



## Off to School – Starting School on the Right Foot (Part 4)

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Everyone benefits from well-planned transitions. Learners with autism are no exception. They may experience additional challenges regarding changes to their routine. Engaging in proactive and collaborative planning in the months before the school year starts can help reduce stress for everyone.

In Parts 1 through 3, we've shared strategies to help set the stage for a positive working relationship with families by offering a sample agenda, and a series of key questions to gather essential information about our transitioning learner (see [www.autism-learning-partnership.com](http://www.autism-learning-partnership.com)). In Part 4, we will take a closer look at best practices regarding the meeting wrap-up and important next steps.

**Note:** The New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development collaborated with the other Atlantic Provinces as part of our collaboration with APSEA Autism in Education to develop an information paper on this topic ([click here for full article](#)). The paper provides helpful advice to schools and families regarding the various issues that should be considered for successful transition planning.

**Note:** This document does not constitute clinical advice. Transition planning must consider factors such as established processes and policies, resources, unique family situations, and the child's needs.

### Transition Meeting – Wrap up

Once information about the learner has been discussed, there are a few more details to work out.

- **Communication Plan:** What is the preferred frequency and method of ongoing communication between home and school? Are any follow-up meetings necessary before or after school entry? Should we consider inviting anyone else?
- **Transportation:** If the child will be taking the school bus, having a chance to familiarize him or herself with this new environment, and with the bus routes, can also help reduce anxiety and identify any skills that should be addressed to promote and maintain security.
- **Orientation activities:** It may be beneficial to offer a school visit prior to school entry, so the learner can familiarize his or herself with their future classroom and common areas such as the cafeteria, gym, washrooms, playground area. A visit with the teacher and other key people can also be helpful.

Once the agenda points have been covered, it is important to give caregivers an opportunity to voice any additional details or concerns.

To help retain all the information covered and understand the plan, the note taker can quickly review next steps for family and school team. A copy of the notes can be shared with all participants in the days to follow. The facilitator can conclude and thank everyone for their participation and highlight the next meeting date and time.