

Autism in High School

Transition into High School Checklist

1. Before High School — When to Start Planning the Transition to High School

Planning the transition:

- Will there be a meeting to talk about high school in grade 8? What is involved in a case-conference? Who will attend?
- When should we start thinking about planning the transition to high school?
- How can we find out which high schools offer an organized program or dedicated space to support students with ASD?
- If our high school does not offer an organized program or a dedicated space for students with ASD, then how can we arrange for similar supports?
- How can we be part of transition planning?
- What do we need to know about when starting high school?
- What school staff can explain how to access and navigate the high school website?

Planning for the transition to the new school:

- What kind of student orientation is possible before starting high school?
 - How many visits are possible?
 - When can these visits begin?
- What school staff will be our contact person at the high school (e.g., special education teacher, vice principal, guidance counsellor, etc.)?
- Can students meet their grade 9 teachers before the school year begins?
- What is the process for letting substitute teachers know about special arrangements (e.g., leaving in the middle of class, walking around if needed, etc.)?
- Can parents meet with their student's grade 9 teachers before classes begin (or shortly after classes begin)?
- If students need to take public transportation, does any school staff help with this?
- Is school bussing available for students who need it because of their I.E.P.?
- How do parents request school bussing for their student?

Planning for expectations for greater independence:

- What do students do on registration day?
 - If students needs assistance on registration day, what school staff should parents speak with to arrange for this ahead of time?
- What school staff can help students on registration day?
- Is their a transition book or video to help familiarize students with the people and rooms that the student will encounter? If so, how do we access this?

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2. Planning/Discussing the Continuation of Supports that were Received in Elementary/Middle School

Use the following questions to help you plan supports around social skills, academics, daily transitions, time management, agenda use, and sensory needs.

The I.E.P. and I.P.R.C.

- What's the process for parents and students to participate in the I.E.P. in high school?
- Who can parents talk to about the student's I.E.P.?
- What school staff will monitor the student's I.E.P. in high school?
- How will sensory, social and academic needs to supported in high school?
- Who can parents talk with about the student's I.P.R.C.?
- How do parents request an I.P.R.C.?

Support for Social Skills

- What does support for social skills look like in high school? In particular, what supports are in place to help students learn:
 - appropriate uses for cell phone and social media
 - how to engage in formal conversations with teachers and students in during class time
 - how to work with other students on projects, groups work, presentations, assigned groups
 - how to engage in informal conversations with students in hallways, cafeteria, and during downtime
 - how to interact with other students in extracurricular activities (e.g., sports teams, plays, band, dances, other after-school groups).
- Some students have behaviours that other students might find odd, so bullying is a concern.
- Who should we talk to about this at the high school?
- Who will look out for the student's safety in high school?
- Are there rules for cell phone use in school? Can the student keep a cell phone with them at all times?

Support for Academics

- If a full course-load in the classroom is too overwhelming:
 - what are the options for a reduced course-load?
 - is a supervised work period possible in grade 9?
 - where will a spare period be located?
 - how is a spare period supervised?
 - which courses can be taken online instead of in the classroom?

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- Is it possible to have a General Life Skills course or MSIP (Multi Subject Instructional Period) every semester?
- If the student will be taking a full course-load of academic classes and will not be in general study skills or life skills classes:
 - who can provide resource help for time management, social skills, life skills?
 - how can we arrange for out-of-class breaks during the school day?
- Is there a buddy system or mentor program in the school?
 - if so, how do we make arrangements to ensure a good fit?
- Can a meeting with parents, student, teachers and special education teachers be set up each semester, and, if so, how do we set this up?
- Is Educational Assistant (EA) support available if needed?
- Are standardized tests mandatory for students with an I.E.P.? (e.g., grade 9 Math test, grade 10 Literacy Test)?
 - if so, what preparation or support are provided to assist with this?
- Will teachers keep in contact with parents and can they meet occasionally to discuss progress?
- Can parents have their student's teachers' email addresses?
- Will teachers post work online?
- If extra academic help is needed, what school staff will be able to provide more direct instruction?
 - If not, who can help with this?
- Can teachers provide an alternative to group work/presentations, if needed?
- Can students use a computer in class if one is needed?
 - Does the school provide the computer if students need to use one in class?

Support for Daily Transitions

- Who should we speak with to request that the time-table be scheduled by hand (rather than generated by a computer)?
- How can we find out about when there will be assemblies or other disruptions in the schedule or classroom?

Support for Time-management and Agenda use

- In elementary school help was given for keeping track of homework, due dates, projects, tests, etc. What school staff can help with this in high school?
- Who can tell us if the GLE (learning strategies) course will be a good fit?
- If it is not a good fit, how will these supports be provided in high school?
- What school staff can help give reminders to bring home homework each night?
- Do high school teachers use a class website to post homework and assignment information?

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Support for Sensory Needs

- The need for support for some of the following issues may be greater, or altogether new in high school.
- Lockers: Having a locker in a crowded area would be difficult. How can we arrange for a locker at the end of a row, or a locker in a quiet area?
- Lunch room:
 - If the cafeteria is too crowded and noisy, what are the options?
 - What school staff supervises the alternate lunch spaces?
- Quiet calming spaces: Does the school have a designated calming place for students who get overwhelmed? Is that space supervised?
- Classrooms: How can a strategic seating arrangement be made for each class (i.e., away from fans, away from doors)?
- What school staff can help to calm students who become overstimulated and/or overwhelmed in high school?
- Does the school have a chapel? If so, can students access the chapel whenever they need a quiet place to go?
- If a parent is worried that the student will go out of the school or go to quiet secluded spaces in the school (e.g., stairwell) to escape the noise and crowds, what measures can be implemented to monitor the student's safety? Will there be a safety plan for students who might leave the school building?

3. Keeping the Communication Going Throughout Grade 9

Use the following questions to help you plan supports around communication.

- How can we set up regular check-in meetings throughout grade 9?
- What is the best way to keep in contact with teachers?
- Can we get deadlines for all assignments ahead of time to help keep on track?