


LEARNING MODULE #6

TRANSITION PLANNING

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Introduction To Module

All students experience a number of significant transitions: from home or preschool to kindergarten, from grade to grade, from school to school, from school district to school district, and from school to adult life. These transitions involve changes in environments, activities, expectations, rules, services, peer groups and staff. Careful planning needs to occur to assist students with special needs during all times of transition. Transition planning and the activities to carry out those plans should be part of the students' educational program throughout the entire school year. We will explore the following areas:

- Transitions into School (Kindergarten)
- Transitions from Grade to Grade (within the same school)
- Transitions to Middle or Secondary School
- Transitions to Adulthood
- Strategies For Successful Transitions
- Long Range Planning Tools (PATH, Microboards, etc.)
- Employment and/or Service Related Activities

Specific Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this module, participants should be able to:

- Learn and share strategies that can help to address some of the common concerns that many receiving teachers have when receiving a student.
- Understand the role of the school and school district in supporting best practices for transitions through planning, staff development, family involvement, education and community training.
- Identify information that a receiving team (whether school based or adult based) will need to facilitate a smooth transition for various settings (e.g., pre-school to elementary; elementary to middle school; secondary school to adulthood; classroom to classroom).
- Identify the type of transition your student will be experiencing and select a transition tool that will best meet the needs of your student and that transition situation (e.g., video tape; portfolio; visits; plans; peer support groups)

Part 1 of 2

- Develop a transition plan with your student's team, family and receiving teacher or adult workers that incorporates community-based instruction if applicable. Build in a means to periodically monitor the progress of the transition plan.

This module will be posted in 2 sections to assist with downloading:

Part 1 will include the following topics:

1. Transitions To School (Kindergarten)
2. Transitions From Grade To Grade Within The Same School
3. Transitions To Secondary

Part 2 will include the remaining topics:

4. Transition To Adulthood
5. Strategies For Successful Transitions
6. Transition To Adulthood - Planning Tools

Recommended Readings

Text: Including Students with Severe and Multiple Disabilities in Typical Classrooms, June E. Downing, Paul H. Brookes Pub. Co., 2008

- Chapter 4, pp. 111 - 113, - The Preschool Student - Assessing the Next Environment & Developing a Portfolio to Assist in Transition
- Review Chapter 6: The Middle School or Junior High School Student - pps 178-179 "Transition To High School".
- Chapter 11 - Common Concerns and Some Responses (for receiving teachers)
- Chapter 7 - The Highschool Student: pp 185 - Preparing for adulthood paragraph; pps. 200 - 209 - Community based instruction sections; & Transition to Postsecondary schools & adult life.

Reference Folder

- Adult Skills
- Adult Switch Activities
- Adult Talking Switch Ideas
- Community Adult Activity Matrix
- Community Service Guide
- Erica's Calendar
- Last Year Schedule
- Leisure Activities Checklist
- Leisure Inventories, D. Mackie
- Sample Internet Environmental Scan
- PATH Guidelines
- PATH Sample
- Sample Adult Motivators
- Sample Calendar

Part 1 of 2

- Special Needs Work Experience
- Team Roles And Responsibilities
- Transition Adulthood Step by Step
- Transition Checklist
- Transition Form Sample
- Adult Day Planner
- How I Make Choices
- Hobbies
- Adult Handbook

Internet Readings

- **Planning Alternative Tomorrows of Hope**, Pearpoint, J., O'Brien, J., & Forest, M., Introduction to PATH

<http://www.inclusion.com/vdpathtraining.html>

or

<http://www.inclusion.com/path.html>

- **Your Future Now**, Transition To Adulthood, Ministry of Education.

http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec_needs/pdf/your_future_now.pdf

- **VELA Microboard** – free planning resource for families, includes PATH facilitation

<http://www.microboard.org/>

- **Transition Planning For Youth With Special Needs**, A Community Support Guide, Ministry of Children and Family

http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec_needs/pdf/support_guide.pdf

- **Developing an Individual Support Plan for an Adult**. A practical guide for adults and those who support them who develop and submit an individual support plan to CLBC.

http://www.communitylivingbc.ca/policies_and_publications/documents/GuidanceforPersonalSupportPlanDevelopment-ADULTS-FortheWeb.pdf

- **Communication Assistance for Young Adults (CAYA)**, project created through Special Education Technology BC (SET-BC) to serve adults between the ages of 19-27 who require alternative or augmentative communication (AAC) assistance.

<http://www.cayabc.org/>

Transition Planning

Introduction

Change is a part of all of our lives and occurs continuously. Some examples for ourselves may include: birthdays, marriages, divorce, college, births, deaths, new home, etc. Transitions to these new changes can create both excitement, anticipation as well as anxiety. Even positive change can create stress for a variety of reasons. For example, when going on a trip there is preparation to be done and arrangements to be made. Sometimes we are unable to relax until we are in the new setting. Many of these feelings can accompany all of the team players when dealing with transitions within the school environment. Teachers, assistants, itinerants, families and students themselves may experience some anxiety as well as excitement regarding the changes that usually take place year to year. Usually the more time that is spent in supporting these changes and transitions, the more smoothly they occur for everyone. In this module, we will explore some issues and strategies for some of the transitions that students with severe multiple disabilities may experience throughout their years in school. Having familiar peers who move along with the student from year to year, is certainly a main source of support for all.



1. Transitions To School (Kindergarten)

The first day of school is often a rite of passage for many. For most parents this is a time of both excitement and anxiety. For the family of a child with significant special needs this day is also much anticipated, but that anticipation is often mixed with confusion and worry. Families may be confused about the protocols and procedures in schools, (e.g., “How is the teacher assistant hired? Does the teacher assistant only work with my child? How much aide time does my child receive? What kind of training do teacher assistants have?”)

Families may have worries about how their child will be received by the regular classroom teacher and by the classmates, (e.g., “Will my child be welcomed?”)

This student is welcomed at the water play bin with her classmates. She is working on one of her skills by standing in her standing frame during this activity.



As well, many children with significant special needs have health issues. Families are naturally concerned about their child’s well being at school, (e.g., “What training do staff have in seizure management?”)

School personnel may experience some anxiety as well. The school administrator, classroom teacher and assistants may have heard that the student will need a lot of special care. They may not have met the child or if they have, the meeting is often just a brief introduction. The school staff may be left wondering how this child can be successfully included into a kindergarten program. They might worry about whether they may be able to manage the student’s needs including the student’s physical care and health issues. Staff may be wondering who will help them to develop an educational plan. They often have concerns about levels of funding available for teacher assistant time, for planning time as well as the materials needed for the student.

Review the tutorial video for: **Where Do I Get Help For My Student**, found in the video section at www.pisp.ca
Or go directly to this link and click on the video for this questions to download:
http://www.pisp.ca/video/video_tutorials.html



Often a transition meeting is held so that the preschool team and family can share information with the school team. This is usually just the beginning of a series of important conversations about the student's needs. Some school districts have an orientation meeting where pre-schoolers with special needs have their families attend and address their questions.

1.1 Recommended Processes For Transition To Kindergarten

Schools and districts are usually involved in the following activities...

Gathering Information On Student

- Diagnosis, Health Needs, Physical Care Needs

Determining Funding, Resources Available to School & Personnel

- Identify School Staff (e.g. Classroom Teacher, Assistants)
- Identify Case Manager
- Identify District Resources – Special Education Services, Therapists, Itinerants

Organizing The Transition To School Meeting

Who usually attends? (Family / caregivers, the student (if feasible), Preschool Staff, Specialist Staff (preschool therapists, preschool case manager), Receiving School Staff

Facilitating The Sharing Of Information

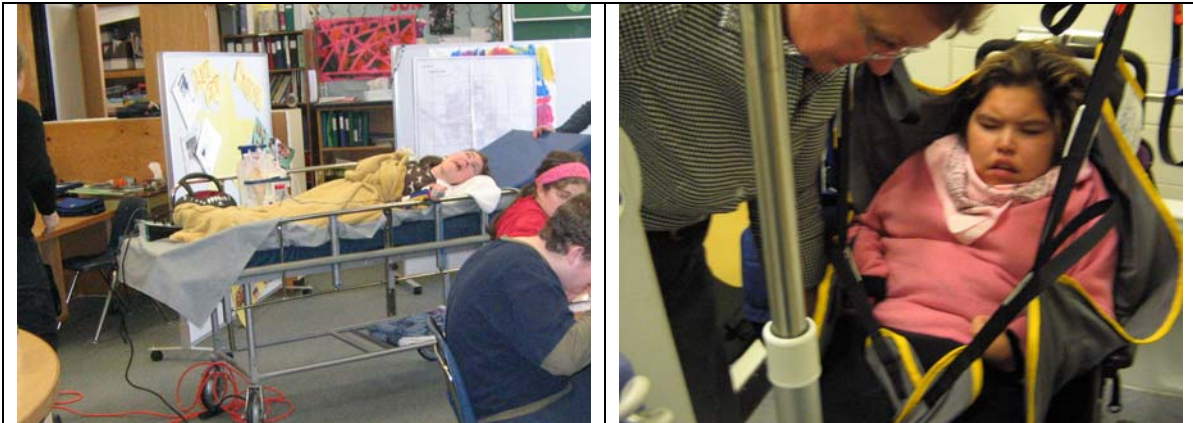
Family and Preschool Personnel share information with school staff

Developing An Action Plan For Transition To Kindergarten

Common Action Plans include the following...

- Assistant training – perhaps by the parent or school nurse for feeding, toileting, etc.
- Family and student visit the receiving classroom & school in June
- Receiving resource teacher visits the student in his/her Preschool Placement in June
- Student's gradual entry to school in September is planned
- Environmental Considerations may include seating systems, beds, lifts, ramps,

washrooms, etc.



Readings

• Including Students with Severe and Multiple Disabilities in Typical Classrooms, June E. Downing, Paul H. Brookes Pub. Co., 2008, Chapter 4, pp. 111 - 113, - The Preschool Student - Assessing the Next Environment & Developing a Portfolio to Assist in Transition

2. Transitions From Grade To Grade Within The Same School

While transitions from grade to grade are less stressful on the student, family and school staff, they still require careful planning. These transitions involve some changes in environments, expectations, rules and staff. One of the challenges is often how to transfer the adult's knowledge of the student (the teacher assistant's and the teacher's) to new staff.

Most teachers indicate that they prefer to receive student information early on in the transition process (e.g., in June to prepare over the summer). Videos, information books and observation time often help to dispel concerns. The receiving teacher also needs to be able to meet with the student's previous teacher before and after the transition to ask questions. It is also important to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the student's team for the receiving teacher and/or school staff (particularly if special students are new to the school and some teachers may not have worked in this capacity before). Questions often come up around the role of the Case Manager and therapists.

Review the tutorial video for the question: **Where Do I Get Help For My Student?** found in the video section at www.pisp.ca

Or go directly to this link and click on the first question/video:
http://www.pisp.ca/video/video_tutorials.html



2.1 Recommended Processes For Transition Between Grades

School staff will ultimately need to create a process for transitioning students with special needs from grade to grade.

Most schools engage in the following activities...

Schedule A Transition Meeting

Who should attend?

Current Staff (e.g. grade 4 teacher and teacher assistants)

Receiving Staff (e.g. grade 5 teacher)

Family / Caregiver

Student, if appropriate

Share Information On The Student

- Student's Current Performance
- Student Needs
- What Support the Student Receives (teacher assistant time, therapists)
- Long Range Planning Information (MAPS, etc.)
- IEP - Goals and Skills
- Progress Reports
- Personalized Daily Schedule specific to Student (reflecting what the student is doing)
- Video Tape of Student in Class & Playground demonstrating skills in all domains

Develop A Transition Action Plan

- Plan a schedule for the student to visit the new classroom.
- The receiving teacher may request time to observe the student in June.

Readings

- Including Students with Severe and Multiple Disabilities in Typical Classrooms, June E. Downing, Paul H. Brookes Pub. Co., 2008 , Chapter 11 - Common Concerns and Some Responses (for receiving teachers)

Reference Folder

- Review the handout called "Team Roles And Responsibilities" with your student's team.

3. Transitions To Secondary

Although transition to middle school or high school can sometimes produce anxiety with parents, there are many advantages to moving the student on to the secondary school. Secondary schools offer a more diverse array of programs. There is a wide range of options through electives that offer concrete activities for students on modified programs. These often include art, drama, sports, band, woodworking, choir, food class, and technology classes. Many high school settings also offer student-support through "Peer Tutors", which allows the student more opportunity to participate in typical school activities.

Due to the lower cognitive functioning of many students on modified programs, sometimes individuals (both school staff and families) feel that it would be more appropriate to keep the student at the elementary level. The challenge is for us as advocates and educators to continue to select and modify activities for the student in age appropriate settings so that the individual continues to experience learning within age-appropriate activities that are concrete and provide high sensory feedback. The following are some considerations regarding the transition from elementary to secondary school.

- Many special needs students actually respond positively to a new environment with the noise and activity level of the high school as it provides new sensory input.
- Meaningful integration into middle school and high school can sometimes provide some of the richest programming opportunities for the student's team. Electives such as textiles, foods, art, industrial education, drama, woodworking or gym can provide "hands-on" concrete opportunities with activities which may be easier to reinforce the student's learning objectives and skills (e.g., switch work using appliance or electric tools, choice making, voice output, functional hand skills, purposeful mobility, expressive language, sorting, matching, functional use of numeracy, etc.).



This high school student is practicing using her vision as well as her cheek switch to run the palm sander in this wood working class.



This student is using her switch and the AbleNet Powerlink to run the mixer in this cooking class.

- Secondary schools often promote **community involvement** and learning skills in the real world. Once again, this is helpful for the student with severe multiple disabilities in providing **meaningful concrete learning opportunities within functional activities.**
- **Peer tutoring** or buddy systems are often implemented in middle schools and high schools as they relate to various care-giving professions. Some buddy systems can be paralleled with the special needs student's programming needs.
- Hopefully the student has established some **long-term relationships** with age appropriate peers over the years at school. Some of these peers will have learned to communicate with and assist or prompt the student with his/her skills. It is important that these peers continue on with the student into the receiving school to model for new students how the student can interact with them.

In short, the emphasis in high school is to prepare all students for their adult lives. A student working on a functional curriculum through modified programming, will need all of this time to help **prepare for a meaningful adult life.** We don't want to shorten this preparation time at the high school level by prolonging the stay at elementary school. It is important that we begin very early on to build in activities at the high school that are **service-related** and occur within the community. For examples of switch related activities for students who have limited hand-function, refer to the reference material - "Adult Switch Activities". For those who have some hand function and mobility, refer to the task analysis called "Special Needs Work Experience".



School jobs and skills should transfer... from elementary to secondary settings.

Readings

- Refer to the reference section for this module for "Adult Switch Activities" and "Adult Talking Switch Ideas".
- Refer to the reference section for this module for a sample task analysis called "Special Needs Work Experience".

3.1 Recommended Processes For Transition To Middle School Or High School

To successfully transition a student to middle or high school the current school should consider the following activities...

Schedule A Transition Meeting

Who should attend?

- Current Staff (e.g. grade 7 teacher and teacher assistants, Case Manager)
- Receiving Team (e.g. School Administrator, Counselor, LAT, Resource Teacher or Life Skills Teacher)
- Family / Caregiver
- Student, if feasible

Share Information On The Student

- Student's Current Performance
- Student Needs
- What Support the Student Receives (teacher assistant time, therapists)
- Long Range Planning Information (MAPS, etc.)
- IEP - Goals and Skills
- Progress Reports or Portfolios
- Personalized Daily Schedule specific to Student - reflecting what the student is doing
- Video Tape of Student in Class / Playground

Develop A Transition Action Plan

- Plan for your student to visit the new school (see below)

3.2 Visits To The New School

During the year previous to the transition to the new school, many students begin visiting the receiving school (e.g., middle school or high school) once a week to become familiar with the new surroundings. Some of these environmental changes include new noises, increased activity within the halls, new peers and adults, and of course a new building and classrooms. Some of these changes are often beneficial for students once they have had an opportunity to adjust slowly to them. These early visits also provide individuals in the new surroundings with the opportunity to become familiar with the student. At this time, it may be useful to share the student's "skill list" with the staff so that they become aware very early on with the student's learning objectives. If any receiving teachers have not experienced working with the student with his/her particular type of disability, the sending school may need to provide some guidelines for an inclusive program that fits with the student's particular skill set and limitations.

If you have not done so already, view the tutorial video for the question: **What are some guidelines for an inclusive program?** found at www.pisp.ca
Or go directly to this link and click on the video named above:
http://www.pisp.ca/video/video_tutorials.html



Readings

- Including Students with Severe and Multiple Disabilities in Typical Classrooms, June E. Downing, Paul H. Brookes Pub. Co., 2008, Review Chapter 6: The Middle School or Junior High School Student - pps 178-179 "Transition To High School".