

The Transition-Planning Team

Transition planning is necessarily a collaborative activity, involving the team of people who will provide support in assisting the student to achieve his or her goals. The team should include:

- the student, family members, and the student's support network;
- one of the student's teachers and other school support persons; and
- (as appropriate and as needed) representatives of organizations that will be providing support after the student leaves school.

Depending on the needs of the student, this team may include the same people who develop the other portions of the student's IEP, or it may require a substantially different membership. The team should always include the primary providers of the supports needed by the student; their participation will help the team to formulate realistic goals and action plans and to implement those plans successfully. Having an identifiable transition-planning team for each student will help to ensure that each plan is individualized to meet the needs of the student.

Roles and Responsibilities of Team Members

A list of *potential* team members and their suggested roles is given below. Apart from the core team of student, parent, and teacher, the potential team members identified here should be included on an as-needed basis. Suggestions for selecting a team for a specific student are provided in the next section, "The Transition-Planning Process for Individual Students".

The Student, Family Members, and the Student's Support Network

1. The Student

The student's personal commitment to the transition plan is vitally important to its success. Students' commitment will be enhanced through their meaningful involvement.

The student, initially through the annual education plan (AEP), assumes responsibility for identifying goals and the steps needed to achieve those goals.

Active involvement in transition planning may also assist the student to develop self-advocacy skills that will be beneficial to him or her throughout life.

Strategies to encourage student participation might include the following:

- Consult the student about whom to invite to join his or her transition-planning team and consider including individuals who know the student well (for example, a support worker, attendant, or friend).
- With the permission of the student, review the student's AEP with him or her and discuss specific details about the student's wishes for the future, including work preferences and further education and independent-living choices.
- If a transition-planning meeting is scheduled, review the agenda for the meeting with the student in advance and help the student prepare his or her contribution.

2. Parents, Other Family Members, and Non-Family Advocates

Regulation 181/98 requires that the parent and the student, if age 16 or over, must be invited to participate in the IPRC and must be consulted in the development of the IEP. This requirement also applies to the transition plan, which is a part of the IEP.

Some students, especially those in their late teens, may need only minimal support from their family or others. For other students, especially those with high or complex needs, family members and other persons in the student's individual support network will play a key role both before and after the student's transition.

Where the student requires support or assistance to identify needs, strengths, and goals, the appropriate members of his or her support network should be included in all phases of the development, implementation, and evaluation of the transition plan. Persons who may play a support role for the student include the following:

- parents
- other family members
- an advocate (e.g., from a provincial parent association) or friend of the student or family
- attendants or support workers (e.g., educational assistant, developmental services worker, child and youth worker)
- health care or social work professionals (e.g., case worker, doctor, psychologist)

Serving in a support role, parents, family, and others in the student's support network can:

- assist the student to feel comfortable with the process;
- assist the student in communicating with other members of the planning team;
- suggest options appropriate to the student and comment on the implications for the student of the various options under consideration;
- assist the student in carrying out the actions assigned to him or her in the transition plan.

Strategies to encourage parent participation might include the following:

- Invite parents to an orientation meeting and/or prepare a parent information package that:
 - provides information explaining the need for and purpose of the transition plan and the process by which it is produced;
 - explains any technical and professional terms;
 - identifies the issues addressed through transition planning and the services available in the community for students after they leave school;
 - assures them that participation in the transition-planning process can help them to learn more about relevant services and how to gain access to them.
- If the student's needs are complex and a large transition-planning meeting is needed, consider inviting parents to a smaller orientation meeting in advance, or arrange to speak with them by phone before the meeting. Identify issues the parents wish to raise at the transition-planning meeting. Ensure that parents have copies of relevant materials before the meeting, including the student's AEP, the most recent IEP and IPRC statement of decision, and relevant assessments (educational, psychological, medical, and others).
- Connect the parents with a local parent association such as the local Learning Disabilities Association, Association for Community Living, or other associations represented on the board's Special Education Advisory Committee.

Note: For adult students (students 18 years of age and over), parents should be invited to participate with the permission of the student.

School System Personnel

The school principal has overall responsibility for transition planning in the school. The principal's role is described in the preceding section.

3. Subject Teachers

Subject teachers should participate in the planning process with relevant observations about the student's strengths, needs, interests, and performance. They may assume responsibility for teaching and assessing the knowledge and skills (e.g., mathematical, communication, and critical thinking skills) identified in the IEP and transition plan as necessary for the student to achieve his or her academic and transition goals.

In integrated settings, subject teachers may also be called upon to teach specialized knowledge and skills (e.g., self-advocacy and stress-management skills) that are identified in the transition plan as necessary for the student to achieve his or her goals.

4. Special Education Teachers

Special education teachers can provide key observations concerning the student's strengths and needs and can assist in collecting information about the student that is needed to develop the transition plan.

Special education teachers' experience with the particular student and with other students who have similar needs will enable them to help the team match the student's needs and interests with appropriate goals and identify effective actions to assist the student in achieving those goals.

When it is the special education teacher who leads the development of the student's IEP, it may be appropriate for the same teacher to lead the student's transition-planning team.

5. Educational Assistants

For some high-needs exceptional students, an educational assistant, developmental services worker, or child and youth worker may spend more time with the student than anyone else at the school and may have a particularly good idea of the student's interests, strengths, and needs.

Where communication is limited by the student's disability, a personal support worker may be able to facilitate communication with the student and anticipate the likely reaction of the student to actions that are being considered in the transition plan.

6. Teacher-Advisers

The teacher-adviser assists the student in preparing his or her annual education plan (AEP), and so is familiar with the student's strengths, needs, and interests. In consultation with the team leader, the teacher-adviser may be able to help the student formulate appropriate goals that are consistent with those strengths, needs, and interests.

In cases where the student requires assistance to communicate effectively, the student's teacher-adviser may be able to assist the student in communicating his or her goals to the transition-planning team.

7. Guidance Teachers/Counsellors

Guidance and career education teachers will be involved in teaching exceptional students who are enrolled in courses offered through the guidance and career education program.⁴

The guidance counsellor can provide career and personal development information to students and parents, as well as information on the range of support services available to exceptional students after they leave school.

Counsellors can conduct and interpret career-assessment activities and help to coordinate some support services documented in the IEP and the transition plan (e.g., help the student contact colleges and universities and the special needs offices of those institutions, where appropriate).

In some circumstances, guidance personnel may become closely involved with the support of some exceptional students and may be suited to playing a key role in the development and implementation of the transition plan.

8. Cooperative Education Teachers/Coordinators

Cooperative education or other forms of work experience can be a key factor in supporting a successful transition to work. It may be appropriate for some students to have cooperative education in each semester for two or three years, in a range of suitable placements. Cooperative education provides a means for

4. See *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: Guidance and Career Education, 1999* and *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 11 and 12: Guidance and Career Education, 2000*.

students to acquire and demonstrate workplace skills, thereby easing their transition to the work force.⁵

Providing appropriate and equitable access to cooperative education (particularly to the work placement component) for exceptional students is a significant challenge, and support from the school board is particularly important in this area. It is important for cooperative education and work experience programs to be available without barriers to exceptional students. Where cooperative education placements are identified as transition activities, early and detailed planning is recommended.

9. School Board Special Education Administrators

An important role for special education administrators is to create an environment of support in the transition-planning process (see “Supporting and Coordinating the Transition-Planning Process”, pp. 6–7).

For some students with high or complex needs, a special education administrator may be a valuable resource for, or leader of, the transition-planning team because of his or her knowledge of the broad range of programs and services available and of the range of options that may be open to the student.

10. Psychologists and Other Professionals

Where a psychologist, social worker, or other support professional is closely involved with the student, the professional input of such persons may be helpful in formulating goals and actions that are appropriate for the student.

These professionals, although grouped here with school system personnel, may also be:

- employees of local hospitals or treatment centres;
- health care or community service providers who provide support services to the student or board;
- members of the student’s existing support network outside the school.

5. In 2001–02, the Ministry of Education pilot-tested the Ontario Skills Passport in nineteen school boards with students in cooperative education work placements. The Skills Passport provides clear descriptions of skill requirements for entry-level work in today’s labour market. It also identifies work habits deemed by employers to be important in the workplace. The skills described in the Ontario Skills Passport were identified as “essential skills” through research and interviews conducted by Human Resources Development Canada with more than 3000 Canadian workers.

Parents and older students should be asked:

- to identify any service providers external to the school system who are working with the student;
- to give the team leader permission to contact these persons and invite them to participate on the transition-planning team.

Other Participants

11. Community Service and Health Care Providers

Community service and health care providers can present specific information to the team regarding the type, nature, and availability of services at the local level for the student after leaving school.

Representatives from the regional offices of the Ministry of Community, Family and Children’s Services (MCFCS)⁶ and representatives from Community Care Access Centres⁷ of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care may be particularly helpful at the earlier planning stages because of their overall knowledge of the range of options available. See Appendix 3 for websites providing current lists of these offices.

For students who will require supports after they leave school, representatives from organizations that offer such supports can:

- assist families with the application process;
- help teachers to plan learning experiences that will prepare students for their post-school support environment; and
- help the agencies prepare to provide services to the student.

6. In the event that a student is receiving support from an MCFCS-funded service provider, the planning process needs to be linked to the MCFCS planning process as outlined in the ministry’s January 1998 document entitled *Individual Support Agreements for People With Developmental Disabilities*. The local MCFCS Coordinated Access Centres are an appropriate first point of contact with local community service agencies. MCFCS regional offices can provide contact information for the Coordinated Access Centres.

7. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) are now the point of contact for in-home services, school health care support services, and placement for long-term care residential services. CCAC responsibilities include assessment, service planning, referral, and ongoing coordination. It is appropriate for schools or school boards to involve the local CCAC as a participant in the planning process for those students who have been receiving services through the CCAC, either at home or at school.

For these students, early referral to a health care or social service provider will increase timely access to services.

For students who are receiving health care or social service supports while enrolled in school, the student's health care or social service providers may be involved on the transition-planning team at a relatively early stage as part of the student's support network.

12. Representatives of Agencies and Institutions

Offering Further-Education Programs

Further-education options include:

- day and evening programs in universities or colleges of applied arts and technology;
- apprenticeships;
- private vocational schools;
- community agencies;
- continuing education programs offered through secondary schools, including adult training and adult basic education programs.

Representatives from agencies or institutions that offer further-education programs can contribute on a board-level transition-planning advisory committee and can also be valuable resources for transition-planning teams for individual students.

Contact with postsecondary institutions a year in advance of a student's transition may help to ensure access for the student to program opportunities and allow time for the institution or department to arrange supports needed by the exceptional student.

In some cases, informal arrangements for provisional acceptance of the student in a college or university program may be possible and may facilitate specific transition planning by both the student and the educational institution.

As the date for transition approaches, the special needs offices of colleges and universities can assist by identifying the accommodations that are available to students. Once students are admitted, it is the responsibility of the special needs offices to assist them in obtaining accommodations appropriate to their special needs.

13. Workplace Representatives

Representatives of employer associations or unions can assist by:

- providing information on current and future job prospects in the local area;
- helping to locate sites for cooperative education or work experience placements;
- supporting or sponsoring special events such as job fairs and guest speakers.

At the regional or board level (e.g., through participation on a transition-planning advisory committee), workplace representatives can provide information about:

- the labour needs of business and industry;
- changes in technology; and
- the impact of these factors on instructional programs and curricula.

The student's cooperative education or work experience employer can advise the transition-planning team about the accommodations the student requires in order to work effectively, and about any additional learning required by the student in order to fulfil employment requirements.

For moderate-to high-needs students, where a specific job has been arranged (e.g., as a result of previous cooperative education or work experience placements), the employer can assist the transition-planning team in defining activities that will prepare the student for the transition to that job.

Strategies to encourage the participation of representatives of community service agencies, employer groups, and postsecondary institutions might include the following:

- Involve these individuals where possible at the school board or school level where they can provide assistance in a generic way that will benefit many students.
- Create and maintain a network of contacts. Such a network, once established, can support the transition-planning teams for many individual students.

- Approach the office or individual in the organization with the most direct interest in assisting students who have special needs (e.g., the special needs office of a college or university; the case worker from an agency who is currently providing services to the student).
- Be sure to encourage participation of a kind that is consistent with the role or mandate of the organization.
- Be selective in seeking assistance. Request participation only where the provider's involvement is critical to the success of a particular student's transition plan.