

For primary teachers: Supporting autistic students' transition to secondary school

Many students find the move to secondary school both stressful and exciting but there are some extra challenges for Autistic students. This is because the transition to secondary school involves three areas that Autistic students may find challenging - socialisation, communication, and adapting to a new environment. The new environment at secondary school will have new people, a different daily structure and a new set of expectations.

Your role

As a primary teacher you have an important role in preparing Autistic students for a successful transition from primary school to secondary school. To do this you'll use your skills in planning and effective communication to develop a transition plan for the student. A transition plan is a written document with information about how you, your student, the student's parent or carer and the secondary school will work together to prepare your student for a successful start at secondary school.

A successful transition plan:

- considers the individual needs of the student,
- includes defined objectives, and
- is developed collaboratively with the student, parent and primary school to ensure a smooth path from primary to secondary school.

You can start transition for Autistic students in Term 1 of Grade 6 or Term 4 of Grade 5 to allow more time to learn new skills. Read more in the Timeline and checklist of steps to create a transition plan.

What the Disability Standards for Education mean for your school

Under section 32 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, education providers must comply with the Disability Standards for Education 2005. The Disability Standards list the legal obligations of all schools:

- (i) Consult, with the student or parent or carer;
- (ii) Make reasonable adjustments; and
- (iii) Prevent victimisation and harassment (bullying).

An adjustment is an action taken to assist a student with a disability to participate in education on the same basis as other students. Student Support Group (SSG) meetings are one way teachers consult with parents. The SSG is a team that works together and provides the opportunity to share information and think about each other's perspectives. The purpose of the SSG meetings is to agree on reasonable adjustments and how they'll be put in place to best support the student's educational and support needs.

Steps for a successful transition plan

1. Gather information

To gather information:

- organise meetings with parents or carers and
 - student observe and document student support
 - needs
- refer to reports and assessments.

Part of a transition plan involves writing a Transition Statement. A Transition Statement is a document completed by the primary school to support a student's transition. Its purpose is to gather information about the student from the teacher, allied health professionals and the student to assist the secondary school to best support the student.

When communicating with parents or carers be aware of any challenges that may affect their communication with you. For example, a parent or carer may be autistic or English may not be their first language. Ask how they prefer to communicate and offer support for this preferred way of communicating.

It's important for teachers, parents and carers to support the student to be involved in developing the transition plan.

The purpose of this table is to assist you to gather information to complete the Transition Statement and develop a transition plan

WHO will be involved	WHAT information could be gathered about the student
<p>Primary school transition team may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistant Principal/Principal• Grade 6 Teacher• Transition Coordinator• Education Support Officer• Student Support Service Officers (psychologists, speech pathologists, social workers)• Visiting Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengths/interests• Dislikes/challenges• Diagnosis information• Sensory challenges• Medical information• Communication skills

Secondary school transition team may include:

- Year 7 Teacher
- Assistant Principal/Principal
- Year Level Coordinator
- Transition Coordinator
- Education Support Officer
- Student Support Service Officers (psychologists, speech pathologists, social workers, school psychologist)
- Visiting Teachers
- Wellbeing Coordinator

Parents or carers

The student

Student's Allied Health Professionals (if appropriate)

- Cognitive Profile
- Emotional and behavioural profile
- Calming strategies
- Current support strategies for learning and behaviour
- Current goals, past goals
- Transition strategies that have been successful in the past

It's important for your school to transfer student information or records to the student's chosen Victorian government secondary school*. Sharing this information informs the secondary school about the best support for the student. You may choose to discuss this with the student's parent or carer but you don't need their consent. The transfer of this student information also enables the Department of Education and Training to fulfil important legal obligations. *If your child is enrolled at a Catholic or Independent secondary school contact the secondary school to find out how the student's information will be transferred.

2. Create a transition plan

To create a transition plan:

- Add 'Discuss transition plan' to the agenda for the Student Support Group (SSG) meetings each term.
- At the SSG meetings discuss the skills that the student needs to learn for a successful transition. Add
- these skills to the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and monitor each term.

The transition plan should consider:

- WHAT skills are needed and what other actions can be taken
- WHO is responsible for supporting the student with the skill
- WHEN it will happen

This table includes some example of skills required to navigate the secondary school environment. Development of these skills could influence the student's transition plan and be included as goals in their IEP.

Skill	Social confidence	Organisation/ Independence	Familiarisation with the new environment	Coping with change/ problem solving	Self-regulation
<p>Possible ways to support skill development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for student to interact with other students going to the same secondary school. Identify strategies to initiate new friendships potentially using social scripts. Practise group work skills. Facilitate guest Q and A with Year 7 students from secondary school. Find activities at secondary school that match student's interest eg. Lego club. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practise taking care of belongings. Provide experience of reading and colour coding school timetables. Explicitly teach time management strategies. Practise self/personal care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise additional visits, possibly with current Education Support Officer. Practise secondary school routine in Term 4 of Grade 6. Teach secondary specific language, for example, textbook, period, homeroom and Year Level Coordinator. Study maps of secondary school. Introduce student to key people at secondary school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explicitly teach problem-solving skills. Create visual reminders of problem-solving strategies. Identify who to ask for help. Give opportunities to discuss feelings and concerns. Remind student of current problem-solving strategies. Focus on student's strengths and how they will be beneficial at secondary school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach student to recognise and appropriately manage their emotions. Teach calming strategies. Identify ways to manage sensory challenges. Identify possible quiet spaces such as the school library. Utilise school psychologist to assist with emotional regulation techniques.

3. Implement the transition plan

This stage involves checking the progress of the skills that were identified in the transition plan. It's important to regularly check in with the student and parent in order to monitor and evaluate whether any parts of the transition plan need to be altered.

It's critical that the primary school facilitates communication between the school, parents and secondary school and establishes agreed methods of communication.

4. Evaluate the transition plan

What worked well? What could be done differently in the future? You can use this information to inform your planning for the transition to secondary school of other autistic students at your school.

Resources

Amaze Transition to Secondary School Information Sheets

[Timeline and checklist of steps to create a transition plan](#)

[Preparing to start secondary school for autistic students](#)

[For parents and carers: Preparing to start secondary school](#)

[For secondary teachers: Supporting autistic students' transition to secondary school](#)

Victorian Department of Education and Training–Transition Year 6-7

[Transitioning to secondary school – students with disability](#)

[Transitioning from Primary to Secondary school. Supporting students with additional or complex needs that arise from disability](#)

Includes a Transition Statement p.14-19 and a section to be filled in by the student p.20-22.

Positive Partnerships

[Planning for change PDF](#)

[Planning Matrix](#)

[Student profile templates](#)

[Transition plan, checklist and Transition and Change Webinar](#)

Amaze

[10 adjustments all school can make](#)

inclusionEd

[Free evidence-based and research-informed teaching practices and tools to support diverse learners in inclusive classrooms](#)

Autism CRC

[Structured Teaching](#)

Allplay Learn

[Primary Teachers Transition Resources](#)

[Primary Teacher Resources](#)

NAS UK website

[Social Stories](#)

Acknowledgement

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