



## Principles Guiding the Planning Process

Research has identified five guiding principles that are critical to the success of the entry-to-school planning process.

### 1. A Focus on the Whole Child and the Family

The strengths and needs of the individual child are the focus of an effective entry-to-school plan. Preschool programs and services emphasize the positive development of the whole child – socially, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and intellectually. In planning for the child’s entry to school, schools and school boards continue this emphasis. As well, they need to consider the child in the context of his or her family in order to work constructively with family members.

### 2. Collaboration

Successful entry-to-school planning involves sharing information and coordinating resources among the key players, including:

- the family;
- providers of preschool programs and services; and
- school-board staff.

### 3. Sensitivity to Diversity

Effective planning is sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity and respects the dignity of all individuals. The planning process respects the cultural heritage and needs of Aboriginal members of the community, as well as those of new Canadians. It also seeks to ensure real equality of opportunity for all children through proactive steps to foster a barrier-free environment.

“It is essential to keep the needs of the child uppermost. Effective entry-to-school programs focus on relationships.” (Dockett and Perry, 2001, p. 36)

A key ingredient of collaboration is trust, which evolves out of repeated successful interactions in which honesty, openness, and respect prevail. (Adapted from Briggs, 1997)

Entry-to-school planning needs to be sensitive to the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of families, children, and the community, as well as to standards and outcome measures set by government at the community level. (Adapted from McCain and Mustard, 1999)



Researchers stress the importance of both defined procedures and personal relationships in effective entry to schools. They all consider components related to interagency collaboration and written agreements to be important, as well as family participation, preparation of the child and family for the new program, and preparation of the program. (Adapted from Rosenkoetter, Whaley, Hains, and Pierce, 2001)

Plans need to be flexible and responsive to changes in the child's needs, family, community, or resources. (Adapted from Dockett and Perry, 2001)

#### 4. Clear Definitions

Entry-to-school planning has clearly defined procedures, roles, responsibilities, and timelines for all partners in the transition process: educators, parents, school boards, and community members. Each has a distinctive role in ensuring that transition planning prepares children to succeed in school. Effective protocols for entry to school clearly delineate roles and responsibilities in language and terms that are familiar to all parties.

#### 5. Responsiveness

Effective entry-to-school planning provides mechanisms that allow schools to respond to changes in the child's needs, family, community, or resources. Programs and services offer a comprehensive range of supports in a coordinated and integrated manner to respond holistically to the unique and varied needs of each child.

