
TRANSITION PLANNING

Students with special needs frequently experience difficulty in making transitions (e.g., entering or leaving school). The new situations faced because of life changes such as entering or leaving school require a specialized plan.

There are many types of transitions:

- Entering the school system
- Moving between activities and settings
- Moving from level to level
- Preparing for adult life

BEGINNING SCHOOL

Entering the school system is an important event in a young child's life. Much of a child's future success in school depends on the transition into the year prior to enrolment. If special supports and programming are required for a child, a one-year notification period is advised. A longer notification period may be needed if physical changes to the school or classroom setting are required. This timeframe allows the division to prepare any extra supports necessary to meet the child's needs.

Guidelines for Early Childhood Transition to School is a protocol designed to facilitate information sharing and collaborative planning between community-based agencies working with pre-school children with special needs and the school system prior to the child enrolling. The goal is to ensure continuity of appropriate supports.

The guidelines were developed and are endorsed by the departments of Health, Family Services and Housing and Education, Training and Youth.

The guidelines encourage collaboration among participants in the transition – the child, the family, sending and receiving service providers – and introduce a process of long-range planning. The roles and responsibilities of each partner in the transition are described and forms to assist information sharing (*School Placement Programming Information Inventory* and *Authorization of Exchange Information*) are included.

The benefits of transition planning prior to school entry include:

1. Continuity of programs that suit the child's development and learning
2. Involvement of parents/guardians in the transition process, including choices of programs and services. Participation in a step-by-step process will help alleviate the anxiety and stress of change.
3. Continuity of intervention from pre-school to school
4. Preparation within the school system to receive students with special needs, including professional development of staff
5. Long-range planning of supports and services the child will require (personnel, environmental modifications, professional development) in the school system.

The exchange of information between all partners will support the transition to school.

Early Childhood Transition to School for Children with Special Needs

- This document is completed for children entering Kindergarten, who have been identified as having special needs at the pre-school level.

- These children reside with their birth families or may be in foster care.
- The document is completed by parents/guardians and/or preschool/sending agencies, prior to initial transition meeting. This document provides an overview of the child's general needs to assist the receiving school in planning and preparing for the child's entry to Kindergarten.
- The document arrives at Student Services office, typically in Nov/Dec prior to school entry. Reports from various agencies (e.g., Child Development Clinic, Society for Manitobans with Disabilities...) may be attached.
- A copy of the document is sent to receiving school to alert the school team to the student's arrival in Kindergarten.

Transition Meeting

- a transition meeting takes place in the early spring, prior to school entry (e.g., March/April)
- Purpose of the meeting is to:
 - Gather information about the child's needs
 - **Obtain documents/reports** from the pre-school team; assure all **Release of Information** forms are completed and signed by the legal guardian (as per usual, in-coming reports are sent initially to Division Office to start a master file and copies are sent to the school).
 - In some instances, **referrals to TMSD clinical staff** are completed at this time.
 - Determine if the child will require special programming and he fits eligibility criteria for Special Needs Categorical Funding.
 - Assure all information necessary to submit a funding application is accessed.
 - Alert Assistant Superintendent of Student Services regarding any outstanding needs (e.g., nursing care, structural changes to the building) which the child might require.
 - Determine transportation needs (e.g., wheel chair bus, harness, bus monitor) and begin process to make arrangements with the Transportation Department.
 - Determine any special equipment that may be required (e.g., special toilet set).
 - Develop a transition plan, if necessary, to assist in the child's school entry (e.g., photos of the school/classroom, visits to the Kindergarten classroom, meet the teacher).
- This meeting is coordinated by the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and **may** include any or all of the following individuals:
 - parents/guardians/foster parents/guardians/legal guardian (i.e., Social Worker with signing authority for the child).
 - Children's disABILITIES Services Worker.
 - Clinicians/professionals involved with the child at the pre-school level: speech/language pathologist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, nurse, child day care worker, St. Amant contact person, Rehab. Centre for Children contact, consultant for the deaf and hear of hearing, CNIB contact, other...
 - School-based team: resource teacher, principal, guidance counsellor.
 - Clinical team: speech/language pathologist, occupational therapist, behaviour support teacher, psychologist.

Reference

Guidelines for Early Childhood Transition to School, Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat (1997)

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/specedu/protocols/pdf/early_childhood.pdf

BETWEEN SCHOOLS

When preparing for the transition between school levels (e.g., from an Early Years school to a Middle Years school), it is necessary to prepare the student and the receiving school. Preparation should begin in early spring.

Processes to provide written documents on all student transitions between levels have been used successfully in many schools. Documents usually include profiles of students and information regarding their academic progress, behaviour, vision, hearing and special requirements.

To assist students identified with learning difficulties in their transition from middle to senior years, a full academic and psychological assessment is required.

Reference

Transition to Junior High: A Unit of Student for Grade Six Students, Manitoba Education and Training (1991)

Towards Inclusion: Tapping Hidden Strengths: Planning for Students Who Are Alcohol Affected, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (2001).

FROM SECONDARY SCHOOL INTO ADULT LIFE

In 1989, the departments of Family Services, Health and Education and Training mandated collaborative planning for all students 16 or older with special needs requiring government support (financial, residential, social and/or vocational) after leaving school. Students with special needs require more intensive and coordinated planning than most high school students because of their need for long-term support. Transition planning is a critical component in providing of programs and services.

Typically, when students with special needs reach 18, a children's special services (CSS) worker formally transfers case responsibility to an adult worker. Transition planning must begin for such students at age 15 or 16 so programs or service agencies are involved in a timely manner.

Manitoba Transition Planning Process Support Guidelines for Students with Special Needs Reaching Age 16 (from school to services for adults) outlines individual transition planning processes, agency interaction roles and timelines and provides information about strategies and current best practices to assist with transition planning.

Reference

Manitoba Transition Planning Process Support Guidelines for Students with Special Needs Reaching Age 16 (from school to services for adults), Manitoba Education and Training, and Children and Youth Secretariat, 1999

REGISTERING CHILDREN IN CARE OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES

Children taken into the care of a child welfare agency experience very stressful emotional circumstances. Moving into care may result in relocation and require enrolment in a new school outside the child's home school division.

Guidelines for Registration of Students in Care of Child Welfare Agencies acknowledge that the speedy entrance of students into an appropriate school setting is an important way to meet a child's need for safety and belonging. The protocol is designed to facilitate effective information sharing and collaborative planning between local child and family service personnel and school division personnel, to ensure a smooth and successful transition.

Guidelines for Registration of Students in Care of Child Welfare Agencies encourages collaboration along the participants in the transition – the placing agency and the school agency – and describes a planning and information sharing process to ensure appropriate programming; services and support are in place. The roles and responsibilities of each partner the in the transition are described and a form to assist information sharing (Children in Care – School Intake Information) is included.