

Supporting Inclusive Schooling

Taking the next Step A Guide for Parents Introduction

This information is specifically for parents of children with disability who are facing the often difficult, ongoing decisions about their children's education. It is based on the extensive experience and collective knowledge of many parents, including those who are just starting out, those who are right in the "thick of it" and those whose children are now adults. Other people involved in schools also helped with many valuable ideas and contributed generously from their unique perspectives. This included school support staff, students, teachers and integration aides.

While this information is not a set of formal government guidelines, it is based firmly on government school procedures and policy. It does not pretend to provide magical answers about how to achieve integration or to make perfect decisions in every situation. STAR is well aware of the extraordinary difficulties parents face in making the initial decision for integrated schooling and then maintaining this throughout their children's school lives. We believe this will help those parents who are working to make their vision of inclusion for their sons and daughters a reality.

The information includes general tips and ways forward, as well as help with particular issues and stages of transition. It should be useful to dip into at certain times in the child's life or when particular problems have to be faced.

Parents are the ones who make integration happen. They often receive little encouragement from others. The struggle is often relentless - as one stage finishes, another looms ahead. Battles won have to be fought again and again. Gains made can so easily be lost. The only thing that keeps these parents going is their love and commitment to their children and their belief in the child's right to develop and live alongside everyone else in the community. To this end, they make the constant hard decisions so that their children will have inclusive lives.

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