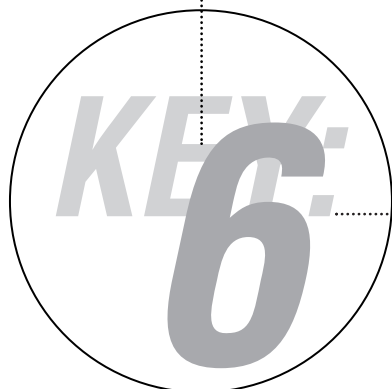


Key Components of Programming for Students with Learning Disabilities



Transition Planning

A transition is any event that results in changes to relationships, routines, assumptions or roles. Transitions are a normal part of life and occur throughout the life cycle. For students, transitions occur at various times during their education programs. Starting school, changing grades and moving from school to post-school settings are common transitions for students. While any student can have difficulty with transitions, students with learning disabilities often have difficulty managing transitions in their lives.

Key Principles of Effective Transitions

Transition planning is most effective if guided by the following key principles.

► **Effective transitions are *planned*.**

In order for transitions to be successful, they must be carefully planned. First, planning for transitions should start well in advance of the actual transition. Second, regardless of whether students are moving from special settings or graduating from senior high school, programming decisions need to be based on an understanding of individual students. This means understanding the individual student's strengths, needs and goals, as well as those of the student's family. Third, similar to developing individualized program plans (IPPs), transition planning should be dynamic and ongoing since transition objectives may change. Finally, a written record of transition planning, including transition goals and strategies, should be included in students' IPPs.

► **Effective transitions are the result of a *collaborative effort*.**

Successful transitions involve input from a variety of people, including parents, students, special and regular education teachers, and community based personnel, such as career counsellors or post-secondary school admissions officers. Collaboration among the various stakeholders should strive to create a supportive relationship and take a problem-solving approach to transition planning. As students move through the education system, they need to become more involved in planning their own transitions. Research has consistently shown that student involvement in the planning process helps students develop understanding of their learning disabilities, and provides opportunities for them to develop much needed self-advocacy and problem-solving skills. (For more on involving students in planning for transitions, see Appendix 9, page 87.)

► **Effective transition planning is *comprehensive in scope*.**

Students with learning disabilities face a variety of challenges, including academic, social, vocational and interpersonal difficulties. As a result, transition planning should focus not only on the academic skills needed for success, but also on helping students develop the ability to problem solve in new situations, monitor and regulate their own performance, and interact appropriately with peers and authority figures. Comprehensive transition planning also involves helping students become aware of their learning strengths, and the type of supports and accommodations available to them in dealing with their learning difficulties.

Facilitating Effective Transitions

Transition planning is an ongoing process. There are a variety of strategies that are appropriate across the school years, including the following.

► **The Elementary School Years**

- Help students become comfortable with new surroundings and people by arranging for students to visit new classrooms and meet new teachers.
- Identify the skills students will need in the next environment and provide opportunities for them to learn these skills.
- Involve parents by helping them become advocates for their children.
- Listen to students' concerns about transitions. Engage in frequent discussion with them about the transition and highlight the positive aspects of a new environment.
- Help students take responsibility for their learning by establishing consistent homework and study routines. Encourage students to be independent learners and praise their efforts to take responsibility for their learning.
- Teach students organization and study strategies, such as time management, note taking, test preparation and test-taking strategies.

► **The Junior High School Years**

- Begin exploring career interests.
- Encourage students to discover their learning strengths.
- Involve students in transition planning by actively participating in goal setting.
- Help students learn how to monitor their progress and assist them in sharing their perceptions with the transition planning team.
- Teach students how to explain their learning needs to others and become self-advocates.
- Teach students effective study strategies, such as time management, note taking, test preparation and test-taking strategies.
- Explore appropriate assistive technologies and encourage keyboarding skills.

► **The Senior High School Years**

- Explore career options.
- Help students and parents understand the differences between senior high school and post-secondary settings.
- Encourage students to take academically challenging programs in the most integrated settings possible.
- Continue to emphasize the teaching of learning and study strategies.
- Help students and parents learn about appropriate accommodations and assistive technologies.
- Ensure students have all the necessary documentation to receive appropriate support in post-secondary settings.
- Explore post-secondary institutions and other community-based services; e.g., Alberta Human Resources and Employment. (For more on transition planning during high school, see Appendix 10, page 88.)

Outcomes

The outcomes below describe potential results from implementing the strategies, activities and practices in this section.

- There is collaboration in the planning and implementation of comprehensive transition plans.
- Continuity of programming is maintained across settings and across grades.
- Parents are actively involved in planning for transitions.
- Students are aware of, understand and are better prepared for the expectations of new environments.
- School personnel are knowledgeable about the needs of students making the transition to their programs.

Connections to Other Alberta Learning Resources

- See Long Range Planning/Transition Planning, pages LD.80–LD.85 in *Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities* (Alberta Education, 1996), Book 6 of the *Programming for Students with Special Needs* series.
- See Transition Planning, pages IPP.41–IPP.49 in *Individualized Program Plans* (Alberta Education, 1995), Book 3 of the *Programming for Students with Special Needs* series.
- See *Transition Planning for Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities: A Resource Guide for Families, Teachers and Counsellors* (Alberta Education, 1992).

