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# Planning Transition from School for Students with Physical and Associated Disabilities

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# Regency Park School Context

- **Regency Park School (RPS) caters for a broad spectrum of students with physical and associated disabilities. Students enrolled through RPS have a variety of schooling placement options available to them according to their individual needs.**
  - **Students are supported to access the curriculum that best meets their needs and potential.**
  - **Link Programs established at two secondary sites support students to access a mainstream curriculum.**
  - **Students who require access to a highly modified, individualized and specialised curriculum attend the RPS site.**
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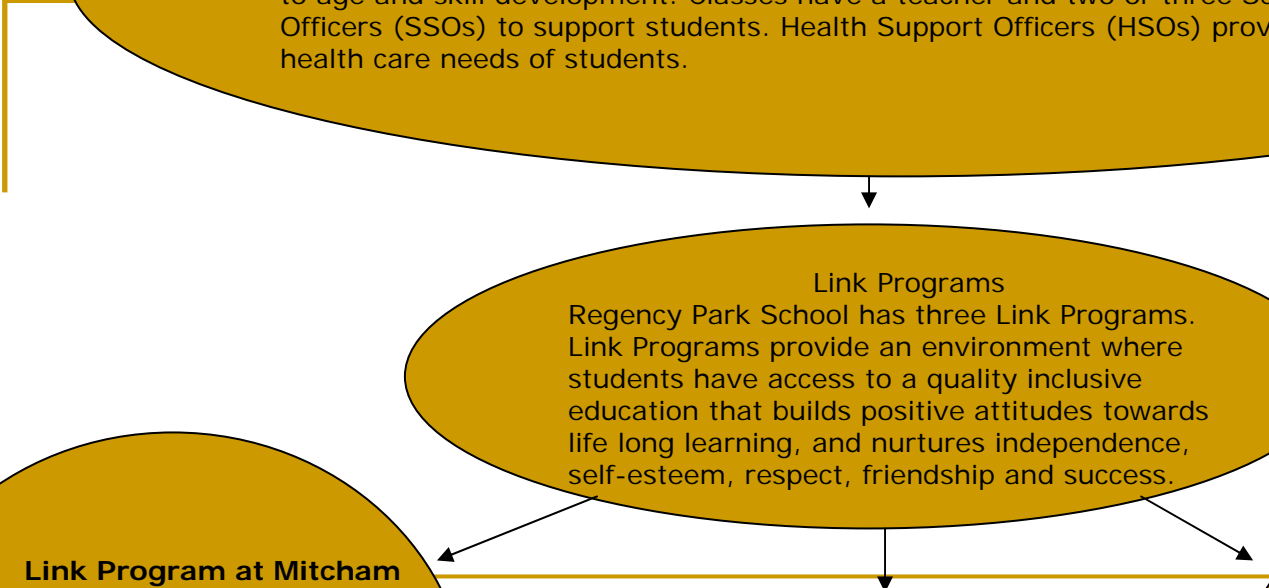
**Regency Park School**  
Regency Park School is a specialist school for students with physical disabilities and communication needs. The age of the students range from 5 to 19 + years. All students have a documented Negotiated Education Plan (NEP) which is reviewed annually. Classes range from between six to nine students per class group. The classes are formed according to age and skill development. Classes have a teacher and two or three School Services Officers (SSOs) to support students. Health Support Officers (HSOs) provide the invasive health care needs of students.

**Link Programs**  
Regency Park School has three Link Programs. Link Programs provide an environment where students have access to a quality inclusive education that builds positive attitudes towards life long learning, and nurtures independence, self-esteem, respect, friendship and success.

**Link Program at Mitcham Primary School**  
The Program offers an 'open door policy' for students, parents and staff .The Program caters for the individual strengths and needs of the students.

**Link Program at Ross Smith Secondary School**  
Staff consult with the host school, professionals, students and their families to support students in their successful participation of the curriculum. Students are supported to learn and practice skills to empower them to become self-determined, confident, capable and successful individuals, providing the foundation for a positive transition from school to adult life.

**Link Program Unley High School**  
Students are supported in their personal care and ICT needs to enable access to the mainstream curriculum. Students are provided with one on one support in order to meet mainstream curriculum requirements.



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# The Lighthouse Project



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Education, Employment  
and Workplace Relations**



- RPS was successful in gaining a funds through DEEWR Lighthouse Grant Schemes.
  - We thought post school information and transition resources needed development to support our exiting students to be 'successful'.
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# Success – What is Success???

- We judge success broadly in relation to positive Quality of Life Outcomes (eg Happiness).
  - While students appeared to be ‘successful’ at school, these ‘successes’ were not always maintained when students left.
  - We decided to find out what the links were between post school success, what was learnt at school and how the school supported transition to adult life.
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## How we planned the Research.

- A survey tool was developed in consultation with staff from all 3 school sites and researchers.
  - The survey was extensive as it had to take into account the broad spectrum of students that had attended RPS, and record their experiences and situations.
  - We piloted the survey and refined it.
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# The Survey

- We contacted past students from the last 11 years by phone.
  - The survey could be undertaken in a variety of modes depending on the preference of the past student or their advocate.
    - These included; telephone conversations, mailing, emailing and face-to-face contact.
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## Survey contact

- 80 past students were contacted by phone.
  - 100% indicated a willingness to take part in the survey in some form.
  - To date there is just over a third return rate.
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# The Survey Content

- The survey aimed at obtaining as much data as possible in order to make meaningful and informed decisions regarding curriculum content and delivery with the school.
  - The Survey covered a number of key areas
    - Personal details (Participants could choose to stay anonymous)
    - Subjects undertaken at school
    - Supports/Accommodations and Services received at school
    - Post School Activities
    - Transition Planning at school
    - General post school experiences
    - Participants were also encouraged to provide any additional comments and ideas they thought relevant
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# Findings – so far...

- Many feel dissatisfied with their level of community participation (Day Options, Employment etc).
  - Being disengaged or unable to access preferred suitable employment options had significant effects on many aspects of peoples wellbeing and that of those supporting them.
  - Students who had short employment/poor community engagement expressed feelings of being not valued and impacted on their overall independence.
  - Adult life costs more than school- transport, equipment and services available free at school needed to be paid for.
  - Poor access to therapy services and feelings of being 'ignored' by providers was also a significant feature of the findings.
  - Despite problems people were generally happy. The happiest were those who engaged in more than one setting.
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# How this relates to other ideas.

- Many of the findings support ideas expressed from other sources including
    - Professional experiences
    - Anecdotal evidence
    - Shut Out Report
    - Themes that were highlighted include;
      - Transport barriers
      - Lack of personal care assistance
      - Cost of providing services and supports
      - Limited opportunities to continue education in Day Option settings
      - Poor recruitment and employer attitudes
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# Implications for our Practice

- Transition Planning needs to start early. In our case this means working collaboratively with all stakeholders to bring change.
  - Families and students need to be actively involved in all stages.
  - Engage families early to be active and advocate for improved services.
  - Use data to inform key stakeholders (students, parents, employers, tertiary educators, day option providers) of where things are going wrong.
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# Staff and Schools are important

- School staff are important in providing students and their families with guidance and supports
  - We must assist students and families to gain the knowledge and skills they need to be active in post-school environments.
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# Curriculum Content

- Students are central to curriculum planning.
  - Much of the prescriptive curricula does not suit the long-term needs of students with physical and other associated disabilities.
  - Specific and explicit opportunities for students to practice skills to promote independence and self-determination.
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# What past students told us worked!

## ■ Past students valued

- Community trials (eg work experience, day option trials).
  - Curriculum that linked with community opportunities in the Arts (eg Drama linking with 'No Strings Attached').
  - Independent living and community skills (housework, accessing transport).
  - Relationship skills (dealing with services - agencies, paid carers, centrelink and caseworkers, making and keeping friends).
  - Practical Numeracy and Literacy skills.
  - Focus on maintaining and extending physical health through sport, swimming, out of chair activities, stretching and massage.
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# Curriculum

- Meaningful subjects have been successfully developed using and adapting existing flexible subject outlines eg;
    - Work Education, VET, Vocational Education
    - Community Studies
      - Health (PE and Relationships)
      - Numeracy, Literacy and Communication.
      - Work and the Community
    - Business Enterprise
    - Integrated Learning
    - Work Placement Trials
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# We Mean Business - Objectives

- To learn about the world of work
  - To work as a team in a business environment
  - To understand and develop individual strengths that each team member brings
  - To use creative and technology skills to develop a product for sale
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# Importance of Student

- Transition planning must be student driven.
  - The student must be provided with the skills, supports and opportunities to be involved.
  - Students (or their advocates), need to be equipped with a range of both technical and personal skills
  - Students should be supported to develop strong skills in relation to self-determination and self-efficacy. Such skills will help students avoid 'learned helplessness'
  - Students must have opportunities to understand the links knowledge and skills developed at school to future possible future pathways.
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# Importance of Family and Supports

- Families need to have a full understanding of the difficulties and issues involved. Students and families need to be able to plan for when supports change or stop when students leave school or turn 18.
  - For many students, families provide a constant and long-term support.
  - Families need guidance to develop skills and knowledge that will help in supporting their children when they leave school.
  - In the past, we noticed that our relationships with families was encouraging a 'learned helplessness'. To increase the skills and effectiveness of the family as a support in the long-term we collaboratively identified changes needed to empower all stakeholders .
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# Community Access Program for Students (CAPS) and Student-led Transition Planning

- The survey recognised the importance of students taking an active part in their transition planning.
  - An increasing number of students have been actively involved in their NEP meetings.
    - On the Ross Smith Link Program site this involves all students. Students are provided with specific supports to help them gain the necessary skills and confidence.
    - A number of senior students on the RPS site also conduct their own NEP.
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# Community Access Program (CAPS)

- A Life Skills Program is offered to Students, teaching skills for independent living in the broader community.
  - The program encourages the development of self awareness, self determination, independence, appropriate experiences and choice making skills regarding their school and post school activities.
  - There is also a component regarding resilience training, assisting students to understand themselves and their particular challenges.
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# Guidelines for running your own Transition meeting

- Welcome everyone
  - Introduce people
  - Say why you have invited people to the meeting.
  - Ask someone to take minutes
  - Issues to be raised:
    - A Learning goals
    - B Operation
    - C Transition – how is swimming affected?
    - D WEA courses/TAFE
  - Check with anyone if there is anything else they would like to raise.
  - Thank everyone for attending and helping
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## Assessment Tasks- aligned to Capabilities, Literacy and Numeracy

- **Learning Styles.** Student will seek OT support to analyze and support task completion.
  
  - **Communication.** Student working with his counsellor to develop strategies to deal with issues he has with his carers. –**Personal development**
  
  - **Personal Goals**
    - Student will explore cost/ value of things so he is better able to manage his money. Student needs to be directly taught to read analogue time –**Numeracy**
    - Student to develop literacy skills to support workplace learning.- **Literacy**
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- **Outside Participation.** Attend Push and Power sport on a Monday night at Regency and evening workshops at Stepney with the 'No Strings Attached' drama group. Service Coordinator will ring 'No Strings Attached'. **–Citizenship**
  - Student would prefer work and to attend day options part time business services ( need to negotiate personal care and transport). He will participate in 'We Mean Business' simulated work setting. **-Work**
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# Importance of Community

- Students with disabilities face many barriers. This is increased for students who do not fit a clear category or descriptor.
  - School can impact on curriculum content & delivery, school community and working partnership protocols with students, staff and families.
  - The influence of schools on broader community relationships, especially those related to businesses and employers is very limited.
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# Plans for the Future

- Tracking student outcomes is important!
    - Survey students 1 and 5 years after leaving school.
  - Continue to refine and develop relevant curriculum.
  - Embed 'We Mean Business', Student-led transition planning and CAPS into curriculum selection to support student needs.
  - Use results to challenge prejudices.
  - Address key employers attitudes
    - Linking through different modes including a 'business dinner'
  - Continue to advocate to gain access to community experiences
    - This could widen choice for students and improve access to more 'appropriate' and desirable outcomes
  - Link with like minded agencies eg SCOSA
    - This could widen choice for students and improve access to more 'appropriate' and desirable outcomes
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# Partnerships with Post-School Pathways Providers

- The school has focussed on enhancing relationships and **partnerships** with various post-school service providers.
  - The diversity of the students mean there is a large spectrum of post school pathways that students undertake.
  - Some of the pathways that students undertake are not their preferred choice but are taken due to barriers encountered elsewhere
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## Partnerships cont..

- The school has worked with Western Futures, Local Community Partner, to build a better understanding of what people with disabilities have to offer in the workplace and look at methods of improving their participation.
  - Employers, such as Imprint Design, who have an understanding of the issues related with employing people with disabilities and implemented strategies to provide personal care have offered to support other businesses. They are currently liaising with another employer to guide them through the maze of issues and arrive at solutions. This ongoing support is invaluable.
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## Partnerships cont...

- Some students go onto post school education either through TAFE, University or others such as Adult Re-entry or Senior Colleges.
  - Stronger ties have been made with the National Disability Coordination Officer Program (NDCO). Barriers have been identified and still need to be overcome.
    - We have been active in this partnership. It has lead to participation of staff and students in NDCO public events and specifically directed activities.
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## Partnerships cont...

- Open Employers
  - Transition Broker, Futures Connect
  - DENS
  - Business Services
  - Day Options such as SCOSA who have an interest in improving access for their clients to work and education.
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# Thanks and Acknowledgements

- The generous assistance of past students who completed the survey
  - Families of past students
  - Craig, current student
  - Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
  - Department of Education and Children Services
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# Contacts

- For further information on the Transition Survey please contact
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  - The Lighthouse Final Report will be available on the DEEWR site
    - <http://www.careerlighthouse.deewr.gov.au/>
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