

Autism and Education: The Art and The Science

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Educational outcomes for young people with autism in terms of employment, transition to tertiary education, and quality of life continue to be poor relative to their potential. It seems our institutions are disproportionately failing this group of people. The personal cost for the autism community is high, as is the societal cost as we face costs of long term care and most importantly fail to benefit from considerable skills and talents of the autistic population.

1. The state of education for children and young people on the autism spectrum.

It is important that we understand what the issues are to enable us to take informed action. In the Australian context we will discuss what we have learned from a recent national analysis of the needs of children and young people with autism in relation to education, schools and tertiary education (CRC Needs Analysis). In addition we will consider findings from the early stages of the Longitudinal Australian study of Students with Autism (CRC LASA) and our understanding of the perspectives of key stakeholders in the education process. We conclude this section with a brief video of a young person with autism reflecting on their experience in the Australian education system.

We will overview the state of education for people with autism in the United States in a videoed interview with Dr Kara Hume from UNC- Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

We will overview the state of education for people with autism in the United Kingdom in a videoed interview with Professor Rita Jordan from the University of Birmingham and Griffith University.

2. Wicked Problems and emerging trends

The discussion in this section of the presentation will focus on the following key topics:

The inclusion of children and young people with autism in education

Co-morbid mental health issues and autism (findings from the LASA study)

Participation and engagement (findings from the LASA study)

A strengths and skills focused approach to autism education.

An ecological capacity building model for autism education

3. Where to from here?

A concluding panel presentation of future directions for education and autism including recorded segments from Professor Jordan and Dr Hume.