematic groupings were not predetermined, but allowed to emerge
as interviews were coded. The thematic group headings were based on the literature of continuity in transition and best practice guidelines.

The following thematic groups and subgroups emerged:

**TEACHING AND LEARNING:**

**Teaching content**
- individual base
- subject base
- philosophical base
- logistical base
- theoretical base
- general base

**Teaching Strategies**
- logistical base
- philosophical base
- learning base
- theoretical base
Teacher knowledge
- school readiness
- school practice
- transition

THE ROLE OF FAMILIES:

Knowledge of
- school
- inclusion
- own child
- parent partnerships
- involvement in education
- support by early intervention teacher
- support by Kindergarten teacher

Transition Management
- child preparation
- by pre school services
- between pre school and school Programs
- communication
- coordination
- systematic/long term
- DSE policy
- school's preparation
- teacher stress
Following is a summary of the main ideas to emerge from analyses of each thematic subgroup.

7.5.1 Teaching and Learning

As previously discussed in Chapter 3 on Teaching and Learning, the importance of pedagogy in the early childhood curriculum is paramount. Concerns have been raised as to teachers' understanding of the pedagogical foundations of their teaching and the continuity between this and their daily Practices (e.g., Miller, 1991; Wolery, 1991). This thesis argues throughout that if teachers are to engage in a discourse between Programs that will facilitate continuity they must firstly be able to understand and articulate their own Beliefs and Practices. These beliefs and practices must, of course, be informed by the literature and current debate on best practice. Continuity of pedagogy is of particular importance to young children with special needs in transition from early intervention Programs to school. If they are to maintain their rate of academic progress, their teachers must aim for continuity between Programs so that they do not suffer setbacks as they waste precious time becoming acquainted with the mores of a new and different teaching approach. In this section the themes which emerged from teachers' comments were divided into the three sub groups of Content, Strategies and Knowledge.

Content

Perhaps the most apparent and obvious indicator of how a curriculum is being applied is Teaching Content. Children, families and visitors see the choice of content manifested in the activities provided, and the work displayed in classrooms. Teachers aiming for continuity between Programs may initially focus on the content of teaching as the demonstration of a particular teacher's philosophy and methods. The literature suggests that the methods for selection of
content vary greatly between preschool and school programs, leading to discontinuity for children (e.g., Williams, 1987; Briggs & Potter, 1990). Although teachers were asked specifically in interviews how they selected their teaching content, their responses were mostly very broad, referring to general philosophies and methods of programming. Very few teacher comments referred directly to curriculum content, particularly amongst the preschool respondents. Responses were grouped according to the main content selection method referred to in each statement.
Teaching Content — Individual Base

Many early childhood writers see the method of content selection as one of the most important indicators of whether a teacher "has an early childhood philosophy" or not. In an outline of appropriate and inappropriate classroom Practices in the primary grades, Bredekamp (1987) describes appropriate content selection to be based on the reflection of children's interests and suggestions which extend their ideas, respond to their questions, engage in conversations and challenge their thinking. In contrast "inappropriate practice" is seen as curriculum "divided into separate subjects (with) time carefully allotted for each with primary emphasis given each day to reading and secondary emphasis to math..." (p.67).

The pre school teachers interviewed were the main group to refer to their selection of content matter as being based on the individual needs and interests of children. The idea emerging strongly from this group was that the child dictated the choice of content, either because of the teacher's identification of needs, or as a result of the child's own suggestion. Teachers talked about frustration or interest providing the key to these needs and used this needs basis to "extend, challenge or add a new dimension" to learning. Nellie (P), perhaps summed up many teachers' views on selection of content by describing it as "a big can of worms". An early intervention teacher did mention interest as a base and a Kindergarten teacher also spoke about needs, but in terms of children who have special needs, rather than as a general principle underlying curriculum content selection. Early childhood philosophy is explicit about content selection, strongly adhering to the principles of child directed content and this philosophy was reflected much more strongly in the views of the pre school teachers interviewed than the Kindergarten teachers interviewed. A difference in content selection methods was evident as all the statements about content selection having a subject base were made by Kindergarten teachers.
**Teaching Content — Subject Base**

In contrast to the selection of content according to individual needs and interests is selection according to subject area. According to Bredekamp (1987), this constitutes inappropriate practice. Only Kindergarten teachers interviewed made statements that fell into the subject based category. Choice of content was strongly influenced by external curriculum determinants such as "profiles", "foundation stage" and "all our phonic things". Whilst "needs" basis was mentioned elsewhere, this is obviously strongly mediated by the necessity to teach towards curriculum documents provided by the employing authority.

It is apparent from the statements of the teachers interviewed that discontinuities exist between teachers in pre school Programs and those in Kindergarten Programs when it comes to selection of content. This reflects the concerns of authors (e.g., Briggs & Potter, 1990) who say that discontinuity of pedagogy for children moving from one Program to another is an issue of concern.

**Teaching Content — Philosophical**

Teachers did not always describe their selection of content according to whether it was individually based or subject based. Many teachers found it difficult to articulate their rationale and spoke in broad and general terms about programming. These statements were considered to reflect a "philosophical" base for planning and were mainly about theoretical perspectives which guided teaching. In illustration, Kathy's (EI) comments reflected the empirical findings of this study, that early intervention teachers have strong Beliefs about the importance of the role of families, explaining that her content selection comes from parents' identification of children's needs, interests and strengths, which she then incorporates into her planning. She did not further elaborate, to demonstrate specific links between philosophy and content selection. Again the statements
made by pre school teachers were heavily influenced by the knowledge of individual children: "how I feel children are" and using children's own ideas to boost their self esteem. Anne (K) wanted to "make them feel happy", but despite the fact that she had earlier espoused a commitment to the philosophies of early childhood education, demonstrated a disparity between her espoused theory, and theory in use by explaining that "they're not allowed to just go and play, they don't need to do that anyway. They want to get into it, to do some "real work"...". She does not acknowledge the role of play as the basis of work and learning in early childhood curricula.

Content Selection — Logistic

In this section, comments were included which were considered to describe content selection based on the everyday realities of classroom life. Philosophical ideals are often overshadowed by pragmatics and both pre school and Kindergarten teachers often described practical programming considerations when asked about method of content selection. Pat (P) spoke in terms of working with a team and the logistics of having the right materials available at the right time, while Anne (K) spoke of the difficulties of working in a big school, with a diverse population. She had concerns that some children arriving from pre school, had had unhappy experiences and she needed to spend time letting them know that school could be an enjoyable place to be. As in previous sections, teachers were very general in their comments referring mainly to overall considerations rather than specific content selection experiences with children.

Content Selection — Theoretical

Teachers from both pre school and school Programs did link their content selection to theoretical bases, but mostly in a very general way. "Child development theory" influenced Sally (K), although she could not specify saying, "I don't know how to name it, developmental stages with a big need for
socialisation, because I've taught in Special Ed." Sylvia (EI) was clear about her planning basis as "encouraging a social, pre-academic and language readiness for school". Unlike other teachers interviewed, she was able to link her espoused Piagetian theory to her theory in use by explaining that she tried to "maximise the child's development by providing the best interactive environment." Nellie (P) was less clear on her basis for content selection, explaining that "I don't plan for curriculum areas - it's individually based. If he's interested in maths, then that's the lead we'll take". She did not keep any record of the curriculum content covered in her Program.

Content — General

Comments included in this section were those of a very general nature which could not be classified according to the previous four sub themes. Overall, the teachers were not able to very clearly explain their choice of Program content. They spoke about their influences as "coming from University", "melding a lot of different theories that have come from training, inservice and learning from other people around you", and based on "experience". As previously argued in this thesis, their inability to know, and articulate their method of content selection raises concerns for children's learning and continuity between Programs. There were evident differences in the views of Kindergarten and pre school teachers, but also similarity of ideas that could be built on. However, before the similarities can be used as the basis for improving continuity, both the pre school and the Kindergarten teachers need to be able to explain their Programs in a concise and clearly informed manner. Their articulation of content selection should be based on knowledge of best practice in early childhood education. They will then be in a much better position to explain them to someone else. As both Miller (1991) and Wolery (1991) point out, it is necessary for teachers to understand, articulate and practise in a manner that links theoretical foundations to everyday actions. The selection of what to teach is perhaps the most apparent indicator to the public of
teachers' work. The content, or the "what" of teaching can reveal a lot about teachers' philosophies and ideas on teaching. The products that children eventually show "to the world" in the form of knowledge, attitudes or skills can reflect teachers' Beliefs on how teaching should occur.

**Teaching Strategies**

The second important theme to emerge from the teachers' comments relating to pedagogy was that of the use of teaching strategies.

Perhaps less obvious to "the world" than the "what" of teaching is the "how" of teaching or the selection of teaching strategies. How these are selected and individualised for children can also provide an indication of teachers' philosophies and approaches. As children with special needs often require individualised programming with teaching broken down into manageable steps, the knowledge and use of a wide range of strategies is particularly pertinent.

If children are to experience continuity between Programs then both the content and the pedagogical approaches that their teachers use are of vital importance. For a child moving from an early intervention Program into school, continuity of teaching strategies would greatly increase their chance of maintaining their rate and quality of learning progress. If a teacher is to successfully facilitate learning, strategies should be informed by the theoretical influences, based on best practice, to which each teacher subscribes. As with descriptions of content selection, all teachers found it difficult to clearly articulate either their influences, or their use of individualised strategies to achieve teaching goals. Despite continued probing by the interviewer, most responses did not directly describe teaching strategies, but talked about the management logistics of organising groups of children, and broad philosophical influences. Teachers demonstrated great difficulty in specifying how
they actually applied these influences to achieve teaching and learning outcomes with individuals, again reflecting the concerns of Miller (1991) and Wolery (1991) about teachers' knowledge of their theoretical foundations for teaching. Perhaps this can be related to the fact that "pedagogy generally has not been addressed with any seriousness in traditional academic approaches". If initial teacher preparation courses "only incidentally at best encompass...the ability to put the knowledge and understanding into practice" it is no wonder that these teachers struggled to explain their pedagogies in practice (Preston & Kennedy, 1995, p.52). Further investigation is needed of teachers' articulation and use of teaching strategies.

Strategies were grouped according to the major sub-themes which emerged.

**Teaching Strategies — Logistic**

The first major sub theme to emerge in the area of strategies was classified as "logistic" choice of strategies in which teachers described their organisation of the classroom environment, rather than describing their methods of facilitating learning for children. Most strategy statements fell into this group. Nellie (P) spoke of the organisation of groups, focusing mainly on the management of behaviour. She did not feel that learning occurred in larger groups, as the teacher had to spend more time managing the group. She felt that the key to success in this area was more communication between staff members, and also between staff and families, but did not go on to explain what specific strategies could or would result from improvement in logistical arrangements. Both Kindergarten teachers (Sally and Anne) spoke of strategies in terms of grouping children, to enable more interaction between the teacher and children, but similarly, did not expand on this to then explain how teaching or learning was addressed or facilitated. Both spoke in terms of determining the memberships of groups according to the "level" of the child. By this they meant the academic level, mainly determined by reading or
maths results. Neither described individual teaching or facilitation of learning as a part of their classroom strategies.

**Teaching Strategies — Learning**

Disappointingly, most teachers interviewed in this study, did not describe their use of teaching and learning strategies clearly or thoroughly, despite repeated probing, to expand on their description of use of strategies. The exception was Nellie (P), who demonstrated reflective thinking in her description of strategy choice. Although she admitted that "I guess I do follow a theoretical perspective but I just can't think of the name for one", and attributed her selection of strategies to "having to keep a strategies chart in college", she did demonstrate awareness of a range of strategies in use. She described her use of "scaffolding" as "working through a situation with children and then trying to take a step back" and reinforced this by explaining that she liked to encourage a lot of independent problem solving. She further explained that she was "very much into reasoning with children" and discussed her awareness of "how I'm talking to children - am I eliciting intrinsic motivation on their part or approval on my part?" Sally (K) said that she selected her strategies according to how long children stayed "on task" and by observing to see "how children learn best" - however she was not able to define the differences in learning style that she was looking for. For example, she may have been thinking about children as visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learners, but was not able to articulate this. From the accounts of these teachers it appears that a child with special needs who had been integrated into Nellie's class, where learning was individualised and independence encouraged, may experience discontinuity when moving into Sally's class where learning was group based and approaches were based on "time on task".

**Teaching Strategies — Theoretical**
There were few statements that clearly linked teaching strategies to theoretical foundations of teaching. Only two statements were deemed to fit into this category. Sylvia (EI) directly attributed her methods of planning for children from "abused and neglected backgrounds" to Erikson's theory of "trust versus mistrust". In direct contrast, Ann (K), dismissed the use of theoretical influences because "I don't think you can put kids in boxes". As with selection of content, selection of teaching strategies appears to be largely "ad hoc", rather than clearly connected to theories of teaching and learning.

**Teaching Strategies — Philosophical**

Links between teaching strategies and general philosophical viewpoints were more common, although an additional possible element of discontinuity emerged in this section. Choice of strategies according to philosophical Beliefs were mainly focused around the need to develop self esteem. This was more strongly emphasised by the early intervention teachers, but not mentioned at all by the Kindergarten teachers. Sylvia (EI) was very adamant that her "first priority is self esteem" and similarly Kathy (EI) tries to "promote their self esteem and confidence". Anne (K) wasn't as definite in her opinions, stating that they were "into the cooperative and that sort of thing...but no, there's nothing really specific". Again, the children attending pre school appear to receive a much more individualised approach than children attending school.

As with selection of content, the teachers in this study were not able to clearly define or describe their selection of teaching strategies. One pre school teacher and one early intervention teacher had clearly put thought into the issue, but the others were very "fuzzy" in their descriptions of strategy selection. A major research question raised in Chapter 3 (Teaching and Learning) of this study, addressed the continuity of Teaching and Learning for children with special needs in transition.
between Programs. Continuity of pedagogical practices as demonstrated by teaching strategies is of paramount importance for the learning progress of children with special needs. Teachers need to be able to select in an informed manner, from a range of strategies, and articulate their reasons and implementation of these to their colleagues in order for discontinuity between Programs as perceived by Briggs & Potter (1990) among others, to be minimised.

Teacher Knowledge
A third sub theme within the Teaching and Learning section that emerged was that of teachers' knowledge - knowledge about other programs and knowledge about the transition process itself. The teachers interviewed worked in three different sectors of the early childhood industry, with different employing bodies and no official links between their programs. Knowledge of other programs would be most likely to result from general reading and information available and formal or informal networks or direct contact with other programs in a local area.

Teacher Knowledge — School Readiness
The preparation of children for school is often understood to be influenced by the child's "readiness" for school. Ideas of what constitutes "readiness" and how children are to be prepared are influenced by theories of child development and by ideas about appropriate curriculum - should the child fit the curriculum, or the curriculum fit the child?

The most important finding to emerge from the elite interviews in the present study about school readiness was that the teachers did not know much about programs other than those in which they taught. Nellie (P) based her knowledge of schools on what teachers in her family told her and similarly, Sally's (K) understanding of pre school programs rested on her son's centre where they "take the older kids and do a few "schoolie" sort of things". None of the teachers
interviewed had any formal links with other programs in their area to ascertain their philosophies or pedagogical approaches towards school readiness. None of the teachers interviewed had communicated with other programs to find out what they do or require in terms of school readiness.

**Teacher Knowledge — School Practice**

As discussed in Chapter 3 on Teaching and Learning, an important pre requisite of continuity is knowledge of other programs and resultant communication, possibly involving compromise, which will contribute to similarities between programs for children. Apart from Sylvia (EI) who was confident that she had a clear picture of Kindergarten programs, the pre school teachers interviewed had very little knowledge of what actually happens in Kindergarten. Nellie (P) said her knowledge was "hazy" and Pat (P) explained that "I have actually no knowledge myself of what happens when they get to school". Sylvia (EI) felt confident that she did know and expressed the idea that Kindergarten teachers need more inservice, including training about "subtle learning difficulties". Continuity, once again, is in question if teachers have no knowledge of programs other than their own.

**Teacher Knowledge — Transition**

The transition process is complex and for the teachers of children involved, there are bound to be processes and experiences that are new to them. As discussed in Chapter 2 on Continuity in the Transition to School, some knowledge of transition best practices and current procedures is beneficial if transitions are to be effective.

The early intervention teachers interviewed were the only ones with direct experience of organising and taking part in formalised transition procedures. Neither of the Kindergarten teachers had any experiences of formalised transition processes, although both thought they would be most helpful. Sylvia (EI) had
been involved in a pilot study of formalised transition and felt that early intervention teachers had the necessary skills to implement effective transitions. Kathy (EL) agreed. Sylvia expressed the opinion that, although pre school teachers "had the best will in the world", they did not have the necessary knowledge of the school system to organise transition and support for children with special needs. This was greatly exacerbated, in her opinion, by the fact that "the Department of (School) Education doesn't volunteer any information about what support is available. It's very hard to find out". Surprisingly, this sentiment was echoed by the two Kindergarten teachers (Sally and Anne), working in Department schools. Both agreed that Sylvia's opinion of the pre school teachers' position was realistic, saying they lacked knowledge of specific special needs and "wouldn't like them to be the sole person doing transition".

7.5.2 The role of families

In Chapter 4 on the role of families in transition, continuity was shown to be critical to minimise stress, and maintain children's rate of progress. To enable and empower families, as is advocated in the literature on best practice, they must be encouraged and allowed to act as equal partners in the transition process. If this is to be a continuous process, it is important to examine the Beliefs and Practices of the early childhood teachers who work with families in Programs both before the child with special needs commences school, and after he/she starts in Kindergarten. Not only do teachers need knowledge of programs other than their own for continuity to be successful, but they also need to understand what families know and think in order to facilitate successful transitions.

In this section, teachers' comments relating to their views on the role that families play in transition have been classified into the four sub groups to emerge. They were Knowledge, Parent Partnerships, Parent Involvement in Education, and Support.
Family Knowledge — School

As transition implies change, it is apparent that families in the transition from preschool programs to school will be changing from a program with which they are familiar, into one that is less familiar, or indeed completely unknown. For teachers to enable and empower families in the transition process, they need to firstly gain an understanding of, and appreciation for, families' pre-existing knowledge of programs.

Opinions on the theme of family knowledge varied, with Nellie (P) feeling that families did have a fairly good knowledge of the school system, qualified by whether it was a first child or not. Nellie felt that families of children with special needs took it upon themselves to become informed, and indeed became a good information resource for her Preschool. She did acknowledge that if it was a first child, they could "find the idea of school a bit daunting, a bit confused as to what is expected of their child and them". Pat (P) felt that families knew "almost nothing". The Kindergarten teachers (Sally and Anne), also felt that parents lacked knowledge of school procedures, but both expressed the opinion that many parents expected the school to "fix everything" once they arrived. Sally (K) felt that how much they knew rested on the pre-school program they had been involved in and thought that "parents rarely know how to go about looking for special help for their children who have been identified as having a problem".

It is apparent with the recurrence of words such as "daunted" and "intimidated", that the empowerment of parents is not yet a reality in the transition to school. A prerequisite of enablement of families is some knowledge of the program into which children with special needs will transfer. Teachers involved in this process
need to "enable" families with knowledge about school policies, practices and their rights, which will allow them to become genuinely functioning members of transition teams.

**Family Knowledge — Inclusion**

The outcome of the transition process is of course, complete participation in the school program. For children with special needs, enrolment procedures, and classroom inclusion, are not always as straightforward as they are for other children. There are specific details of assessment procedures, classroom support and funding applications, for example, with which stakeholders in the transition process need to become familiar.

Teachers interviewed from both pre school and school programs agreed that families had little operational knowledge of the inclusion process. The focus of their concerns clearly reflected experiences within their own work with families. Sylvia (EI) felt that parents knew little of the specifics of testing and the role of counsellors, and pointed out that reading about these things was meaningless to them. Pat (P) admitted that she initiated a transition process last year because she could not answer any of the parents' questions about inclusion. Anne (K) was concerned that parents felt that school would provide instant solutions to children's problems and she needed to stress to families that everything would take a long time.

The concerns about families' lack of knowledge of inclusion practices raised by the teachers interviewed, highlight the need for planned transition processes in which all stakeholders are involved and are fully informed. If, as advocated in Chapter 4 on Families, realistic transition goals have been developed, with families' concerns given paramount consideration, the situation described by Anne (K), of unrealistic expectations should occur less frequently.
Family knowledge — of own child

"Family systems theory" as described previously in Chapter 4, sees the child as one part of a transactional and dynamic unit. In common with early childhood philosophy, the family is recognised as the child's first and most important teacher. Implicit to this philosophical approach is the understanding that families are the people who know their own children best, and can act as best advocates on their behalves. Teachers' philosophical beliefs will influence their beliefs about the importance of families' knowledge of their children and the place that this knowledge has in the process of planning for children's learning. The research questions raised in Chapter 4 focused on continuity between early childhood and school programs for families of children with special needs. One element of this continuity will be strongly influenced by teachers' beliefs about families' knowledge of their children and the place of this knowledge in the Teaching and Learning planning process. This is closely related to the research questions raised in Chapter 3, relating to the continuity of Teaching and Learning for children moving from pre school programs into school. If teachers in different programs share Beliefs and Practices, continuity is likely to occur, whereas the converse is likely if there is a mismatch between the Beliefs and Practices of teachers in different Programs.

The teachers interviewed for this study varied in the strength of their opinions as to whether families were the people who knew best about their own children. In support of the empirical data in this study, the early intervention teachers interviewed (Sylvia and Kathy), had the strongest feelings that families knew best what was in the best interests of their own children. However Sylvia, adopted a pragmatic stance, stating that they "sometimes need some guidance". The preschool teachers (Pat and Nellie), felt "very strongly" or "quite strongly" with one adding the rider that "sometimes you do get the families...going through a denial process". The Kindergarten teachers, (Sally and Anne) were less certain about this
issue with one "fairly strongly" believing and explaining that she relies on parents to tell her what is worrying children and the other explaining that once children had been at school for a while and were spending six hours a day in the classroom, she also knew a lot about the child.

It seems that from the teachers interviewed for this study, the importance that parents can expect to be placed on their views of their child's learning needs, will be as outlined in the literature and revealed in the empirical findings of this study. That is, Early intervention teachers are likely to give the highest level of regard to families' knowledge of their children's needs, in line with their strong beliefs about the role of families. This may not be reflected in practices though. It is much less likely, however, when the child commences school, that this knowledge, and families' views, will be incorporated into the planning process. These differences will lead to the discontinuities that are the main focus of this study and which need to be lessened before exemplary transitions can occur.

Family Involvement

As previously outlined in Chapter 4 on Families, there has been a theoretical shift in recent years in professional views about the role of families in the programs of children with special needs. Family involvement is seen as being beneficial to the child, the professionals, families themselves and can reduce the stress of transition (Johnson, Chandler, Kerns & Fowler, 1986). In this study, the four teachers in the pre school group were most emphatic that family involvement is "crucial", "fundamental", and "paramount". Nellie (P) said that she "would be at a loss without it" and Sylvia (EI) explained that she sees the child "not as an individual, but as a part of the family". These comments clearly reflect the literature base on family systems theory. One Kindergarten teacher, Anne, felt that it was "crucial for parents to be involved" and explained that "those parents who were involved had children who progressed." However, in a possible discontinuity between
espoused theory and theory in use, she explained that in her role of school welfare officer, when she rang parents to tell them that their child was in trouble at school, she often felt that they were not interested in becoming involved and "taking responsibility" for the child's behaviour. Sally, the other Kindergarten teacher, showed a similar mismatch, stating that involvement was "crucial", but explaining her nervousness about having parents in the classroom, as she felt they would be judging her. She further pointed out that sometimes it was "detrimental" to have some parents there, as it created more work than it alleviated.

Again, discontinuities between the Practices of the pre school teachers and the school teachers interviewed emerged, with the pre school teachers demonstrating a stronger commitment towards family involvement. Families changing between the Programs of these teachers would experience a mismatch in the Practices that allowed or encouraged them to be fully involved in the planning and implementation of their children's Programs.

**Family Support — Early Intervention Teachers**

It has been mentioned earlier (in Chapter 4), that an important component of "family systems theory" is the concept of family support. Family support theory recognises the need of all families, with or without children with special needs, for informal and formal social supports. Support and the provision of resources promote competence and specifically avoid the creation of the long term dependency of families on others for meeting their needs (Dunst, et al., 1993). As the focus of this thesis is continuity in transition, the perceptions of teachers in both pre school and school programs about their support role for families is of great importance.

There was general agreement that a major role of the early intervention teacher was to support families. All teachers from all programs agreed that this seemed to
work effectively, although several expressed concern about families who were not connected with early intervention programs.

**Family Support — Kindergarten Teachers**

Again, teachers from pre school and school programs were in agreement that the general supportive role of the Kindergarten teacher towards families should and indeed does decrease as the child commences school. Sylvia (EI) said that she felt responsible to point out and plan for decreasing support throughout the transition period. She rationalised this by explaining that both parent and child should be becoming more independent as the child grows older, and family members become more familiar with their role and develop their own support networks. However, she did point out the need for someone to assume a social work role in schools. The pre school teachers interviewed felt that the Kindergarten teachers should be supportive of parents, but were realistic about their ability to do so within the constraints of time and numbers. The Kindergarten teachers again differed in their views on the importance of this role. Anne felt it was most important, and that she could manage the role by being available, even if for short periods like "when walking to lines". Sally, however, was quite definite that general emotional support, realistically, could not be a part of her job, as she was there to educate and should not assume a role for which she was untrained. She saw her responsibility in this area as a referral agent. Perhaps the role definition of teachers is one that needs to be considered. As more children with special needs enter the mainstream, teachers who have not previously been exposed to the philosophy of Family Systems, may feel or express the role definition dilemma expressed by Sally. Although they have heard the "rhetoric" of family systems espoused and feel that they should believe in the philosophy, when it comes to practices, if they truly believe that the role of the teacher is an "expert" who is there to "educate", their practices will not reflect the philosophy.
7.5.4 Transition Management

Effective transition processes rely largely on effective coordination and management for their success. Despite the good work of individual stakeholders, a transition can "come unstuck" at any point if effective management, leading to effective communication, is missing. The most difficult transition can be smooth with carefully planned and coordinated management and the simplest transition can become a disaster without this. In Chapter 5 on the management of transitions, a question was raised about the possibility of managing exemplary transitions in services other than ideal ones as described in the literature. As the empirical results of this study showed that there were considerable differences between teachers' Beliefs about Transition Management and their actual Practices, it is important to further investigate the comments of some of these teachers to help explain and interpret the findings. This was done through elite interviews and the results are reported below in the ten sub themes which were generated from the analysis of elite interview data. The themes are Child Preparation, Transition Management by pre school Programs, Transition Management between pre school and school Programs, Communication, Transition coordination, Long Term Transition Management, Department of School Education Policy, School Preparation, Parent Partnerships and School Resources. A further theme to emerge, which is included in this section was that of Teacher Stress.

Child preparation

Specific preparation of children for the next educational setting is a contentious issue, but best practice guidelines for transition clearly advocate the definition of specific transition goals for children with special needs.

The preparation of children for transition perhaps highlighted the potential for discontinuities between Programs more than any other transition element. The pre
school teachers felt that they were preparing children well, on the whole, but admitted that they were not familiar with what they were preparing the child for. Only one respondent, Sylvia (EI) was confident that she understood what would be required in classrooms. Nellie (P) said "unless you've been there you can't imagine what it's like" and Kathy (EI) pointed out the differences in school expectations. Sally (K) felt that preschools should have contact with schools to determine expectations and Sylvia (EI) pointed out that preparation could only be done to a certain extent if the child was not going to receive ongoing support. Again, the issue arose of children who have not been involved in early intervention programs, with Anne (K) feeling that those who had, were well prepared. Nellie (P) encapsulated the issue, describing differences and pointing out discontinuities by saying "It's very hard to prepare them for dealing with increased numbers in classrooms, having only one teacher to meet all their needs, long days, bigger playground, big kids, big school, really!"

In order to address and reduce the potential for discontinuity in child preparation that has been highlighted in these elite interviews, teachers in both preschool and school programs need to become familiar with other programs as a pre requisite to establishing the dialogue that will lead to the compromises needed to establish continuity between Programs.

**Transition Management by preschool services**

In the year before children with special needs commence school, several preschool programs may already be involved in planning and programming for them. Ideally, these services should already be operating in a coordinated manner, that will easily incorporate the extra team members from schools who will be needed for establishment of an effective transition team.
It became clear from elite interviews that coordination and cooperation amongst pre school services depends very much on individual services and workers. Sylvia (EI) said "it's very well coordinated in this area" and Kathy (EI) felt that "from my point of view it's really important, so that's one thing I always try to do." However, she also felt that professional differences of opinion (e.g., between therapists and teachers) did impede success and called for more case conferences. However well coordinated pre school services are, they are minimally effective if coordination and cooperation is not continued into the school. Sally (K) pointed out that a lot of services "drop off" when the child commences school and that the school has to rely on the parents to convey information. She expressed frustration saying "other services never approach us, we have to approach them if we have a worry...doctors are very reluctant to do any contacting. I don't think we've ever had a Preschool, even in extreme behaviour problems, contact us and say, hello, this child is coming to you."

**Transition Management — Between pre schools and schools**

When children commence transition to school, further stakeholders join the team and extra opportunities for discontinuity arise.

Major concerns were raised by both pre school and school program personnel in the area of the management of transition between the two. Pre school teachers expressed frustration, with Pat (P) saying "I've always found schools the hardest ones to get in contact with and to actually communicate with...they seem to make the decisions themselves...have never asked us to come to the school". On the other hand the Kindergarten teachers expressed as much frustration about pre schools not contacting them. Anne (K) said "I've never spoken to anyone from the Preschool" and expressed the opinion that pre schools were sending "young" children to school "to get rid of them". She suggested that "you would think they'd bring them...over for orientation". Clearly there are discontinuities in
transition management between programs identified by these teachers, which need to be addressed.

**Transition Management — communication**

Many of the findings raised in the previous section on discontinuity of transition management between pre school and school programs can be closely tied to the effectiveness of communication and further, who accepts responsibility for its occurrence and efficacy. This sub theme emerged as a major issue. Teachers from pre school programs, on the whole, did not know what information actually got to the schools. In the absence of any formal procedures for the handover of children's records, parents were often given information to hand on at their own discretion. While this procedure is in accord with family empowerment theories, there appears to be no process to guarantee successful transfer of records. Pre school teachers said they never receive feedback about children's progress and Kindergarten teachers said they never receive the records. Nellie (P) said she never passes on information, and she wasn't sure why, but on reflection expressed concern about someone else reading her observations of children. Sally (K) said "the information never comes through" and often there are children in Kindergarten who have been in programs about which the teachers have heard nothing. It was suggested that the transfer of information may stop "at the Principal's desk", but one thing was clearly evident - the pre school teachers and the Kindergarten teachers do not talk to each other.

**Transition Management — coordination**

A recurring theme that emerged in many contexts was that of coordination of transitions. All teachers agreed that this was a necessity. Neither Kindergarten teacher knew of anyone in the NSW Department of School Education who assumed the role of transition coordinator. Anne (K) stressed the need for a
person "who worked as a liaison between both" but was concerned that "someone should give us the money to do it properly and not band aid it...I think so much stuff is band aid on for twelve months and then twelve months later, we won't worry about that because that's not important any more". There was marked difference of opinion as to who should assume the role, again reflecting teachers' views on the role of families. Kathy (EI) thought it should be whomever the family felt most comfortable with, while Sylvia (EI) felt that the early intervention teacher already had the trust of the family. Nellie (P) felt the pre school teacher would be ideal, but Pat (P), thought the Department of School Education should assume responsibility. Sally (K) was happy for parents to coordinate transition because teachers didn't have time, but advocated professional involvement also, stressing that the person would need experience in schools to understand the needs. Clearly coordination is a crucial aspect of transition management that needs further attention.

**Transition Management — long term**

Best practice guidelines for transition are predicated on the notion that transition processes must occur over long term periods. Although all teachers agreed that transitions needed long term planning, most were emphatic that they had not experienced it in operation. Sylvia (EI) mentioned that one meeting prior to school entry was beginning to become practice, but was extremely annoyed at school counsellors who sent families away until school term four. This was seen as being in direct contradiction to DSE transition guidelines. Sally (K), did express concern that information passed on about children, before they commenced school would be useless, but when the transition team concept, with which she was unfamiliar, was explained to her, she was enthusiastic about the benefits.
Transition Management — DSE policy

As guidelines for the transition to school were introduced by the NSW Department of School Education in 1994, teachers often referred to these guidelines although specific information was not sought as this study was not intended to be an evaluation of the guidelines.

Pre school teachers were familiar with the guidelines and felt they were useful, although Nellie "got the royal runaround" in trying to obtain a copy. The teachers who knew the least (in fact nothing) about the guidelines issued by DSE in 1994 were the DSE Kindergarten teachers (Sally and Anne). They had heard vague mention, but had not seen the guidelines, attended inservices, or been involved in their use. Kathy, an early intervention teacher, liked the policy on paper, but didn't feel that it was being followed. There is clearly a need for greater dissemination of the guidelines themselves and information supporting their implementation.

Transition Management — school's preparation

Again, pre school teachers' lack of knowledge of the operation of schools meant that their opinions on this theme were limited. Kathy (EI) felt that teachers were unprepared because their training only looked at the average child. Anne (K) felt that her training and personal interests meant that she was prepared to teach children with special needs, but Sally (K) mentioned restrictions such as class sizes, classroom space and support as impediments to successful inclusion. Because her school had special classes, with specialist teachers available to advise her, she felt, that unlike other schools, she was lucky in the amount of advice and support she could access. Matters of inservice training and classroom resources are critical components of successful transitions and need to be addressed as an integral part of evaluations of transition processes.
Transition Management — parent partnerships

Family systems theory, as outlined in Chapter 4, has as a core component the partnership of parents and professionals. The empirical findings of this study showed that early intervention teachers hold stronger beliefs in the importance of the concepts embodied in this theoretical approach than do the teachers in preschool programs or schools. Parent partnerships are at the heart of genuine family involvement in the education of children with special needs, but all teachers surveyed had differences between their Beliefs and Practices on the role of families in transition.

Most teachers interviewed expressed the opinion that parents definitely did not feel like partners in the transition process. Sylvia (EI) felt they were disadvantaged in the school setting and interestingly had noticed that often the situation was reminiscent of their own school failure. Kathy (EI) thought that parents were overwhelmed and thought that "the school knows best, they're the ones who are trained", as did Anne (K) who said "a lot of ours (parents) think, OK, you're the teacher, you're the professional, you do it". Pat (P) felt that parent partnerships are currently limited because "they (parents) don't have a lot of knowledge or a lot of understanding...they don't know that they could have as a parent a lot of input...and they have the right to have that input." Kathy (EI) felt that parent partnerships were potentially possible "when it's done properly", which currently in her perception is "not very often". Although teachers say that they strongly believe in the principles of family systems, and early intervention teachers more strongly than others, practices clearly do not reflect this.

It is apparent that if parents are to become true partners in the process of transition, further research needs to be done to establish why this is not yet
happening. Specifically, why are teacher Practices in relation to family involvement so different from Beliefs?
Transition Management — school resourcing

Another of the major areas of concern to emerge from the interviews was in the area of the resources available within schools for children with special needs. This is a key area in the understanding of the differences between Beliefs and Practices.

The early intervention teachers, particularly Sylvia, had strong views on the inadequacy of resources for children with special needs in Kindergarten. She felt that "lack of support personnel in school is still a major issue" and was concerned that priority for help from a "Support Teacher Learning Difficulties" is usually given to older children. Understandably, as an early intervention teacher, she advocated giving support to younger children first, with the view to prevention or reduction of later difficulties. She has found it "virtually impossible to get integration support", particularly if the child doesn't have "high level" needs and felt that this situation is worsening. Kathy (EI) also had strong views on resourcing, saying "they get integrated with disabilities and learning difficulties and if it's not picked up before they go to school then nothing is really done until they're reading and writing ... and that's what the school sees, they don't pick it up... by then it's too late, they've wasted three years of their schooling. The Department of Education!"

She called for

more funding from the Department of Education, more staffing, the classes are getting bigger so the children that do have learning difficulties or some sort of special need that could be integrated in the class are being integrated into classrooms and would cope a lot better with smaller class sizes. There's a big difference between pre schools and schools.
She summed up her frustrations with "like everything else its not (working)... and integration was supposed to be happening across the board and you tend to find it happens in certain schools more than others because they have the staff to cope with it and then that school gets a reputation for integrating and providing resources and support to the children so more children tend to go there then other schools tend to go on their merry way without really facing that. Instead of all schools promoting."

Similarly the Kindergarten teachers (Sally and Anne) expressed frustration, focusing on their classroom difficulties with Anne saying "when he came to the school, the only thing that I got from the boss and from the mum was that you will be given teacher's aide time to do that and that was supposed to be set up in first term and that didn't arrive until third term. So I had to do a lot of the work with him". She explained that individual teachers need to seek out support "there is (support) if you go looking and if you know it's there. If you don't know it's there, then you've got to find it." Although teachers report belief in individualising programs and providing appropriate curricula, their comments show that lack of coordination of transitions and classroom resources affect their practices.

**Stress On Teachers**

A further theme to emerge from the interviews was that of the stress experienced by teachers during the transition process.

Most teachers did not feel that transition processes and family involvement were stressful. Sylvia (EI) felt that "occasionally if parents are anxious or in denial" it could be more stressful and Pat (P) felt that the day was perhaps a little more tiring with parents involved, but that it was "most important" and "keeps us on
our toes". Anne (K) said "I'd much rather have them in there, much much rather. I think it makes it so much easier on the kids. Because they're feeling so important". The exception was Sally who finds "I often put off having parents in the room when I know I should. I feel absolutely paranoid about it at the beginning of the year." Overall, stress did not emerge as a major issue for the teachers in this study.
7.6 Delimited Thematic Statements

As many themes and issues emerged it was decided that following the listing of all thematic statements (see Appendix 1 - Table 1), statements would be delimited to produce a summarised table showing all issues raised. If a statement considered to be the same was made by two different teachers, this was collapsed and considered to express one issue. For a full list of the identified issues see Table 2 (Appendix 1).

7.7 Teacher Perceptions of Problems

Following the grouping of statements into themes it became evident that many statements referred to problems in the transition process. Further analysis was conducted on statements to draw out those statements that were considered to define problems in transition. These were called "problem statements" and as with thematic groupings were delimited to produce a list of teachers' perceived problems in transition. A set of principles developed from the literature relating to best practice in the transition to school was developed (see Chapter 5 - Managing Transitions for the list of Principles). The problem statements were then classified according to the 22 best practice principles previously written (see Table 7.26).
Table 7.25  
Transition Problems in Relation to Best Practice Standards Derived from the Literature, as Perceived by Early Childhood Teachers with Experience of the Transition into School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best practice guideline</th>
<th>Perceived problems</th>
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| 1. Transition requires a longitudinal plan with a written timeline; | • transition is not being consistently carried out in a systematic way, over long term.  
• in most cases it is only possible to hold one transition meeting before school commencement.  
• some school counsellors discourage parents from coming until term 4, don't understand best practice in transition.  
• some teachers see information as a bit meaningless when they don't know the child  
• involvement in transition is another thing to ask of the busy teacher  
• pre school staff not aware that they should be starting transition early in the year |
| 2. Transition has a goal of smooth/efficient movement from one program to the next; | • families and children find the idea of school daunting- don't know what to expect.  
• families not in early intervention receive no support and can be overwhelmed. Long waiting lists.  
• pre school teachers not sure of the kinder teachers' or the school's expectations of chn when they start school.  
• coordination probably has to be up to parent as no one else has time. Varies according to knowledge and skill of parent.  
• coordinator should be someone who has had experience in both areas- pre school and school.  
• money should be available to do it properly, not for twelve months and forget about it because that's not important anymore.  
• Kinder teachers not aware of who is responsible for coordinating transition.  
• difficult to obtain information on transition from DSE. |
| 3. Transition is a process that includes preparation, implementation and follow up | • pre school preparing chn as much as possible but don't know what-if any, support will be available.  
• Transition policy is written but not being followed.  
• Kindergarten teachers haven't heard about transition guidelines. |
| 4. Transition has a philosophy that movement to the next program implies movement to a program that is inclusive or less restrictive than the previous program. |                         |
5. Transition involves trans disciplinary teaming in which all personnel are aware of the transition process;  
- school expectations differ and are difficult to ascertain.  
- hard for pre school to prepare child when they don't know about the next setting.  
- chn at a disadvantage if not in EI program- therapists have no knowledge of schools-should do some training for therapists.

6. Families receive support and information to enable them to participate as equal partners in planning transition  
- parents don't feel like partners in the transition process.  
- little attempt made by schools in the past to involve parents.  
- school can be reminiscent of parents' own school failure.  
- families are in a very vulnerable position-they've got a child who needs a lot of help.  
- at times parents have to push for equal partnership.  
- Kinder teachers not aware of how much help families will need in school.  
- families probably feel at the mercy of the school they are going to.  
- Kinder teachers think the majority of families don't want to be involved.  
- families don't have a lot of help.  
- some parents still may feel uninvolved- transition organised by DSE and they have to fit in. They don't have a lot of say, don't have a lot of knowledge or understanding and they don't know that they could have a lot of input and they have that right.  
- Parents overwhelmed by professionals.  
- Its a lottery-parents don't feel they have much power.  
- sometimes when families know that teachers are doing extra work in the classroom, they don't want to do any thing at home.  
- some families don't want input- think "you're the professional, you do it."  
- Working closely with families may be a little more stressful, though it keeps us on our toes.  
- Parent partnerships could be threatening to some teachers, just depends on their previous experience with parents.  
- Occasionally stressful for teachers if parent is anxious or in denial.

7. Developmentally appropriate assessment and curriculum planning are incorporated into the transition process;  
- discontinuity as pre school curriculum has individual child focus- does not start from subject areas.  
- pre school children mainly used to learning individually or in small groups.  
- Kinder program has little individual work. Seen as remedial approach only.  
- difficult for pre school teachers not familiar with school to plan for continuity of program.  
- Kinder teachers don't value play based learning.  
- no formal links between pre schools and Kindergarten.  
- pre schools send to many schools-no contact made.  
- school's response to approaches by pre school is unenthusiastic or negative.
8. There is inter agency cooperation and transfer of information to all team participants;

- success of school involvement limited because they can't commit themselves to support.
- hard for pre school teachers to coordinate transition, despite good will because they don't know what support is available.
- DSE doesn't volunteer any information about what support is available. Very hard to find out.
- little cooperation between pre school and school.
- pre school teachers don’t have enough specific knowledge of transition.
- therapists have their own needs and can't see the whole child. That's why it's important to get a case conference together and start with the parents and really focus on the parent's needs.
- not really an integrated thing - rely on the family.
- other services never approach schools.
- lots of services cease when the child goes to school and the parents have been lead to believe that when they go to school, they'll get services (e.g. therapy).
- teachers rarely ring pre schools to find out more about enrolling children.
- schools don't find out how the pre school program worked - philosophies, practices.
- schools are always the hardest to get in contact with and to actually communicate with.
- the schools seem to make the decisions themselves and never ask pre schools to come to the school.
- we (schools) just haven't made the effort to liaise with pre schools.
- can't afford the time to go to all the feeder pre schools.
- pre schools, even in extreme cases, rarely contact the school.
- schools (some) fear that preschools might start doing things that are school based.
- some pre schools very difficult to get information from
- preschools probably don't know a lot about schools - they would just give general expectations - no formal link there.

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<th>9. Individualised transition plans are developed</th>
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<td>• teachers lack knowledge in special education.</td>
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<th>10. Transition is evaluated periodically by all team members</th>
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<td>• child and inclusion process not systematically evaluated after school commencement.</td>
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| 11. The transition team determines the communication policy and program of potential receiving programs. | • expectations differ from area to area and despite set curriculum expectations are not uniform.  
• pre school teachers have no knowledge of what happens when chn. get to school-classroom assistance.  
• pre school teachers don’t know about school funding procedures.  
• pre school teachers initiate transition independently because family asks questions they don’t know the answers to.  
• procedures aren’t explained to families, just told where their children slot in.  
• procedures vary from year to year so pre schools don’t know when to apply for integration support.  
• school usually doesn’t know DSE support funding procedures and availability. |
| 12. The transition team obtains information about the skills seen as important in the receiving program | • schools don’t identify their expectations.  
• families don’t know school expectations, which vary from school to school.  
• pre schools not sure of the school’s expectations of chn when they commence. |
| 13. The child is prepared for successful and independent inclusion in Kindergarten | • pre schools vary in their preparation of children, not all chn. have gone to pre schools.  
• families can be quite “out of touch” with school expectations.  
• pre school “out of touch” with school expectations.  
• It’s very hard to prepare chn when there is little continuity- increased numbers in classroom, having only one teacher to meet needs, long days, bigger playground, big kids.  
• child prepared well by Ef only if there is ongoing support.  
• chn “not ready” for school expectations (lining up). |
| 14. Information is sent to receiving program and receipt is verified | • pre schools not familiar with what information gets to schools.  
• some parents don’t tell school anything about child’s special needs.  
• no feedback from schools (only via parents) on information sent about children.  
• pre schools don’t pass on any information.  
• pre school feels hesitant about passing comprehensive records on-can’t discuss them.  
• pre schools rely on the parent to transfer records.  
• school doesn’t get enough information-teachers don’t know where to get them from-unfamiliar with pre school systems.  
• pre school confidentiality standards don’t allow them to talk to school against parent wishes.  
• sometimes it gets to the Principal and no further.  
• the information never comes through.  
• Kinder teacher unaware of work done with child in the past. |
| 15. Program continuity is ensured by providing developmentally appropriate curriculum for all age levels. | • we (schools) just haven’t made the effort to make links with pre schools.  
• schools not committed to play based curriculum. |
| 16. The school prepares to successfully integrate and educate the entering child in the kindergarten and primary school mainstream. | • Need for more inservice for Kinder teachers.
• Need for training about subtle learning difficulties.
• Kinder teacher's knowledge depends on past experience.
• Teachers not aware of DSE procedures
• Kinder teachers don't have time to go to all preschools
• Families think school will be able to fix all child's problems.
• School fails to explain procedures, tests, jargon to parents.
• Kinder teachers don't know how to approach parents if concerned about a child. |
|---|---|
| 17. The school staff provide the necessary services to promote and support the child's placement, inclusion and education in the kindergarten classroom and primary school mainstream. | • Lack of support, personnel in school still major issue.
• STLD priority given to older chn-should prioritise younger ones.
• Virtually impossible to get integration support.
• Child must have high level needs to get integration support.
• Consultants can't give "extra pair of hands" support.
• Lack of staff in Kindergarten makes it difficult.
• Ideal to have someone take social work role in school.
• Pre school teachers can't imagine what its like to have thirty children and one teacher.
• Important for families to feel supported, teachers should be approachable and if necessary direct family to networks.
• A lot of families may not feel comfortable approaching other (than teachers) professionals about their child.
• Kinder teachers don't see their role as support-unrealistic to ask a mainstream teacher to support in a large way-should be communicating all the time with the parent but then referring them-role to provide educational programs.
• Kinder teachers find it difficult to know how involved to become with parent-one teacher may do it and then parent expects all teachers to do it.
• Biggest factor class size
• There isn't support available to Kinder teachers-if you don't give us extra personnel and you don't give us smaller class sizes, we can't do it. |
- try to manipulate teacher numbers and class sizes so children with special needs get a fair go. Overall organisation of the school needs to be able to cater for these kids as well as the teacher in the class.
- Parents rarely know how to go about looking for special help for their children who have been identified as having a problem.
- Heavy load on Kinder teachers at beginning of year-different levels plus some with special needs.
- Teacher training looks at the average child and staff have difficulty challenging the child that's gifted or the child that's not learning the set way.
- Teaching experience and ability varies. Good if teacher is willing to take child on, but unless got experience can't take child in just to be kind.
- Pre school teachers don't know about types of support available.
- Families not satisfied with support—some children receive none for years.
- Some schools accept children to keep the numbers up to keep the staff.
- Pre school teachers perceive need for early and continuous support—not being received.
- Lack of early identification—nothing is really done until they're reading and writing, by then it's too late, they've wasted three years of their schooling.
- More funding needed from the DSE, more staffing, the classes are getting bigger, the children with special needs would cope a lot better with smaller class sizes. Lack of continuity between preschools and schools.
- One school gets a reputation for integrating and so more children tend to go there then other schools tend to not really face it.
- Some children have been told there are no special classes available.
- Lack of clear procedures for application for funds, children missing out—should have applied for it earlier.
- Kinder teachers not given background information on child.
- Kinder teacher has to "survive alone" until support is allocated in term 3 or 4.
- Kinder teachers have to search out support—not easy to find out about.

| 18. | Family consent is obtained for release of information. |
| 19. | The child's eligibility for transition and the receiving placement is determined |
| 20. | Development of IEP and IFSP in which family strengths and needs are determined. |

- DSE policies and procedures difficult to ascertain.
- Pre school teachers don't have enough specific knowledge about schools.
- Kinder teachers not used to communicating with families of children with special needs—not sure how to approach.
- Some Kinder teachers feel parent involvement is detrimental, can't determine family strengths.
| 21. Identification and organisation of the training and resources needed to establish and support the transition process | - Govt. departmental boundaries mean support system stops at school entry-discontinuity-need to re-establish new networks.  
- Kinder teachers feel need for training in specific areas. |
|---|---|
| 22. Identifying program options and planning visits. | - Families need help in identifying sources of support  
- Pre schools don't know much about schools-don't approach.  
- School in local area may not have skills or personnel to suit child's needs. |
7.8 Summary

It is evident from these analyses that the teachers interviewed feel that, despite the introduction of transition policies, there are still many problems to be addressed. It is apparent that transitions are not yet being planned systematically and on a long term basis. There was little evidence of the NSW Department of School Education's involvement in transition planning in this study, despite the introduction of guidelines. There is certainly substantial data to show that continuity is not occurring. In all the best practice areas, comments were made that revolved around the lack of knowledge and understanding by teachers about areas of teaching other than their own. It was strongly evident from the pre school sector, that teachers do not know what happens in schools, what support is available for children, and the expectations held by particular schools. Similarly, Kindergarten teachers are not familiar with the methods and curricula of programs from which the children have moved. There appears to be little effective communication between the two sectors, with the Kindergarten teachers saying they don't have time to do this, and the pre school teachers demonstrating negative attitudes and recalling bad experiences with regard to school stakeholders' willingness to talk to them.

The teachers' views on family involvement were mainly reasonably positive, but as shown in the empirical data, the early intervention teachers had significantly stronger Beliefs on full involvement (see Table 7.12). The Kindergarten teachers saw involvement in a much more limited sense, though many parents didn't want it and were less sure of the benefits for all children.
It is interesting that the area of Teaching and Learning was one in which there were fewer comments. Teachers were more concerned about resources and the lack of communication between sectors, than the specifics of how to teach children with special needs in the classroom. This has implications for the quality of Teaching and Learning experiences by children with special needs.

The area of school preparation and resourcing for children with special needs was the one that received the most comments. It appears that schools are not receiving information on children with special needs before they arrive, and this is exacerbated by the reluctance of some pre-school programs to pass information on. Both pre-school and Kindergarten teachers, when they were familiar with classroom support processes, felt that classes were too large to allow continuity from pre-school programs to be effective. They also both felt that Kindergarten teachers needed more specific training to teach a variety of children with special needs. Again, it was mentioned several times that DSE policies and procedures for obtaining funding and integration support were not easy to find out about.

Further to the listing of teachers' perceptions of problems, statements were again delimited to produce a list of significant transition issues. These were devised from the statements that reoccurred regularly.
Table 7.26

**Significant Transition Issues**

- transition to school is not systematic and long term
- families don't know what to expect from schools
- families are not treated as partners in decision making
- school policies and procedures are not readily available and known by all stakeholders in transition
- pre school teachers do not know what happens in schools
- families not in early intervention programs are at a disadvantage for transition
- there is discontinuity of curriculum, physical environment and teaching strategies between pre school and school
- schools don't initiate or encourage links with pre school programs
- schools don't clearly identify their expectations
- information from pre schools is not sent or passed on, through schools, to Kindergarten teachers
- Kindergarten teachers are unsure about their role with families
- Kindergarten teachers need more specific knowledge
- there is discontinuity of support and therapy when children commence school
- there is insufficient classroom support
7.10 Limitations of This Study

The results of this study need to be interpreted within the context of the small sample size. The number of teachers involved was small and they came from only one region, albeit a large and diverse one - a Western Sydney metropolitan area. Results, as such, may not be generalisable. The responses given in part 2 for teaching Practices were the self reports of teachers about their daily work. These may or may not be an accurate representation and should be supplemented by classroom observations to check their reliability.

One notable feature of the responses was the difference in response rate between teaching groups. The number of responses from schools was considerably lower than from the other two groups. Whilst some of this difference may be accounted for by surveys not getting to the appropriate teacher in larger schools, several schools did reply, saying that this was not a relevant issue for them to comment on. As the survey did not ask about individual or specific children, with all questions requiring a generalised response it did not matter if teachers did not have a transition child in their class at the time. There are implications in this response rate for general awareness about the transition to school, within schools.

In relation to the second stage of this study, the elite interviews, it is possible that despite reassurances of confidentiality, and attempts to allow teachers to feel relaxed, the respondents may have felt influenced by the researcher's aims and may have responded in a perception of "politically correct" answers at times rather than expressing completely honest and open views. There was no reason to suspect that this was the case, but the possibility must be considered.
CHAPTER 8:

Conclusions and Recommendations

The transition to school for children with special needs is an emerging area of interest in the field of early childhood. This is reflected in the development of policies and in initiatives to facilitate transitions in some regions. These initiatives have largely emerged as the result of "grass roots" recognition of need and the resultant pragmatically based development of programs to address perceived needs. There has been little Australian research into this important transition. As transitions are recognised as stressful, a current and localised research base is needed to facilitate policy development and delivery of effective services. All stakeholders in the process, including families, children and teachers will be the beneficiaries of improved transition processes. Improvement, to a large extent is dependent on increased continuity of teaching and learning processes, views and practices with respect to the role of families, and transition management models and procedures.

The current research was largely descriptive and exploratory in nature because of the lack of a substantial Australian research base and the perceived need to provide a detailed picture of the beliefs and practices of one group of stakeholders in the transition process for children with special needs in NSW. Early childhood teachers (pre school, early intervention and Kindergarten) were chosen as the subjects of this study as their role in this important transition is crucial. The employment of complementary qualitative-quantitative research protocols enabled the construction of a comprehensive picture of the transition to school.
The research questions around which this study was constructed, focus on the issue of continuity for children with special needs and their families as they transfer from early intervention programs into school programs. If this transition is to be successful continuity is vital and it must demonstrate the exemplary practices that will reduce stress and optimise children’s progress. In this study continuity was considered in the three important conceptual areas that emerged from the literature: Teaching and Learning, Family, and Transition Management. More specifically, several questions were addressed in each area:

**Teaching and Learning:**
- is there a match between teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning and their daily Practices?
- is there continuity between teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning for children, as they move between Programs?
- is there continuity of Teaching and Learning Practices for children as they move between Programs?

**Families:**
- is there a match between teachers' Beliefs and Practices in relation to the role of families in transition?
- is there continuity of Beliefs about families between teachers in different Programs?
- is there continuity between teachers' Practices with families in different Programs?

**Transition Management:**
- is there a match between teachers' Beliefs about Transition Management and their Practices?
- is there continuity in teachers' Beliefs between Programs about the Management of Transitions?
• is there continuity of Transition Management Practices between Programs?

These questions were addressed through the use of complementary quantitative and qualitative research methods comprising of surveys and follow up interviews.

In this chapter, results will be summarised in relation to the research questions raised in the introductory chapter, and the literature on best practice in the transition to school (Chapters 2, 3, 4 & 5). In Section 1(8.2.1) quantitative data obtained from teachers about NSW Department of School Education Transition Guidelines for Educators and Parents will be summarised and discussed. Further the participation of the teachers surveyed in relevant inservice courses will be reviewed.

In Section 2 (8.2.2) the issue of continuity in the transition to school for children with special needs and their families will be summarised. Part 1 will cover continuity in teaching and learning; part 2, continuity for families in the transition to school; part 3 will summarise continuity of transition management. The results of both quantitative and qualitative studies will be summarised in an integrated manner.

In Section 3 (8.2.3) teachers' perceptions of problems in transition, revealed through analyses of qualitative data will be summarised in the form of a list of significant transition issues.

Following the summary of results, conclusions will be drawn. This will be followed by a list of recommendations which will be reported in three parts:

Part 1 (8.4.1) will consist of implications for teachers;
Part 2 (8.4.2) will present recommendations for policy makers; and
Part 3 (8.4.3) will outline future research directions.
8.1 Summary of Major Findings

8.1.1 NSW Department of School Education transition guidelines

In 1994, following a process of community consultation, the NSW Department of School Education (DSE) formulated and subsequently introduced a set of guidelines for "parents and educators" involved with children with special needs undergoing the transition to school.

Teachers were asked about their awareness of the guidelines and their involvement in their implementation in 1994.

Results indicated that there are still teachers who do not know about the guidelines, and even more who have not yet been involved in their implementation. Early intervention staff are the principal group who are taking responsibility for their implementation with fewer pre school and Kindergarten teachers involved at present. There is agreement as to their potential usefulness.

Special education related inservice

Guidelines for best practice in transition emphasise the need for adequate preparation of teachers who will be working with children with special needs. Inservice training is an important component of effective transitions, necessary for teachers to feel more confident and competent when working with children with special needs.

In this study early childhood teachers' participation in inservice programs which may be beneficial for the transition and inclusion of children with special needs, was quite high. Most teachers found these useful with fewer finding them extremely useful.
8.1.2 continuity in transition

A major purpose of this study was to examine continuity of experiences for children with special needs and their families in the transition to school. Results indicate, however, considerable discontinuity that has implications for children's education and their transition to school. Areas of discontinuity in programs for young children with special needs have been identified in this study and have implications for their education and their subsequent transition into the next program.

The following elements of continuity emerged as the most important in this study:

**Continuity of Teaching and Learning**

An essential element of curriculum, the pedagogical beliefs and practices of teachers, are an element of transition where potential discontinuities may arise. There are possible differences within individual teachers' own beliefs and practices, and also between the beliefs and practices of teachers in different programs.

Explorations of Teaching and Learning indicated mismatches between all teachers' Teaching and Learning Beliefs and their subsequent daily Practices. Whilst teachers reported strong Beliefs about the philosophies and ideals of teaching young children, they also reported that they did not frequently implement Practices in accordance with their Beliefs. To further investigate the difference between Beliefs and Practices, results were analysed according to the Program teachers worked in and also their Qualifications. Investigation of the relationship between Program and Beliefs and Practices revealed differences. The early intervention respondents recorded a bigger difference between their Teaching and Learning Beliefs and Practices than did the pre school teachers. There were no relationships between Qualifications and Beliefs and Practices. Explanations of differences were provided through the six elite interviews with three areas of Teaching and
Learning emerging to become the focus of analyses - Content, Teaching Strategies and Teacher Knowledge:

**Content**

Through further discussion with pre school, early intervention and Kindergarten teachers during elite interviews, specific discontinuities were revealed between Programs in Teaching and Learning Beliefs and Practices. The selection of what to teach is perhaps the most apparent indicator to the public of teachers' work. The content, or the "what" of teaching can reveal a lot about teachers' philosophies and ideas on teaching. The products that children eventually show "to the world" in the form of knowledge, attitudes or skills can reflect teachers' beliefs on how teaching should occur. Among the teachers interviewed for this study, the selection of teaching content appeared to have a fundamentally different foundation for pre school teachers than for Kindergarten teachers. This reflects literature that suggests that early childhood programs in schools revolve around subject based planning while in pre school programs it is more likely to be based on the needs and interests of individuals (Briggs & Potter, 1990; Williams, 1987). While teachers interviewed, from all programs, espoused a philosophical stance based on children's individual needs, the pre school teachers in this study described their practices as based on observation for these needs and following children's leads while the Kindergarten teachers were much more restricted and committed to "covering" content according to subject matter criteria and requirements of school syllabi. Teachers from all programs revealed a surface level approach in their ability to describe their rationale for content selection (Crawford, Gordon, Nicholas & Prosser, 1994).

**Teaching strategies**

Perhaps less obvious to "the world" than the "what" of teaching is the "how" of teaching or the selection of teaching strategies. How these are selected and individualised for children can also provide an indication of teachers' philosophies
and approaches. As children with special needs often need individualised programming with teaching broken down into manageable steps, the knowledge and use of a wide range of strategies is particularly pertinent.

In the description of selection of "how" to teach, "surface level approaches" (Crawford et al,) towards selection and articulation of the use of teaching strategies was even more apparent, for all programs, than in the area of content selection. Despite probing, few teachers were able to clearly explain their rationale or use of strategies. The recurrent phrase, seen to best encapsulate description of this critical area of teaching, of particular relevance to children with special needs, was "I just do it". Discontinuity was revealed between pre school and Kindergarten teachers in the amount of planning and implementation time that was devoted to individual work with children. Although individual work is a cornerstone of pre school programs, in Kindergarten, almost no individual work was reported. A major research question in this study was the continuity of pedagogical practices for children with special needs in transition. Among the teachers who participated in elite interviews, there was little continuity between programs evident in the area of teaching strategies. Further, the articulation of use of strategies was surprisingly difficult for these teachers considering the fact that they were all qualified teachers.

**Teacher knowledge**

When researching continuity of Teaching and Learning and Management of Transition, what a teacher knows individually is of importance, but so too is what they know about other programs. As discussed in Chapter 2 on Continuity, stress is relieved and progress is maximised when there is no mismatch between programs. For this to happen teachers need to establish dialogue and make compromises between programs. Before this can occur, teachers need to know about the other programs involved in the transition process.
Teachers interviewed from all programs, revealed that they knew little about early childhood programs other than those in which they worked. Pre school teachers (including early intervention) did not reveal adequate knowledge about what schools expected of children on arrival or what constituted their programs. Similarly, Kindergarten teachers knew little about what pre school programs did to prepare children for school. For teachers in this study, there had been almost no communication on this important element of continuity with any other early childhood teachers in sending or receiving programs in their areas.

Apart from the early intervention teachers who had been directly involved in transition procedures, there was a marked lack of knowledge and experience of transition processes. The teachers who worked in Department of School Education schools had heard little about the policies and procedures which are currently being implemented within the Department.

**Continuity about the role of families**

If best practice in the transition to school is adhered to, families will take a leading or integral role in the transition process. As recognised in family systems theory, the child in transition is not an isolated unit but a member of a complex and dynamic system - the family. In this study teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to families were explored.

Again, as with Teaching and Learning, there was a mismatch between teachers' reported Beliefs and their actual Practices. All teachers recognised the important role of families but no teachers seemed to translate these Beliefs into daily actions.

To further investigate the difference between beliefs and practices, results were analysed according to the program teachers worked in and also their qualifications. Investigation of the relationship between the program in which a teacher worked, seemed to influence beliefs. The early intervention teachers
considered the role of families to be more important than did the pre school or Kindergarten teachers. In further investigation of the relationship of qualifications to beliefs and practices, there were no significant differences found. In order to understand and explain differences, six elite interviews were conducted and analysed qualitatively.

On the whole teachers felt that families knew very little about what school would be like for their children with special needs and that families probably felt intimidated in schools. One teacher expressed the view that families of children with special needs made it their business to find out a lot more about schools, but overall there was little confidence from teachers that families with children commencing school were informed or empowered. Teachers felt parents knew little about specifics such as policies, assessment procedures and the role of counsellors. Whilst pre school teachers felt that parents, on the whole, were the people who knew best about their own children, Kindergarten teachers were less certain that this was true. Similarly, pre school teachers felt more comfortable about the involvement of families, seeing the child as part of a family system, where the Kindergarten teachers saw their involvement as important, but viewed it in a much more limited sense, e.g. working in the classroom when the teacher felt ready to have them. All teachers interviewed agreed that parents are not yet really true partners in the transition process. It was apparent that the level of support that families can expect, and do receive, is considerable in early intervention programs but substantially less at school.

**Continuity of Transition Management**

For the management of successful transitions to occur, participants in the process need to strive for continuity in all elements of that process. This can be done by knowing and adhering to best practice guidelines. Within these guidelines there are specific elements which relate to management practices. For continuity of these practices, which has been established as vital in previous chapters, stakeholders
from all programs involved need to know and adhere to best practice. This will minimise the stress involved for families that has been described by Fowler, Schwartz and Atwater (1991). This study investigated teachers' beliefs and practices about Transition Management in the change from early intervention to school.

Similarly to the other two conceptual groups, all teachers surveyed reported that their beliefs about the management of transitions, did not accord with what they actually practised. Quantitative analyses revealed no differences according to Program (pre school, early intervention, Kindergarten) or Qualification. In order to further examine the continuity of management practices between programs, follow up interview data was gathered and analysed.

Not surprisingly, major discontinuities between programs were described by the teachers interviewed. The preparation of children with special needs for school is apparently problematic, when pre school teachers are not fully conversant with the school system. This is exacerbated by the fact that teachers are not finding out about programs other than their own. Early intervention teachers are preparing children for Kindergarten programs that will be very different from the pre school programs they are used to and there appears to be little chance of the previous pre school level of classroom support for children who do not have "high level support needs". Whilst pre school services often seem able to coordinate and manage transition programs effectively between themselves, this appears to often stop at the point of school entry, with little or no follow through. Information is rarely passed on to schools and feedback is not given to pre school programs. Teachers in pre school programs and teachers in Kindergartens are not communicating directly with each other, and each seem to be waiting for the other to initiate contact. Teachers interviewed identified a strong need for personnel to take responsibility for the long term coordination of transition programs, ensuring that communication and cooperation are effective.
The availability of resources is an area of major concern. Kindergarten teachers mentioned lack of space, lack of assistance and large class sizes. They were not aware of support policies and procedures and had to seek out any help they received. There was a perception that classroom support is becoming harder to obtain and that children need to have "higher level" needs to be eligible than was previously the case. Non-transfer of information about children exacerbated the lack of classroom support as teachers reported needing to take extended periods of time establishing children's needs.

8.2.3 teachers' perceptions of transition issues

Although the teachers interviewed, on the whole were willing to become involved in transitions and acknowledged the benefits of a good transition, the focus of their discussion was on the problems they had encountered. In order to give voice to their concerns and use them as the basis for future improvement in transition processes, "significant transition issues" were identified. They were used to generate the following Table of "Significant Transition Issues":

| TABLE 8.1  
Teacher Perceptions of Significant Transition Issues |
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• transition to school is not systematic and long term</td>
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<tr>
<td>• families don't know what to expect from schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>• families are not treated as partners in decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• school policies and procedures are not readily available and known by all stakeholders in transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• pre school teachers do not know what happens in schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>• families not in early intervention programs are at a disadvantage for transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• discontinuity of curriculum, physical environment and teaching strategies between pre school and school exist</td>
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<td>• schools don't initiate or encourage links with pre school programs</td>
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<td>• schools don't clearly identify their expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• information from pre schools is not sent or passed on, through schools, to Kindergarten teachers</td>
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<td>• Kindergarten teachers are unsure about their role with families</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Kindergarten teachers need more specific knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>• there is discontinuity of support and therapy when children commence school</td>
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<tr>
<td>• there is insufficient classroom support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.2 In Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore continuity between early intervention and school. Research questions focused on teachers' transition beliefs and practices.

Empirical results indicate a mismatch between teachers' beliefs and practices in each conceptual area: Teaching and Learning, Families and Transition Management.

The concerns and problems identified by teachers in the current transition processes focus primarily on the more pragmatic elements of transition and less strongly on in depth issues such as curriculum development. This reflects a concerning lack of "deep level" thinking by the teachers involved about the pedagogical issues surrounding the inclusion of children with special needs.

Despite evidence (e.g Briggs & Potter, 1990) suggesting that teachers in the pre school and school sectors of early childhood education believe different things and do different things empirical results of this study did not show significant differences according to Qualifications. These suggestions of differences, implicitly and explicitly rest on the notion that teachers who hold Qualifications in early childhood education will believe and practice differently to teachers holding Qualifications in primary education. Differences in Beliefs, were revealed however, related to the Program in which teachers worked and were explained through qualitative analyses of follow up interviews. Discontinuities were revealed between Programs in the three conceptual areas of transition studied (Teaching and Learning, Family and Transition Management). These differences led to the generation of "Teacher Perceptions of Significant Transition Issues". The early intervention teachers surveyed, believed more strongly in family involvement than other teachers and other areas of early childhood teaching could benefit from adoption of their philosophy. Early intervention teachers also held stronger beliefs about Teaching and Learning.
A need has been identified for improved communication between programs and all teachers working with children with special needs should see themselves as a coherent group working together for the best interests of the children in their care. Communication with the next, or previous teacher must be seen as a matter of importance and professional responsibility. When it comes to the future needs and education of a child with special needs there is no time or room for "buck passing" or procrastination. Children's futures must all be seen as partially dependent on the knowledge and professionalism of the people who care for and educate them and as such there is no room for professional jealousies, lack of knowledge, misunderstandings and resultant discontinuities. All early childhood teachers need to prioritise the transition of children with special needs more highly than they presently do.

Teachers in this study, were mainly concerned with the survival aspects of working with children with special needs. The discussions on teaching and learning issues were relatively superficial. The "deeper level" comments made on teaching strategies came from the pre school teachers who may be more used to working with children with special needs and thus may be a step further along in their development as teachers of inclusive programs. Many Kindergarten teachers are approaching the inclusion process for the first time and thus, may be considered novices in this area, despite their general experience. Perhaps this can be related to Katz's (1977) levels of development of beginning teachers (survival, consolidation, renewal, maturity). For many teachers inclusion of children with special needs is a new area and there is a need for ongoing support and professional development. If teachers can go beyond their own immediate survival needs, they may be able to focus more on their teaching strategies and styles, thus having a better chance of aligning their beliefs more closely with their daily practices. This would surely lead to higher quality experiences, as the "survival" stage is passed, leading to improved quality of programming for all children concerned. Although many of the teachers surveyed attended inservice courses, not all rated these highly. The monitoring and evaluation of inservice training may address some of the gaps and needs these teachers perceive they have in their knowledge.
Policy makers and planners need to ask why these committed teachers with very strong beliefs about the best interests of young children are not always converting beliefs into the implementation of accordingly exemplary programs. The teachers themselves would see these discrepancies as arising from a lack of training and ongoing support.

Communication between programs must be of an excellent standard if children are to have their best possible chance in the future. This optimal level of communication can be best achieved through thorough, comprehensive, coordinated transition planning. This needs to be fully recognised and supported at a systemic level. For exemplary transitions to occur teachers need to be work from a sound pedagogical base, and be committed to the process of transition with resources, mainly in the form of personnel being made available to assist. More early childhood teachers need to be formally involved in the transition process particularly in the pre school/daycare and Kindergarten sectors.

Strategies at policy, school and classroom level need to be in place to eliminate comments like: "I feel schools need to contact us if they know they are taking a child with special needs" (pre school teacher) and, "It would always be desirable to know in advance and to liaise with the pre school, but I have had the misfortune to have pre schools tell parents to enrol, but say nothing and "see if the teacher of Kinder notices" (Kindergarten teacher) ... in a greater attempt at working together for the continuity of services for our children.
8.3 Recommendations

8.3.1 Implications for teachers

The findings of this study suggest that for continuity to be achieved for families and their children with special needs as they move from early intervention programs into schools teachers need to:

- participate in detailed examination of the transition to school process, to facilitate understanding of why teachers' strongly held Beliefs about best practices related to transition and inclusion are not reflected in commensurate levels of highly frequent Practices. If teachers are saying they believe strongly in transition principles guided by best practice standards, then ideally, they should be converting these Beliefs into classroom Practice. If they are not doing this they are compromising their own Beliefs. Further understanding of this mismatch is needed.

- familiarise themselves with available transition policies and endeavour to participate in transition processes which incorporate best practice.

- read and act on available literature about best practice in the transition to school for children with special needs.

- initiate or participate in networks of early childhood teachers from different programs to improve communication between sectors in general, and specifically about the transition of children between programs.

- articulate both their Beliefs and give comprehensive descriptions of their Practices as an integral part of the process of matching Beliefs to Practices. To facilitate this, staff development programs leading to reflective teaching
practices should be fostered. These should encourage and enable a greater depth of knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning processes in early childhood classrooms. Further to this, specific application of these methods should be adapted to work with children with special needs. Part of the process should be the development of teachers' abilities to articulate the foundations and processes of their programs. This will enable them to communicate effectively with other programs involved in transition processes. Further to, and resulting from this communication, all teachers must be prepared to make the compromises and program adaptations that are necessary to ensure that children experience continuity from one Program to the next.

- see the transition of children as high priority, regardless of program. To this end, they should accept and assume responsibility for initiating communication with other programs. They should ask for and become involved in formal transition processes whenever it is possible.

- attend inservices about transition to school and the inclusion of children with special needs.

- recognise early childhood family involvement philosophies and beliefs of early intervention teachers about the centrality of the role of families. The theories of family systems and family support that guide early intervention philosophy should be widely disseminated and subsequently implemented into other early childhood programs. In particular, schools should explore avenues through which families can take a genuine partnership role in the education of their children with special needs.
8.3.2 Recommendations for Policy Makers

- That all schools develop and participate in formal transition processes for all children with special needs who will commence Kindergarten. This participation should acknowledge and incorporate principles of best practice in the transition to school.

- That the NSW Department of School Education (DSE), in full consultation and cooperation with the pre school sector, continues to develop, implement and evaluate the formal transition to school processes that have commenced.

- That NSW DSE hold further information sessions to ensure that all stakeholders - particularly families and early childhood teachers are fully informed of recommended transition processes. It is important that school counsellors and support teachers as well as Kindergarten teachers are included as important stakeholders in the transition process.

- That every school, as well as other transition stakeholders, be able to identify and access a person who is responsible for coordinating the transition to school for individual children to ensure that transition processes operate according to best practice guidelines.

- That in the interest of greater teacher confidence and knowledge of transition and particularly, inclusion practices, inservice programs that are planned and evaluated in consultation with early childhood teachers should be given high priority. Similarly, tertiary teacher preparation courses for both primary and early childhood students should incorporate the study of transition research and practice.

- That teachers' concerns about support and resourcing need to be heard, valued and acted upon wherever possible in order to develop the confidence of stakeholders in the ability of schools to meet the needs of children with special needs participating in the transition to school.
8.3.3 Future Research Directions

There are many areas associated with the transition to school for children with special needs that could benefit from further research investigation. Some specific suggestions to arise from this study are:

- Detailed and extensive description of current transition processes in NSW is needed. This should include all regions of the NSW Department of School Education, and other school systems such as Catholic and Independent schools. Children coming from the full range of early childhood experiences should be included in the investigation including those who have not attended formal programs prior to school entry. The investigation should seek to ascertain what transition programs are in operation and aim to evaluate the efficacy of these programs. It should address questions about the access and equity to transition programs for children from rural areas and children who have not been involved in early intervention programs.

- Evaluation of operational transition programs is needed and should be widely disseminated. Questions to be addressed within evaluation pertain to the difficulties encountered by early intervention workers seeking to implement exemplary transition programs in services where their current case loads are too high to allow them to allocate the time to conduct transitions according to best practice principles.

- There is a wide scope for research into the discontinuities experienced by children and families as they move from one early childhood Program to another. Detailed investigation is needed into the teaching Beliefs and Practices of early childhood teachers. Specifically, research is needed to reveal why the difference between espoused theory and theory in use is so marked. Classroom observation may
result in findings which could facilitate a greater match between theory and practice in the work of early childhood teachers.

- Further to investigating the work of individual teachers, there is a pressing need to develop strategies to minimise the discontinuity in Teaching and Learning, Family Role and Transition Management Practices between the Programs that children attend before they commence school and those they will attend at school entry age.

- There is a need to investigate the short term and long term effects of varying transition models on the success children's inclusion in regular school settings.
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BUILDING THE BRIDGES:

THE TRANSITION TO SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND THEIR FAMILIES

by

LINDA NEWMAN


A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Education (Honours) of the University of Western Sydney, Nepean.

December, 1995

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VOLUME 2

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Table 1  Summary of teacher comments ................................. 242
Delimited summary of teacher comments ............................ 272

Table 2

Appendix 2 - Questionnaire ................................................. 294

Appendix 3 - Interview Format ............................................. 302

Appendix 4 - Transcripts of Interviews ................................. 308
Interview - Sylvia .......................................................... 308
Interview - Kathy ......................................................... 316
Interview - Nellie ......................................................... 325
Interview - Pat ............................................................. 339
Interview - Sally .......................................................... 350
Interview - Anne .......................................................... 365

List of Tables

Table 2.1  Best Practice Guidelines for Continuity in the Transition
to School for Children with Special Needs and their Families
Table 6.1  Services Approached for Research and
Responses Received
Table 7.1  Awareness and Use of Department of School Education
Table 7.2  Mean scores for Teacher Reported Teaching and
Learning Beliefs and Practices by Program
Table 7.3  Repeated Measures Analysis of the Teaching and
Learning Subscale using Program as the Independent
Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated
Measure
Table 7.4  Mean Scores for Teacher Reported Teaching and
Learning Beliefs and Practices by Qualification
Table 7.5  Repeated Measures Analysis of the Teaching and
Learning Subscale Using Qualifications as the
Independent Variable and Beliefs and Practices (Rating)
as the Repeated Measure.
Table 7.6  Teaching and Learning Items
Table 7.7  Teaching and Learning Belief Rankings
Table 7.8  Teaching and Learning Practice Rankings
Table 7.9  Mean Scores for Teacher Reported Family
Beliefs and Practices by Program
Table 7.10  One way ANOVA Analysis of Family Beliefs Using
Program as the Independent Variable
Table 7.11  Repeated Measures Analysis of the Family Subscale
Using Program as the Independent Variable and
Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure.
Table 7.12  Mean scores for Teacher Reported Family Beliefs and Practices by Qualification
Table 7.13  Repeated Measures Analysis of the Family Subscale using Qualifications as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure
Table 7.14  Family Items
Table 7.15  Family Belief Rankings by Qualification
Table 7.16  Family Practice Rankings by Qualification
Table 7.17  Mean scores for Teacher Reported Transition Management Beliefs and Practices by Program
Table 7.18  Repeated Measures Analysis of the Transition Management Subscale using Program as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure
Table 7.19  Mean scores of Teacher Reported Transition Management Beliefs and Practices by Qualification
Table 7.20  Repeated Measures Analysis of the Transition Management Subscale using Qualifications as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Independent Measure
Table 7.21  Transition Management Items
Table 7.22  Transition Management Belief Rankings by Qualification
Table 7.23  Transition management Practice Rankings by Qualification
Table 7.24  Classification of Responses to Open Questionnaire item
Table 7.25  Transition Problems in Relation to Best Practice Standards Derived from the Literature, as Perceived by Early Childhood Teachers with Experience of the Transition into School
Appendix 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Sub area</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEACHING</td>
<td>individual base</td>
<td><strong>PS.N.2.</strong> Take suggestions from children and work from that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTENT</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PS.N.3.</strong> Use children's ideas to extend, challenge, add a new dimension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PS.N.6.</strong> Know needs if they show an interest/frustration in something.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>PS.N.5.</strong> Doing what I feel the children need - its a big can of worms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>K.A.2.</strong> Spend most of first weeks finding out what their needs are if they have any special needs</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>K.S.3.</strong> Needs basis.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>P.S.5.</strong> Wouldn't stick to a developmental model - if saw a child needed something that wasn't next would step in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>P.P.2.</strong> What we think is a need within the classroom - some need or some great interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>E.I.K.4.</strong> And their interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>subject base</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **K.A.5.** This term I've started to do all our phonics things - some of them don't even need that, they've gone way past it. **
| **K.A.6.** I know all the outcomes ...heavily into that ...our kids mostly come on the foundation stage ??? **
| **K.A.7.** Most of our kids are lined at foundation stage to pre-foundation stage and then we use, what we call structured play based type of things. **
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>content</th>
<th>philosophical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.1.</strong> Decisions based on how I feel the children are.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.4.</strong> Use child's ideas to boost self esteem.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.10.</strong> Theoretical perspective is a combination - wouldn’t be able to label it but like to think I have a holistic approach based on individual planning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.12.</strong> Perspective comes from constant need to reflect and analyse what I've been doing.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.6.</strong> So some way that will interest the child and get their attention.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.A.1.</strong> And make them feel happy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.A.9.</strong> Originally I think it came out of Kindergarten plan years ago, they wanted kids to free play all the time. But the way things are at the moment without somebody teaching we can't do that. They're not allowed to just go and play. They don't need to do that anyway they want to get into it - to do some &quot;real work&quot; and that's when we'll have our story writing and reading activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.K.1.</strong> Well-parents basically, indicate what they feel children's needs, children's interests and their strengths and I incorporate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| content | logistic | P.P.1. Well, what I decide is in a team way, we discuss with the other teachers in the room.  
P.P.11. We're going to have picture talks at group time or number games or something or rather whatever we've decided. So in that way we would be actually planning before the week started to get out some support materials.  
P.P.12. All the things that we can afford to pick up from the centre and we get them out and put them in the cupboard, let everybody know these things are here and introduce them when it's your teaching day because we team teach and everybody has responsibilities for different days.  
K.A.1. Where I'm at, at the moment, I'm in a DSP school, a huge diversity in there.  
K.A.4. It's hard, half and half have gone to pre school and the ones who have gone to pre school some of them haven't had a pleasant experience.  
K.A.8. We have eight activities and they choose... they have planning books and by the end of the year they'll just function by themselves. |
|---|---|---|
| content | theoretical | E.I.S.1. Encouraging a social readiness for school.  
E.I.S.2. Preacademic readiness for school.  
E.I.S.3. Language readiness for school.  
P.S.N.7. I don't look at curriculum areas - try to break it down all the time.  
P.S.N.8. Don't plan for curriculum areas - it's individually based. If he's interested in maths then that's |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>content</th>
<th>general</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PS.N.11. Perspective comes from university.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.N.13. Perspective comes from current reading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.N.14. Comes from tossing things about and discussing with peer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.S.1. Where the students' skills are, mixed with syllabus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.S.7. Melding a lot of different theories that have come from training, inservice, and learning from other people around you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.P.7. Knowledge would be our theory that we've collected ourselves in our training and in our reading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.P.8. If we haven't got any particular knowledge we go and find out some way.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.P.10. I've been teaching for quite a while, it comes naturally.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.I.K.2. Experience I suppose.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.I.K.5. I suppose my teaching background like going through uni.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHING STRATEGIES</th>
<th>logistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.I.S.1. Look at teacher's skills, support and setting. parent commitment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.N.1. Lots and lots of small groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.N.2. Little learning facilitation in large groups—mainly behaviour management, learning more directed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.N.3. Would like to improve on communication between staff to know where kid is coming from, where they're going and where they're at right now.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.N.4. Involving family, trying to maintain constant feedback from here and at home.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.S.1. Beginning of kindergarten use a lot of</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Summary of teacher comments.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>strategies</th>
<th>learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.5.</strong> Use scaffolding-work through situation with the children then try to take a step back.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.6.</strong> A lot of independence and a lot of independent problem solving-that's what I like to encourage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.7.</strong> I'm very much into reasoning with children if possible.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.8.</strong> I'm very aware of how I'm talking to children. Am I eliciting intrinsic motivation on their part or approval on my part.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.9.</strong> Sometimes its very hard to say original things without hinting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.10.</strong> Spur of the moment thing as to which strategies to use with different kids.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.11.</strong> Strategies come from having to keep a strategies chart in college. Refer to a handout I had if I'm stuck. Keep theoretical things in a folder.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.12.</strong> I guess I do follow a theoretical perspective but I just can't think of the name for one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.1.</strong> Choose activity based lesson plans.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.2.</strong> Noting the times they seem to be on task-attending.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.3.</strong> One IM child learnt all sounds-little else-sure it was by learning them through songs. Look at them and try and figure out situation they learn best in- then repeat it in group-others will have different needs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.4.</strong> A lot of collaboration with other teacher(team).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.5.</strong> Mentally sort class into three groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.6.</strong> Don't have anything individual for kinder-year ones have more-remedial sort of group-learning what they should have learnt in kinder.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.1.</strong> Look at the group, how children mix, general Summary of teacher comments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategies</td>
<td>theoretical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

**EIS.5.** Kids from abused and neglected backgrounds refer back to Erikson's trust versus mistrust.

**K.A.5.** No, not really, I don't think I did. Cause each individual kid's different I don't think you can put kids in boxes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>strategies</th>
<th>philosophical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EI.S.2.</strong> Based on needs of child, confidence and self esteem.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EI.S.3.</strong> First priority-build up self esteem.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EI.S.4.</strong> If self esteem good, tackle skill deficit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.1.</strong> Obviously from your observations...a completely different way. So you're using observations and adapting your methods to that child's personality and emotional development and chronological development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.2.</strong> Probably not, not that I can think of (strategy theory).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.A.3.</strong> Well it would depend on what it is, if it's a behaviour problem, an attention seeking thing I don't feel that I really spend that little bit of extra time with that child that yes it is important. Then the child who's got a speech thing I spend most of my time sitting next to them and ......</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.A.1.</strong> No, not really. we're into the cooperative and that sort of thing and trying to impart that onto our kids to really do it, but no there's nothing specific it would depend on the theory cause everyone's different.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EI.K.1.</strong> That depends on the child, it depends on his needs and it depends on their ability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EI.K.2.</strong> Try and promote their self esteem and confidence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EI.K.3.</strong> I just do it! work with individuals and see how they respond.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EI.K.4.</strong> Not consciously, I remember a few years ago I mapped out a philosophy but it changes.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Appendix 1. Table 1. Summary of teacher comments.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>school readiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.2.</strong> Last job used to take children down to the school and chat to the principal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.3.</strong> People in my family are kindergarten teachers and I’ve asked them about their expectations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.4.</strong> It would be really nice to get something that is meaningful and that would be applicable to all of the schools.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.5.</strong> Expectations differ from area to area but one would think when schools have set curriculum their expectations would be fairly uniform.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.6.</strong> Compiled a folder on school readiness for parents to read and discuss with me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.1.</strong> Basing my knowledge on son's centre and my EC training- they take older kids and do a few more schoolie sorts of things-to supposedly prepare them for school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.2.</strong> There would be a limit in preschool- basically make them a little bit more independent, looking after own belongings etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.3.</strong> We don’t want them to do school things-just talking about it and preparing them for the fact that they will have to comply in a group-so many children-have to put your hand up, think most centres do that anyway, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher knowledge</td>
<td>School practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E.1.S.2.</strong> Need for more inservice for Kinder teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E.1.S.3.</strong> Need for training about subtle learning difficulties.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E.1.S.1.</strong> Quite a clear picture of Kindergarten and what will be expected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.I.</strong> Have actually no knowledge myself of what happens when they get to school, if they need some special assistance in the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.S.N.1.</strong> Even I have some hazy images of school.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
E.I.S.2. Early intervention teachers would have the skills.  
E.I.S.3. Hard for preschool despite good will because they don't know what support available.  
E.I.S.4. DSE doesn't volunteer any information about what support is available. Very hard to find out.  
P.S.N.1. I wouldn't have a clue about funding.  
P.S.N.2. I don't have enough specific knowledge.  
P.S.N.3. Lack knowledge in special education. I can read it up but I'm not trained in ADD or Down Syndrome.  
P.S.N.4. Did compulsory special education subject but it was broad-experience counts too.  
P.S.N.5. I wouldn't like to be the sole person doing the transition-I like to gather as many different opinions as possible.  
K.S.1. depends on the disability- if its something I'm used to like behaviour or developmental disability. I'm reasonably confident-physical, no.  
P.P.1. I would like some more information. I think my training is adequate, I have an understanding of the needs and can then follow-up and get the support that I need, cause I know where my knowledge and my training stops and I need some more expert area of knowledge to take over.  
E.I.K.1. Yes, and what knowledge I don't have I generally investigate and find out. |
| FAMILY | knowledge-school | E.I.S.1. Depends on whether first child-if so, very little.  
P.S.N.1. Parents with older children have a pretty fair idea.  
Summary of teacher comments. |
| Family | knowledge-inclusion | **E.I.S.1.** Very little knowledge of specifics-tests, counsellors. Meaningless to read about it.  
**P.P.1.** Organised transition myself because the parent was asking me many questions and I didn't have the answers.  
**K.A.1.** I had to try and reinforce it, that it's going to take a long time to get to that stage, it's not going to happen over night. |
| Family | involvement | ELS.1. Usually know best about child but not always-sometimes need some guidance.  
PS.N.1. I feel very strongly that parents know what is best for their child. They may be subjective and need some support-it could help focus their thoughts and feelings a bit more. Generally parents know what they want for their child.  
K.S.1. We felt she might have been avoiding facing it (knowledge of problem). We referred her to the counsellor but she wouldn't talk. Mum didn't mention anything in the enrolment form.  
K.S.2. Fairly strongly-parents spend a lot more time with child-they know motivators and emotional triggers, what boosts their self esteem-lot more in touch with their needs. Rely on parents to tell us what is worrying kids.  
P.P.1. I really feel quite strongly that a parent has a good feeling of what their child needs.  
P.P.2. And sometimes you do get the families that want to deny that there's any problem and they're going through a denial process.  
K.A.1. Well they probably know them fairly well. I think it needs to go jointly they can bring a lot more of the knowledge at the beginning when they first start but I think ??? a bit more too, when the child is spending six hours a day in the classroom ??? I think initially yes ??? and that would be ideal.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.I.S.1.</td>
<td>Most EI services naturally supportive to parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.I.S.2.</td>
<td>Families can't expect ongoing emotional support when start school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.I.S.3.</td>
<td>EI role to develop family independence of support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.I.S.4.</td>
<td>Suggest to school, evaluation of child twice per term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.I.S.7.</td>
<td>At a disadvantage if not in EI program-should do some training for therapists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.S.N.1.</td>
<td>Those in EI services get a lot of help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.S.N.2.</td>
<td>Other families, not as much. There are waiting lists-that's very hard for them. It frightens me that they feel so overwhelmed. That's an area that can always be improved on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.S.1.</td>
<td>I'm not really aware.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.P.1.</td>
<td>I don't think they have a lot of help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.I.K.1.</td>
<td>That depends on their access to services. Some children will still come in at four and have had no intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.I.K.2.</td>
<td>Depends, yes that varies from service to service and from to school to school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Support - EI Teacher | EI.S.1. Major part of role.  
|                     | EI.S.2. Need to discourage dependency and empower parents for decision making.  
|                     | PS.N.1. It should be a joint responsibility - EI and regular teacher. EI teacher should certainly make themselves known to the parent, not just a name on a piece of paper - they do have that knowledge, in an excellent position for making suggestions.  
|                     | KS.1. I see EI teacher as resource person-direct parent to person who is liaison between preschool and school.  
|                     | PP.1. I think it's a big part.  
|                     | KA.1. You wouldn't have to definitely support the family to get through. If there is another special need, like a disability or something, quite often the early intervention teacher I think will probably be the one that the parents will probably feel more comfortable asking the questions to. And if they've established a good rapport then that would be an ideal thing to happen.  
|                     | EI.K.1. It depends on the service's capacity in staffing to meet those needs. It's your role basically if don't have the skills or staff, to refer on.  
|                     | EI.K.2. No, my role is definitely supporting parents.  

| Support - Kinder Teacher | EI.S.1. Lack of staff makes it difficult.  
|                         | EI.S.2. Ideal to have someone take social work role in school.  
|                         | EI.S.3. Kinder teacher doesn't need to support as much - child would be becoming more independent.  
|                         | EI.S.4. Parents more independent, don't need as much support from Kinder teacher.  

Summary of Teacher Comments.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSITION MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELS.1. Main aim, quite specifically to develop a readiness for school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELS.2. Child prepared well by us only if there is ongoing support.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELS.3. Preparing them as much as we can.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELS.4. El people clearly prioritise social. Move away from skill based work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.N.1. I’m not entirely sure of the kinder teachers’ or the school’s expectations of children when they start school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.N.2. I focus on preacademic and social skills They’re going to feel it if they can’t do it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.N.3. I don’t think children special needs are always well enough prepared for school. Unless you’ve been there you can’t imagine what its like. That doesn’t mean to say they can’t cope.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.N.4. It’s very hard to prepare them for increased numbers in classroom, having only one teacher to meet needs, long days, bigger playground, big kids, big school really.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS.1. Probably not prepared well enough- but possibly just not ready- this creates the biggest wave in those first few weeks-the kids just do not see the point in lining up.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS.2. Parents certainly can help a lot with preparedness by talking to children about all the nitty gritty little things and then listening when they come home again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS.3. If preschools have had contact with schools they probably know how to prepare them, if they haven’t they could be quite out of touch-every school is different too.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP.1. I think in most cases they are.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PP.2. Because I think early childhood teachers put a lot Summary of teacher comments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page 237
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transition management</th>
<th>EC services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.S.1.</strong> Very well co-ordinated in this area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.S.N.1.</strong> In my last job there wasn’t a great deal of liaison going on there-the need wasn’t there.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.S.N.2.</strong> When I think of the services I think of Lapstone and they do a fantastic job. We have a round table discussion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.1.</strong> Not really an integrated thing-we rely on the parent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.2.</strong> Other services never approach us, we have to approach them if we have a worry- with the exception of speech pathology-doctors are very reluctant to do any contacting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.3.</strong> Lots of services seem to drop off when the child goes to school and the parents have been lead to believe that when they go to school, they’ll get that sort of thing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.1.</strong> The ones that I’ve been involved with certainly work together and they communicate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.A.1.</strong> ?? maybe that’s an isolated case of where I am, but ?? apart from Lorraine, the parents have been the ones who have liaised with ???.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.K.1.</strong> No I sort of got things started but it wasn’t really our role. The pre-school have more of an input -started things going.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.K.2.</strong> From my point of view its really important, so that’s one thing I always try and do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.K.3.</strong> Yes, I think it’s really important that the parents needs are looked at and what they see the primary needs are with their children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.K.4.</strong> Yes, that’s happening all along. Still, I feel that a lot of therapists have their own needs and can’t see the whole child, they just look at that one area and that’s why...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of teacher comments.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>transition management</th>
<th>EC and school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ei.S.1.</strong> No!</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ei.S.2.</strong> Slowly improving, now more meetings.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ei.S.3.</strong> Success limited because schools can't commit themselves to support.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ps.N.1.</strong> Haven't made links with schools half as much as I'd have liked. I haven't made that rapport with schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ps.N.2.</strong> I rang up all the schools in the area and asked them if they could send an information booklet. Some were good enough to.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ps.N.3.</strong> I didn't get a fantastic response from the schools I rang last year...It was as though no-one had ever rung them before....it's like &quot;what sort of things do you want?&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ps.N.4.</strong> One of the teachers has written to us twice now offering to come out and talk about school, which is great, and we are planning to ask her to come to a parent meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.1.</strong> Preschools probably don't know a lot about school-they would just give general expectations-we don't have any formal link there.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.2.</strong> I guess we just haven't made the effort.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.3.</strong> Scattered population- probably four areas, which one do I go to-can't afford the time to go to them all.</td>
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<td><strong>K.S.4.</strong> I think links are desirable- tried to convince principal to allow me to don a clown suit and go and look for enrolments.</td>
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<td><strong>K.S.5.</strong> I don't think we've ever had a preschool, even in extreme behaviour problems, contact the school and say &quot;hello, this child is coming to you&quot;.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.6.</strong> I think the schools fear that preschools might start</td>
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<td>transition management (continued)</td>
<td>EC and school</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.4.</strong> And on odd occasions the teachers will ring and say &quot;we've had an interview with a child that's attending your centre and I'd like to talk to you more about that interview&quot;, but that's rare.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.2.</strong> Things like that which we're interested in and we don't know what the teachers say. And they can also talk to us about what we do and how we introduce early literacy, early reading and early writing, and we can say &quot;this is what we do, and how do you follow on with that?&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.1.</strong> I always find the school the hardest one to get in contact with and to actually communicate with.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.2.</strong> I find very little communication with the school, they very rarely ring here and say we've got an enrolment from a child and they've presented with this information and some of that information was from your centre, and say &quot;what do you think should happen with this child?&quot;.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.2.</strong> They seem to make the decisions themselves and the local schools have never asked us to come to the school and see what happens there or how the children are supported in the classroom.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.A.1.</strong> I haven't spoken to anyone from the preschool but I was given more by the occupational therapist.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.A.2.</strong> I've got my own theory. Where I am at the moment we seem to be getting a lot of four years/five month old kids starting school, boys and girls, and I think it's OK get rid of them we'll get more people.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **K.A.3.** No. Which would be an ideal thing to have it, they would have to be feeding in to only four schools around them. Cameron found it difficult because all the other kids had gone to all these other preschools and when...
EI.S.1. Not familiar with what information gets to schools.

EI.S.2. Probably not enough information gets to schools.

PS.N.1. Make up a book about child' give to parents, ask them to take to school.

PS.N.2. Feedback from schools(only via parents) that booklet is a nice idea, not how helpful its been.

PS.N.1. Schools don't get enough information at all. I guess. It's a two way thing-certainly a lack of communication.

PS.N.2. We don't pass on any information.

PS.N.3. I can't think of a reason why we don't pass info on.

PS.N.4. Feel a bit hesitant about passing records on-I'd not like someone to read my observations and not discuss them with me-they can't be as detailed as I'd like, there aren't as many as I'd like. No I don't pass on my records-they have to stay here anyway.

K.S.1. School doesn't get enough information-I'm aware now that we can chase up preschool records and that there are people who go around preschools for children with real problems- and there are files in more central places too. I know kids who have been considered, or assessed or something.

K.S.2. The information never comes through.

P.P.1. I know that we assess them as needing some special assistance and we say to the parents "look you know, they really should continue their speech program or you should ask the school for some support in their learning or whatever". We say these things to the parents
<table>
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<tr>
<th>transition management</th>
<th>communication (continued)</th>
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</table>

**K.A.1.** No. The speech therapist, I got her to come out and she showed me things in the classroom to show the kids things that she could do. I didn't get to read any of her reports.

**K.A.2.** I don't know, I don't know whether it was something that they're trying to keep things to themselves or what. I said to the Mum "is there a problem there that I should know about" and she said "No", so I said "right, OK". And there's only so much, no more that I would put up before I find out. They obviously know what happened to the kids, they sort of knew that, they knew stuff that they had been doing.

**K.A.3.** No, admittedly I haven't rung them cause I felt the stuff that I've been getting has been adequate.

**K.A.4.** No, and I didn't even know that he'd been with it until they bought photos and stuff ... "oh no, it was special preschool" and the clock started clicking over in my mind and then I started asking questions.

**K.A.5.** No, and nothing was said to me when they came up for orientation about problems with his speech ??? I don't know whether she was embarrassed about it. I don't think so.

**EI.K.1.** We're trying to encourage the preschool to do a bit more. They've got a lot of valuable information which is often left at the preschool and not carried through.

**EI.K.2.** I think that varies from year to year (knowing when to apply for integration support).

**EI.K.3.** I think it also depends on the school knowledge of what funding's available. What's appropriate funding.

**EI.K.4.** Some parents feel that they just want their children enrolled and don't want them to know that they've...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transition management</th>
<th>coordination</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.S.1.</strong> EI person ideal as they already have the trust of the family.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.S.N.1.</strong> Preschool teacher with some government money to employ coordinator.</td>
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<td><strong>K.S.1.</strong> Probably have to be up to parent-Kinder teacher doesn't have time- maybe a middle person, someone to oversee.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.2.</strong> Should be someone whose had experience in both areas- would really need to have worked in a school to know-could come in and see things that are happening and not be aware of underlying reasons-not be aware of constraints on teacher with umpteen kids, or small rooms.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.1.</strong> The Education Department, there must be, you hear of Cluster Directors or somebody who's responsible for an area of primary schools. Somebody should be interested in the education of children from not just when they arrive on their doorstep. And perhaps instigate some meetings and get them together and talk about what happens.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.A.1.</strong> The parent (coordinated transition). Because if the parent knows, this is the preschool that my child is going to but this is the school that they're going to, neither of the two might ever meet because they're obviously very busy.</td>
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<td><strong>K.A.2</strong> If there was a person that worked as a liaison between both that would be an ideal situation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.A.3.</strong> Someone who would give us the money to do it properly and not bandaid it, do you know what I mean. I think so much stuff is bandaid on for twelve months and then twelve months later we won't worry about that because that's not important any more. Whether or not...</td>
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*Summary of teacher comments.*
| transition management | systematic/long term | E.I.S.1. NO!  
E.I.S.2. One meeting six months before school slowly becoming the trend.  
P.S.N.1. No, definitely not.  
K.S.1. Information a bit meaningless when you don’t know the child-know the disabilities which were coming which would be helpful.  
K.S.2. That’s another thing to ask of the teacher.  
K.S.3. No.  
P.P.1. I think it can be.  
P.P.2. In the past no, now that I’ve had these guidelines on transition I find that quite helpful.  
K.A.1. No, I’d like them to be, I think that would be wonderful. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transition management</th>
<th>DSE policy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.1.</strong> have copy of DSE draft guidelines.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.2.</strong> Rang DSE for update of guidelines and got the royal runaround.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.S.N.3.</strong> Invited to inservice on guidelines(by accident). I will definitely go.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.1.</strong> I have heard, have waited to hear, to see what was going to come.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.2.</strong> Haven’t heard anything.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.1.</strong> And actually that introduced to me that I should be starting that early in the year rather than waiting until October.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.2.</strong> Yes, (DSE guidelines) that's what I've sort of gone on.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.2.</strong> The school that we contacted for the transition meeting seem to be quite willing to come and the Education Department representative came and that all seemed have it.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.A.1.</strong> No, the only thing I've heard about early childhood is that the profile stuff has been put on hold, I presumed transition stuff will becoming.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.K.1.</strong> Transition policy is put on paper but I don't feel its being followed.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transition management</th>
<th>school preparation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.1.</strong> I couldn't say yes or no because I'm not well enough informed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PS.N.2.</strong> I think perhaps parent requests (smaller classes, experienced teachers) are being met.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.1.</strong> Biggest factor class size.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.2.</strong> Second factor, teaching experience and ability. Good if teacher is willing to take child special needs, but unless got experience can't take child in just to be kind.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Summary of teacher comments.
transition management

parent partnerships

E.I.S. 1. NO!
E.I.S. 2. Disadvantaged in school setting.
E.I.S. 3. Little attempt made by schools in past.
P.S.N. 1. I very much like to think so.
P.S.N. 2. at times parents have to push for that.
K.S. 1. Don't think so, they probably feel at the mercy of the school they are going to.
K.S. 2. Its a lottery-parents don't feel they have much power- may want the child to go in local area but teachers, skills may not fit child.
P.P. 1. I would hope they do.
P.P. 2. I think some parents still may feel that they're not but it's something that's organised there and they have to fit in with whatever has been organised. But they don't have a lot of say it's just something that the Education Department does because they don't have a lot of knowledge or a lot of understanding that they don't now that they could have as a parent a lot of input into and they have the right to have that input. I don't think they really understand that.
K.A. 1. I once again made sure I kept very close contact with the parents and told them what was working for me in the classroom. This is working for me in the classroom why don't you try it at home or is there something at home that works better. that would work for me?
K.A. 1. It seems to me that the speech one I had last year, once she knew that I was doing it in the classroom, she didn't want to do any stuff at home.
K.A. 3. No, not really, a lot of ours think "OK, you're the teacher, you're the professional, you do it".

Summary of teacher comments.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transition management</th>
<th>School resourcing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.S.1.</strong> Lack of support, personnel in school still major issue.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.S.2.</strong> STLD priority given to older children.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.S.3.</strong> Suggest priority given to younger children.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.S.4.</strong> Virtually impossible to get integration support.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.S.5.</strong> Child must have high level needs to get integration support.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E.I.S.6.</strong> Consultants can't give &quot;extra pair of hands&quot; support.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.S.N.1.</strong> Don't know a great deal.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.1.</strong> It comes down to time and I've always felt that if I approach a preschool that its only that one and I would have to go around and see where all the children are coming from.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.2.</strong> Isn't support available to Kinder teachers-read last year about some training program and was very suspicious-it says &quot;we'll give you the skills&quot;. You can give us the skills but if you don't give us extra personnel and you don't give us smaller class sizes, we can't do it.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.S.3.</strong> We have years where we seem to be heavy with kids with learning problems-try to manipulate teacher numbers and class sizes so they get a fair go. Overall organisation of the school needs to be able to cater for these kids as well as the teacher in the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.P.1.</strong> She said that she wasn't satisfied at what had happened at the primary school. Two years later they hadn't done anything. And so she was very unhappy and she just pushed very, very hard this year for something, for some support in the classroom And he now also has a support worker and they're feeling much happier about that.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Summary of teacher comments.
EIS.1. Occasionally if parent is anxious or in denial.

EIS.2. Apart from extremes, not perceived as stressful.

PSN.1. No, I think I feel more stress if the parent is not involved.

PS.S.2. Some may find it stressful depending on their approach to families. I see child care as providing a service for families, not just children.

K.S.1. I think it is-I do think it is- I often put off having parents in the classroom, when I know I should. I feel absolutely paranoid about it at the beginning of the year.

K.S.2. Sometimes its worked out very well- it really does depend on the parent and how well you are organised and how well you match the activities to the parent.- sometimes you feel it would probably be better if you just did it yourself.

K.S.3. Where you do get the right mix you do feel that the kids are getting more than just extra help.

PP.1. Quite often the staff at this centre communicate, mainly they find it stressful.

PP.2. I don’t find immensely stressful.

PP.3. I think probably the day is a little bit more tiring when they’re here and you want to ensure that they’re feeling right about things that are happening here and things that they are hearing.

PP.4. Really important. I think they have a better feeling about things that they come along and spend some time and talk to us a lot.

PP.5. Probably is a little more stressful, though it keeps us on our toes.

KA.1. No, I’d much rather have them in there, much, much rather. I think it makes it so much easier on the kids.

Summary of teacher comments.
Table 2
Delimited summary of teacher comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Sub area</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teaching content</td>
<td>individual base</td>
<td>P. take suggestions from children and work from that.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P. wouldn't stick to a developmental model-if saw a child needed something that wasn't next would step in.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P. follow some great interest.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>K. if they have any special needs.</td>
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<td>K. needs basis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>subject base</td>
<td>K. phonic things.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>K. Outcomes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Philosophical</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P. based on how I feel the children are.</td>
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<td>P. use child's ideas to boost self esteem.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P. wouldn’t be able too label theoretical perspective but like to think I have a holistic approach based on individual planning.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P. constant need to reflect and analyse what I've been doing.</td>
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<td>P. some way that will interest the child and get their attention.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>EI. parents basically, indicate what they feel children’s needs, interests, and their strengths are and I incorporate.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>K. make them feel happy.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>K. the way things are at the moment we can't do that (free play). They're not allowed to just go and play, they don't need to do that anyway, they want to get into it - to do some &quot;real work&quot;.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Logistic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. decide in a team way.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P. we going to have, picture talks at group time or number games or something.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P. we get them out and put them in the cupboard let everybody know these things are here.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>K. in a DSP school, a huge diversity.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>K. half have gone to preschool and the ones who have gone to preschool some of them haven't had a pleasant experience.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>K. We have eight activities and they choose...</td>
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<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>theoretical</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.</strong> don't consciously look at curriculum areas—try to break it down all the time, individually based.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.</strong> agree with Piaget’s preoperational stages and observations relate back to those characteristics.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.</strong> observations of certain children So then we’d probably identify something, it might be an extension or it might a meeting a need.</td>
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<td><strong>P.</strong> look at the developmental age of the child as well as other things.</td>
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<td><strong>P.</strong> we still do a lot of Piaget, preoperational, if they can see and touch and feel and relate in that way they get a great understanding of it.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EI.</strong> encouraging a social readiness for school.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EI.</strong> preacademic readiness for school.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EI.</strong> language readiness for school.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EI.</strong> maximise child's development by providing best interactive environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EI.</strong> children’s developmental levels.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EI.</strong> Hands on learning?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EI.</strong> philosophy comes from different places, parts of Montessori, parts of Piaget.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.</strong> knowledge of developmental stages and their social skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.</strong> coming a lot from the importance of play activity, and the importance of hands on activity at this stage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>general</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. perspective comes from university.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. perspective comes from current reading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. tossing things about and discussing with peer.</td>
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<td>P. If we haven't got any particular knowledge we go and find out some way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. I've been teaching for quite a while it comes natural.</td>
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<tr>
<td>E1. Experience I suppose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>E1. I suppose my teaching background like going through uni.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>K. where the students' skills are, mixed with syllabus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. melding a lot of different theories that have come from training, inserviceing and learning from other people around you.</td>
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<tr>
<td>teaching strategies</td>
<td>logistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. lots and lots of small groups. Large groups are mainly behaviour management, learning more directed.</td>
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<td>P. would like to improve on communication between staff</td>
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<td>P. involving family, trying to maintain constant feedback from here and at home.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EI. look at teacher's skills, support and setting, parent commitment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. beginning of kinder use a lot of developmental play activities.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Group kids-those who have been through all that and want to get down to writing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. individualise more with children with problems than middle group or gifted group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. I can spend more time with smaller groups, kids who have a special need of speech things.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. when the kids arrive at school we talk to the parents and ask them is there any problem with ears, eyes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. use scaffolding-work through situation with the children then try to take a step back.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. a lot of independence and a lot of independent problem solving—that's what I like to encourage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. I'm very much into reasoning with children if possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. I'm very aware of how I'm talking to children. Am I eliciting intrinsic motivation on their part or approval on my part.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. spur of the moment thing as to which strategies to use with different kids.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. I guess I do follow a theoretical perspective but I just can't think of the name for one.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. choose activity based lesson plans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. noting the times they seem to be on task-attending.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. look at them and try and figure out situation they learn best in—then repeat it in group-others will have different needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. a lot of collaboration with other teacher(team).</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. mentally sort class into three groups, how children mix, general maturity and skill level, ready for more formal work or need more—what we call preschool type activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. don't have anything individual for kinder-year ones, have more-remedial sort of group-learning what they should have learnt in kinder.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. depend on what it is—behaviour problem, an attention seeking thing ...a speech thing I spend most of my time sitting next to them and ......</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| strategies | theoretical | EI. kids from abused and neglected backgrounds refer back to Erikson's trust versus mistrust.  
K. No, Cause each individual kid's different I don't think you can put kids in boxes. |
| strategies | philosophical | P. from observations, adapting your methods to that child's personality and emotional development and chronological development.  
P. Probably not, not that I can think of(strategy theory).  
EI. first priority-build up self esteem.  
EI. if self esteem good, tackle skill deficit.  
EI. That depends on the child it depends on his needs and it depends on their ability.  
EI. I just do it! work with individuals and see how they respond.  
EI. Not conscious.  
K. we're into the cooperative and that sort of thing.  
K. each child is different. |
| teacher knowledge | school readiness | P. last job used to take children down to the school and chat to the principal.  
P. people in my family are kindergarten teachers and I've asked them about the expectations.  
P. it would be really nice to get something that is meaningful and that would be applicable to all of the schools.  
P. expectations differ from area to area but one would think when schools have set curriculum their expectations would be fairly uniform.  
P. compiled a folder on school readiness for parents to read and discuss with me.  

K. basing my knowledge on son's centre and my training.  
K. there would be a limit in preschool- basically make them a little bit more independent, looking after own belongings etc.  
K. we don't want them to do school things-just talking about it and preparing them for the fact that they will have to comply in a group. |
| teacher knowledge | knowledge-school practice | P. have actually no knowledge myself of what happens when they get to school, if they need some special assistance in the classroom.  
P. even I have some hazy images of school.  

EI. Need for more inservice for Kinder teachers.  
EI. Need for training about subtle learning difficulties.  
EI. quite a clear picture of Kindergarten and what will be expected. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Knowledge</th>
<th>Transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P. I wouldn't have a clue about funding.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>P. I don't have enough specific knowledge of transition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. I lack knowledge in special education. I can read it up but I'm not trained in ADD or Down Syndrome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. Did compulsory special education. subject but it was broad-experience counts too.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. I wouldn't like to be the sole person doing the transition-I like to gather as many different opinions as possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. I would like some more information. I think my training is adequate, and can then follow-up and get the support that I need.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. organised transition myself because the parent was asking me many questions and I didn't have the answers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL. Yes, and what knowledge I don't have I generally investigate and find out.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EL. Yes, because of policy trialed in 1993.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL. Early intervention teachers would have the skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL. Hard for preschool despite good will because they don't know what support available.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL. DSE doesn't volunteer any information about what support is available. Very hard to find out.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. depends on the disability- if its something I'm used to like behaviour or developmental delay I'm reasonably confident-physical, no.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>knowledge-school</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. in fact nothing I'd say.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. parents with older children have a pretty fair idea.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P. if first child can find the idea of school a bit daunting, a bit confused as to what is expected of their child and of them.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P. Families of children with special needs. better informed-They can give you valuable information about all the schools in the area.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EI. Not a lot. Procedures haven't really been explained to them, just told them were their children slot in.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EI. the parents are always unsure about school, and what's expected, and it varies from school to school too.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EI. depends on whether first child-if so, very little.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K. But I think parents think that once they get to school, the school will fix it for them.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K. would really depend on how much the preschool had given.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K. we haven't had a lot of approaches other than kids who are integrated from special programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K. if been involved in program, a lot more informed-would ask.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K. Parents I find rarely know how to go about looking for special help for their children who have been identified as having a problem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Family | knowledge-inclusion | EI. very little knowledge of specifics-tests, counsellors. Meaningless to read about it.  
K. I had to try and reinforce that it's going to take a long time to get to that stage, it's not going to happen over night. |
|--------|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | knowledge- own child | P. I feel very strongly that parents know what is best for their child. They may be subjective and need some support.  
P. quite strongly that a parent has a good feeling of what their child needs.  
P. sometimes you do get the families who are going through a denial process.  
EI. usually know best about child but not always-sometimes need some guidance.  
EI. Very strongly.  
K. we felt she might have been avoiding facing it (knowledge of problem). We referred her to the counsellor but she wouldn't talk. Mum didn't mention anything in the enrolment form.  
K. fairly strongly-parents spend a lot more time with child-they know motivators and emotional triggers, what boosts their self esteem-lot more in touch with their needs. Rely on parents to tell us what is worrying kids.  
K. Well they probably know them fairly well. I think it needs to go jointly when the child is spending six hours a day in the classroom. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>involvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. Involvement is fundamental, most definitely. I'd be at a loss without it. The parents know them inside out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. parents should be as involved as possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EI. most EI services consultative, parent friendly.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EI. Paramount.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EI. Child not perceived as individual, but part of family.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K. crucial for parents to be involved—children who progress are the ones who have it reinforced at home, know their parents are involved.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K. we have had cases where it's been detrimental to have them in the classroom with that child (discipline issue).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K. I look after student welfare in my school, the majority don't want to be involved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Family support | **P.** I don't think they have a lot of help.  
**P.** those in EI services get a lot of help.  
**P.** other families, not as much. there are waiting lists- that's very hard for them. they feel so overwhelmed.  
**EI.** most EI services naturally supportive to parents.  
**EI.** EI role to develop family independence of support.  
**EI.** suggest to school, evaluation of child twice per term.  
**EI.** not much help from therapists-not familiar with school situation.  
**EI.** at a disadvantage if not in EI program-should do some training for therapists.  
**EI.** That depends on their access to services.  
some children will still come in at four and have had no intervention.  
**K.** I'm not really aware. |
| support-EI teacher | **P.** It should be a joint responsibility- EI and regular teacher.  
**P.** I think it's a big part.  
**EI.** It depends on the service's staffing. It's your role, if don't have the skills or staff, to refer on.  
**EI.** Major role is definitely supporting parents.  
**EI.** Need to discourage dependency and empower parents for decision making.  
**K.** The early intervention teacher I think will probably be the one that the parents will feel more comfortable asking the questions to.  
**K.** I see EI teacher as resource person-direct parent to person who is liaison between preschool and school. |
| support-Kinder teach | P. I'm sure, that should be a big part of her day.  
P. from outside perspective-yes, but can only imagine what its like to have thirty children and a curriculum.  
Idealistically, yes. Teachers should be approachable and if necessary supply networks.  
P. a lot of families may not feel comfortable approaching other professionals about their child.  
EI. lack of staff makes it difficult.  
EI. ideal to have someone take social work role in school.  
EI. Kinder teacher doesn't need to support as much -child and parents would be becoming more independent.  

K. Don't see our role as support, not in the mainstream, unrealistic -should be communicating all the time with the parent but then referring them-role to provide educational programs.  
K. often difficult to know how involved to become with parent-one teacher may do it and then parent expects all teachers to do it.  
K. I seem to do a lot because I think a little bit of time goes a long way. There is a continuity between it all(from pre school.).I think all teachers need to do that for all kids. I did it and we benefited.  

| transition management | child | P. I'm not entirely sure of the kinder teachers' or the school's expectations of children when they start school.  
P. I focus on preacademic and social skills They're going to feel it if they can't do it.  
P. I don't think children with special needs are always...  

Delimited Teachers' Comments
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transition management</th>
<th>EC services</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.</strong> In my last job there wasn't a great deal of liaison going on there-the need wasn't there. <strong>P.</strong> The ones that I've been involved with certainly work together and they communicate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EI.</strong> very well coordinated in this area. <strong>EI.</strong> No I sort of got things started but it wasn't really our role. The pre-school have more of an input -started things going. <strong>EI.</strong> From my point of view its really important, so that's one thing I always try and do. <strong>EI.</strong> Yes, I think it's really important that the parents needs are looked at and what they see the primary needs are with their children. <strong>EI.</strong> Yes, that's happening all along. Still, I feel that a lot of therapists have their own needs and can't see the whole child, they just look at that one area and that's why its important to get a case conference together and start with the parents and really focus on the parent's rights and things.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>K.</strong> not really an integrated thing-we rely on the parent. <strong>K.</strong> other services never approach us, we have to approach them if we have a worry-with the exception of speech pathology-doctors are very reluctant to do any contacting. <strong>K.</strong> lots of services seem to drop off when the child goes to school and the parents have been lead to believe that when they go to school, they'll get that sort of thing.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**transition**

Appendix 1. Table

EC and school

**P.** I think it would probably be a good idea to have some Delinquent Teachers' Comments
P. make up a book about child give to parents, ask them to take to school.
P. feedback from schools (only via parents) that booklet is a nice idea, not how helpful its been.
P. Schools don't get enough information at all. I guess Its a two way thing - certainly a lack of communication.
P. we don't pass on any information. I can't think of a reason why.
P. feel a bit hesitant about passing records on - I'd not like someone to read my observations and not discuss them with me. No I don't pass on my records - they have to stay here anyway.
P. although we haven't had any feedback from the school at all.
P. I don't know. From our point of view we pass on our developmental report to the family and then suggest to the family that they take that to school.
P. know that we assess them as needing some special assistance and we say to the parents "look you know, they really should continue their program or you should ask the school for some support". they go off to the school and say "the preschool or the child care centre said this, and what should I do about it" and they in the past have followed that through.

EI. not familiar with what information gets to schools.
EI. probably not enough information gets to schools.
EI. We're trying to encourage the preschool to do a bit more. They've got a lot of valuable information which is often left at the preschool and not carried through.

EI. I think that varies from year to year (knowing being
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transition management</th>
<th>coordination</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.</strong> preschool teacher with some government money to employ coordinator.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P.</strong> the Education Department.</td>
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</table>

| **EI.** | EI person ideal as they already have the trust of the family. |
| **EI.** | Its happening more and some children need it more than others and that's generally the ones that have more services involved. |
| **EI.** | And also it depends on the parents' confidence and knowledge. |
| **EI.** | That depends on the parents I think (who they want). |

| **K.** | probably have to be up to parent-Kinder teacher doesn't have time- maybe a middle person, someone to oversee. |
| **K.** | should be someone who had experience in both areas- would really need to have worked in a school to know. |
| **K.** | Someone who would give us the money to do it properly and not bandaid it. I think so much stuff is bandaid on for twelve months and then twelve months later we won't worry about that because that's not important any more. |
| **K.** | Not that I'm aware of. (coordinated transition). |
| transition management | systematic/long term | **P.** I think it can be.  
**P.** In the past no, now that I've had these guidelines on transition I find that quite helpful.  
**P.** No, definitely not.  

**EI.** NO!  
**EI.** One meeting six months before school slowly becoming the trend.  
**EI.** some school counsellors discourage parents from coming until term 4.  

**K.** information a bit meaningless when you don't know the child-know the disabilities which were coming which would be helpful.  
**K.** that's another thing to ask of the teacher.  
**K.** no.  
**K.** No, I'd like them to be, I think that would be wonderful. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transition management</th>
<th>DSE policy</th>
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<tr>
<td>P. and actually that introduced to me that I should be starting that early in the year rather than waiting until October.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. Yes, (DSE guidelines) that's what I've sort of gone on.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. The school that we contacted for the transition meeting seem to be quite willing to come and the Education Department representative came.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. Rang DSE for update of guidelines and got the royal runaround.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. Invited to inservice on guidelines (by accident). I will definitely go.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EI. Transition policy is put on paper but I don't feel its being followed.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>K. I haven't heard, have waited to hear, to see what was going to come.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. haven't heard anything.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. No, the only thing I've heard about early childhood is that the profile stuff has been put on hold.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>transition management</th>
<th>school preparation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P. I couldn't say yes or no because I'm not well enough informed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. I think perhaps parent requests (smaller classes, experienced teachers) are being met.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. Because I'm not sure of what happens in schools, I've never seen that, and I've never met a teacher who does this special support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. I imagine from the person who came from the Education Department that they would be quite well prepared to meet the child's needs.</td>
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</table>
P. I very much like to think so.

P. at times parents have to push.

P. I would hope they do.

P. some parents still may feel uninvolved-organised by DSE and they have to fit in. They don't have a lot of say, don't have a lot of knowledge or understanding and they don't know that they could have a lot of input and they have that right.

EI. NO!

EI. disadvantaged in school setting.

EI. little attempt made by schools in past.

EI. reminiscent of own school failure.

EI. When it's done properly (Not very often). Parents overwhelmed by professionals.

K. don't think so, they probably feel at the mercy of the school.

K. It's a lottery-parents don't feel they have much power.

K. I once again made sure I kept very close contact with the parents and told them what was working for me in the classroom and why don't you try it at home or is there something at home that works better?

K. It seems to me that the speech one I had last year, once she knew that I was doing it in the classroom, she didn't want to do any stuff at home.

K. No, not really, a lot of ours think "you're the professional, you do it."

K. I think with..., definitely this year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. No, I think I feel more stress if the parent is not involved.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. some may find it stressful depending on their approach to families. I see child care as providing a service for families, not just children.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P. Quite often the staff at this centre communicate that they find it stressful.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P. I don't find it immensely stressful</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. I think probably the day is a little bit more tiring when they're here.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. Really important. I think they have a better feeling about things when they come along and spend some time and talk to us a lot.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. Probably is a little more stressful, though it keeps us on our toes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|        | EI. Could be threatening to some teachers, just depends on their previous experience with parents. |
|        | EI. No. Even though its new to me, I'm determined because this is what the parents want. Their needs will be listened to. |
|        | EI. Occasionally if parent is anxious or in denial. |
|        | EI. Apart from extremes, not perceived as stressful. |

|        | K. I think it is. |
|        | K. sometimes its worked out very well- it really does depend on the parent -sometimes you feel it would probably be better if you just did it yourself. |
|        | K. where you do get the right mix you do feel that the kids are getting more than just extra help. |
Appendix 2
QUESTIONNAIRE
The Transition to School

The following questionnaire is about the transition to school for young children with special needs.* It will survey teachers in Early Intervention Services, regular Early Childhood Services and Kindergarten teachers in schools. There are questions which are specifically about young children with special needs as well as some about your regular teaching practices. The questionnaire looks at your beliefs about teaching and your daily practices. It is well recognised that many constraints influence the way teachers put their beliefs into practice. Please be as honest as possible in responding to the questions as this will help to present a realistic picture of what is happening in the transition to school for young children with special needs.

*The term "special needs" is used throughout to describe:

(a) children with identifiable conditions that interfere with their development and learning;

(b) children with developmental delays but no apparent biological impairments;

(c) children who are at risk for developmental delays or disabilities because of a variety of environmental and/or biological factors.

The term "classroom" is used throughout to describe the setting in which you teach, which may be in preschool, long day care, school, etc.

Please return this questionnaire in the Reply Paid envelope to:

Linda Brewer
University of Western Sydney, Nepean
Faculty of Education
Department of Professional Studies
PO Box 10
KINGSWOOD NSW 2747

This questionnaire is the pilot stage of this research study. Could you please tick the appropriate box to indicate if you would be willing to participate in further stages of this research project.

YES □ NO □
Please complete the following details about yourself and your work.

Appendix 2. Questionnaire

Page No. 295
6. Total years experience in this field .................................................................

7. Years of experience in your current grade/level .............................................

8. Do you work in (a) an integrated program or (b) special program? 
   (a) □ (b) □

9. Do you mainly see yourself as (a) a regular teacher or (b) a special needs teacher? 
   (a) □ (b) □

10. Did you attend any inservice related to special education in 1994? YES / NO

11. Please rate the usefulness of this training to your everyday teaching of young children with special needs. 
   Not at all useful □ Useful □ Extremely Useful □

12. Are you aware of the NSW Department of School Education guidelines for transition to school for young children with special needs? YES / NO

13. Have you been involved in using these guidelines in 1994? YES / NO

14. Gender: Male □ Female □


16. Number of children in your class/group? ..........

17. Number of children with special needs? ............
The following statements are about (a) the things you believe about teaching and learning, and (b) the things that actually happen in your classroom on a day to day basis. These may or may not be the same. Each question will have two parts, (a) and (b). Please respond to each part - first in terms of what you believe and then in terms of what actually happens in your daily teaching. Please leave blank if you don’t know the answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(A) BELIEFS</th>
<th></th>
<th>(B) PRACTICES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t believe</td>
<td>Believe</td>
<td>Very strongly believe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Children with special needs are (a) **able to** (b) **do** make a contribution to my class.  
2. In the transition from one program to another continuing communication between professionals (a) **is important** (b) **happens**.  
3. It (a) **is important** (b) **happens** that families are informed at every step in the transition process.  
4. My classroom (a) **can** (b) **does** meet the basic needs (eg. safety) of young children with special needs.  
5. It (a) **is important** (b) **happens** that the pre school/ early intervention program knows about the philosophies and practices of the school that the child will attend the following year.  
6. It (a) **is important** (b) **happens** that families have input into the transition program for their child.  
7. I (a) **can** (b) **do** meet the learning needs of young children with special needs.  
8. It is (a) **important** (b) **happens** that the school receives information about children with special needs and their families, before they commence at the school.  
9. It (a) **is important** (b) **happens** that parents’ specific concerns about their child are determined and addressed.  
10. I (a) **can** (b) **do** comfortably discuss the needs of individual children with other professionals such as Psychologists, Speech Pathologists, Occupational and Physiotherapists.
11. It (a) is important (b) happens that the school knows about the philosophies and practices of the service from which the child with special needs is coming.

12. It (a) is important (b) happens that families evaluate the transition process according to their satisfaction with the outcome.

13. Cognitive development occurs (a) best (b) in my classroom through a child’s self initiated, active exploration and experiment with the environment.

14. In the year before school, procedures (a) should be (b) are established that include determination of goals for an effective transition from early childhood services to school, for young children with special needs.

15. Family support (a) is an important part of (b) happens in my job.

16. Children learn best in a planned environment in which (a) they are observed and their development is actively guided (b) I observe and actively guide their development.

17. It (a) is important (b) happens that all people working with a child with special needs have input into the writing of transition goals.

18. Supporting and strengthening family functioning (a) is an important part of (b) happens in the transition process.

19. (a) Teachers should (b) I observe for signs that children are ready to learn and then provide them with the next step in the learning process.

20. It (a) is necessary for (b) happens that transition procedures to begin from six to twelve months before a child with special needs starts school.

21. The involvement of parents of a child with special needs, in all aspects of their child’s assessment, decisions on intervention, transition and education (a) is important (b) happens.

22. Children learn best when (a) planning is done to (b) I plan to teach behaviours or skills and reinforce them for appropriate responses.
23. It (a) is necessary (b) happens for/that transition procedures to be formal, clearly written and available to anyone with an interest in the process.

24. The involvement of families (a) can be stressful for teachers (b) is stressful for me.

25. (a) Effective teachers can (b) identify the learning needs of individual children by interacting with them individually in a planned environment.

26. It (a) is necessary for (b) happens that transition goals to identify the skills that the child will need at school.

27. It (a) is desirable for (b) happens that parents to provide input into their child's assessment and help to identify targets for future intervention.

28. I (a) can (b) do identify the skills, strategies and processes that individual children with special needs need to allow them to learn effectively.

29. It (a) is important for (b) happens that the Kindergarten teacher to have/has direct support in the classroom for effective integration of a child with special needs.

30. Parents' knowledge of their child (a) is important for (b) is considered when identifying intervention targets.

31. (a) Individual programs for children are most effective if target behaviours are identified, observed in natural settings, and evaluated across a range of settings.
   (b) I plan individually by identifying target behaviours, observing in natural settings and evaluating across a range of settings.

32. (a) It is important for teachers to (b) I attend inservice courses about the inclusion of children with special needs.

33. (a) It is important for (b) I plan for children with special needs to develop persistence and-independence with tasks.
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<th></th>
<th>(A) BELIEFS</th>
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<td>Don't believe</td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>(a) <strong>It is important for</strong> (b) <strong>it happens that</strong> the transition team to visit/visits the school which the child will be attending to become aware of policies and practices.</td>
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<td>35.</td>
<td>(a) <strong>It is most important to</strong> (b) I teach children with special needs things that they can also use outside school.</td>
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<td>36.</td>
<td>(a) <strong>It is important for</strong> (b) <strong>it happens that</strong> the Kindergarten teacher to be/is informed of teaching strategies that have been successful with the child with special needs.</td>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>(a) <strong>Teachers should</strong> (b) I structure situations that enable and facilitate meaningful social interactions for young children.</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>(a) <strong>It is important for</strong> (b) <strong>it happens that</strong> the transition team to work/works out how the effectiveness of integration into kindergarten will be evaluated.</td>
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<td>39.</td>
<td>(a) <strong>Teachers should</strong> (b) I structure small group situations in which children can work at different levels towards a common goal.</td>
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<td>40.</td>
<td>All children are different and planned activities (a) <strong>should be</strong> (b) are responsive to individual differences in development.</td>
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<td>41.</td>
<td>(a) Children under eight years of age (a) <strong>learn best through active exploration</strong> (b) <strong>learn best through active exploration in my classroom.</strong></td>
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<td>42.</td>
<td>(a) <strong>It is important for</strong> (b) <strong>it happens that</strong> children with special needs to receive regular individualised teaching.</td>
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<td>43.</td>
<td>(a) <strong>Young children learn best when</strong> (b) <strong>young children do learn best in my classroom when</strong> teaching goes across curriculum areas, eg by the use of learning centres, projects, etc.</td>
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<td>44.</td>
<td>As an evaluation technique for children under eight, standardised group tests (a) <strong>should be used</strong> (b) <strong>are used in my classroom.</strong></td>
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Would you like to comment further on any aspect of the transition to school process for young children with special needs and their families?

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Thank you for your valuable responses to this questionnaire. The information will be used to improve the transition to school for young children with special needs and their families.
Appendix 3
The Transition to School: Building the Bridges

Interview format

We will be talking about transition from preschool and early intervention services to school. Most of the questions will be general and not related to specific children. Not all questions will be related to children with special needs, but to your teaching in general. Please take as much time as you want and ask for clarification if questions are not clear.

Name ....................................................

School/Centre ....................................................

Grade level ....................................................

Have you been involved in a formal Transition Process? .................

Teaching and Learning
1. I would like to focus on teacher decision making in the classroom. Could you tell me what is the element that mostly influences your decisions on what you will teach?

2. What mostly influences your decisions on how you will teach?
3. Do you follow a particular theoretical perspective and how does this influence your decision making?

**Families**

4. How much do you think parents know about what it will be like for their child at school?

5. Do you think parents feel like partners in the transition process?

6. Can you discuss family involvement in the education of a child with special needs?
7. Do you think the involvement of families is stressful for teachers?

**Transition Planning**
8. Are individual children with special needs prepared well enough to start school?

9. How well do the services working with children with special needs join together to help them start school?

10. How much help did you feel families have in getting their child enrolled and started at school?

11. How much responsibility do you think early intervention Teachers should take for supporting families?
12. How much responsibility do you think school teachers should take for supporting families?

13. Do you think schools are generally prepared and able to meet the learning needs of children with special needs?

14. Can you discuss the classroom support available to Kindergarten teachers?

15. Is enough information given to the school about the needs of children with special needs?
16. Who should take responsibility for coordinating the transition to school?

17. In your experience, is transition planning carried out systematically over six to twelve months?

18. Do you feel that you have sufficient knowledge and training to allow you to make the transition to school an effective one?

19. How strongly do you feel that parents know best what was in the best interests of their child?
20. Can you make one suggestion that would make the transition to school work more effectively for children with special needs and their families?
Appendix 4
INTERVIEW WITH SYLVIA
an Early Intervention Teacher

Linda Have you been involved in a formal transition process?

Sylvia Yes

Linda Yes, you have. OK. So bearing in mind that you're not teaching directly in the classroom. What do you think mostly influenced your decisions as a teacher, and as a teacher as a decision making on the content. What you will teach? And in your case it would be on what you are advising teachers to teach. So the actual content, what's involved?

Sylvia Probably encouraging a social readiness for school, would be the priority and also a pre-academic readiness at school plus a language readiness. I would like to think we have quite a clear picture of kindergarten and what will be expected and I guess the main aim of all of our programs, no matter what the child's disability or special need is would be to quite specifically develop a readiness to cope with that situation.

Linda So in deciding what you will advice people to teach there, in making those decisions on your content, what you're going to put in, do you feel that you're coming from any sort of a theoretical background? Do you base those decisions on some sort of theoretical view point?

Sylvia I'm probably still influence mostly by Piaget, so my basic stand point would be to maximise the child's development by providing the best interactive environment particularly in the pre-school or the child care centre. So advice would be, to help the teacher to organise the environment so that the child interactions both social, language and pre-academic are as constructive as possible.

Linda Once you've decided, either before or after you've decided what you're going to teach, you would also think about how that's going to be done, in terms again of advising teachers, in your case, what sorts of strategies they're going to use, what approaches they're to use. How do you decided, how the teachers are going to do that? What strategies would you use?

Sylvia Well, it would very much apt the teacher's skills and the amount of support and the preschool setting. This various enormously from preschool to preschool. Some preschools have an extra support person in the role of a special needs teacher. Other centres don't have that extra pair of hands so the advice depends very much on the setting. Another big factor would be the amount of parent commitment. Say for example if a child with quite a severe speech problem was only attending preschool for only one day a week, but he had a parent that was doing the speech program very effectively and frequently at home I would be advising the staff not to withdraw him for the speech work because obviously that one day at preschool would be much more valid to develop his social use of language and his social skills. So the extent of the parental commitment is a big issue that I would take into consideration as well.

Linda OK, so you're mainly talking about there about logistical sort of things, organisational sorts of things, what about in actually working with individual children, in the approach that the teachers would take with different children? And how they would vary according to ..?
Sylvia: Well, it would be based on the needs of the child and would say probably the paramount thing to establish when you're working with a child is the level of confidence and the self esteem, because depending on that quite a different approach can be needed from the staff.

Linda: And what sorts of things would you do then according to that, once you've seen that and ascertained that, what sorts of things would you do?

Sylvia: Well, if the self esteem was low, I would target that as the first priority when programming to build up the self esteem. If the self esteem was good then I mean you obviously could tackle the skill deficit fairly competently.

Linda: And then again do you come from a particularly theoretical perspective in making those sorts of decisions?

Sylvia: Sometimes. I usually see each year several children who come from an abusive or neglective background and with those kids particularly I always refer back to Erickson and particularly his stage of trust and mistrust, I feel that's critical with all children. And many of the behaviour problems that you see with abuse kids comes back to that initial stage of Erikson's theory. So probably Erikson if anybody.

Linda: And we've sort of touched on the next question already in terms of theoretical perspectives, do you follow a particular theoretical perspective, so I think we've already covered those.

Sylvia: In terms of cognitive development it would be Piaget and in terms of emotional/social development it would Erikson.

Linda: So the questions that I'm asking you, I forgot to tell you before, are sort of grouped into three different areas which the questionnaire was even though they were randomly scattered through and they are: teaching and learning; families; and transition planning. So we are going to now talk about family issues.

How much do you think parents know about what it would be like for their child at school? When they start school and we are talking about parents with kids with special needs.

Sylvia: Well it depends very much of course on their previous experience with older children in the school system, I mean that's quite a critical factor. And if they've had no older children at school, which they know very little, they would know little about integrations acrot, they wouldn't know what an STLD was, they probably wouldn't know the roles that school counsellors have, what a psychometric test is, I would say the majority would be familiar with those processes. And some of them may of seen it written down but until it's explained verbally in discussion they are fairly meaningless terms, of course.

Linda: Do you think that generally parents feel like partners in the transition process?

Sylvia: No. I think most parents would feel at a disadvantage (a) because of their lack of knowledge about support within schools, (b) because in the past very little effort has been made by the schools to make them feel part of the process. And see they may have had unhappy experiences at school themselves particularly if the child with learning difficulties, his parents perhaps had learning difficulties at school, so the whole school situations is for them is reminiscent of failure and obviously all those things would discourage them from feeling any involvement really in the transition process.
Linda
If you could speak now a little more generally about family involvement in the education of a child with special needs. Just generally overall what you sort of think and feel about that.

Sylvia
Well, there's been a definite move over the past ten years to bring the family into the picture of early intervention. The role ten years ago was very much that the early intervention specialist was seen as a professional who would hand down pronouncements and decisions, but now the role is much more consultative, much more parent friendly, and much more family orientated and really that would be through most early intervention services now. Also most early intervention services now are most supportive to the parents because that's the natural offshoot of that process and that is a problem in itself because when the child goes into school the parent can't necessarily expect that ongoing emotional support. So with many of the families I see in about term four I start to talk them about that, that next year there won't be anybody that will pop in every six weeks to see their child and sit down and discuss the developments. That there won't necessarily be anybody that they can phone up if they've got a problem. So, it's becoming increasingly important to encourage the families having had all that support to reach some sort of independence from it in readiness for the school situation.

I often request now as children go into school, I make a formal request that the class teacher and perhaps the infant's mistress sit down with the parent twice a term to re-evaluate the child's progress. But obviously I can only offer that as a suggestion whether or not the school follows it up is very much up to them. But I say some parents have become used to that and I mean ideally obviously it should continue particularly for the anxious parent.

Linda
And what do you feel about the importance of family involvement?

Sylvia
It's paramount, obviously. The child is no longer perceived as an individual but very much as part of a family.

Linda
Do you think the involvement of families is stressful for teachers?

Sylvia
Preschool teachers, you mean?

Linda
Any teachers, well if you can generalise, maybe you don't want to generalise, maybe you want to see a difference.

Sylvia
Occasionally it can be. If the parental reaction is one of extreme anxiety or complete denial. Obviously you always get those two extremes when you're looking at parental responses, but apart from those two extremes, no I don't think it's perceived as stressful. It certainly shouldn't be, no probably not perceived as stressful.

Linda
OK. Turning to transition planning. Do you think again, general speaking, children with special needs are prepared well enough to start school?

Sylvia
Well, if there was some guarantee of ongoing support, even minimal support, then yes I think we would feel confident that we have prepared them for successful entry, right, but because that guarantee is never there, or let's say rarely there, then no, probably we are preparing them adequately. But then we are preparing them as much we can, if you see what I mean.

Linda
Do you think we are preparing them in the right way?
Sylvia: Oh yes, I think so, with the intervention people have got very clear priorities, the importance of social/emotional development of course everybody acknowledges now that is the key issue. There has been a move towards that and away from just skills based work. Which used to be the priority.

Linda: So now looking at the services, how well do you think they’d work together to help the children start school?

Sylvia: Very well in the Penrith area, there is close liaison between the area health centre and the private therapist and the early intervention workers and this week went informal discussions and sending of reports and there's consultation about school placement.

Linda: Would you include the schools in that group?

Sylvia: No

Linda: So if I included the schools in that and said that schools were part of that group would you then say they worked well together?

Sylvia: No. It is slowly improving in that there are now more meetings, between the early intervention people, the parents and the prospective school. For example, I've got about six meetings already organised this year. But there's a limit is to how successful those meetings can be because the schools can't make the commitment about the support and I mean that's the bottom line. It doesn't matter how well meaning they are, if the supports not there they can't comment and so that makes it a rather uncomfortable process at times.

Linda: So, how much help do you feel again in general families have in getting their child enrolled and started at school.

Sylvia: How much help?

Linda: Yes

Sylvia: They wouldn't get much help from therapists, in my experience, simply because therapists aren't really familiar with the school system, and I guess in itself that is a problem that could perhaps be addressed at some point, but they would certainly get help from the early intervention specialists.

Linda: So if they weren't involved in an early intervention service?

Sylvia: They would be at a disadvantage. It's an interesting point actually we should look at some educational therapist or the Department of Education really should, look at some education of some speech therapists and OT's and physios about what is available and what isn't available because they'll often phone us to find out.

Linda: ?? Well all that study in the lidical area with people who have been in nothing ?? How much responsibility do you think early intervention teachers should take for supporting families?

Sylvia: Towards transition?

Linda: Yes, but as a general rule with the families that we're working with so they might be the kids the year before that or whatever or even younger. How bigger part of their role should that be?
Sylvia  Yes, I think it should be a major part of their role but without, but taking care not to encourage dependently. While supporting they need to empower the parents obviously to become part of the decision making process. And that's a big issue you do find some parents do become, particularly when you've been seeing the child for two and a half three years, they do become quite dependent upon you unless you consciously encourage them to make choices.

Linda  And then on the same questions about looking at the school teachers how much responsibility do you think school teachers should take for supporting families?

Sylvia  I mean again that's more difficult because of the lack of staff, I mean an ideal ?? of course would be to have an extra staff person per school with no teaching responsibilities who would adopt, if you would like, a social work type role in supporting any families who have children with behavioural or learning difficulties or problems. But obviously that's an unrealistic expectation. That would be the ideal.

Linda  So you don't think that the school teacher's role in supporting families is, what's the word ??, shouldn't be as much a part of their role as it is for early intervention teachers?

Sylvia  No, probably not, because you'd be hoping by that time the child would be becoming more independent. So in a sense you would hope that the parent would also becoming more independent of that amount of support. And that also by that stage they should perhaps be well linked into, you know, support groups and social workers from the major agencies.

Linda  OK, again in general, do you think school are generally prepared and able to meet the learning needs of children with special needs?

Sylvia  No, I think the lack of support, the lack of actual personnel within the schools is still a major issue. A lot of schools do have STLD but they give priority to fifth and sixth class. That's the problem I come across many times each year. And of course coming from our perspective I would be encouraging the schools to reassess the priorities and give the younger the better.

Linda  What about in terms of classroom teachers knowing what to do?

Sylvia  Yes I would say there's a need for more training, more inservice training. Not only about the major disabilities that they might come across but also the more subtle learning difficulties like visual perception problems and auditory processing problems and whatever.

Linda  ?? just took one look at and said "wouldn't have a clue what you're talking about". So what do you think, and we've touched on this again, what do you think on the classroom support that's available to kindergarten teachers?

Sylvia  It's not enough. It seems to be virtually impossible to get integration support now days. The children have got to have high level needs to even be considered for intervention support. And it doesn't matter how many consultants they've got coming through and how much advice they've got, that they've been given that it always comes down to having the extra pair of hands in the classroom to aide, or to guide, or to model for the special needs child.

Linda  Do you think there is enough information given to the school about the needs of children with special needs?
Sylvia: I don't know to tell you the truth, I wouldn't be familiar with what information comes through, but probably not. You don't mean preschool do you, you mean the regular schools?

Linda: What the schools actually receive?

Sylvia: No, probably not.

Linda: Now we're talking about transition process and transition planning, presuming that process needs someone to co-ordinate it and in an ideal situation who do you think that person should be?

Sylvia: It's very difficult because of the complexity of early intervention services but ideally somebody, some early intervention because they already have the trust of the parents, OK, which may have been established over, even up to four years. So that would be the ideal person if they had the time. So the children who are in Department of Education early intervention classes the ideal person would be the teacher from the class. The children with milder problems who are functioning in just in a regular preschool, I guess it should be an itinerant advisory person or the preschool people themselves, I suppose.

Linda: In your experience is transition planning carried out systematically over six to twelve months?

Sylvia: No.

Linda: Would you like to expand on that?

Sylvia: What usually happens is perhaps one meeting maybe six months before school entry, that is perhaps becoming the trend now, just becoming the trend. I find that some school counsellors actually discourage that by telling parents that "there is no point in coming until the end of term 4" (quote unquote). Which I have a dyslectic child yesterday when the mum had made the approach to the school.

Linda: Still trying to get to the counsellors down there to speak to their group ???

Sylvia: I was amazed, I mean this mum did the right thing, his diagnosis ?? and she was told to come back at the end of term 4. So those meetings are just starting now since ?? has become an issue, I mean there was one meeting because of the case load, perhaps supplemented by a visit to the preschool to see the child. That would probably be the best you could hope for as things are at the moment.

Linda: Do you feel that you have sufficient knowledge and training to allow you to make the transition to school an affective one?

Sylvia: Yes I do now because of the policy that we trialed in 1993. But there wouldn't be many people that would have similar skills. Well that's a bit unfair, the early intervention class teachers would do. But other than that there wouldn't be anybody really with similar skills even if we are honest. I mean the preschool teachers with all the best in the world would think oh yes we can do this but because they often don't know what sort of support is available it would be really hard for them.

Linda: So you're saying that in taking on that role you have to find out what support is available?
Sylvia: Yes

Linda: And that's not necessarily easy to do?

Sylvia: No. In my experience the Department doesn't volunteer any information about what support is available. And it is very difficult to find out.

Linda: I've heard this before, this week. How strongly do you feel that parents know best, what's in the best interest of their child?

Sylvia: Usually, but not always. Sometimes they need some guidance I guess. An example of that one, just to back track to the previous question. On my understanding if you were promised integration support for a child it would be available in term 1, we recently heard from a mum whose child we used to see last year, and who is now in kindergarten, that he hasn't had any integration support at all during term 1 but that he may get it in term 2. And according to this mum this is now the understanding with the Department that you don't actually get integration support in term 1 even if you've been officially granted it and again it would have been nice to have been told that by the Department before we enter into discussion with parents. Department personnel often accuse us of raising parent's expectations, but we can only give realistic expectations if we have accurate information.

Linda: I'll have to be like a journalist and say "I will not divulge my sources". OK, here's the creative part. You make one suggestion that would make the transition to school work more effectively for children and families.

Sylvia: I would train a group early intervention specialist specifically as Transition Coordinators. They would not have any responsibility other than this. They would need to do one initial assessment on the child and then consult with parents and therapist and school staff and then be responsible for co-ordinating the process throughout the year. It should be limited to about 20 with no other responsibilities.

Linda: Who would pay them?

Sylvia: Don't know.

Linda: Who do you think would be the best person?

Sylvia: The Department of Education or DOCS. And also to follow the child through kindergarten as well.

Linda: And do you think that's sufficient?

Sylvia: Probably, if those people were well trained and skilled in that role, yes I think that would very sufficient.

Linda: Because I've been reading a bit of stuff ?? about transition into year 1 and saying how that again is another sort of crisis point and because year 1 is so different, they can be in kinder and go through all that and suddenly they're thrown into year 1 without anything and they all feel a bit, parents and the child get thrown out again as they change from kinder to year 1.

Sylvia: That's happening a bit isn't it with Ryan. I've had a phone call from Mary.

Linda: No I haven't spoken to her.
Sylvia    Cause he's struggling a bit cause he's in year 1
Linda    James too, because when I spoke to her she said the same thing.
Linda    Any thing else that you would like say?
Sylvia    I don't think so, the key issues are having someone to assume that role, the role of the Transition Co-ordinator, and secondly having the adequate support in kindergarten, I mean adequate to the child's needs.
INTERVIEW WITH KATHY

an Early Intervention teacher

Linda The other thing that might not be relevant that I didn't ask you is, have you been involved in formal transition process?

Kathy I'm in the process of doing it now.

Linda But not in the past?

Kathy No I sort of got things started but it wasn't really our role. The pre-school have more of an input -started things going.

Linda So when I ask you questions today they will be in the groups teaching learning there families and transition management it doesn't really matter the first one I'm going to ask you is about teaching and learning in your case are you teaching directly or an advisory position?

Kathy Both now, when I was at early child support service, mainly an advisory role but now I'm a group leader have children that come in.

Linda That's good you can answer both perspectives.

Kathy Yes

Linda Which every make most sense ok? So what I'm talking about here is about your decision making process the thoughts that you go through when your thinking about what you do in your teaching. All teachers make lots of decisions all the time I'm looking at teacher decision making process. Firstly I want to talk about content. What I'm asking you is when you are trying to decide what to teach, the actual content of what you are going to do, what guides your decision making when you do that?

Kathy Well-parents basically, parents ring up, parents indicate what they feel children's needs, children interest and their strengths and I try and incorporate their other skills that I'm working on

Linda So when you've looked at the child, when you have decided this is what they need, or the parents say this is what they need, the actual things that you use to teach them, the actual content that you are going to teach them, what I'm going to do, how I'm going to fulfil this need, how do you decide where you're going to get that content from?

Kathy Experience I suppose I've worked in long day care, in preschool, incrisis care, you name it, so I've got a lot of knowledge and try and base it as much as possible on the children's developmental levels and their interest and try and do something you think they should be doing.

Linda So a lot of that is based in your head, experience. Where did it come from in the first place? How did you know those things in the first place?

Kathy I suppose my teaching background like going through uni. I lectured at Milperra in childevelopment, Play Observations,. A lot of my lecturing was based on my experience.

Linda Can you think back to a particular theoretical perspective?
Kathy  Hands on learning?

Linda  So you don't stick to one in particular?

Kathy  No, that's when I like lectured in that subject we looked at ourselves as lecturers, and said our philosophy comes from different places, parts of Montessori, parts of Piaget. Basically based on experience.

Linda  Could you say which bits you have chosen from where and why you have selected those bits or does it fit together a bit more loosely than that?

Kathy  No Montessori is great but its very structured and some of the ideas are hands on learning and life experiences and things but the actual materials are restricted I feel so thats where a lot of your other theorists come in.

Linda  So leading on from that you are saying in the same sort of vein, that talking about what you decided to teach, what about how you decided to teach, your actual strategies that you use with kids?

Kathy  That depends on the child it depends on his needs and its depends on their ability especially in terms of abilities, they all vary so much and some of them have communication barriers so that you have to look at other avenues to encourage them to learn with out being self conscious try and promote their self esteem and confidence. Lack of confidence is.....

Linda  So how would you decide what strategies to use with what kids?

Kathy  I just do it! Generally know in that first 20 minutes of working with a child which way you've got to go to build up their confidence. Sometimes it's the first couple of minutes your with a child, other children takes them a little bit longer to get their confidence in you. You either take their lead ....and observe their play.

Linda  Do you think that's any particular theory or theories?

Kathy  Not consciously, I remember a few years ago I mapped out a philosophy but it changes. ?All sorts of people influence you. You see something and ooh!

Linda  Get onto transition, what I want to know is with families who have children starting school, children with special needs, how much do you think they know about what it is really like for kids when they start school?

Kathy  Not a lot. We are experiencing a lot of difficulties at the moment with some off our children and children that have had Dept. of Ed assistance. Procedures haven't really been explained to them, just told them were there children slot in.

Linda  Is that in terms of placing them for next year?

Kathy  with some schools, numbers, they'll accept because that will keep the numbers up to keep the staff

Linda  So is that being done in any way within the transition policy do you feel?

Kathy  Transition policy is put on paper but I don't feel its being followed.
Linda

So when you said you were going through a formal transition at the moment is that with the departments policy or

Kathy

Yes, we're just getting the ball rolling. The parents are actually taking a very active role which is good. We're trying to encourage the preschool to do a bit more. They've got a lot of valuable information which is often left at the preschool and not carried through. And the parents are always unsure about school, and what's expected, and it varies from school to school too.

Linda

So do feel generally that parents feel like partners in the transition process?

Kathy

When it's done properly.

Linda

And when is that?

Kathy

Not very often. Parents, I think are often overwhelmed, and think "the school knows best, they're the ones who are trained"

Linda

So what do you think of family involvement in the education of kids with special needs in general?

Kathy

Primary importance. It can't happen without it.

Linda

Do you think that involvement is stressful for teachers?

Kathy

Could be threatening to some teachers, just depends on their previous experience with parents.

Linda

How about you?

Kathy

No. Even though it's new to me, and the case we are actually involved in has a school that's very academic and in the past hasn't accepted kids with disabilities, so I know that its going to be a hard slog. But I'm determined because this is what the parents want. Their needs will be listened to. If I think its going to be very stressful for the parents and perhaps jeopardise the child's schooling I'll make more suggestions.

Linda

Is that the local school, the nearest school?

the child's brother and sister have gone to the school and are both quite bright so...

Linda

Have you had any contact with the school?

Kathy

I have encouraged mum to do that at this stage but I'm actually going to a meeting I'm in the process of seeing the mother, spoke to the speech pathologist went to the preschool to look at how the child functions at all levels with other kids he's having an assessment and now the next step will be to put a whole report together on the whole child in all the areas on how the child and then we'll go for an interview...

Linda

So are you co-ordinating that?

Kathy

Yes, mum's in control, that's my perception the mum needs to be in control of all that but mum is really only bouncing ideas off me and what should I do next, she didn't understand the transition process and I've given her a copy of the policy to read and told her what her rights are and she seems quite comfortable with it.
Linda: Interesting OK so in terms of the child, again in general, do you think the kids are well enough prepared for school?

Kathy: Depends on the individual and it depends on the school as well.

Linda: In what way?

Kathy: ???

Linda: It's very hard to generalise of course. In terms of looking at the system, and how the system generally prepares forkids?

Kathy: I mean that depends on whether they've had preschool, intervention and where they've been to, quality.

Linda: You're allowed to say anything, these tapes are all confidential, there's no names. I'll give you a false name and everything. The sorts of things I've heard of I've had to say that "I have to protect my sources".

Kathy: You can have a child with a disability that is going to a preschool and the child's confidence and self esteem, validated as a person and prepare them that way and as best to academic ability to go to school and then you can have another child that goes to a preschool who just goes to a preschool and there is no transition, there is no preparation for school. Its social, just socially that they're there basically, there's no individual things looked at. Social things are important when you go off to school but they need to be nurtured as well, not just stuck with other children.

Linda: Do you have any ideas on what constitutes that difference? Is there something you can put that difference down to?

Kathy: Training, time, budget and and attitudes, staff attitudes. Staff attitudes to children in general and staff attitudes to children with disabilities.

Linda: And where did they come from? Those attitudes- what's the difference between a positive attitude and a not so positive attitude?

Kathy: if you've done the training and you're there because they want to be there and value children. And someone who's just there for the money.

Linda: So you see training would be a big factor?

Kathy: Training, yes, although I know a lot of untrained staff who are a lot better than trained staff and it's all because they want to be there and value children and respect children basically.

Linda: So it's a personal thing a personal attitude to children really?

Kathy: I think life experience is valuable too.

Linda: OK, so thinking about all the people who might have been working with a child before they started school, all the different services and people, how well, generally speaking if you can, how well do those services join together to help a child start school? From your experience?

Kathy: From my point of view it's really important, so that's one thing I always try and do I try co-ordinate everybody and make sure that everyone's working in the
same sort of areas, that the parents needs what the parents might feel the child needs...talk

Linda It's really important that they all join together and work together and look at the child.

Kathy Yes, I think it's really important that the parents needs are looked at and what they see the primary needs are with their children. They might see behaviour as really crucial whereas someone else might think the child needs to cut with a knife and fork or cut with a pair scissors before they need to do anything else. So it's really important to get a case conference going, everybody talking, not going off on a tangent, stress on the family and stress on the child.

Linda And do you think that's working?

Kathy Yes, that's happening all along. Still, I feel that a lot of therapists have their own needs and can't see the whole child, they just look at that one area and that's why it's important to get a case conference together and start with the parents and really focus on the parent's rights and things.

Linda And is that possible logistically and financially? Do you find that you are able to do that?

Kathy It's happening more and some children need it more than others and that's generally the ones that have more services involved. And also it depends on the parents' confidence and knowledge.

Linda So overall how much help do you think families have in getting their child enrolled in the school?

Kathy That depends on their access to services.

Linda And do you find that a lot of people still haven't got the access to services or don't know about them?

Kathy Yes, well some children will still in at four and have had no intervention.

Linda So if a child that's say been tapped into early intervention services for a couple of years, how much help do you think they have in getting enrolled into school?

Kathy Depends, yes that varies from service to service and from to school to school. What the school has to offer, what the parents perceive their needs to be. Some parents just enrol and that's it. They'll get all the help that they want. When they turn eight and nine and get into the primary school they don't get the help.

Linda And I was talking to a teacher the other day, and she has left and she felt that a lot of parents feel that "OK once they're at school they'll be fixed, the school will be able to fix them", the expectations is on teachers to fix them.

Kathy And people get told it's free education and that you need to educate your children but they get integrated with disabilities and learning difficulties and if its not picked up before they go to school and then nothing is really done until they're reading and writing... and that's what the school sees, they don't pick it up... by then it's too late, they've wasted three years of their schooling. The Dept of Education!

Linda What solutions can you see
Kathy: More funding from the Dept. of Education, more staffing, the classes are getting bigger so the children that do have learning difficulties or some sort of special need that could be integrated in the class and are being integrated into classrooms would cope a lot better with smaller class sizes. There's a big difference between preschools and schools.

Linda: Who do you think should be responsible?

Kathy: Education Department.

Linda: The liaison between the preschools and the schools?

Kathy: I think the preschools have got an obligation, and I think the Department of Education have to come to them because they're the ones that need to open their doors and say it's OK for that information to flow on but they often come across as some big firm or something, sometimes come across like a big front and people, being professionals, and some people find it hard to approach them, uncomfortable. It needs to be... they need to say yes its OK for everyone to come and go.

Linda: A lot of people I'm talking to at schools say we're not getting the information, we want the information and the preschools are saying they don't want the information. It seems there's a great big block there, but nobody..

Kathy: I know a couple of schools that have said to preschools come and visit, come to morning tea, come to we're having a puppet show, come and join in, it's more of a partnership than, here's preschool and then all of a sudden it's a big step for the children to go to school and then ther's no liaison at all and then once the child gets there and then they have difficulties well then they are screaming out and saying "why didn't you warn us about this child" but there was no inivation, no sort of relationship before.

Linda: So we're back tracking a bit .. in thinking about support for families, how much responsibility do you think early intervention teachers should take to support families?

Kathy: In what way?

Linda: Again, fairly generally I suppose, offering whatever support it is that they will need and being available for that.

Kathy: It depends on the service's capacity in staffing to meet those needs. Its your role basically if don't have the skills or staff, to refer on and that sometimes becomes a difficulty because you have to say to the ... and the whole focus on the child and the family is lost....

Linda: And do you see that as a big part of your role or do you think that your role is more of a referrer?

Kathy: No, my role is definitely supporting parents.

Linda: And does that change for the kindergarten teacher, is it the same or different do you think for a kindergarten teacher?

Kathy: I think in some ways its different because all of the ground work is done If they've been in early intervention, a lot of ground work is done and by then parents have generally got speech pathology so you're more of the liaison person keeping the Kindergarten teacher informed and the school counsellor.
Linda: Do you think schools are generally prepared and able to meet the learning needs of children with special needs?

Kathy: No! No because of the large of children that come in from varying levels - some children have been to preschool and some haven't, and they're trying to cope with those children without having children with special needs thrust upon them, especially in first term. And I think training is definitely looks at the average child and staff have difficulty challenging the child that's gifted or the child that's not learning the set way. And that's the same for private schools.

Linda: OK what about the support that's available to kindergarten teachers.

Kathy: Like everything else its not... and integration was supposed to happening across the board and you tend to find it happens in certain schools more than others because they have the staff to cope with it and then that school gets a reputation for integrating and providing resources and support to the children so more children tend to go there than other schools tend to go on their merry way without really facing that. Instead of all schools promoting...

Linda: And have you had experience with trying to get integration support for kids starting at school and what's you experience with that?

Kathy: Varying, some children have been told there's no classes available if they want a special class. Just enrol them and we'll find a place hopefully. Lack of funds, you should have applied for it earlier.

Linda: How do you know when to apply for it?

Kathy: I think that varies from year to year, like some years you can apply in December and you'll get funding and other times they'll tell you third term.

Linda: So, it's hard to find that out? It's hard to know what you should do?

Kathy: I think it also depends on the school knowledge of what funding's available What's appropriate funding.

Linda: So do you see that as the school's role to find that out or is it your role to find that?

Kathy: It depends on the parents in what they want you to do, some parents feel that they just want their children enrolled and don't want them to know that they've got any difficulty and it's not until the school approaches them that there's problems with this child that they will get some funding and its not till next term...way down the track.

Linda: So if the parent said that they didn't want you to have anything to do with the school then you would respect that wish?

Kathy: Yes.

Linda: OK, so do you think enough information is given to schools about the needs of children with special needs?

Kathy: From which angle?
Linda: Well, coming through from wherever it is that they've been.

Kathy: So getting information from us?

Linda: Yes and from preschools?

Kathy: And that again depends on the parents' wishes.

Linda: Say then, yes the parent is quite happy for everything to go through, is there enough information arriving at schools?

Kathy: ??? the child can't ???

Linda: And do you know that gets there and it gets to the right people?

Kathy: Generally, yes I generally do a follow up phone call and give a copy of whatever's sent to the parents.

Linda: So your happy that that's getting to the teacher, that will work for the child ???

Kathy: Sometimes it gets to the Headmaster or whoever and that's as far as it goes but I generally encourage the parents to, that's why they've got a copy to take it to the school, the teacher.

Linda: So who do you think should be responsible for co-ordinating the transition to school?

Kathy: That depends on the parents I think ?? what happens to the child and it depends on funding and time factors and the needs of the child. Sometimes your, job description, that goes beyond your boundaries.

Linda: Yes, so you can't necessarily do it, but say I had government money or a magic wand or something and said OK I can afford a person, who do you think that, the best person to do that would be?

Kathy: Whoever the parent's comfortable with. I think anybody could do it but some people are a bit more forceful and some people take the parents feelings a bit more than others because its a major step for the parents and the child needs just someone who they're comfortable with and can relate to.

Linda: So that means don't nominate a specific, say someone employed by the Education Department to do all transitions but has different people for different families. So in your experience is transition planning carried out systematically over six to twelve months?

Kathy: No!

Linda: OK. Do you feel you have sufficient knowledge and training to allow you to make the transition to school effective?

Kathy: Yes, and what knowledge I don't have I generally investigate and find out the things that I don't know about. Parents ask me a question and I don't really know but I can find out and I'll pursue it.

Linda: OK. I think you've already answered this one. How strongly do you feel that parents know best what's in the best interest of their child?
Kathy  Very strongly I agree with that, parents needs in terms of the child they're the ones that are with them most of the time.

Linda  The last one. If you've got to have one magic wish or suggestion that could come true, what would you do to make the transition to school work more effectively?

Kathy  Make more people aware of it and ??? and encourage parents to take a more active role not to be scared off by it all - institutuins and professional -teachers know best but they don't always know best.

Kathy  I did that today I was trying to encourage a preschool to give me more information to go over and talk to the school, what they require of the children, what things that they look at for children to be enrolled to be successful in Kindergarten then you communicate that to the parents and encourage the parents to take on the school different things that we give to the parents so they can take to the school. Whether it goes to the school or not is another choice but ???

Linda  Maybe that's something we should do a session on at our get-together meetings. Because in the Hawkesbury area they've set up a network were the school teachers and all the early childhood teachers meet regularly at regular meetings and they're working on systems that exchange information and all that sort of stuff. Maybe we could get some of that from there and get the ball rolling from the early intervention side of it because nobody seems to be taking the initiative to ???

Kathy  ??? have an input that goes with it.

Linda  But so many teachers that I talk to say "I never saw anything, I never got a thing" it doesn't seem to get as far as the teachers. And I know myself when I was doing ???

Kathy  ??? and that why I say give it to the parents then you ensure that, that is what the parent really wants it will get there.
INTERVIEW WITH NELLIE

a Preschool teacher

Linda Have you been involved in any formal transition process?

Nellie No. Having said that though, I was looking through a folder we have with a draft transition guidelines for parents and staff and children, mainstream and early intervention from the Department.

Linda KU?

Nellie Yes. And I rang them to say do you have an update, and they gave me the royal run around, try this person, try that person. I eventually got onto a very helpful person, her name was Renate ?? and she wasn't actually involved in the particular guidelines I was after, but she has invited me to an inservice that she's is putting on called "Don't panic - Transition Guidelines for Kindergarten and Preschool Teachers". So I will definitely go to that.

Linda I might try and get on to that. You probably my know or have been aware when you were filling in the questionnaire that there was actually three sets of question in there, and even though they were all sort of mixed up all the way through. One was teaching and learning questions, another one was pertaining to families, and another one was transition planning and they went all the way through. So what we'll do first is focus on the teaching and learning aspect. The first thing I would like you to have a think about is your role as a decision maker, in your classroom. And I use the classroom to cover all different levels.

Nellie In regards what children are learning?

Linda Yes, what I want you to think about is your content, what you actually teach and what mostly influences your decision about what you choose to teach.

Nellie My decisions are based on how I feel the children are, and any suggestions that come from them I will quickly scribble down, and I think that yes we can actually take something from that suggestion and work from that and I will definitely go along those lines because for instance I've got a prime example today, we were reading a book called "Rebec Coles Birthday Book" where there are, it's not a pop up book, but there are envelopes in the book and there are presents within those envelopes and the children love it, it's become a classic with these children. And one of them said "Why don't we mix up the presents in the different and then you can really trick us". And I thought, hey that will really extend the story rather than reading it in the same ordinary way and it will just add a new dimension and another challenge. So next week that's what we're going to do in a small group situation, especially using the child that suggested it. And another reason I do that is because this child's self esteem is a bit of low level at the moment and reinforcing that I think that his ideas are important I think will only help to make him feel special about himself. Definitely going along what the children are interested in doing, also what I feel that they need, I guess that's a big can of worms. Yeah, what I feel their needs are and you give it to them.

Linda And how do you know what they need?

Nellie If they're showing an interest in something, like if they show an interest in scissor cutting, but they're obviously having difficulty and they are feeling frustrated, so then if I model a more appropriate scissor cutting method then it
will be more effective for them and then they will enjoy the experience a bit more. And so, just breaking down, I'll do something like that.

Linda

Now you've talked about things like social, self esteem, those sorts of things, you've talked about skills like scissor cutting, what about it comes to the content of curriculum areas, like for example ?? and those sorts of things, again how do you make a decision about what content?

Nellie

I don't look at those, when I think of maths, I try and break it down all the time. I don't do it in curriculum areas as more I do on more individually based. It's very hard to determine if I'm going to be doing maths concept next week or a science concept because what I'll do is I'll have my children on a roster basis and I'll observe them and if they happen to be interested in maths then that's what lead we'll take. Yeah, I will try and incorporate it to whatever he's doing.

Linda

Do you keep a track of what content you've covered?

Nellie

I keep a track of the observations I've made and what areas they fall into by a colour coding system. But as far as what group times, what sort of curriculum areas fall into the group times, I'd say no.

Linda

So you don't go back and say "Oh we haven't done any maths".

Nellie

No. Not consciously anyway. I try and include all the areas as we go. But no not consciously, I don't have a maths curriculum, I don't have a science curriculum. One thing I've been meaning to do, and I have actually followed it in my last job, was having very, very broad aims for the year, and they fell into all curriculum areas. But no I haven't done that here.

Linda

Underlying, that meant, that you used for choosing your content for the children, do you feel that there is any particular theoretical perspective?

Nellie

I guess it's a combination, I wouldn't be able to label it with anything but I like to think I have a holistic approach based on individual planning.

Linda

Where does that come from?

Nellie

It comes from university, very much so. It comes from my Bachelor training more so than my Diploma or unconsciously it comes from my Diploma but I've certainly thought a lot more about it. It also comes from my constant, I don't know whether it's a good or bad point, my constant need to reflect and analyse what I've been doing. It comes from current readings that I can lay my hands on and it comes from, my husband is also in early childhood, so he and I often toss things about and discuss them because we can be very different angles. So basically it is reflecting.

Linda

So you can't trace the way you work back to any particular theoretical viewpoint, any particular theorist or any particular??

Nellie

I do agree with Piaget's pre-occupational stages of development and my observations relate back to those characteristic, if that's more specific, yes.

Linda

So you feel that underlies what you do?

Nellie

Yes.

Linda

Sort of continuing along the same lines but shifting slightly to, OK you've decided what you're going to teach the children, now you have to decide how
you're going to do. What strategies are you going use and how they are going to be the same or different for different children? How do you decide how?

Nellie

Lots and lots of small groups. I believe very much in small groups. I'm not mad on large groups for many reasons, mainly because I find so much time is taken up with behaviour management strategies rather than real facilitating of the children's learning. And it is so much more directed in large groups. I'm a true believer of small groups. I also, so that would be one strategy I would image. One thing I would like to improve on is communicating with other staff in respect that we know exactly where this kid's going, where they're coming from, and we know where they're at right now. So basically I need more time in the day to be able to sit down and discuss each and every child. We've started doing that in staffing. Involving family, having a chat with mum or dad, trying to maintain constant feedback from here and at home. Another strategy I use is scaffolding. I try and work through situation with the children and then I try and take a step back. For example in a lotto game, some of our children now can actually progress through a whole lotto game quite independently. And if I stand as far away as I am from you that's enough for them to know that I'm near by and if they need me they can just tug at me and I can respond to whatever they need. A lot of independence and a lot of independent problem solving that's what I like to encourage. Also I'm very much into reasoning with children as much as possible. It can sound a bit long winded at times, it's for them to be able to realise it's not a case of their behaviour it's another aim of mine. Also in the way I'm talking with children, become very aware... one of the articles I read, about how I'm speaking to them and if I'm actually ??? intrinsic motivation on their part for approval on my part. So I'm very conscious of that ??? things like that. Are they the sorts of things you mean?

Linda

Yes. And how do you decide how to use all of those strategies with different kids?

Nellie

I guess it's very much spare of the moment sort of thing. Some children you know that you need to be very quick and very sharp, not sharp as in, that's the wrong word, but don't mix your words just get it out. Trying to get the children to see the positive side of their actions. Like we sat down and wrote down the things we do inside preschool and things like, and they'll come up with things like "you never run" and "you don't hit people" and "you don't do this" it is all don't, don't, don't. So we try to turn it around and say "when you walk inside we ask our friends for help" things like that. Some children you need to be quick with especially if they're behaviour ??? generally things like that. I may write down the strategies that I'm using with them in the observations and also discussing with the parents too how each particular situation. I've got one child here who you can reason to a degree, he is fantastic at reasoning and you actually try and talk himself out of situations by reasoning and those are the times I find I have to say "No, this is basically what's happened and let's talk about this".

Linda

And again, can you trace the way you do those sorts of things in the things you do back to a theoretical perspective?

Nellie

To a theoretical perspective, I don't know that I could name one, but when we were going through uni we always had a teaching strategies column in the experiences that we had to present to children and I've actually got a couple of handouts from Fayre ?? who on strategies that I've always carried around with me, but if I was ever stuck using a new strategy. So yeah, those are the sorts of things, I keep those theoretical in a folder that I just refer to constantly ...

Linda

Is there anything else that you feel in that area that you would like to talk about.
Nellie: No, not at this stage.

Linda: 

Nellie: I guess I do but I just can't think of the name for one.

Linda: Move onto the family area, talk a little bit about the family. Can you think about how much you think parents know about what it's going to be like at school for their children when they start?

Nellie: Those parents and I find a lot parents or families in this area have at least two or three children, I think for those parents who have their last child at preschool and has their older children at school have a pretty fair idea of what's ?? Especially some parents who are older parents, chosen to have children at a later stage in life and who have only decided to have one child, I think sometimes they can find the idea of school a bit daunting and bit confused as to what is expected of their child and for them as well. Whether or not they know what it's going to be like very accurately, I don't know. I mean even I have some hazy images of school. Actually my last year of what we should do was go down to the school with the children and have a chat with the principal and I've also got some people in my own family who are kindergarten teachers and I've asked them for the expectations and that sort of thing. You talk to a lot of kindergarten teachers with a lot of different expectations so it would be really nice to get something that was meaningful that can be applicable to most of the schools. In my last job I worked at Paddington and the families there, broadly speaking, were very academically minded. Can my child read, can my child write everything, can my child recite the alphabet, that sort of thing. Where as families here are more socially orientate, is my child make friends, are they playing with other people. Different expectations I guess differ from area to area. But one would think that when schools have their own set curriculum their expectations would be fairly uniform. Do you know what I mean?

Linda: Yes. So you haven't had those links with schools?

Nellie: No, not half as much as I'd like. I joined here last August and was a bit of a busy time, I hadn't made that repertoire with schools. And if I was staying here, then that's what Debbie and I would doing.

Linda: That's just been created by lack of time you haven't attempted to do that or having contact from the schools.

Nellie: I did ring up all the schools in the area. And we found that a lot of the children last year were going to about twelve different schools. So what I did was I rang up all the schools and I said "Do you have an information booklet for our kids that I could use?" and some were good enough to send them back to me and I compiled them in a folder and I also had quite a few readings on school readiness, teacher's expectations of children, so I compiled it in a folder and parents who were really concerned about it, I would say "Have a read through this and we'll discuss any issues or articles you find interesting".

Linda: Now, what if the child has special needs, the child going to school? Does that make a difference to what you know?

Nellie: I think so, I think parents generally are better informed, those parents of children with special needs. They make the journey to the school fairly soon in the year to find out what the school has to offer, and how well the school can suit the needs of their child. And sometimes parents are so worried for the
children they can give you so much valuable information about different schools in the area. I think it’s South Penrith they have come here in the past because they have a program. So they come here and liaise. Cynthia ???

Linda  So you think those families have a fairly good idea of what they’re coming to?

Nellie  I do, most of them, yeah.

Linda  So do you think that generally those parents of children with special needs feel like partners in the transition process?

Nellie  I like to think so. I very much like to think so. I think decided whether or not your child’s ready, I’m not a parent, but I would think that deciding whether or not your child was ready for school is a hard enough decision and if your child has special needs then that makes it even more tricky I think, what school to go to. Not an easy decision. I guess we involve the school in one other way, I don’t send a formal report as some preschool do to school. What I do is I compile a special book about the individual children and we call it the “Special Book About Me” by, for example Katie”. And in that book that child has the opportunity to write their name, write how old they are, what their likes are, what their dislikes are, who their family is, who their friends are, what makes them happy, what makes them feel sad, what they want to do when they grow up, if they want to ask that sort of thing. And they draw pictures in there too. So, I like to think that creates a link between where the child has come from and school. Even if the teacher can have just a quick flick through it, especially if there are friends from the preschool going with the child then they have another look through ?? so it works as a keep sake for families and also for some information for the school.

Linda  So that goes to the families at the end of the year and it’s optional?

Nellie  Yes, I encourage them to take it to school.

Linda  So have you had any feedback from schools.

Nellie  Yes I have. More so from parents, but positive feedback from schools. More so that it’s a nice idea rather than how helpful it has been.

Linda  So overall you feel that the parents feel that they’re a part of that process of going through the transition to school ??? very important ???

Nellie  I think so at time parents have to push for that.

Linda  OK, so can you just talk to me in general terms about the involvement of the families of child with special needs with the view of education?

Nellie  In their transition to school?

Linda  In general involvement in their education.

Nellie  Well there’s Cynthia who comes here every now and then and she has a chat with me or Debbie about the child’s progress and then she has a chat with mum or dad and then she does some individual work with the child. And then she writes up here report and each ones of us gets a copy. And it’s on that basis that I discuss the child’s progress with the parent or just the fact that Cynthia might be coming I might use that as a starting point. How’s your child been at home? How have they been here? Any links, any thing that’s dissimilar between the two environments. Perhaps more frequent conversations and
feedbacks with those parents who have children with special needs than those who don't. But then, you know, how does one define special need. They may not be on the funding for special needs but on all accounts they've got special needs. So just constant feedback really. Trying as best we can to make the parents feel welcome and in establishing a positive climate for the parent to feel comfortable to approach us and say "Look I've got a problem" or "Look my child did this last night, isn't it fantastic".

Linda: How important do you think their involvement is in the education of their children?

Nellie: I think it is fundamental, most definitely. I'd be at a lose without it, that's for sure. I only see their children for six hours a day, their parents know them inside out. I know them in a different environment and what they do me sometimes they won't do for them. They'll ?? it.

Linda: And form do you think that would involve in that taking? What sorts of things do you see as being the important aspects of that involvement? What sorts of things they should be doing?

Nellie: Becoming as involved as possible. Finding out about their child's day even if it's just a couple of words. We quite often have communication books that we write things in, any speech therapist write things in, mum and dads write things down in. One of my parents asked me to write a letter to the Doctor regarding this child's behaviour at preschool. This was about medication going up and down that sort of thing. Monitoring a child's progress at preschool so the parent is able to make more informed decision about their child. That's another thing I want to talk about, the medication, this parent was wondering about medication for their child and she wanted to know how he was at preschool. And that feedback on his progress helped to make that decision of whether or not she should, with the doctor's advice, increase it or change the time of day it was given. Is that the sort of thing you mean?

Linda: Yes. What about in deciding what sorts of things you're going to do with those children, what sorts of objectives you're going to ???

Nellie: We have a special needs teacher who works largely with the children with special needs. And it's in consultation with the teacher, especially the normal teacher that those objectives are made that's by policy of KU, they're written down on a separate form at the end of each term and they're shown and discussed with the parents and their approval is requested in the form of a signature and basically our approach is rather than saying "Look these are the objectives can you please sign these?" our approach is "Look these are the objectives we feel will be appropriate, what's your feeling on this. Do you think they're appropriate, do you think they're reachable, is it possible for you to work with these sorts of things with him or her at home? Is there anything you would like to add?" That sort of thing.

Linda: OK. Do you think the involvement of families is stressful for the teachers?

Nellie: No, I think I feel more stress if the parent is not involved. Because I'm thinking do they know enough? should they know more? are they making the right decision? That sort of thing.

Linda: So you personally don't find it stressful?

Nellie: No
Linda: Do you think other teachers find it stressful?

Nellie: Some may. Depends on their approach to families. I see child care as rather than providing a service for children I see it as providing a service for families.

Linda: I'm moving onto the actual planning of the transition to school. Do you feel that individual children with special needs are well enough prepared to start school?

Nellie: Now this is a tricky one because I am not entirely sure of the kindergarten teachers or schools expectations of children when they start school. I focus or emphasise social development, I think pre academic development is very important and I think the child, any child will feel a little left out if they're the only ones in the room who can't write their names. Or they're the only one in the room who can't cut around an object. But again it goes back to self esteem, they're going to feel that if they can't do it. So it's only for those reasons that I. No that's wrong. It's not only for those reasons, I think if a child is interested in that's what we'll do. I don't think child with special needs are always well prepared or prepared enough for school. Unless you've actually been there you really imagine what it's like. That doesn't mean to say they can't cope.

Linda: In any specific ways, can you think of specific ways?

Nellie: It's very hard to prepare them for dealing with increased numbers in classroom, having only one teacher to meet all their needs. Long days, bigger playground, big kids, big school, really. All those things you really can't plan for unless you are able or in a fortunate position to be able to go and visit a school. I let you know a lot of children do, which is great. Yeah, it's just different really. A school is a big place. It's an exciting place, I mean some children take to it like a fish to water.

Linda: And in your experience how well do you think the services working with the children before they start school, children with special needs, join together to help the child start school?

Nellie: In my last job there wasn't a great deal of liaison going on there, mainly because the need wasn't there as much as it is here. So I mainly really apply that question to the job that I'm in now and when I think of the services I think of Lapstone, and I think they do a fantastic job. We have round table discussions with the school, Cynthia, Debbie, my Director; and myself, we've had those already this year. That's when a child had already started school and we were evaluating his progress. I don't know, I think services do really well, considering how many children they've got.

Linda: Just stop and think ??? really lucky in this area, because it happened very early?

Nellie: Yes. I mean, KU have got their own Special Education Service and we utilise that a lot, but not as much as Cynthia's or Lapstone because ??

Linda: How much help do you feel families have in getting their children enrolled and started at school? Children with special needs.

Nellie: Those who have established relationships with early intervention services I think they have a lot of help. Those who don't for example if you think of the numerous children with speech ??, family ??, not as much. Whether or not they can afford private therapy or if they have to get it through the public health system where the waiting list is just, you know the waiting list. That's very hard for them I think. And it frightens me that they feel so overwhelmed. I
know all the mothers would be in that situation. So I guess that's an area that can always be improved on. But until we get funding, that can sound like a bit of a cop out really, but there are limitations, I guess, with what can be done.

Linda: Where should the funding come from?
Nellie: The government.
Linda: Which part of the government?
Nellie: ??? I don't know, is there a special, who does fund special education? I don't know. It's a bit ignorant of me isn't it.
Linda: Unless you're involved in it, you don't sort of find out unless you have to?
Nellie: Yeah. Who does?
Linda: ?? bodies, it comes from all over the place. Some from the Commonwealth, Special Education Departments, some from State Government, and a lot of it comes from charitable organisations ...
Nellie: Actually Federal doesn't fund preschool, does it? Preschools run by State ...
Linda: But there's all sorts of things, there's like the West Area Assistance Scheme which comes through Council, they fund some things, parent council funds and early intervention, it comes from all over the place.
Nellie: So it's not surprising .... I wouldn't have a clue
Linda: .... No unless you actually have to get into that side of things. But you think it should be government funded.
Nellie: Yes
Linda: Do you think it should come through departments like the Department of Community Services or should Education Department?
Nellie: I don't know, I really couldn't cast an opinion on that, not knowing enough about, perhaps it could come from both. I don't know to what degree each of those institutions will play with.
Linda: How much responsibility do you think early intervention teachers should take for supporting families?
Nellie: Early interventions teachers, would that mean people like our Special Education teacher?
Linda: Yes
Nellie: I would imagine it, or I feel it should be a joint responsibility. Their knowledge, Bernadette's knowledge, in such a position to be able to see those plans on a daily basis although if she is totally ?? about something she will ring up. But, you know, I think there is certain responsibility there. I read somewhere that teaching is an ethical act, and if you thing about it that way, then there certainly is a responsibility. Alongside the regular teacher, I think you know, the special education teacher should certainly make themselves known to the parent rather than appear to them as just a name on a piece of paper. Which could sometimes happen when your child is seeing so many
different people. But if you think that an early intervention teacher does have that specific background in special education, they do have that knowledge, they're in an excellent position for making suggestions.

Linda

OK, so do you think that should be the same or different for kindergarten teachers in the school? Towards supporting families.

Nellie

From the outside perspective, I would say yes, but I can only imagine what its like to have thirty odd children all of whom are just beginning school and you've got a curriculum that you need to get through. So yeah, from an idealistic point of view I would say yes it would be very nice. It's important for families to feel that they are supported and that there is someone there who does care and who is interested. And I think for that reason teachers should be reachable. They should be a person a parent can approach and if necessary provide a network for other early interventions professionals. And a resource link in. A lot of families may not feel comfortable approaching other professionals about their child.

Linda

Other ?? teacher.

Nellie

You know if you think about that you know they're in a very vulnerable position. They've got a child there who needs a lot of help. They need someone to listen to and understand them. ??? But yes that's the sort chance they take.

Linda

And in general, in your experience do you think the schools are generally prepared and able to meet the main needs of children with special needs?

Nellie

I couldn't say yes or no. I wouldn't like to say yes or no because I'm not well enough informed in that sort of thing. But I'm certainly aware of a growing number of children with special needs. Interesting things like parents requests wanting a classroom with small numbers, wanting a teacher with years of experience. I don't know if it's just me but I think sometimes perhaps those needs are being met ?? and I think that's a fantastic position to be able to put yourself in and say "Look this is what I want, can you give it to me?" It means that the schools are actually aware of the needs of those very pragmatic needs.

Linda

So do you know anything about the classroom support that's available for children with special needs in kindergarten?

Nellie

No, not a great deal. I can only surmise really.

Linda

Do you feel it's your role to know that?

Nellie

Yes, probably. I probably should know that, yes.

Linda

And why do you think you don't, if you feel that it's something that you should know?

Nellie

I guess .... I started this job towards the latter half of the year and it put me right off balance. And it certainly something that Debbie and I have been intending to do. Also I'm not terrible aware of this area of town. I've come from Sydney to the Blue Mountains, and that's one of the reasons I'm changing jobs because I feel it's so important to work in a community where I'm actually living in, so I can start establishing that network. And it is very important. I guess having said that I know I'm more aware of the extra support the children with special needs are getting while they're here in terms of speech therapist, ?? and waratah and a couple of the private therapist and that sort of thing. It's a
matter of time as well. If you asked me about six months ago, I wouldn't have a clue where as now I'm in a better situation, not in an ideal situation to be able to say it. 'Yes I know all that all that experience in that sort of situation.

Linda

Do you the schools get enough information about the children you're starting with special needs?

Nellie

No, not at all. So I guess it's a two way thing. It's certainly a lack of communication.

Linda

Are you saying that you feel that you don't pass on enough?

Nellie

We don't really pass on any, apart from all the ... (end of Side A)
(Beginning of Side B) ... we've had telephone conversations about how the child is going.

Linda

So is so is there a reason why you don't pass records on?

Nellie

No, I can't really think of one. I'm feeling very ignorant. I can say yes there is a lack of communication but I can't really say ....

Linda

So how do you feel about passing the records?

Nellie

A bit hesitant, not like some ??? observations and not discuss them with me because no matter how objective you like to be in your observations of children they can always be perceived differently. And different things read into something, you know. And with sixty children passing through your room each week they can only be as detailed to some degree, they can't be as detailed as I'd like them. And they're not as many of them as I'd like. I feel as though I've got quite a few. So yeah, I wouldn't like someone to read my observations in isolation without my discussing with the person. Because no matter how much you read about a child you will learn more about that child in five minutes in meeting them than I feel you are in reading a whole string of observations. But that's not putting down the importance of written reports of the child. I guess any services that the child uses, I don't know I'm assuming they would pass on their records, but no I don't pass on my own records and they have to stay here anyway.

Linda

So what form of communication do you think you could have, what do you think would be a good way to do?

Nellie

Perhaps meeting with the staff of the school that the child is going to. Perhaps in fourth term or third term talking about their needs, what would be working involving other agencies involved with the child or myself, the director and the parent. I think the parent always needs to be present. Phone calls, follow-up conversations.

Linda

And in terms of written material, say for example the person you talk to at that meeting may end up not being at that school that following year, meaning you've got to have some sort of written records. What sort of format do you think that should take?

Nellie

In the form of a meeting, I'd take minutes that sort of things of what things we discuss. I guess it would be nice for a system to be developed.

Linda

So what sorts of, if I were to walk in here and say to you "I've got a grant and I'm going to pay you to develop a system for passing the records of the children onto the schools, you've got to go away and develop a system". What sorts of
things would you think should be in that transfer, that written transfer of
information?

Nellie The child's family background, medical background, family expectations,
teacher expectations, developmental progress from as far back as you can trace
to present time, long term/short term objectives, strategies to use in order to
achieve those objectives, social situations in which the child feels comfortable in
and performs well. A lot of social information. Any video ???, personality
traits.

Linda Is it possible or practicable to do that?

Nellie For every child? Or every special needs child?

Linda Well, firstly for children with special needs.

Nellie It would make life very busy at the beginning of the year.

Linda And then for all children.

Nellie Yeah, I mean, I'd like to for all children.

Linda Can it be done?

Nellie No, not easily. You could give me a grant to get enough staff ??? But I mean
even with that special book that we do for the children, that is very time
consuming, but I feel that reflects their social background, you know, what sort
of person they are. If the child is really into it you get a fantastic response.
Even that it's just so time consuming. But that doesn't mean it's any less
important.

Linda Who do you think should take responsibility for co-ordinating the transition to
schools?

Nellie I think it should be a joint responsibility between the last teacher that the child
had, the teacher that the child is going to, any services that are involved and the
parents.

Linda Now to make that work, if one person had to take on the co-ordinating role for
meeting those sorts of things, who should take responsibility for that?

Nellie I would say, I do, but then I know you're going to ask, why haven't you? I
guess one could argue, that yes I could.

Linda The classroom teacher?

Nellie The classroom teacher. Perhaps the government could give us money to
employ a co-ordinator. That would be nice.

Linda But who should employ that person?

Nellie It's one of those government things again. I don't know, as I say, I don't have
enough information on those sorts of things.

Linda To put it in a broader perspective, should that person be the classroom teacher
or the early intervention teacher, or someone from the school? Who takes
responsibility for putting it all together?
Nellie  The classroom teacher. Oh, sort of, I mean if it was someone from outside the classroom area they may perhaps have a more objective view, I don't know, it's a tricky one.

Linda  Someone like Cynthia?

Nellie  Yes. We need a lot more of those. ???

Linda  OK. So in your experience is transition planning for children with special needs to go to school systematically carried out over a six to twelve month period before they start?

Nellie  No. Do you mean between the school and here?

Linda  Yes.

Nellie  No. Definitely not.

Linda  Do you feel that you have sufficient knowledge and training to allow you to make the transition to school for kids with special needs effective?

Nellie  The children with special needs, not entirely, no. I don't have the specific knowledge. As I said before, my expectations of school may be fairly different to the school that they're are going to. I feel my knowledge is very specific to the classroom, as such. My years of experience in my training don't permit me to have such a broad knowledge, unfortunately, I wish it did.

Linda  So what areas do you feel that particularly that you lack knowledge?

Nellie  Oh, some degrees of special education, I mean why have an ADD child, I can read up as much information, I mean when I was at uni they weren't even discussing ADD. I mean I can read up as much information, I probably have better access to more early childhood based information than parents do, but you know I can read up as much as they can. I may interpret it differently, being early childhood trained and that could be in my favour but I'm not trained in ADD, I'm not trained in Down Syndrome.

Linda  Did you do a compulsory special education unit when you were at university?

Nellie  Yes, but it was a broad subject. I didn't do it as a ... it was an elective. So, I think experience counts from there too. Plus the fact that it was really brave children, that sort of thing. This is my fifth year. I mean I wouldn't like to be the sole one, sole person making that transition. I would like to, but that's a personality thing for mine too. I like to gather as many different opinions as possible.

Linda  OK. So how strongly do you feel that parents know what's in the best interests of their child?

Nellie  I feel very strongly that parents, I feel parents feel what is best for their child. They may be coming from a very subjective angle and they may need some support in a teacher saying "Hand on let's just stop and think where you're coming from here?" Just to, for a teacher, although they're there, the teacher is being involved with the family they're still very much an outside perspective. So it could help focus their thoughts and their feelings a little more. Teachers may not be as ??, and as I said before parents may be, or may be feeling as though they're in a vulnerable situation that could be a little daunting or overwhelming. General parents know what they want for their children.
Linda: If I was to say to again, I've given you a grant to solve all the problems, could you make one suggestion that you think would make the transition to school work more effectively for children with special needs?

Nellie: One suggestion, more avenues for extended, well a style of open communication to establish those links, so that would include more time...

Linda: ... provided by?

Nellie: OK, it would be nice if we had a float teacher so he or she could come in for a morning once a week ??? that would be nice. I think more communication, first and foremost.

Linda: OK, terrific. Is there anything that you feel that we haven't covered?

Nellie: No, you did say somewhere half way through that there was something that you wanted to ask me?

Linda: Yes, about the KU's transition guidelines, have you come across those issues?

Nellie: No, I was looking for those the other day actually, and that's how I came across the department's. So I have, I'm not familiar with them as much as I'd like to be. ???

Linda: So they just came out in the post?

Nellie: Yes

Linda: You haven't had any inserviceing or anything on them?

Nellie: No. I think there is a lack of inservice for transitions to school. Ever since I've been teaching three to fives. I've spent the first two years of my teaching career teaching two year olds. There is a lot of parent pressure too, on staff I find. Not so much here but yeah there can be a lot of parent pressure. Again it's that feeling vulnerable. You know "help me, can my child do this, why not". So it's also educating parents in what is appropriate for children to know when they go to school. It is not the be all and end all if they don't know the alphabet. But if they can sit in a group and turn to the person next to them and say "Hi, I'm Nellie" to me that's more important. From experience I've found that children who aren't socially competent will ?? or be affected in every other area. So that to me is a major expectation, well it's a major focus. So stuff like that.

Linda: Thank you very much for your time.

Nellie: My pleasure.

DISCUSSION

Nellie: .... going down to the local school worked really well, we took photos and we had a whole notice board about starting school and things like that. That was really effective and that was really great because I had about eighteen children going to school, sixteen of those children would go to a preschool. It just lovely, they all knew each other, we all went down to the same school. They had great fun. But here where the schools are so wide spread, I guess it's an aim for me when I go and work at Katoomba to know those things. I thought it would be easy here, at the end of day when I finish at three I could scoot off to
so many schools but they finish at three too. And I didn't get a fantastic response from schools that I rang at the end of last year, not as much as I would have liked. And you know it was as though no-one had ever rung them before, I got that impression, it's like "What sort of thing do you want?" ..... just to give parents more information so their decision can be more informed, that sort of thing.

Linda

Unfortunately what I find is when I talk to the preschool teachers they say the way that schools ... we're waiting for the preschools to do it ...

Nellie

That communication line is just not there.

... But one of the teachers there, she has written to us twice, now offering to come out and talk about school, which is great, and we are planning to ask her to come to a parent meeting.
INTERVIEW WITH PAT

a Long Day Care teacher

Linda Have you ever been involved in any formal process transition into school?

Pat I've been involved in one form of transition.

Linda So who was that through or organised by?

Pat It was actually organised by myself because it was a child at this centre and the parent was asking me many questions about what was going to happen to her child next year. What special class would he be in and she was asking me lots and lots of questions that I didn't have the answers to and then I knew this transition process was available so I suggested to her that we start it and she agreed and then I mentioned it to the speech therapist, support worker and she got in contact with the other support workers and the school and actually put the whole thing together.

Linda As a teacher you're in a decision making role every day, all the time and I wanted you just to think about that a little bit and see if you can tell me how you choose what you teach? The content of your teaching, how do you decided what it is that you're going to teach?

Pat Well, what I decide is in a team way we discuss with the other teachers in the room, working with the children every day, in a team teaching situation what we think is a need within the classroom and so we've all taken observations of certain children plus seen the group as a whole right through the week. And we've each planned on different days and introduced different groups and language and activities and on Thursdays and evaluated them and from that discussion at the end of the week we say what we think, what will be a good plan for the next week, something some need or some great interest that the children have shown or something that we've seen that we think would be a benefit to the children in the classroom either individually or as a group ???

Linda And so just taking that a little bit further, so say for example you've got a particular child and you've identified the need there and you've said you're going to work with this, whatever it is, then how do you decide what it is that you're going to teach that child?

Pat So then we'd probably, somebody would identify something, they'll say "this is what I've got to do, it would be really great if we could do something about this" it might be an extension or it might a meeting. Well it might be an extension because they're good at it and we want to extend that, it might be something that they can't do at all so we want to introduce it to the child. So we look at it and throw some ideas around and look at the developmental age of the child as well as other things and so everybody puts in some ideas about a good way to introduce that, some way that will interest the child and get their attention or we may decide that somebody will spend some special time with that child to get them interest because they may not be showing, they may need some one to one. So we sort of throw some ideas around like that and try to bring in something that, some other area observation that we've seen that that child is interested and use his interest to extend the need.

Linda So say for example you'd only decided in a particular child they actually need ??? these are the sorts ??? or they can't count or something like that it could be
any one of the thousand different things. Where or how do you decide then what the specific thing is, I'm hesitating with the words I'm using here, but what it is, where does it come from when you're going to decide your going to teach? Let's say it was counting, a maths thing, where would you then know, how would you know or how would you decide what particular thing you were going to teach that child?

Pat

Probably a lot of the knowledge that the way I would introduce it or the things that we would discuss would be our theory that we've collected ourselves in our training and in our reading. We have resources books here for programming or planning at the centre. ?? If we haven't got any particular knowledge we go and find out some way so I know at one stage we had to introduce to a child who had a developmental delay, basic maths and we were advised by, I can't remember who, to go to the Macquarie Learning Program and they sent a book on how to introduce maths to somebody was mildly developmentally delayed. So we do those things, we resource and we find out ways of introducing different areas.

Linda

Would you say that they way you select your content is linked to any particular theoretical perspective? Is there one theory that you can think of or one theoretician that you can think of that you would use?

Pat

I would say that we still do a lot of Piaget, Paragon. So if a child can actually, I usually find that if, with young children in early childhood, if they can see and touch and feel and relate in that way they get a great understanding of it.

Linda

So that's basically what you feel that subscribed to. Ok, so moving on from that then, you've decided what you're going to teach, now you've got a whole classroom full of different kids, you have to decide how you're going to teach each different one. Again, same thing, how do you decide how you're going to teach the children?

Pat

I've been teaching for quite a while it comes natural ?? I'm not sure that I can specifically answer but I do go home and think about, so we may be focusing on five particular children for that week. So we all think about those five particular children and think about how we're going to introduce things and what we're going to say and what are we going to have, picture talks at group time or number games or something or rather whatever we've decided. So in that way we would be actually planning before the week started to get out some support materials and when we decide what materials we would have in the centre all ready that would support that, puzzles or whether its collage material that would be interesting to promote this idea or whatever it is. We collect everything that we can before, at the beginning of the week to introduce that and I just generally, if it's a language or physical activity or something that I want and I can introduce it through music as well, so I sort of think about what I can do with music titles ??? for everybody to do it as well, we do it as a group situation and we will be doing that at different times through the day. So it might be something that I can think about at lunch time as well. But generally I plan at the beginning of week different ways and all the things that we can afford to pick up from the centre and we get them out and put them in the cupboard let everybody know these things are here and introduce them when it's your teaching day because we team teach and everybody has responsibilities for different days. If there is any of these resources that you want to use because we've planned for these things they're there in the cupboard ready.

Linda

OK, and I'm taking as read that you agree that every child is different and your approach is going to be different with every child. So then you've decided all
this, how do you decide what approach you're going to use with different children in your actual teaching? Strategies you're going to use?

Pat

Obviously from your observations and what you've observed about the child, the one child maybe very outgoing and one child might be very shy and withdrawn so you would introduce ?? a completely different way. So you're using observations and adapting your methods to that child's personality and emotional development and chronological development in taking all those things into consideration. Mostly observing, noting through the day how they respond so that you can respond to them in a way they'll want to.

Linda

Again, as in the first one, do you link that to any particular theoretical perspective?

Pat

Probably not, not that I can think of.

Linda

As you say, when you've been doing it for so long, it's hard to say exactly why you do, what you do. OK, moving onto families. How much do you think parents know, and now we're talking specifically about children with special needs, families of children with special needs. How much do you think parents know about what it will be like at school for their child with special needs?

Pat

I think parents know very little, almost nothing, in fact nothing I'd say. Unless they have other children at the school and they've seen something through being a parent helping up there. And seeing something happening but if they're not at the school all the time ?? I think nothing.

Linda

And speaking generally about the transition process, do you think that parents feel like partners in that process?

Pat

I would hope they do, I think some parents still may feel that they're not but it's something that's organised there and they have to fit in with whatever has been organised. But they don't have a lot of say it's just something that the Education Department ?? because they don't have a lot of knowledge or a lot of understanding that they don't now that they could have as a parent a lot of input into and they have the right to have that input. I don't think they really understand that.

Linda

So you said something organised by the Education Department, so do you see them as the people who organise that and have the say?

Pat

Yes I do, that's how I see it, yes.

Linda

OK, in generally talking about families involvement in education of children with special needs, can you just speak generally on what you think about that and how you feel about that, how important that is?

Pat

I think it's a really good idea because, being in a child care centre with young children and then progressing and going onto school. I have actually no knowledge myself of what happens when they get to school, if they need some special assistance in the classroom. I know that we assess them as needing some special assistance and we say to the parents "look you know, they really should continue their speech program or you should ask the school for some support in their learning or whatever". We say these things to the parents and they have to go off on their little path, they go off to the school and say "the preschool or the child care centre said this, and what should I do about it" and they in the past have followed that through, usually and sort out whatever
needs they feel their child needs. So the parent that was asking me last year and coming up and saying "well when Craig goes to school and he needs special help" cause she knew that herself "how do they give the special help, does he go to a special class, does he have half the normal classroom and then half the day in a regular classroom or half the day in a special classroom, what does a special teacher come and work with him for a lesson or something" and I said "I don't know". I said "let's get somebody from the school and get somebody to talk to about this because I don't know and you don't know, so let's find out. And that's why I think this is really good because I don't have that knowledge so therefore I could see that she was very insecure about the whole process and she wanted to know before next year, before she went into the school holidays and things, that she could actually talk and know what she was heading into the next year. And so that was some information that I could gain too and therefore would be able to have some knowledge, pass some information onto other parents and of course continue on with this processing of needs, I think that's a good idea.

Linda And did you find out?

Pat Yes. Once I found out what the Education Department would be applying, the school would apply to the Education Department for a support teacher to come in and help Craig. Generally I think within the classroom, actually be with him in the classroom and help to understand the lessons and it would mean a certain number of periods through the day, so it might have been half an hour a day or something like that. It seemed to me that generally he would be withdrawn from the classroom, he would be in the regular classroom and would have a support worker with him.

Linda And did you find out before he went off whether that application for support had been successful?

Pat I don't think I did, but the School Counsellor who came to the transition meeting before Christmas assured us almost certainly that it would be successful because there was also other children in the school that need support and they would therefore have enough reason for a support teacher to be allocated to the school. So she almost guaranteed us that this would happen.

Linda And you said early on that you didn't know much about what happened in the school. Why do you think that is, that you don't have that knowledge?

Pat I think it's because I don't really have much interaction with kindergarten teachers in the local schools. I think it would probably be a good idea to have some meetings together with kindergarten or infants teachers or some teachers from the local primary schools. We send children off to about five different local schools here, including catholic schools, we're sort of in an area surrounded by quite a lot of primary schools, catholic primary schools and we have some knowledge about, actually the only interaction we have is they send their enrolment, sometimes now, they send their enrolment dates to the centre and they say "we are now enrolling children" and on odd occasions the teachers will ring and say "we've had an interview with a child that's attending your centre and I'd like to talk to you more about that interview", but that's rare. Apart from that we send them off and that's it unless there is a problem ??? any interaction so I don't really know a lot what happens in the primary situation in the infants school.

Linda So who's responsibility do you think it should be to get that contact going?
Well, I think probably, actually I think the Education Department, there must be, you hear of Cluster Directors or somebody who’s responsible for an area of primary schools. Somebody should realise, and I imagine the Education Department responsibility for the education of the children, and the Catholic Education Department, and other schools that are in the area, should be interested in the education of children from not just when they arrive on their doorstep. And perhaps instigate some meetings and get them together and talk about what happens. What happens at your centre, what happens at school when your children start, what do they actually do in kindergarten? When the children come from our centre most of them can write their names and do all these things and other children come and can’t write their names, how do you organise all that with the children in the classroom? Things like that which we’re interested in and we don’t know what the teacher’s say. And they can also talk to us about what we do and how we introduce early ???, early reading and early writing, and we can say “this is what we do, and how do you follow on with that?”

So do you think involvement of families is stressful for teachers?

Quite often the staff at this centre communicates, mainly they find it stressful. I don’t find immensely stressful I think probably the day is a little bit more tiring when they’re here and you want to ensure that they’re feeling right about things that are happening here and things that they are hearing ??? But I think, because I feel it’s so important I always encourage it and go along and try and be as natural and include them in as many things as they can, so I find it’s really important and I think they have a better feeling about things that they come along and spend some time and talk to us a lot. They seem to be more comfortable about things. Probably is a little more stressful, though it keeps us on our toes.

Now turning to transition planning, sort of management of the transition process, do you think that individual children with special needs going off to school are well enough prepared to start school?

These are the children?

Yes

Are they well enough prepared to go to school? I think in most cases they are. Because I think early childhood teachers put a lot of effort into that area. And there will be, how different school life will be to child care/preschool life and so I think they talk about it and they attempt to think such as caring for and belonging ??? make sure they can take themselves to the toilet and if they can’t they usually communicate that to somebody, if they are concerned this and usually share that concern with the family.

And in thinking of all the services that a child with special needs might be involved in before they start school, how well do you think those services join together to help the child start school?

The ones that I’ve been involved with would just be early child support service at Blacktown kindergarten and I’ve found Mt Druitt Community Health Services, they’re the two main ones and they certainly work together and they communicate. So if I say that somebody is doing this and then somebody else is brought in, they do all communicate and work together. We’ve also had a child that was on those programs attending a paediatrician for lots of tests, that paediatrician communicated with us, they got in touch with us independently.
and also spoke to the speech therapist. Generally if there is a concern they work together.

Linda

Now if we were to say that the school was a part of that transition team, and I asked you the same question again, what would you say?

Pat

I always the school the hardest one to get in contact with and to actually communicate with. I find very little communication with the school, they very rarely ring here and say we’ve got an enrolment from a child and they’ve presented with this information and some of that information was from your centre, they rarely get in touch with me and say “what do you think should happen with this child?”. They seem to make the decisions themselves and the local schools have never asked us to come to the school and see what happens there or how the children are supported in the classroom. ??? that transition process that’s when we rang them and asked them and that’s when the school counsellor came to the centre and was involved in that. So I find that the school is fairly, probably the hardest one to approach and to get some information from them.

Linda

So general how much help do you think families have in getting their child enrolled in starting school?

Pat

How much help do they have? I don’t think they have a lot of help. There was the family that I was talking about, that we had the transition meeting for last year. It’s a little bit of a difficult one because the mother herself was also delayed and she had very little writing and reading and that was why it was even more important to have the transition because she had hear because she couldn’t read any of notices that came home and so she got very insecure. She was asking lots of questions, but then I’ve just spoken to another family, although this has happen, he’s in second class now, and the families that we’ve had going off with, that should need special or support in primary when they go in the last, they’re just going back in the last four years, I’ve found that they’ve always had it quite difficult to find out what support their child will get, they will go and say “I think my child” because they came to this child care centre and the teacher is there say “and I think too and we’ve discussed and we’ve come to a conclusion that some support education is needed” they usually don’t seem to be totally satisfied what happens. I was talking to a parent this afternoon, then I just got some feedback from this year and she said that she wasn’t satisfied at what had happened at the primary school. And she went to enrol at this local primary school and she interviewed, went to who the children were interviewed by and said "my child will need some support and he wants private speech therapy and is also a little delayed in his learning so we want some support" and the school promised, they said "whatever support your child needs we will arrange for him" and so they didn’t exactly say what we’ll get so she was still a little bit insecure and she didn’t know how it was going to be organised, but she believed the school, she said "right they’re going to do whatever Johnathon needs”, I said “well that’s good, I’m sure they will do something”. Two years later they hadn’t done anything. And so she was very unhappy and she just pushed very, very hard this year for something, for some support in the classroom and she got the private speech therapist to go with her and push as hard as they could together for the school to support Johnathon and it’s just come second term. And he now also has a support worker similar to what I was describing before, that he actually comes into the classroom and supports Johnathon within the classroom and they’re feeling much happier about that.
Linda  OK, so in talking in terms of that support concerns children with special needs, how big a part of the role is the early intervention teacher do you think that should be, supporting families?

Pat  I think it's a big part, I do. I think that the more knowledge that the family has and the more understanding and the more secure they feel about what happens, when it happens and how it happens and how you start it happening and all those things, they feel more confident and all that confidence goes onto their child going off to school. And so I think the more that you can talk about it and tell them and introduce the right phone number to ring or the right person to contact or let's do this or let's do that and have it all organised as much knowledge and as much organisation done before, as I said before, before the Christmas holidays because they're not going through Christmas holidays very insecure about what's going to happen on the 4th of February or whatever. That will make them feel a lot happier.

Linda  Now in terms of the kindergarten teacher when they get there, how much or how big a part of the kindergarten teacher's role do you think supporting the family should be?

Pat  I imagine that it would be very similar to my job as a teacher, I put it down as quite a large role in my position because I consider my role as an educator of the child that's here as well as supporting the family and so I see that as an all round responsibility. And I imagine that a kindergarten teacher's responsibility should be very similar. She would probably have a larger number of children to care for, because I've got, we've got three staff to our twenty children, whereas she's probably got herself to twenty or twenty plus children which make it obviously more difficult for her. But they're the same age, like they're leaving us at four and half, five and she's getting them at that age and that's when they need lots of support and I think the families need lots support as well, I think as much as she can give and pass on any information and spend some time with them I'm sure, that should be a big part of her day.

Linda  Do you think schools are generally prepare and able to met the learning needs of children with special needs?

Pat  Because I'm not sure of what happens in schools, I've never seen that, and I've never met a teacher who does this special support. I imagine from the person who came from the Education Department for this transition meeting, the information that she gave on that day seemed to me that they would be quite well prepared to met the child's needs, there was some physical needs like he was still unsure about his toilet training and she assured that they could handle that area as well as his learning areas. And so I felt quite confident that they were going to meet the areas that the child needed and although we haven't had any feedback from the school at all, which I think would probably have been nice if we had some feedback. The parent still comes to this centre because we've got the next child and she seems reasonably happy with what's happening there and she sometimes brings Craig up to visit us and he shows us his special homework book and that appears to me to be something that I would think that is meeting his needs. And so that was good that I'm still seeing this child, otherwise I would never see this child again. And so because I've still got the family here I'm getting some feedback about it. But actually if that wasn't happening if that family wasn't still attending the centre you always want to know how, what's happening, did things come together, is the child happy, you want to know those things and so it would be nice to have a second term meeting or something.
Linda: So I think this next ones was already discussed, what you think about the classroom support available to kindergarten teachers?

Pat: Yes, although I haven't ?? it sounds like it could be meeting the needs because the child seems happy and the family seems quite happy with his learning, obviously learning ??

Linda: Do you think enough information is given to the school about the needs of children with special needs?

Pat: I'm not sure because I don't know. From our point of view we pass on our developmental report of what we consider the child developmental level is and so we give that to the family and then suggest to the family that they take that to school if that's what they want to follow up if we don't do one of these transition meetings that's what happened before these were set in place but apart from that I don't know what the school's got.

Linda: ?? All the things we've been talking about is transition into the school, it seems obvious that somebody needs to co-ordinate that whole process. Who do you think that person should be?

Pat: Co-ordinate the whole process of?

Linda: The transition into school. That would be in a long term basis as the child moved into school.

Pat: I think, myself, I still go back to the Education Department, I think there should be somebody who is aware of all the services in the area and come in and introducing themselves and saying "we're from the Education Department or Catholic Education Department" or they should work together or the schools or somebody who represents the schools in the area and "and is there anybody that you're concerned about that will need some special support, do you want to talk about that, do you need more information about it and I'll be seeing that school next week I'll be passing on the information from you and then I'll be coming back in two months time or next term and I will tell you what I've found out from the school". And so somebody needs to be actually going ??

Linda: So that would be the kindergarten teacher?

Pat: No, I can't see how she can do it. It's the same as me, I can't leave this centre because I'm part of the teacher ratio. ??

Linda: So in your experience is transition planning carried out systematically over a six to twelve month period before the child starts school?

Pat: I think it can be, I haven't had a lot of experience with it because as I said I've just started doing it.

Linda: So in the past?

Pat: In the past no, I didn't think it was happening. But now that I've had these guidelines on transition I find that quite helpful and actually that introduced to me that I should be starting that early in the year rather than waiting until October and saying "there really is a need there". That's made me aware that to start earlier in the year, start making other people aware and perhaps, definitely talking family about that.
Linda: That's the Department's guidelines you're talking about?

Pat: Yes, that's what I've sort of gone on, looked at and read and thought "Ok, that's a good idea", so it is better to start early because obviously if something has to happen it can't happen if we let the school know on the 1st of December because they need to get things into motion a lot earlier than that. So that made me aware of those processes. And I think it can be quite, go in a quite organised manner as far as getting all the people who are supporting that child and work with that child and the school together. The school that we contacted for the transition meeting seem to be quite willing to come and the Education Department representative came and that all seemed have it.

Linda: When was that?

Pat: That was at the end of last year, I would say it was about November.

Linda: So it was still in fourth term?

Pat: Yes

Linda: You didn't have one earlier in the year?

Pat: No

Linda: So do you feel that you have sufficient knowledge and training to allow you to make the transition process an effective one?

Pat: I would like some more information. I think my training is adequate, I have an understanding of the needs and can then follow-up and get the support that I need, cause I know where my knowledge and my training stops and I need some more expert area of knowledge to take over and so I feel that I'm quite confident in that area, but I don't actually have knowledge as I was saying before of what happened in the school with the children that have speech difficulties or they're having speech therapy here through community health services and that's going to stop, I imagine when they leave here, and then what happens, if I think that they still need help with their speech, how is that helped, I have no idea in the classroom situation, if the Education Department does organise the support worker for that child's speech I don't know how they introduce that at all. I would like some more information on that.

Linda: How strongly do you feel the parents know best, what's in the best interest of their child?

Pat: I really feel quite strongly that a parent has a good feeling of what their child needs. Sometimes I try to encourage them to express what they feel and get a feel for how the feel about what's happening and what stage the child is at. And sometimes you do get the families that want to deny that there's any problem and they're going through a denial process. But you still get that feeling that perhaps if you keep talking about it and saying the things that are happening that something will click. So you still, rather than jump in boots and all and say "this is what your child is doing and all the other children are doing something else, but your child's not doing it". Rather than using that approach I think it's good to bring the family around and saying "this is what's happening and what do you think about that" and generally I'd say, in the back of their mind, they usually have some concern and when you bring it to the full then everybody is prepared to work on that.
Presuming there are areas for improvement in that process of transition to schools, so I've sat there with a magic wand and said "you can have whatever money you'd like" how are you going to improve that process? What's the one thing that you would do to improve the process?

I think the one thing that I would do is have that Liaison Officer that goes around and as well as talking and meeting everybody and saying what everybody does, that you would also organise some meetings between schools and early childhood services and speech therapists and other support workers and everybody to get together and say "this is how we do it and what do you do" and you know just general sharing and swapping of information.

They actually started doing that in the Hawkesbury region ??? centres in the area and schools and having ??? for a couple of years.

Have they?

Yes

And do you know who actually started that, was it an early childhood worker?

I think it was the preschool who initiated it.

I imagine that it would probably be, cause we sort of show concern in that area. The only feedback that I ever got from school, you know how you have the parents that are concerned about whether their child should start school or not, May birthday or the end April the beginning of June. ??? is my child ready to start school? We have all these discussions going on all year and we look at what levels they're at and what they're doing and all this. And how the parent feels and I advice them to talk to as many people and as many other parents as they can and this goes on and on. And we've had on several occasions we've had to go to the school and our last plots was probably a better idea, that came back. So another year at this child care centre and then go off to school. In a couple of occasion that was our advice to the parent and they took that to the school when they enrolled and saying "well I'm doing the enrolment and I'm still not sure whether I should send my child and I've been talking to the child care centre and they feel it's advisable for my child for another year". And several occasions the teacher at the primary school actually said "well they wouldn't really know". I'm not sure that they actually used the words "they're not current teachers" or. They wouldn't have that knowledge that we know and we want you to send your child, I think it's a good idea, enrol your child, ??? we meet all the children's needs not matter how old they are, you know that sort of approach. So that was the feedback that came from several families and I really felt strongly ??? that I should organise ??? but I didn't have time to do it ???

It's funny because all the teachers that I talk to in kindergarten say "we really want to know what happens in the early childhood services and we want more contact" and they seem really receptive to that and so often I hear those sorts of stories from the other side that the school isn't receptive and doesn't want to know. So I'm not quite sure, I guess it's individual differences.

I got the feeling at the time that the school was pushing for enrolments they needed a certain number of children at the school and so they were sort of saying "well don't worry too much about what those teachers are saying and we will be meeting the needs of your child at the school anyway, so come along".
Linda: That didn't happen?

Pat: And that was the feeling that I got, without ever actually talking to anybody any further and yet I think probably all kindergarten teachers and first class teachers would be very happy to meet us and we would be very happy to meet them. But being busy teachers who organises it. It would be quite a big organisation to actually ring around and say "are you prepared to do this, we're prepared if you're prepared, where will we meet and what day will we meet". I know how many hours that takes to do that having organised those sorts of things on different areas and I sort of think "I haven't got time to start this, as well as all the other things I've got to do in the day", and I imagine they think the same thing and so it just sort of goes on being put on the back burner. "Well there's not much I can do here, I'll do that first". But I really think it would be a really advantageous for all children.

Linda: For all children not just children with special needs.

Pat: Yes, that's right, everybody. I think it's quite a big area.
INTERVIEW WITH SALLY

a Kindergarten teacher

Linda Have you ever been involved in any formal process transition into school?
Sally No.
Linda Your decision making processes in the classroom. Teachers have to make lots of decisions, every day, every minute of every day in the classroom. Can you tell me what you think mostly influences your decisions about what you will teach? The content of your teaching.
Sally Well I guess it's where the students skills begin or when ?? if you're talking about coming into kindergarten, definitely at the beginning of kindergarten I'd be looking at what skills the children come with and where they need to go from there. And there is the mix with the syllabus. But, with kindergarten you do tend to go from your knowledge in early childhood. Knowledge of developmental stages and the children's social skills to program and to decide what you're going to teach and learn. So it really is a needs basis because so many come at different stages ?? type skills and ?? development.
Linda Now you referred there to child development, the child development knowledge. Child development is a theoretical approach it's based on a particular theories. Can you name or do you think that you ascribe to any particular theories that you work with?
Sally I guess, I've taught in special education, so I guess then I've had a background in looking at children with developmental delay therefore I've looked at it from a developmental model with younger children. But I wouldn't, I would meld the other side of weld, I don't stick to a developmental model. But if I saw that a child needed something that didn't come next in the step then I would step in. I would do a program for that child's needs. But I don't really know how to sort of name it that I would look at developmental stages, look at the big need for socialisation at that stage.
Linda So there is not one particular theorist that you base that developmental knowledge on or one particular theory of development?
Sally No, not really. Only that I probably couldn't give you a name as someone who is specifically that but it's sort of a melding of a lot of different theories that have come from training and as with inserviceing and learning from other people around you. I guess coming a lot from the importance of play activity, and the importance of the hands on activities at this stage.
Linda Now just leading on from that a little bit further, we are talking about actually what your going teach. Now thinking about how you will teach it, that might be different for different children, so again how do you decide how, what strategies you're going to use with particular children?
Sally Well, again I would look at the group to how the group, the children mix with each other, their general maturity and their skill level as well, whether they're ready for more formal work or whether they need more, what we call preschool type activities. How?
Linda Yes, what strategies you would select?
Sally

Because we probably, or in the beginning of kindergarten because we use a lot of developmental play activities to begin introducing more formal concepts, we do start to teach a sight word, and we do start to teach a sound in the very beginning but we would do it, in hopefully a more of a play way and in a craft, look of activities more so than the formal way. But we also try to provide both kids that come to school and have been through all that and who have been to, really want to get down to writing. We try and provide for those children as well. Usually as you get to term two or say half way through term two we've usually grouped the children according to where they're at as far as formal work or as far as needing more of that developmental sort of work. I mean you usually find that the kids who are going ahead with that academic type of, really just forge on, and we find that we're going back and going over lots of things that we did in the first part of the year for the second group. We choose activity based lesson plans type things.

Linda

So if you're looking at a particular child, you had three different children and you decided to focus on in that day and you had to think about what approaches you were going to use with each of those, you had some concerns or whatever in a particular area. What would go through your mind in terms of selecting the approach that you would use with them? The actual teaching strategies, how they would differ for different children?

Sally

I think as we do the activities just noting the times that they seem to be on class and they seem to be attending. For example, last year, I had two Year ones in my class who actually who have been identified as IM kids. I noticed that one of those, he managed to learn all his sounds last year and not a lot of other formal sorts of things, we're sure it's because he was learning the songs and he could attach them to the songs. I look at them and try to figure out the situation that they seem to be learning better in. And then try and re??? that situation more often or for that particular group of children, there's usually some others that require something a little bit different as well. A lot of collaboration with two kindergarten and our children are joined together for English groups so we talk to them, we say "How do you think so and so is going?" "What sorts of activities do you think we need now, especially with the sounds becoming more formal?" That starts off as a lot of fine motor skills now becoming more formal and more formal to write. I decide more on a group basis. I usually visualise the class in thirds and then decide, "Right this is the way, this is the sort of activities that's going to suit those children with a sort of activity". I don't have anything individual at the moment for kindergarten, the year ones have more of that sort of thing. They're a remedial sort of group. They're basically learning what they should have learnt in kindergarten.

Linda

And again, in taking those approaches can you pin that down to a particular theory or name of theory that you follow in doing that?

Sally

Not at the moment. When you have to really pin it down, no.

Linda

Can I just take you back to that where you said that with the individual work, that you do that with the kids that you see as having remedial needs. Do you see individual work as being something that you do with children that have problems?

Sally

I probably do more so than perhaps with that middle group or perhaps with that more gifted group. I would be more likely to give extra time to those children with problems. Within our planning though we are always trying to be aware of those children who are forge ahead and who might appear to feel as though they can do everything. So we need to extend those. We have found that we usually cater for that in dismissing the group around and skill based in the
group. We don’t like to call it streaming but I guess that’s probably what we are doing for that English group, anyway. And that seems to work, those children are able to go at a quicker pace and we introduce a lot more reading, whereas if it was the lower group we might be just contemplating on one sort of sight word. The others are ready to fly and learn lots more. So I guess we cater for those kids on the group basis.

Linda: Do you think that that approach has got anything to do with your special education background, or do you think that’s a general approach that most teachers would use?

Sally: I think that, I feel that it does, but also we have five/six special education classes here and they’ve really influenced the way we look at kids as well because they are so individually based. And different procedures even though we’re going to the outcomes that we had done much the same in assessment procedures because we had so much contact with the special classes and had integrated with them and they were in our programs. So lots of their assessment type procedures that were a lot more individualised, we’ve been using and probably really good.

Linda: Except for now we might not be having outcomes.

Sally: Yeah, isn’t that funny, someone said that they were going to be, or the wording was going to be changed, or something. Just let us do what we do.

Linda: Just something I thought of while you were speaking before that’s got nothing to do with this whatever. How many kids do you get in, do you think that haven’t been to any preschool or long day care?

Sally: It varies from year to year. But only a small number. Within a class there would only be about three, maybe.

Linda: So you expect most of the children to have some sort of background in formal?

Sally: This year anyway, the ones that haven’t were actually older and quite intelligent, emotionally they found it a bit hard but academically they aren’t having any problems. I’d be worried about the younger ones that haven’t had that and are coming into school really early and haven’t had preview. It’s experience.

Linda: Just interesting different areas, to see, to sort of compare and to see what’s happening these days.

Sally: It is, cause there’s a few whose parents I would have thought would have sent them but they’ve preferred to have them at home with them.

Linda: There are still a few people who feel guilty about doing that, feel as if they’re getting rid off the children.

Sally: But they’re not, when I think of the kids that that has happened to, they’ve been kids who have been fine, they’ve obviously got the stimulation at home. But then it does come out a little in socialisation, I think, just in their ability to cope with all the chopping and changing that happens at school and the number of people, things like that.

Linda: Especially in a big school.

Sally: Yes, things change.
Linda: My kids go to a school with one class per grade, so it's a lot easy, something like that.

Sally: We're one and a half each grade but the special classes are one and a half too.

Linda: Now I think we've already covered this next one, do you follow a particular theoretical perspective? So I think we've covered that. So let's move on to families. You work with families and what you think about that. Can you tell me in general, we have to take it in a general sense, obviously it's going to be different for everybody, but in a general sense, how much do you think parents know what it will be like at school for a child who has special needs?

Sally: What it would be like? I think that would really depend on how much the preschool has given, if they've gone to preschool. I think there is a perception there of parents that, if the child has a problem the will school fix it. And depending on how understanding the parent is and how perceptive they are, that changes, but there are parents who expect a big problem to be remediated by the school, and don't understand it. ???

Linda: And as far as things like just the management side of it, the enrolment procedures, and the fact that if the child has a disability there are different procedures to go through, they can't just walk in the door like every other child. How much do you think they know about those sorts of things?

Sally: About the fact that they could enrol like that?

Linda: Yes, and that they will actually have to come and not just automatically put the child's name down and come into kindergarten like the next door neighbour.

Sally: Right. I don't know, are we talking with someone with a real identifiable need?

Linda: Yes.

Sally: That's hard to say. We haven't had a lot of approaches that I know of in that way. The special needs children, we don't seem to, the special needs kids that we end up with are the integrated kids from all the units. I'm just trying to think. You'd include learning problems.

Linda: If they've been involved in some sort of program beforehand. How do you think their knowledge of what the school would be like and all the procedures is?

Sally: If they have had contact with organisations, say that given information about their child's special disabilities then they're a lot more informed. And would come in and I think ask about those things. We do have children with fairly bad speech problems or one last year we had a student who really did seem to have something wrong with her, but you didn't like to say, she looked fine, she was almost down but mum just prevented her. We did get more of that probably than parents who are informed about what can be done for their child. Parents, I find they very rarely know how to go about looking for special help for children who have been identified as having a problem.

Linda: And with that particular girl that you referred to, what did you do about that? You feel that the parent wasn't aware that there was a problem, you felt there was?
We felt that she might of been avoiding facing it perhaps. And we referred her to the counsellor. But she wouldn't talk. We could assess her very well. We waited until she was talking and then she left, so we had it really difficult. But mum didn't mention anything in the enrolment form.

So you didn't talk to her ..... 

... we had an interview, and she said no, there didn't seem to be anything different. And a little later it did come out that she didn't talk until she was four years old. So that was reasonably different. But anything that she said were a problem, she didn't think were the cause of her ???

And earlier on you also said that what the parent knows about the school would depend on what they were told at preschool or where they'd been. How much do you think the preschools, let's say the preschools in this area, know about what would happen in your classroom and what it's like at school?

I would say probably not a lot, they would just give a general expectation. We don't have any formal link there. I think they would general expectation of what's required.

Why do you think you don't have any formal links with the preschools?

... and because we do get quite a scattered population. So there would be, I guess there would be three or four main centres that they would come from, from Kingswood and over Lemongrove way and then closer in. So there would be quite a few teachers ???. I suppose in my thinking I'd be thinking "oh well which one do you owe, I think I can afford the time to go around to all of them".

So do you think it's a desirable thing?

I think it probably is. I tried to convince the Principal last year to ???. and go and look for enrolments. We didn't loose a teacher. We have thought about it. But yes I think it is a desirable thing. I'm probably basing a lot of my knowledge on the fact that my child is at a day care centre and that I have known the Director for a long time and that I did my training in early childhood, so I'm probably thinking of the sorts of things that I know that a big centre they take the older kids and do a few more schoolie sort of things to supposedly prepare them for when they go off to school. But there would be a limit I think in a preschool as to what you can do to prepare them. I mean basically make them a little bit more independent in the things that they have to do in looking after their own belongings etc. But that's a goal anyway. We don't want them to do school things but just talking about it and preparing them for the fact that they will have to comply in a group, so that because there is so many children you have to put your hand up, and you think most centres do that anyway. But the importance of those sorts of things and the fact that the teacher will have a big group won't be able to just stop to talk to you. And it's not that the teacher doesn't like you or doesn't listen to you. I found that very interesting last year I did a little survey of my kids ???. just little questions, smiley faces, ?? my school, this is my teacher listen to me and lots of kids said that ?? and I always thought that I was really good ???. and that I would stop and listen to children so obviously they haven't felt that I've listen to them. I've put that down to perhaps they're telling me something and I'm walking around the room trying to do something or whatever or just their expectations of what listening to them is. Is listening on a one to one basis and not realising that.
Interesting

Are the kids around? Yes so I found that quite a surprise.

Interesting isn't it, I wonder what else they'd tell you ???

Exactly, sometimes they're a bit frightened to do it ??? will I or won't I. It was better at the end of the year.

In looking at that process of transition into school for kids who do have identified special needs, do you think in general, again, that parents feel like partners in that process of transition into school?

I don't think they do, I think they probably feel at the mercy of the school that they are going to. Schools are resourced differently, they could go to one school and it might fit their child and they might go to another school and it won't be suitable, the environment mightened suitable, the sorts of teachers that you've got, the skills that the teachers have got might not suit that child. It's a real lottery, really for those kids. I think that's where the problems come in, where parents would like their special needs child to go to a local school, that's good for them to be in that local area, it's good for them to be mixed in with the kids that are in that local area, but is it the best environment if the resources they need are not there. But I think, I don't think they feel as though they have much power in that way. I mean it's very hard to have guidelines because every child's case is different. The principal is different, every school is different in what they can offer.

So again, just in general terms about the involvement of families in the education of children with special needs. Can you just talk in general terms about what you feel or think about that.

I feel it's crucial for parents to be involved. The children who have problems, the children who progress are the ones that are having it all re-inforced at home and the ones that know that their parents are interested in school, or interested in what they're doing at school. I found that the year ones that I've got are the ones that do their homework and whose parents are interested are progressing at better rate than others. It's crucial that you have their support. It can work the other way sometimes if the parent say doesn't have a complete grasp on the child's disability and their expectations are unreal. Or a lot of our special education are helped here. But we have had cases where they come in and it's just been detrimental to have them in the classroom with that child, they'd been better off to go to another room.

And why do you think that is?

It's usually because the child misbehaves while the parent ??? Parent is stuck in knowing how to, it's terribly difficult to discipline your child in front of another person who has authority over your child as well.

So that leads on to the next one nicely, do you think that the involvement of families is stressful for teachers?

I think it is, I do think it is. I often put off when I know I shouldn't asking parents to come in and help in the classroom. I feel absolutely pardoned about it at the beginning of the year. But you're still sort of getting into the routine and getting the kids into the routine, you need to know that you are totally in control of your class before you ask for parent helpers to come. It's a lot of
work to organise anyone, even parents that have a bit of training in different areas, it is a lot of work to organise parents to help. But if you strike the right parent and you're able to give them useful activities then it's wonderful to have that extra help. We had last year and this year, we had integration help for the language class over here and they've actually been parents of the children here and they've been very good. They've worked out really well. It really does depend on the parent and how well you are organised and how well you match the activities to the parent. Sometimes you feel that it would probably be better if you just did it yourself.

Linda

Easier?

Sally

Easier, definitely. But where do you get the right mix, you certainly feel satisfied that the kids are getting something more than extra help. But it is difficult, we have one dad who special unit coming over and he comes over with some of the hearing kids and sometimes it's like having another kid in the classroom. And there's all sorts of things like, you've asked the children to be quiet but the parents are still talking, all these little tiny things that just make it so difficult and just adds one more little ????

Linda

Where you said you feel like you need to be in control before you let the parents come in, why, just wondering, I'm not quite sure how to phrase it, why you feel like that or what you feel would happen if you weren't?

Sally

If I wasn't, like if I asked a child to do something, I'm thinking in the terms of I asked a child to do something and the child didn't do it, then I would feel very uncomfortable about that in front of a parent and I'd probably feel uncomfortable, if it was just an ordinary reprimand that I had to give the child, that would be fine but there are so many kids at this school that it has to go further than that, and I don't feel comfortable about taking those consequences further with a parent in the classroom. And it's making, and they can also see "Oh there's a child like that in my child's classroom" and the teacher has to spend the time on that child. I feel uncomfortable about that sort of thing.

Linda

Can you analyse why?

Sally

I guess I'm a bit worried that I won't win in a situation, that there might be a situation that comes up.

Linda

And what would that lead to? In your mind or in the parent's mind?

Sally

I would feel that that parent has seen that "Oh that Mrs Bate she can't control the children".

Linda

The parent might be judgemental.

Sally

Yes, that would be my worry. It would depend on the parent. There are lots of parents who know the class, who know me and know the school and are taught how fiddly it would be and can see it all in context, but I'd be worried about parents being out of context. And actually knowing that this is the way we have to treat this child and this is way. And the other thing is those days where you're on the hop and I feel really uncomfortable about being on the hop if had to go "oh, right this is what I've got to do, something has changed, I've got to do this" or "I went out last night and I haven't got everything I need" that sort of thing worries too about having parents.
Onto transition planning and talking about the children coming in with special needs, again on the whole, do you think they're prepared well enough to start school? The children themselves?

Probably not, but so much of what you might pick up as not being prepared is possibly just not ready. The not ready creates the biggest wave in those first few weeks. The kids who just do not see the point in lining up ??? I've got one too. There is no point there and you have a hard time, sort of convincing them that yes it must look silly from where you've come from, but we have to do it because we've got all these children and we have to keep order here. And other people will look and see that we're just a mob if we're not in line. I would call it more a problem with readiness than preparedness but parents certainly can help a lot with that preparedness by talking to the children, talking about all the little nitty gritty things and then listening to them when they come home again any problems or worries.

And again going back to that issue of those links with the preschools, do you think that the preschools know the sorts of things that you would like to have the children be able to do and be prepared?

Yes, I think if they've had contact with the school then yes they probably do, but if they haven't then they could be quite out of touch with what is happening in the classroom and obvious it's different in each school, too. We might be less formal than some other kindergartens are, some might be more formal kindergartens.

So overall in your experience how well do you think all the different services that might be working with a child with special needs before they start school, come together to help that child and family start school? Considering the child may have been seeing speech pathologist, and occupational therapist, and an early intervention service, and a preschool.

Not really an integrated thing, we rely on the parent basically to give us information. Other services never approach us we have to approach them if we have a worry. We very rarely have other services approach us, with the exception I guess of speech pathology. And they may have come from children ?? from the help centre or not. So that would be basically. Doctors are very reluctant to do any contacting. Lots of services seem to drop off when the child goes to school and the parents are often have been lead to believe that once they go to school they'll be getting that sort of thing, so we don't need to carry it through.

A lot of that is legal too. You're not allowed to continue.

Oh, right. So even things like physiotherapy and things like that?

It depends who they're with. ??? only go to that school ???

I don't think we've ever had a preschool, when even in extreme cases when kids who break windows and ??? contact the preschool to say "hello, this child is coming to you".

It's really odd because in doing these interviews and doing lots of things I've done before, when you talk to the preschools they'll say ??? they don't want to know about us, we try and we try and they don't want to know. And then when you talk to the schools they say "we want to know but they won't contact us". That's why I'm doing this, there's that big wall there.
Sally: I think the schools fear that preschools might start doing things that are school based, maybe we're a bit jealous of that dividing line. And it also comes down to time and I've always felt if I go and approach a preschool then it's only that one that I would have to go around and see where all the children were coming from.

Linda: Actually in the Hawkesbury area they set up a network of these infants schools and all the preschools and all the day care centres and they get together regularly and meet as a group.

Sally: And I have known of some who actually take the children for a visit to there as well.

Linda: Yes, we used to do that.

Sally: ????

Linda: How much help to feel that families have in getting their child enrolled and started at school? Families with children with special needs.

Sally: I'm not really aware there, most children here that turn up because it's the local school. We get a few who come because it's a smaller school say in South Penrith which is the next closest. They would come more on what other parents have said about the school, what they hear in the community about the school.

Linda: Those families with children with special needs, how much responsibility do you think early intervention teachers should take supporting those families?

Sally: When they come into school?

Linda: Well, before they start and as they're coming in I guess, yes.

Sally: How much responsibility ...

Linda: ... for support? How much part of their role should support be as opposed to education, I suppose, to teaching?

Sally: Well, they definitely need a lot of support.

Linda: Should that be the role of the teacher, the early intervention teacher?

Sally: I would see their early intervention teacher as the sort of resource person, the person who would direct a parent to authorities that could help in a transferring from a preschool situation then as a support sort of liaison between that preschool situation and a school situation would be good.

Linda: So bearing that in mind, then how much responsibility do you think you should have of supporting families with children with special needs as a kindergarten teacher?

Sally: Again I would say as a person who can refer them to people.

Linda: So you don't see your role as ????

Sally: Don't really see our role as a, in the mainstream I don't, I think if you're in a special class then, you are, you just have to play that role a lot more so, you look too a lot more. I think it's unrealistic to ask a mainstream teacher to ??? a
large way, I'm sure that a mainstream teacher does it in a small informal way. But with a full class load I think it becomes a little unworlly. And that classroom teacher should be communicating all the time with parent but and then referring them if they have a particular need. But I see the kindergarten teacher's role as in the classroom and providing educational programs. We often run into problems as a teacher and as someone who is fairly busy is often difficult to know to what extent to become involved with the parent. And then we find that there might be one teacher who will be happy to do something and then the parent sort of goes along the next year and expects the same sort of thing to be happening here "Oh, but Mrs So and So did that". (end of Side A)

Linda So do you think schools are generally prepared and able to meet the learning needs of children with special needs?

Sally Again that depends on a lot of factors and I would say the biggest factor would be your class size. The second factor would be the teaching experience and ability not, well it's good if a teacher is willing to take a child with special needs but unless they've got the experience you can't just take a child in to be kind.

Linda And in terms of sort actually knowing what to do with the children do you feel prepared in that way?

Sally No always. When a child presents with a problem there's always a period of "oh my gosh what will I do with the child, what sort of activities or programs should I put this child on" but well even before that you cannot, is it possible for me to spend more time with this child or is it possible for me to find someone who can spend more time with this child. I guess in a way we're lucky here in that because we have the special classes if we join together for groups it takes our group sizes down and we've been, that really has made it much easy to copy with those kids that have problems. That small group size it's just a major factor. And the fact that we've got so much special education expertise around, we get to look at the sorts of programs that they have their children on and we can pick it and talk about it and get lots of ideas.

Linda So what do you feel about the level of support that's available to kindergarten teachers in the classroom?

Sally Well there isn't, and I remember, I think it was last year, reading about the program where children were to be introduced into the kindergarten, special needs children introduced into kindergarten. I think it was to do with some training, but I can't remember now. And I feel very suspicious about all that sort of thing, because it saying "we'll give you the skills" well OK you can give us the skills but if you don't give us the extra personnel and you don't give us the smaller class sizes we can't do it, we might have all the skills in the world but we might not be doing the best to that child in a class of whatever, thirty, with no extra help. So I do worry about that ...

Linda ... ?? it's not the answer, not the only answer?

Sally No, not the only answer. It's good our school going to the Elk ?? Program, we were going to do it last year, but we're hopefully doing it this year and it's great and because one of our staff members has already gone, we've already starting using bits and pieces from that and we like being able to do that. But again we can only do it because our kindy groups become smaller, the language teachers join in, or the hearing teacher joining in. Or the fact that my year ones go to another English group so that takes nine children out of my class so we just divide up then the kindergarten kids. Just in numbers is the thing and you can see it, I can see it with my year one kids, if I have the chance to grab them
one to one they think all their Christmas' have come at once. And you think "gosh I wish I had more time to do this". The inserviceing is good because it makes you aware of things that you can do but you have to be careful about making teachers feel really inadequate because they're not able to address all the children's needs. We have years at this school we seem to be heavy with kids with learning problems and adjust so that group that goes through that every year we sort of try to manipulate teacher numbers and class sizes so that they get a fair go. So really the overall organisation of the school needs to be able to cater for these kids as well as the teacher in the class. Are ADD kids classed as special needs?

Linda: Yes. So do you think that school receives enough information about the children with special needs?

Sally: No. I'm aware now that we can chase up preschool records and that there are, they're not councils, I don't know what they're called, who go around to the preschools or day care centres if there is a child that has real problems.

Linda: ???

Sally: Right. And that there are files in more central places too. I know kids that have been considered or assessed or something.

Linda: That stuff should be coming through to you?

Sally: And that never does. Is it? ???

Linda: ??? big black hole.

Sally: ??? I have this extreme child last year, and a casual came along and she'd been working at the preschool and told us about the things that he did there, and I'd asked the parents, the dad, what he'd been like at preschool and he said "Oh, they didn't say anything". Well it turns out that he'd broken things, he attacked and did all sorts of things. And she said "Oh look, he was assessed or I'm pretty sure he was assessed that there would be information there and when you look at the records the preschool say "they're wonderful" ???

Linda: Well I've actually done that job ???

Sally: ??? the observations and things, I mean there's so much there ???

Linda: ??? particularly if they had an advisory teacher. I've done that job in this area and I know the person very well who does the job now and she's constantly frustrated that the records aren't reaching the classroom teachers.

Sally: Do we have to request them?

Linda: You shouldn't have to, let's move on before I say too much. Can we just go on and come back to that and talk about that later cause I want to see what you say first before I say what I want to say cause it leads on to the next questions. Who do you think should take the responsibility for co-ordinating that transition to schools? And that would be part of that, the transferral of records.

Sally: It's difficult I guess because from a preschool or a day care centre children are going every which way. But the parents could give information as to what school they were going to and if possible, I don't know where the finances or confidentiality or what, might be a problem there. But if they could pass them on it would be very good. They could give them to the parent but then I'm not
sure if that's information that goes to the parent. We've had, two years ago I remember getting letters from preschool, I just thought that, we had letters from preschools just to, but I think the parent was the one who requested that and wanted the school to know that the child might have problems.

**Linda**

With the child, say who had identified special needs and had lots of different records, and was seeing lots of different professional, someone would need to bring that all together. Who do you think could take on, or should take on that role?

**Sally**

I think it's a bit ??? for the teacher to do that, I think it's even a bit ??? for the school to do it unless they've got someone who wasn't on full time class. And it's such a busy time at that beginning with kindergarten that a kindergarten teacher just wouldn't, unless you looked at those couple of days that we have beforehand, but to contact all those people would be pretty difficult you have to the parents permission to contact doctors and things like that. So really it's probably up to the parent to co-ordinator perhaps, you sort of do need almost a middle person, don't you? Someone who does oversee.

**Linda**

The theory says that that should be happening for twelve months before the child starts school, that process

**Sally**

Really? I think that the school would be getting information, I think it would be a bit meaningless when you don't know the child. But of course when you would know the disabilities that were coming though which would be helpful.

**Linda**

The idea of that transition process is that the school actually gets to know the child ??? but when they arrive everybody knows them, and how to start, where to go from there. So you're ready to program, you're ready, you know, you're expecting the child, you've been through a series of meetings in the twelve months prior so you know the child has had transition goals and you know what their progress has been towards those goals that the school actually identifies goals for the child, so in that series of meetings the school might say things like "they really have to be able to sit down and put their hand" and so that is worked on.

**Sally**

That sounds like a good module and that sounds like the kindergarten teachers job to be able to do that, the only problem is that the next year it might not suit the teacher. But then that is a fairly, that's another thing to ask of a teacher.

**Linda**

So if I could wave my magic wand and say 'I've got the money to pay someone to do it'. Who should that person be? Should they be an education department person, someone from the preschools, someone from somewhere else. Who would be the best person to take on that role?

**Sally**

I think somebody who had experience in both areas, somebody who had preschool experience and who had been able to, you really would need to have worked in a school, I feel to know. Because you could come in and see things that are happening and not be sure of the underlying reasons why that's happening and not be aware of the constraints on a teacher with umpteen kids, or small rooms or things like that.

**Linda**

So I think again you've answered the next one, in your experience is transition planning carried out systemically over six to twelve months before the child starts school.

**Sally**

No
Linda: Do you know much about the department's transition guidelines then? That are in operation this year?

Sally: No.

Linda: Have you heard of them? Do you know they exist?

Sally: I have heard, have waited to hear, to see what was going to come whether it was going to be a push for all teachers to be inserviced or whatever in this area and then for them to say "well OK you've done the inservice you know how to cater for child with special disabilities, and here we go, here is one for you".

Linda: But you haven't heard anything?

Sally: No.

Linda: Do you think anybody else in your school might have heard something that you haven't heard about or something along that line?

Sally: That's quite possible, our language teacher goes to a lot of inservices and the AP infants may have. She may have even mentioned things and ????

Linda: No, but you haven't been to a course? You'd remember if you'd been to a course.

Sally: No, early intervention courses.

Linda: Interesting.

Sally: No, most of the early childhood courses that I can recall have been to do with the profile.

Linda: I'm going to a meeting in a couple of weeks to tell me how well it's all working. OK, so do you feel that you have sufficient knowledge and training to allow you to make the transition into school an effective one?

Sally: It depends on the disability, I guess, if you presented me with a child with a physical disability then I'd be learning I wouldn't, with children I've that I've had experience with before like developmental delay and behaviour problems I feel reasonably confident in coping with those children but that's not to say that life is easy. And this is my fourth year on kindergarten so I feel comfortable with what parents expect, in knowing what parents would be expecting on the first day and how the children will be on that first day, and the sorts of things that we have to do to get them settled in and know that's going to be difficult for that first term and it gets better as it goes etc.

Linda: So how many years have you been teaching?

Sally: Fourteen.

Linda: So now strongly do you feel that parents know best, what's in the best interests of their child?

Sally: Fairly strongly in that they spend a lot more time with them and they know the child's motivators, they know their emotional triggers, they know what boosts their self esteem and what doesn't. They are a lot more in touch with their needs than someone who has twenty-five kids. I rely on parents and putting notes for them to let us know if children are worried about something because
we could go through the whole year without knowing that a child is worrying about something.

Linda: They won't talk to the teacher?
Sally: Yes, funny isn't it.
Linda: She came home the other night with something that she said that a new teacher, their teacher has gone on long service and he's just come in and he gave them something that they haven't done before and she was having hysterics, and I said "well just go and tell him that you haven't done it, you don't know how to do it" and she said "I couldn't tell him, I'm so embarrassed to say I couldn't do it".
Sally: I'm not sure whether it's that fear here, whether they don't want to approach the teacher, it's really funny. ?? They might be worrying about such a little tiny thing and you don't realise that this tiny little thing is having an affect on them. They hate going to school and it's only because of a spelling test.
Linda: Last one just to round up, overall would you be able to make one suggestion that you think would make the transition into school work more effectively?
Sally: ?? endorses personnel. Someone who has the time to liaise between the preschool and the schools or someone who can provide the relief for that teacher to do that. That would be something. If someone said to us "look we've got this many days relief for this" then I think teachers would be happy, they'd say "Oh, right OK, I'll pop down to here this morning and over there in the afternoon or spend some time on the phone". But we don't get many places that are just ringing up and say "Hey, this child is going to come to you, bla, bla, bla". And it seems to depend on the parent, whether the parent has, probably at the preschool, expressed some sort of concern about how they are going to go at school and whatever, and sort of pushed people to intervene a little more because the parent was worried.
Linda: Thank you very much. I'll have to get Cynthia to ring then and make contact, because she's the person, the advisory teacher, who does that job in this area and I know she has a lot of contact with a few schools because that's a matter of gradually building up contacts.
Sally: What's her last name?
Linda: Cynthia O'Neill. She's based at Lapstone Preschool. She has the Penrith/St Marys area.

Discussion
Sally: I've never been really sure how much a centre could pass on.
Linda: They have to have parent's permission and usually the best way is to give to the parent and give the parent the option of handing it on. Put you can get forms signed as long as the parents are happy. Anything originated by yourself, like any of your own records, say a doctor sends you something then you can't send that on, but anything that you've originated yourself as long as you've got the parents permission, it's OK.
Sally: I guess maybe a lot of the kids that we've had that end up with realising that they've got some sort of delay, you really have realised in school time too, that you know it's been a sort of "oh well maybe, let's see how they go at school".
Linda
A lot of these kids have been on programs for one, two, three years or more.

Sally
Sometimes you're surprised to find something, a parent would say "Oh well we've got this, or the preschool said this" or whatever they often assume I think that maybe there's that connection between ...

Linda
But I did a transition program once for a child where, it was a school my kids went to, so I knew all the teachers in the school, they knew the child was coming, I knew the counsellor personally. So it was very intensive, and I'd worked with this kid for years and the counsellor asked me to do a program for the first six weeks to get the teacher up and running, and also review it at the end of six weeks, and at the end of that six weeks I went to her and said to her "oh well how's it going" she said "what are you talking about?" I said "the program, you know, how's it going?" she said "what program?" She'd never seen it. It had stopped at the counsellor and that was the situation that should have worked perfectly because everybody knew everybody and there were no problems, everybody was very willing and happy to do the whole thing and even that fell apart.

Sally
So image what, yeah ... And the experience of, you know I've got kids with speech problems ?? you've been given ideas and I get to the end of the term and I think "well I haven't put that in, I haven't done this, I haven't done that" I think in kindergarten you can get away, in a way because you're doing such basic, you're in such basic areas that you are building up language, you're building everything, so you're sort of working from where they are anyway. But yeah, I know. It's a difficult situation and I think unless you're given some extra incentive ...

Linda
Thank you very much for your time.
INTERVIEW WITH ANNE
a Kindergarten teacher

Linda Can you tell me a little bit about your decision making in the classroom. What you think is the thing that mostly influences your decision of what you will teach?

Anne Where I'm at, at the moment, I'm in a DSE school, the huge diversity in there, we've got some professional families who like to spend a lot of time with their kids down to the ones that spend x amount of times with their kids. So when they come to school in their first two weeks when they're having their settling that's when I spend most of time finding out what their needs are if they have any special needs, like a visual or an auditory or whatever, if they have any specific socialisation problems that they really need to fulfil. That's what I go on with for the first couple weeks. And make them feel happy. It's hard, half and half have gone to preschool and the ones who have gone to preschool some of them haven't got experience. I've got to try it can be a good fate. So initially my first major thing that influences them is how they arrive at school. And what their particular are. And as I've gone on to different terms, we've started to do all our financing and some of my kids just don't even need that. They've gone way past there. So I've played records and things like that, got some extension activities for them so they don't get bored. And play games with the ones having trouble influence what I do and then, I know all the outcomes heavily into that so a lot of it our kids mostly come on the foundation stage.

Linda Yes, that's what I was going to say to you, when you actually determine what level they're at, then where do you go. For this kids, for this level, what am I going to teach?

Anne Out schools is right into that and we're part of the 10% in NSW, I don't know what it is, what they're doing in Met West and we're part of the 10% Most of our kids are lined at foundation stage to pre-foundation stage and then we use, what we call common.

Linda And you're actual selection of what you teach, what is that based on?

Anne Socialising, whether it's down to fine motor skills, play dough and to constructing things and problem solving.

Linda ???

Anne When we do it we have eight activities are together they choose the three and they have planning books and then they go they go along and Parramatta West I think started it and it was developed along those lines. By the end of the year the kids who had the books evaluation along that way.

Linda ?? that it's based on, does that come from a particular theoretical foundation?

Anne ??? originally I think it came out of the play document years ago, they wanted kids to free play all the time. But the way things are at the moment without somebody teaching we can't do that. They're not allowed, they want to get into it "do some real work" anyway. That's when we'll do our story writing story writing.
Linda: So you've decided what you're going to teach, but in terms of your teaching and your strategies how do you decide how you are going to teach?

Anne: Depends on what area whether it's a whole class setting or whether ?? I find doing ?? so that I can spend more time with ?? special need of speech things then I can go and spend extra time if it's just the one of ?? I think the area based ?? we might do something ?? and if they have to construct something then I let them choose what they want to use to construct ?? most of them have to choose the theme animals and have to build something where an animal would live ?? some of them want to use blocks so then they chose. So it would depend on what I'd learnt ?? That seems to help ???

Linda: So when you get to those original kids how would you describe how you would change and teach them differently, for different children?

Anne: ??

Linda: Can you tell me how you decide that?

Anne: Well it would depend on what it is, if it's a behaviour problem, an attention seeking thing I don't feel that I really ?? that little bit of extra time with that child ?? Then the child who's got a speech thing I spend most of my time sitting next to them and physically ?? holding their hand in front of their mouth so they can draw ?? thing I make sure that they're looking at me or if I know ?? that side ??

Linda: So that's knowledge of the original kid?

Anne: And I make sure I know most of that stuff ?? and we have to screen our kids ?? so I spend the first couple of weeks making sure I know the kids ?? like at the school ??

Linda: And do you get much input from the parents on the things that they want for their children?

Anne: No, not a lot with our parents, a lot of them don't tend to spend a lot of time with their kids, watching their kids sit at home and do their homework ?? you know the best thing you can teach your kid ?? or go out and play outside with them or whatever. So being so quiet except it is someone ?? a child could need speech therapy ?? what I need to know. Behaviour wise, at the school I had last year, looking at their behaviour I once again made sure I kept very close contact with the parents and told them what was working for me in the classroom ?? this is working for me in the classroom why don't you try it at home or is there something at home that works better. ?? I think of it as speech ??

Linda: You don't find that there are parents who want to tell you ??

Anne: No, not really, a lot of ours think "OK, you're the teacher, you're the ?? you do it" ??????

Linda: So would you say that you applied ?? theoretical viewpoint? Do you base what you do in the classroom or on one set theory?

Anne: No, not really, I don't think I did. Cause each individual proves different ?? according to a specific theory that you may go with. ?? ok this is the particular type of work for them and if it doesn't then I've got to move on to something different.
Linda: Do you have a theory perspective that you sort of lean towards more so than other ones?

Anne: No, not really. ??? to really do it, but no there's nothing specific ??? it would depend on the theory ???

Linda: ??? How much do you think the parents know before the children start school about what it would be like for them? Particularly the parents with children with special needs.

Anne: I don't think they can live their life ?? they must know that something is going to go on, I think some of them qualify ??? like when they get to school things are going to change. Which is unrealistic although we do have all the ??? for it. But I think parents think that once they get to school, the school will fix it for them. So I spend a lot of time with those ??? difficult where doing inside ??? and speech one ??? this is an exercise that you can practice with them at home to make them ??? holding your hands over their mouth ??? I'm probably more ??? whether or not they take it on board it depends on how much time they can ??? or want to spend to do it. Parents with behaviour problems ??? that the child had a problem ??? what ??? expect the school to do anything and it wasn't ?? what would you like us to do. ??? you find it interesting.

Linda: Do you get a lot of those?

Anne: ?? last year we would have had, in two kindergarten classes, eight, that had speech therapy and this year we've got none.

Linda: ???

Anne: ??? we can't understand them.

Linda: ???

Anne: Yes, you do, don't you? I think sometimes they think they like to know what's going on and they think OK this is going to happen ?????? like this is the end product and I had to try and reinforce it, that it's going to take a long time to get to that stage, it's not going to happen over night ???

Linda: And what about the sort of needs and stuff like enrolment procedures and things like that, the fact that the child may not be accepted for enrolment those sorts of progress they have to go through ?? for special needs?

Anne: Well this year we've got a new boy who's got ?? a lot of difficulty in fine motor ?? and we have a lot of people, and parents last year they had to look at them ?? think about school or move them ?? to get around, which is completely mobile and that's fine but we had two go on that level and then one of them came in for a couple of days for an hour a couple of days last year ?? And so when she came this year, and so by the end of last year I had a good repertoire with Lorraine so when she arrived this year, I had a rapport already established with her and I knew a couple of the kids, younger brothers and sisters ?? she has been accepted quite well, she has a ??? with kindergarten it's not a major problem at the moment because they're all the same height and once they get older maybe she might, but I think she's been very, the kids don't know that there's a problem and can't see it ???

Linda: So in that case the parents knew you, they knew what to expect fairly well?
Anne: Yes, by the time they arrived.

Linda: Would that be typical?

Anne: Well, with this one, Lorraine, yes. I wouldn't say as much with the speech ones because it has a name to it.

Linda: ???

Anne: I can't remember. But it has a specific name, so whether or not that gives it a bit more of a special for them. But I already set up parents know more, contact them.

Linda: So in thinking about the transition from say preschool or an early intervention service wherever they've been before and in that process that you've just describe, where they came a do you think that parents in general feel like a partner in that process?

Anne: I think with Lorraine, definitely this year, moved along the whole thing with her they've given me all the occupational report and etc. what was actually happening Lorraine I didn't want along that way a lot of the reading that would get me up to their knowledge of what was going on and I would expect to find which direction her needs would take. She needs a lot of the fine motor practice, but she can't do that all day. They guided me towards what, she is the principal that she's been at these are the sorts of things that she was doing there. can you follow on from there but still a classroom so she's not feeling left at all.

Linda: So is the preschool involved in that process as well?

Anne: I haven't spoken to anyone from the preschool but I was given more than occupational therapist.

Linda: Who co-ordinated all that?

Anne: The parent.

Linda: But you say that hasn't happened with any of the other kid?

Anne: No. The speech therapist got her to come out and she showed me things in the classroom to show the kids things that she could do. I didn't get to read any of her reports.

Linda: Why do you think that is?

Anne: I've got my own theory. Where I am at the moment we seem to be getting a lot of four years/five month old kids starting school, boys and girls, and I think it's ok get rid of them we'll get more people encouraging them to go on so they can get new people in. He came in and brought me in photos and showed me the other people that were in his group but time gets.

Linda: So why would that interfere with their sort of wanting to give you information?

Anne: I don't know, I don't know whether it was something that they're trying to keep things to themselves or. I said to the mum "is there a problem there that I should know about" and she said "No", so I said "right, ok". And there's only so much, no more that I would put up before I find out. They
obviously know what happened to the kids, ??? they sort of knew that, they knew stuff that they had been doing, ???

Linda: They obviously have got a good communication?

Anne: No, I wouldn’t know.

Linda: About this school?

Anne: No. Like it’s not very far from where we are anyway, and when he came to the school, the only thing that I got from the boss and from the mum was that you will be given teacher’s aide time to do that and that was supposed to be set up in first term and that didn’t arrive until third term. So I had to do a lot of the work with him.

Linda: So you don’t have any other links with that preschool, are the kids coming to visit or anything like that?

Anne: No. Which would be an ideal thing to have it, they would have to be feeding in to only four schools around them. Cameron found it difficult because all the other kids had gone to all these other preschools and when they arrived they knew them and Cameron said to me "I’ve been to preschool" but none of his friends were there because you don’t have a special preschool.

Linda: Well let’s jump forward, do you know what sort of preschool it was?

Anne: They just said early intervention.

Linda: It was an early intervention service rather than a regular preschool?

Anne: Yes. You’d think that they would bring them whether or not they brought them over for orientation or which ever they were feeding into ??? Whether or not they speak considerably more to the preschool actually attached to ??? whether or not they feed specifically into that school and have a program going there but they have to have children feed in from other areas ???

Linda: Who do you think should be responsible then, for getting that communication working?

Anne: I think the parents, because if the parent knows, OK this is the preschool that my child is going to but this is the school that they’re going to, neither of the two might not ever meet because they’re obviously very busy, we’re obviously very busy, we don’t know the communication that’s going on, I think sometimes the parent needs to say to the preschool "my child is going X school what can we do to get the information from here over to there". Or whether the preschool from their end can do it. Like I’ve tried following up ??? from other preschool it’s like getting blood out of a stone sometimes. And then other ones will go "yeah, sure, here you go".

Linda: Say for example the parents weren’t capable or weren’t interested or didn’t feel able to take on that role, if it were to be a professional role, if you said right one of the professional people involved if they could do that, who do you think that should be then?

Anne: Are you talking a specific person employed to do that or are you talking from the preschool end or the school?

Linda: What do you think?
Anne: If there was a person that worked as a liaison between both that would be an ideal situation. Because that liaison person would know what was going on over here and they also know what's going on over there.

Linda: Who should employ them?

Anne: Someone who would give us the money to do it costly and not bandaid it, do you know what I mean. I think so much stuff is bandaid on for twelve months and then twelve months later we won't worry about that because that's important anymore. Whether or not that's a departmental thing, if it's going to be linked with schools, public school??? they have a huge job to do if they were assigned to specific areas.

Linda: So you don't think there is anybody at the moment who takes on that role?

Anne: Not that I'm aware of.

Linda: We'll come back to that when we finish. Back to families. Can you discuss family involvement in the education of the child with special needs? In other words what you think about it, what you feel about it.

Anne: The parents know what issues?? go into special needs?? they're very, very involved with her, they're very involved with the school, ??? day to day, like today they're up there, they drop everything for her to get involved in what she's doing at school. Behaviour ones, I tend to feel, they just think OK there's a problem now and we're going to drastic ??? to keep them quiet.

Linda: Do you think that would be a general thing for behaviour problems, or do you think that's this particular family?

Anne: I look after student welfare in my school, so I could probably say that the majority would say, when they get the phone to say your child ??? extension you get it all the time. Each one does tend to feel they get involved initially and then what they probably feel quite sure if you're in something, then they'll say "that's the way" I think more. The girl that I've got this year, her parents are really involved in what she's doing and I'm always giving them things that they can do at home and they are always updating me etc, etc, ???

Linda: So do you think it is important?

Anne: Oh absolutely?? Lorraine feels so much happier, and she knows that they are there, that she knows that yes she comes to school and feels very important, like her family is very important and she feels important too. Like behavioural ??? make the parents feel, this is your problem ??? If we get all parents involved like Lorraine's our life would be much easier.

Linda: Do you think the involvement of families is stressful for teachers?

Anne: No, I'd much rather have them in there, much, much rather. I think it makes it so much easier on the kids. Because they're feeling important and the fact that they are having a difficulty, whether it's speech or whatever ???

Linda: Now we'll go onto the transition aspects of it. Do you think, again in general, children with special needs are well prepared to start school?

Anne: I think ?? very much ?? aspects of school which environment if they went to an early intervention centre ??? the teacher there ??? I think Lorraine went to a
preschool for children with special needs so she was ??? and filled in on what was going to happen at school. I think they all get a major shock where after three weeks ?? they might like their mum and dad ??? I think those two ?? they were prepared, they knew what was going to happen at school. I can feel a lot of kids that go to preschool are like that anyway not just the kids with special needs.

Linda: What about differences ?? in the way that they spend their time during the day?

Anne: I think most of that seems to get ironed out I think to an extent after, I think by the end of first term I think most of them are well and truly have got ?? this is big school and this is what we do. I think probably more of the kids with special needs have an expectation that was little school and now we're in big school type of thing and this is the expectation that's going to be based upon ?? Kevin was six by the time he came to school ?? with a speech difficulty so he was six, well and truly passed ???

Linda: We've touched on this one too. How well do you think the services ?? children ?? together to help them start school?

Anne: ?? maybe that's an isolated case of where I am, but ?? apart from Lorraine, the parents have been the ones who've liaised with ???

Linda: ????

Anne: No, admittedly I haven't rung them cause I felt the stuff that I've been getting would has been adequate ?? report as well ???

Linda: So how much help do you feel the family of the child involvement ??? with children with special needs?

Anne: Well I think Lorraine's this year, she's had a lot of help, Cameron probably did last year to an extent. I think they get the direction of where they go, I don't know whether it was suggested at school that would be good for them or whether the parents ??? school or what it is. Speech ??? I think ??? going to ??? or I don't how the boss, she came down to me and said "is Cameron in your class?" ??? My boss ??? so whether or not ???

Linda: So with him you weren't involved in the meetings ???

Anne: No, and I didn't even know that he'd been with it until they bought photos and stuff ?? "oh no, it was special preschool" and the clock started clicking over in my mind and then I started asking questions.

Linda: ???

Anne: No, and nothing was said to me when they came up for ??? problems with his speech ??? I don't know whether she was embarrassed about it. I don't think so.

Linda: And how much ??? do you think the early intervention teachers should take for ???

Anne: I think a lot of the parents when they find out that their child does have special needs and will need a lot of support to get them through, I think sometimes it's very traumatic for some people. Especially the speech ??? then I can understand it, if they come up against that an early intervention teacher needs to sort of say "OK you can understand ??? but for everybody else sort of understand me" I
think that way, that's it you wouldn't have to definitely support the family to get through. If there is another special need, like a disability or something, quite often the early intervention teacher I think will probably be the one that the parents will probably feel more comfortable asking the questions to. And if they've established a good rapport then that would be an ideal thing to happen.

Linda

So do you think that should be part of their role?

Anne

I think so. I think they would need to get in and talk with the families and report to families because quite often they don't have the expertise in what's going on, yet the early intervention teacher would.

Linda

??? Now going on to yourself, how much responsibility then do you think school teacher, the kindergarten teacher should take for supporting families?

Anne

I seem to do a lot because I think a little bit of time ??? goes a long way. And quite often that's all it does take, if it's five minutes things, a lot of the time the parents, for Lorraine they catch me on the run I'm walking down to lines "can you talk to me on your way to lines". It's only an informal talk but it does support her a lot and that doesn't worry me at all, and I think all teachers need to do that for all kids. So for one parent to know ??? I think school teachers need to get in and support the family ???

Linda

So as much as early intervention teachers?

Anne

I think so, yes, because if its a role that can be carried just from one and then brought straight onto the other one, then its a flow in the whole thing and nothing gets broken down, the child has to benefit from that. ??? there is a continuity between it all. I did it and we benefitted.

Linda

So do you think schools in general are prepared to meet the learning needs of children with special needs?

Anne

I think that would depend more on the ??? of their kid, I think. Because early childhood is an interest of mine I've made sure that I've got ??? up to date on stuff. So if a child does come to me I find out what I can about that ??? if it's a behavioural thing ??? behavioural modification that needs to be done. It will depend I think on the school, ??? I think it would depend ??? our school is able to take ??? our school is open to all that.

Linda

So what would it be about teachers that might make a difference?

Anne

Interest, I think interest in teaching, number one, and interest in kids, both of those, because you've got to like kids as well, you've got to be interested in them.

Linda

And what would make the difference to that?

Anne

Attitude I think.

Linda

And what creates that?

Anne

I really like kids and I really love what I do. So that's my attitude towards teaching, I think ??? I think your attitude that you take ?? would be, it helps set up in your head, and help set up ?? What changed it for other teachers, some of them, I don't think had a tolerance for children with special needs ??? talking about it. I sometimes feel that ???

Appendix 4.

Interview - Anne

Page No. 372
Linda: I think ?? age or training or ???

Anne: I think maybe sometimes, I've been teaching to an extent I think ?? so many different people that can help you along the way, they think "it's not my problem". ???. at our school, Mt Druitt School, we have a lot of younger teachers and most of them are ready to jump in with both feet and get on with it.

Linda: Can you talk about the support available to kindergarten teachers for children with special needs?

Anne: We ?? at our school at the moment we've got a ITBDLD itinerant we call it teacher learning behaviour difficulty ?? specifically catered to at the moment ???. Teachers aid, employed as well, and she spent time last year ?? speech ???

Linda: How much ??

Anne: ???. a day

Linda: One class or between the two?

Anne: That was both in my class ?? I have a special needs class ?? because the other teachers are free ??

Linda: Was she trained at all?

Anne: Yes, she was early childhood trained.

Linda: Like CCC or, sorry the aide?

Anne: No, she ??

Linda: So she is untrained?

Anne: Yes, she is untrained, she went through the speech ??? people, she went through all the techniques ???. she followed my lead ???. The other ???. as well ???. I haven't rung her ???. profile to say that they're on their way. In our cluster we have an early childhood network we get together ??

Linda: So do you think there is enough support?

Anne: There is if you go looking and if you know it's there. If you don't know it's there, then you've got to find it.

Linda: So they don't make it well known?

Anne: When you're were saying is there a liaison officer ?? I know I don't know about them ??

Linda: So you're happy with the situation?

Anne: Yes, I'd like to see a lot more liaison between early intervention or that stuff ???. Also to the ???. I find between the preschool and the school. One of our preschool that I don't know like to ???. and their parents. If they could do that ???

Linda: The difficulty has been for the person to reach the stage need ??? we've been trying for years to do that and we get knocked back all time ???
Anne: I've sort of got onto one lady at one preschool ....

Linda: It's still in the personal link.

Anne: It definitely is and I get in more with the parents OK network ??? I can see the role from both sides I think preschool sometimes it would be even more different from what the school would be ???

Linda: Maybe the school needs to write to all preschool in the area ???

Anne: I think so, a lot of people don't tend to do that until they see a problem.

Linda: Yes, that's right.

Anne: And it's only when a problem arises do they say "we really should have noticed about the before" and I know ??? I sort of know, but that's my fault to that as well ???

Linda: So the next one is nothing much about the school about the needs of children with special needs, you would say no?

Anne: I'd say no about the speech one ??? and I would say yes about Lorraine because I don't know ??? when she was at a preschool specifically for behavioural children. And I think maybe, I don't no whether or not they might have had more time ... (end of tape)

(Side B) ... information wise as to what they were doing with her and what they were doing with the other one ??? with the early intervention that was through parents that I found that ??? and that was through me saying "what sort of things did they bring home when they came home?" ???

Linda: So do you think in your experience transition planning is played out systematically for six to twelve months before the child starts school?

Anne: No, I'd like them to be, I think that would be wonderful ???

Linda: The theory ??? Do you feel you have sufficient knowledge and training to allow you to make the transition to schools, for children and families?

Anne: ??? yes. ??? that I've got into and I think ???

Linda: So how strongly do you feel that parents know best of what is in the best interest of their child?

Anne: Well they probably know them fairly well. I think it needs to go jointly they can bring a lot more of the knowledge at the beginning when they first start but I think ??? a bit more too, when the child is spending six hours a day in the classroom ??? I think initially yes ?? and that would be ideal.

Linda: Can you make any suggestion that would make the transition process work more effectively?

Anne: I think, and if you could, for me as a teacher to go and visit where they are beforehand. So if I had of known, like I knew the Lorraine was coming to my class this year, but if I had of been able to go down and see where she was at preschool ??? I would have liked to have gone there and did that. So then I could have had that link go between ??? if there was to be a neutral liaison person between the two that they could check back in on, to liaise back with.
Linda: You're indicating to me here that should be an ongoing thing?

Anne: Yes, through out the whole year.

Linda: The whole kindergarten year?

Anne: Yes, I think so, and the lead up too, because if that liaison person knows that this child is coming to you, this is what you need to know, OK these are the people you can contact to find out a bit more. You can ?? teacher at preschool they'll be the person to tell you the things that they've been doing. Sometimes if you've got that link in between it helps. And someone who's not ?? in the middle with us and a balanced interest between the two. And if that liaison person, the parent has contact with before, that could liaise with parents, and that would give the parents more information on what they would be doing when they get to school. ?? You need more than one.

Linda: That's what the theory says and that's what the transition policy procedure should say, should happen, but unfortunately ?? KU children services, this year, have bought in transition policy for their centres and they will nominate the Director to take on that role. So the Director will be responsible for doing that, so it's not a neutral person, but it is someone ??

Anne: ?? they've got so many other responsibilities that they have to do, that's why, a separate thing, but still in there ??

Linda: And coming back to that other issue that you were talking about before the person, the department did employ an ?? who was to organise transition ?? and you obviously haven't?

Anne: No, the only thing ?? about early childhood ?? has been put on hold, I presumed transition stuff will becoming ??

Linda: Guidelines were written last year and should be in operation now, so the kids that you've received this year should have been through a transition process last year. ??

Anne: I'd only say for Lorraine that I did because we knew about her being enrolled maybe four weeks before the end of the year. And we ??

Linda: ?? beforehand and there should be meetings that you should have been at, and the school should have been at, maybe not necessarily the teacher.

Anne: That's right. I don't know ?? in a couple of years time, I know the family now, ?? so whether or not that would be ?? the correct channels to go through.

Linda: Sometimes those people ?? organisation ?? that may get that going ??

Annette: ??

Linda: Yes, so we've got to keep plugging away at it, I think, talking about it.

Anne: Yes I think so ?? quite often I think I need to contact ?? it's the time issue most of the time ?? preschool which I look after student welfare in the school ?? and what I have I have to use effectively as I can.

Linda: Yes that's right. ???
Anne: Oh, they are.
Linda: ??? teachers are even more flat out.
Anne: Oh, definitely, because, I don't know if they're trying to turn over in the area that we are at, at the moment because there seems to be another little stream going through of kids. Turn them over to get them out into schools to ??? preschools ????
Linda: Well economically schools are cheaper than child care ???
Anne: Definitely ???
Linda: ???
Annette: Oh, definitely, and you know your going to get them inside both ways ???
Linda: It makes life a lot easier.
Anne: It makes a big difference ?? a lot of our parents out there ??? little boy whose birthday is on the 28th July and he is so far behind the eight ball and he didn't go to preschool or anything. So that's very slow case ???
Linda: You have to try and get him to a counsellor then ????
Anne: ??? more and more as it goes along. ??? we have an excellent teacher who comes in ??? chaos and she's in there with them. And at the end of term two ???
Linda: So you'll get it?
Anne: ??? you have to ???
Linda: Ok thanks very much, all I can do is keep writing it down and putting it in and publishing it ????
Annette: ??? when they're young ??? you try and do as much as you can ..... ??? they have to have a specific program that they teach along with ??? I can show you the notes to prove it and she said "Oh, OK" we run up against the same thing in schools, well all kindergarten ???
Linda: ??? a long the line ???
Anne: ??? I send my kids all over the place to show them ??? the work that they've done, they sort of say "did kindergarten do that?" "yes they can, ??? still they can do ??? by the time they get here" ??? Preschools have a program, that this is what they go through when they get there. I got a really good report from one boy that ??? yes it was a check list, but if you're busy there's nothing wrong with a check list. ??? and the information I got from there was great and it showed then, that yes ?? followed along with the program, this is what he can do. And I think if I had more knowledge of that sort of idea ??? when they ??? kindergarten it would ??? running there for first six weeks to the term were the same, I think you would have a lot more kids ??? because it wouldn't be, the big jump from little school to big school.
Linda: Did you train here?
Anne

Yes

Linda

??? we'll have to get into the primary course more, look into the primary students ???.

Anne

Yes, the only thing that we did on early childhood was Psych 1 and that's it, nothing in practices ???. nothing in the theory behind it, nothing, we spent so much time doing ???. You get posted to a school, you've got three chances out of seven of getting K-2. And you've got four out of seven of getting 3-6. And the K-2 is that they're young and they're more willing to do more stuff, more open to do stuff and they're going to take a lot more care. The later they get, yes you can do the re-building and the repairing but why re-build and repair when ???. and some teachers don't know that. I think the early childhood ???. I think they need to do at least a semester ???. early childhood education study not just, it seems to focus more on 7-12 ???. and I got put into a school and I got second grade and I thought "beauty" and then I'm going down and down and I want to keep going down now. I think once you get a taste for it that's it, once I got a taste I got hooked and that was it ???.

Linda

Thank you very much, I will send you a final report.
Building the Bridges

The Transition To School For Children With Special Needs And Their Families
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
BUILDING THE BRIDGES:

THE TRANSITION TO SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND THEIR FAMILIES

by

LINDA NEWMAN


A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Education (Honours) of the University of Western Sydney, Nepean.

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Volume 1
Abstract

The process of transition to school for young children with special needs is a complex one. There is a range of stakeholders involved in the process - not only the child, but his or her family, (which may be extended) and a range of professionals from different disciplines. The process involves a change from one set of service providers to another. This change may include shifts in philosophies, models of service delivery and qualifications and practices of staff.

If the process is to be effective and efficient, involving as little stress as possible, continuity is essential for children and families. This continuity has several elements. Continuity between services the child is leaving and the school the child will attend; continuity of teaching and learning; continuity of relationships with families; and continuity of planning and management of the transition process itself.

During the complex and lengthy transition process the attitudes, emotions and views of families and professionals are enmeshed within a framework of policies, management procedures and the decision making required within each.

This thesis is a descriptive study of the transition process. It includes an outline of best practice as currently described in the literature and investigates the issue of continuity for children and families during the transition from early intervention services to school. Research was carried out in Western Sydney with one group of stakeholders in the process - early childhood teachers. They described their current beliefs and practices related to transition.

Results of research are outlined and discussed and recommendations are made for the delivery of more effective future transitions to school for children with special needs and their families.
CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree.

I certify that any help received in the preparation of this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged.

Signature...........................................

Linda Newman
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In memory of Ray and Valerie who gave me the wherewithall and a sense of social justice.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................................. i

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY ........................................ ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................... ii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ..........................................................

DIAGRAM - Transition Process ..............................................

CHAPTER 1

An Introduction to the Area of Study

1.1 Introduction ................................................................. 1
   1.1.1 Elements of Transition ............................................. 2
   1.1.2 Continuity in Transition .......................................... 3
   1.1.3 Children with special needs .................................... 6
   1.1.4 Teaching and Learning in inclusive settings .......... 8
   1.1.5 Definitions .......................................................... 8

1.2 The Context ................................................................. 10
   1.2.1 Early intervention services .................................... 11
   1.2.2 The historical context of early intervention .......... 12
   1.2.3 Integration/inclusion ............................................. 13
   1.2.4 The current context in NSW ................................. 14
   1.2.5 The Transition to school in NSW ......................... 15
   1.2.6 Transitions .......................................................... 18

1.3 The Role of Teachers in Inclusion ................................. 20
   1.3.1 Early childhood curriculum for children with special needs ...... 20

1.4 The Purpose Of This Study ........................................... 21

1.5 In Summary ............................................................... 23

CHAPTER 2

Continuity in the Transition to School ................................. 24

2.1 Continuity of Teaching and Learning between Pre school
   and Early Intervention .................................................... 26

2.2 Continuity between Pre school and School ...................... 28

2.3 Elements of Discontinuity ............................................ 29

2.4 Best Practice Guidelines for Continuity ......................... 33

2.5 Research Issues and Questions .................................... 35
CHAPTER 7

Results and Discussion ......................................................... 116
7.1 Introduction and Overview ........................................... 116
7.2 Background Information And Synopsis of Results .......... 118
  7.2.1 Background information on teachers
        and their transition experiences........................... 119
  7.2.2 Inservice.......................................................... 122
7.3 Survey Results Of Conceptual Areas ......................... 124
  7.3.1 Teaching and Learning......................................... 124
  7.3.2 Family.............................................................. 143
  7.3.3 Transition Management...................................... 157
7.4 Interview Results..................................................... 169
7.5 Interview Analysis.................................................. 170
  7.5.1 Teaching and Learning........................................ 173
  7.5.2 The role of families........................................... 183
  7.5.4 Transition Management.................................... 190
7.6 Delimited Thematic Statements................................ 199
7.7 Teacher Perceptions of Problems............................... 199
7.8 Summary................................................................. 206
7.9 Limitations of This Study........................................ 209

CHAPTER 8

Conclusions and Recommendations ........................................ 210
8.1 Summary of Major Findings ....................................... 213
  8.1.1 NSW Department of School Education
        Transition Guidelines........................................... 213
  8.1.2 Continuity in transition................................. 214
  8.2.3 Teachers' perceptions of transition issues ............ 220
8.2 In Summary.................................................................... 222
8.3 Recommendations.................................................... 225
  8.3.1 Implications for teachers.................................. 225
  8.3.2 Recommendations for Policy Makers....................... 227
  8.3.3 Future research Directions................................. 228

REFERENCES .................................................................. 230
VOLUME 2

APPENDICES

Appendix 1
Table 1 Summary of teacher comments .................. 242
Delimited summary of teacher comments ................. 272

Appendix 2 - Questionnaire .................................. 294

Appendix 3 - Interview Format ................................. 302

Appendix 4 - Transcripts of Interviews ...................... 308
Interview - Sylvia ........................................... 308
Interview - Kathy ........................................... 316
Interview - Nellie .......................................... 325
Interview - Pat .............................................. 339
Interview - Sally ........................................... 350
Interview - Anne ........................................... 365

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Best Practice Guidelines for Continuity in the Transition to School for Children with Special Needs and their Families
Table 6.1 Services Approached for Research and Responses Received
Table 7.1 Awareness and Use of Department of School Education Guidelines, 1994.
Table 7.2 Mean scores for Teacher Reported Teaching and Learning Beliefs and Practices by Program
Table 7.3 Repeated Measures Analysis of the Teaching and Learning Subscale using Program as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure
Table 7.4 Mean Scores for Teacher Reported Teaching and Learning Beliefs and Practices by Qualification
Table 7.5 Repeated Measures Analysis of the Teaching and Learning Subscale Using Qualifications as the Independent Variable and Beliefs and Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure.
Table 7.6 Teaching and Learning Items
Table 7.7 Teaching and Learning Belief Rankings
Table 7.8 Teaching and Learning Practice Rankings
Table 7.9 Mean Scores for Teacher Reported Family Beliefs and Practices by Program
Table 7.10 One way ANOVA Analysis of Family Beliefs Using Program as the Independent Variable
Table 7.11 Repeated Measures Analysis of the Family Subscale Using Program as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure.
Table 7.12  Mean scores for Teacher Reported Family Beliefs and Practices by Qualification
Table 7.13  Repeated Measures Analysis of the Family Subscale using Qualifications as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure
Table 7.14  Family Items
Table 7.15  Family Belief Rankings by Qualification
Table 7.16  Family Practice Rankings by Qualification
Table 7.17  Mean scores for Teacher Reported Transition Management Beliefs and Practices by Program
Table 7.18  Repeated Measures Analysis of the Transition Management Subscale using Program as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Repeated Measure
Table 7.19  Mean scores of Teacher Reported Transition Management Beliefs and Practices by Qualification
Table 7.20  Repeated Measures Analysis of the Transition Management Subscale using Qualifications as the Independent Variable and Beliefs/Practices (Rating) as the Independent Measure
Table 7.21  Transition Management Items
Table 7.22  Transition Management Belief Rankings by Qualification
Table 7.23  Transition management Practice Rankings by Qualification
Table 7.24  Classification of Responses to Open Questionnaire item
Table 7.25  Transition Problems in Relation to Best Practice Standards Derived from the Literature, as Perceived by Early Childhood Teachers with Experience of the Transition into School