

An Integrated Planning Process

Transition planning is one of a number of planning processes intended to enable exceptional students to attend school, to benefit to their full potential from school programs, and to make a successful transition into adult life. Depending on the needs of the student, some or all of the following plans may be required:

- an Individual Education Plan (IEP), including a transition plan;
- an annual education plan (AEP);
- a cooperative education personalized placement learning plan (where applicable);
- an exit program;
- a “life plan” and an Individual Support Agreement for students who receive supports through agencies funded by MCFCS Developmental Services;
- health care and psychosocial support plans (where applicable).

While not technically a plan, the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) statement of decision sets out the student’s strengths and needs and also, possibly, program and service recommendations, which should be taken into consideration in developing the IEP and other plans.

If several of the plans mentioned above are required and are developed separately, there is a risk of considerable duplication of effort and an even greater risk that the plans will contradict each other. It is therefore recommended that school boards and school principals develop integrated planning procedures for exceptional students. For example, the various planning functions might be completed by a team of the student’s core support persons in a multipurpose planning meeting.

An integrated planning process must not compromise regulatory or policy requirements governing the individual processes.

The following paragraphs review some of the inter-relationships among the transition plan and other planning documents.

The IPRC Statement of Decision

When reviewing an exceptional student’s IEP, the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) must consider, with written permission, the student’s progress with respect to the annual goals and learning expectations outlined in the IEP. The student’s goals in the transition plan are a part of the IEP and should be considered by the IPRC in documenting the student’s strengths and needs and in making its placement decision.

Recent progress towards the student’s stated goals should also be reviewed. The student’s goals may affect a variety of factors, including:

- the description of the student’s strengths and needs;
- the placement decision;
- IPRC recommendations concerning special education programs and services.

IPRC recommendations concerning programs and services must be considered in developing the student’s IEP and transition plan.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

The regulatory requirement that the transition plan be a part of the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) leaves to local discretion the extent to which these two plans are integrated. For example, the components of the transition plan may be:

- fully integrated into various sections of the IEP;
- collected in a separate section of the IEP; or
- collected in a distinct document appended to the IEP.

As noted previously, it may be appropriate in some cases (especially for students with complex needs) for the transition-plan portion of the IEP to be developed in a meeting devoted exclusively to that purpose. In these cases, the challenge will be to ensure that the transition plan is compatible with the rest of the IEP. The IEP curriculum-related goals, learning expectations, supports, and accommodations must be consistent with the actions documented in the transition plan. To achieve this, the IEP should be reviewed and revised in its entirety in the light of the transition plan.

The Annual Education Plan (AEP)

All students from Grade 7 on are required to prepare an annual education plan (AEP) that describes the student's goals and the plans for achieving those goals. The student's teacher-adviser assists the student in preparing the AEP.⁹

To ensure that the transition plan is compatible with the student's AEP:

- the student and the teacher-adviser should be aware of the contents of the IEP and the transition plan when preparing the AEP;
- the members of the student's transition-planning team should be aware of the contents of the student's AEP when they discuss and prepare the student's transition plan.

In all cases, the student should take as much responsibility as possible, through the AEP process, for planning his or her own future. As students mature and their AEP takes on more detail, the extent of support required through the transition plan may diminish.

The Cooperative Education Personalized Placement Learning Plan

Cooperative education and other forms of work experience programming are important components of the transition plans of some exceptional students.

9. More information about the teacher-adviser program and the annual education plan may be found in the ministry documents *Choices Into Action: Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1999*, and *Helping Students Plan Their Education, 2000* (see "Selected Resources" at the end of this document).

Cooperative education and similar types of programs require a written learning plan that governs the student's work placement goals and activities. Details of the requirements for cooperative education programs are set out in the Ministry of Education policy document *Cooperative Education and Other Forms of Experiential Learning: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Secondary Schools, 2000*. To ensure a meaningful work experience, those involved in choosing the placement and writing the placement plan must ensure that both are consistent with the student's goals, strengths, and needs as documented in the student's IPRC statement of decision, IEP, AEP, and transition plan.

The student's work experience can shape his or her interests and expectations. Consequently, the perceptions of the student, parent, job coach (where applicable), and teachers about the student's recent work experience can help to shape the next year's transition plan and IEP.

Exit Programs

As part of the school's guidance and career education program, schools are required to provide exit programs for students who leave school upon or before graduation. Policy requirements of exit programs are set out in *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12* (section 5.7.2) and in *Choices Into Action* (pp. 15 and 16).

The purpose of these programs is to help all students to make successful transitions to the next stage of their lives, whether they are graduating, transferring to another school, or leaving school for work or community living. All students leaving school must have access to an exit program and should be encouraged to participate.

The school's exit program should provide the student at the point of leaving school with:

- a review of the student's achievements;
- discussion and clarification of the student's plans for the immediate future;
- information on postsecondary education options;

- information about community services and community contacts that can provide assistance;
- information on apprenticeship programs;
- information on procedures for applying for employment;
- information on managing personal finances.

Much of this information may have been provided as part of the student's transition-planning process. The exit program offers an opportunity to review this information with the student. At the point of the student's school leaving, the exit program should provide the exceptional student (and family) with:

- a copy of the student's transition portfolio and information on how to use it;
- information about the Ontario Secondary School Diploma, the Ontario Secondary School Certificate, or the Certificate of Accomplishment (where relevant), and the Ontario Student Transcript; and
- information about the school's retention policies for student records.

Finally, the exit program provides an opportunity for a last check to ensure that the planned support services will be in place for the student upon leaving school.

The MCFCS “Individual Support Agreement”

The Developmental Services Branch of the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services has introduced an “Individual Support Agreement” to document service plans for individual clients. Where parents (or older students) consent, the transition plan, and possibly also the IEP, might provide supporting documentation for the Individual Support Agreement. Similarly, the Individual Support Agreement may provide useful information for the development of the student's transition plan and IEP.

Health Care and Psychosocial Support Documents

In addition to the MCFCS Individual Support Agreement, other planning and administrative documents are likely to be associated with the health and psychosocial supports required by some exceptional students. These services form part of the framework of support for the student and should be integrated into the planning process, where possible, in a process similar to that described here for other programs and services.