

Autism in High School

In High School Checklist

1. Transitions

Questions regarding major transitions:

- What supports can be put in place to help ease the transition to a new term?
- Can students meet their new teachers before the term begins?
- What school staff can help set up a meeting with the student's new teachers at the start of every term?
- Does the elementary school offer a transition program for students heading into Grade 9?
- Does the elementary board conduct Grade 8-9 transition meetings?
- Can we get the timetable early? Who should we contact for this?
- Can we see where the classrooms are? Who should we contact for this?
- Can we get a copy of the term curriculum for each course? Who should we contact for this?

Questions regarding daily transitions:

- How can we get advance notice of planned changes in routine (e.g., fire drills, substitute teachers)?
- What school staff can help prepare students for planned changes in the daily routine?
- If students have difficulties with changes in the usual routine, what school staff can assist with this?
- Is there a buddy or mentor system or student mentors at the school?
- What strategies can be put into place to assist with moving from class to class?
- What options are there for students who are unable to attend assemblies? Is there a designated room to go to when assemblies are being held?
- Is there a designated room to go to for support/academic or personal during the school day?
- Can students use a lock they find easy to use?

2. Social Demands

Questions to ask regarding social challenges with teachers and school staff

- What is the process for finding out about substitute teachers ahead of time (when circumstances permit)?
- Can parents set up a meeting with new teachers every semester? What school staff is the lead contact person to assist with this?
- Is there a Child and Youth Worker at the school?
 - What is their role?
 - How do we access the Child and Youth Worker?
- Teachers sometimes ask students to form their own groups in class — if this is too challenging, what supports can the teacher put in place? What's the process for communicating this need?

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- What's the process if we feel the teacher is not able or willing to address our concerns?
- What school staff can help when there is an interpersonal issue between the student and a teacher? What are the steps to follow?

Social challenges with students:

- What school staff can monitor students' safety when bullying is suspected?
- What social skills supports are there to assist students who are in regular classes (e.g., working with other students on projects, presentations, etc.)?
- Are there social skills training or other school supports for helping with:
 - interacting with other students via texting, social media, etc.?
 - having informal conversations outside of class?
 - romantic relationships?

3. Challenges related to Sensory Needs

- Where is there a designated calming, quiet space where students can go if they have difficulty with the bright lights and noisy classrooms?
 - Is this space available at all times?
 - How do students access this space if they need to leave class and go there?
- What arrangements can be made to avoid walking through crowded hallways between classes (e.g., permission to arrive late to class without being marked as absent or late, permission to leave early from class)
- Does the school have a "no perfumes or strong smells" policy?
- Where is there a quiet place to eat lunch if the cafeteria is too overwhelming?
- What arrangements can be made for a locker that is at the end of a row of lockers (not in the middle of the row)?
- If the school uniform presents a sensory issue, what are the options?
- What school staff would be the lead person at the school to assist with these concerns?
- What school staff can help create discreet ways to communicate a need to leave in the middle of class?
- What options are there for students who are unable to attend assemblies because of sensory overstimulation? Is there a designated room to go to when assemblies are being held? Is there a way to be informed of what was missed at the assembly?

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4. Managing Workload and the Structure of the Day

Homework:

- Outside of the General Life Skills course, what school staff can help with time management regarding homework, due dates, instructions, etc.
- How will this type of support be provided to students who are taking a full course-load?
- What is the process for parents to communicate with teachers so that they can be up to date on homework completion?
- Does the school offer courses that teach organization/time management/etc. skills?
- Do students have to take a full course load if it is too overwhelming?

School day:

- If being in the classroom for all courses is too overwhelming, what alternatives are there for earning credits outside of class? (e.g. eLearning, correspondence)? How do we access these options?
- If a break is needed in the middle of a class, how can this be communicated discreetly?
- If a laptop is needed in class, what is the process for arranging this?
- Are there any schedule modifications to optimize success? (i.e. first period spare)
- What's the process for requesting that the time-table be scheduled by hand (vs. generated by a computer)?
- What kinds of accommodations can be made for final exams?
 - Where will final exams be written?
 - Are breaks allowed during a final exam?
 - What school staff makes these arrangements?

Co-Op Work Placements:

- Does the school offer aid and support in preparing students for the workplace?
- What school staff can help with writing a résumé?
- Is there someone at the school who can help with looking for a job?
- What accommodations can the school provide for co-op placements?
 - shorter hours
 - summer placement

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5. Coexisting Diagnoses that Affect School Attendance

Use the following questions to help you plan supports around co-existing diagnoses.

- If managing the early start time is too challenging, what are the options?
- How can regular check-in meetings be scheduled so that issues can be addressed before they turn into big problems?
 - How often will check-in meetings take place?
 - How can parents be informed and involved in these meetings?
- What alternatives are there for earning credits outside of class (e.g., eLearning, correspondence)? How do we access these options?
- Is there a school social worker?
 - If so, what is their role?
 - How do we access the school social worker?
- Is there a mental health nurse?
 - If so, what is their role?
 - How do we access the mental health nurse?
- What is the role of the “monitor teacher”?
- What is the role of the attendance counsellor?
- During the school day, where can students go when they are too anxious to attend class?
- What school staff can help when students are feeling too anxious to go to class? What is the process for connecting with this person?