

Special Needs Students in Transition: A Practical Guide for Schools and Parents

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has identified many 'transition' points in a student's academic career. Preparing and informing our special needs students and families on how best to handle these transitions can lead to greater student success and happiness. This factsheet was developed to assist families of special-needs children in making successful transitions.

Transitions include the following: entry into a school for the first time (such as kindergarten), moving from one school/program to another, from school to work, further education, or community living. This information factsheet highlights key transition points for your child, the resources available to you and your family within the school system, as well as how best to collaborate with school partners for ensured success.

"The probability of a successful transition is significantly increased when schools work with parents, employers, community agencies, and providers of further education to develop coordinated transition plans for exceptional students."

— *Transition Planning: A Resource Guide*,
Ministry of Education, 2002

Transition Points

There are two types of transition points for students:

1. Fixed Transitions

- entry to school — junior/senior kindergarten (where applicable)
- entry to full day school program
- entry to junior program
- entry to intermediate program
- entry to secondary program
- exiting the school system — age 21 (or earlier)

2. Variable Transitions

- student status
- program
- level of support required
- integration

Entry To School

Registering Your Child for School

- Bring your child's birth certificate, immunization record, and health card.
- Speak with the school office administrator and inform him/her that you have a child with special needs.
- Request a future meeting with the principal and the learning support teacher (LST).
- School Meeting
- Bring a photo of your child and any medical or assessment reports, (i.e., developmental, medical, psychological, speech and language, occupational therapy, physiotherapy).
- Share information about what your child can do, his/her strengths,

challenges, and how he/she learns best.

- Let the school know if you are considering a specialized class/program.
- Contact may be made with a central learning support consultant (LSC) to share information about your child. The LSC may attend this first meeting or may provide the school with strategies to help with your child's program. He/she may also suggest that your child could benefit from a particular program at another school.

Considering a Special Education Class/Program

- If an application is made for a special education class/program, the recommendation committee for your child's profile, (i.e., autism, developmental disability, physical disability, etc.) will review the documents you have provided.
- Where applicable, the LSC for this committee will contact you to arrange to visit your child in a school, preschool program, or at home.
- The members of the committee will make a recommendation regarding admission to a special education class/program.
- The principal will inform you of the committee's recommendation and invite you to visit the new class/program if placement is offered.

Placement/Decision Making

- The family decides whether to accept the specialized placement or choose to attend the community school.
- If the specialized placement is accepted, parents are asked to register their child at the new school.
- Transportation arrangements will be made (as per Board policy).

The First Weeks

- Information sharing is key to a smooth transition.
- Once your child is registered, the classroom teacher will be in touch with you to discuss goals for your child for the school year ahead.
- Information obtained from these discussions, (i.e., a list of his/her interests, strengths, family information, etc.) will become part of your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- You will be provided with a copy of your child's IEP after 30 school days.
- Your child's classroom teacher is your key contact. It is very important to keep in touch with the teacher and discuss any questions you may have regarding your child.

Transferring to a New School or Program

Key elements for success:

- transition planning
- ongoing communication
- assessment
- information sharing
- multi-disciplinary discussions
- possible applications for programs
- referral(s) for services and/or support (where required)
- recommendations
- follow-up

Transition Planning

Key elements for success:

- a collaborative team approach
- identifying transition goals
- identifying steps and actions necessary to achieve goals
- developing and coordinating the Transition Plan with the IEP (and other plans, where applicable)
- identifying responsibilities and timelines
- recording the plan as part of the student's IEP
- implementing and reviewing the plan

Transition-related Skills Taught Across the Curriculum

- self-advocacy skills
- study skills
- vocational/job skills (specific to a workplace)
- employability skills (dress, punctuality)
- daily living skills
- interpersonal skills
- stress-management skills
- problem solving/decision-making skills

Exiting the School System

It is essential for the student and family to discuss and set goals.

Options may include:

- community college
- community living/services
- university
- volunteer opportunities
- workplace
- recreation and leisure

Exiting Transition Plan Checklist

Goals

- Compile a list of strengths, needs, and goals. Do they encompass the following?
- employment, supported employment, or community volunteering
- further education
- community living
- Are the goals realistic — in terms of the students' abilities, motivation, available supports, actions specified, and timelines?
- Are goals sufficiently challenging — do they encourage the student to achieve his/her potential?

Actions

- Are future actions consistent with the Identification Placement and Review Committee's (IPRC) recommendations regarding special

education programs/services?

- Are the following specialized programs/services part of the action plan? If so, applications must be made as soon as possible, due to potential waiting lists.
- further education
- social services
- health care services
- case worker
- Are there opportunities for the student to further refine his/her goals?

Ensure that provision of supports are consistent with goals, such as:

- school/school board services
- equipment
- health care and social services
- Are there appropriate work placements and community service providers?
- Is everyone familiar with future program options and service providers?
- Investigate future financial support.

Develop IEP learning expectations which:

- reflect the student's goals
- maintain provincial curriculum expectations.
- Is an employment search required?
- Is case management required?
- Establish provisions for monitoring the plan.
- Anticipate and identify any future actions required.

Responsibilities

- Ensure each action item is designated to a specific individual for follow through.
- Ensure the designated individuals are aware of assigned actions and agree to follow through.

Timelines

- Timelines for each section are clearly outlined.

Guiding Principles and Best Practices for Transitions

- a welcoming environment
- focusing on the best interests of the child
- respect
- collaboration
- sharing relevant documentation
- ongoing communication
- a team approach
- planning for success
- advocacy (parents)/self-advocacy (student)

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133 Greenbank Road • Ottawa, ON K2H 6L3 • Phone: 613-721-1820
Fax: 613-820-6968 • Website: www.ocdsb.ca