



## Moving on up! Part: 2

### Practical Transition Activities: School to School

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We all need support and adjustment time when making a significant change in our lives. Typically, Canadian students have two major school changes during their school years; elementary school to middle school, and middle school to high school. Considering some of the things students must adapt to; new location, people, transportation, schedule, bells, and expectations; changing schools is a major transition. Schools often support all learners as they prepare for a new school by talking about the differences and positive activities available at the new school, arranging school visit, and sharing important details with families. Learners with ASD may need additional support and opportunities to prepare for these school to school transitions.

Marcie is a fifteen-year-old high school student. She is confident to complete mastered tasks and interact with familiar people when following a routine. She uses Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) to express her wants and needs and uses a visual schedule to help her organize her day and to understand what is coming next. She enjoys when she has opportunities to work independently and can follow an Independent Activity Schedules (IAS), where she completes/reviews previously mastered tasks and leisure activities. She also loves doing an independent gym work out. Like many people, Marcie does not enjoy changes in her schedule; her parents and school team were aware that Marcie would need support for her transition from middle school to high school. The activities took time and coordination between the schools and parents; however, the planning helped with Marcie's success in adjusting to her new school and routine.

Check out what Marcie, her parent and school teams did to help have a smoother transition into a new school.

#### Communication

There were several sharing and planning meetings with both school teams and parents starting mid way through Marcie's last year at middle school. The teams and parents also met during the month of September to discuss how Marcie was adapting to her new school.

#### Visual Supports

In preparation for school visits, pictures of the high school (entry doors, office, hallways, locker, cafeteria, gym, washrooms, classrooms, etc.) and some high school staff members were taken (teachers, education assistants, principal, admin assistant, crosswalk guard, bus driver, cafeteria staff, etc.). Labelled pictures were put in a photo album and a copy was created for her visual schedule.

#### School Visits

Marcie made short visits to the high school several times during her last year at middle school with a middle school staff member. Her first visits were short (15-20 minutes) and happened during class time to avoid busy and noisy hallways. She followed her visual schedule to find specific areas in the school, completed some of her preferred tasks (IAS brought from middle school, gym workout), ate a snack, and asked staff at the school for something she needed. As she became more familiar with the school and the staff, she had longer visits (30- 60 minutes) where she bought and ate lunch and took part in some activities with a few students.

**Note:** This document does not constitute clinical advice, but rather serves as an example of an effective practice for a particular student. Intervention plans should be based upon assessment, and evidence-based teaching strategies should be carefully selected according to the child's needs, and learning profile.

When Marcie's middle school class went to visit the high school, she was able to participate in some of the events because she had already had several visits and had preferred activities to do during the tour.

During the month of June and the week before school started Marcie and her parents had scheduled visits at the high school. Marcie used her visual schedule to plan her visit and then used her PECS to ask for some things she wanted during her visit. Marcie's schedule for the first day was shared with her and her parents.

### **At Home**

Marcie and her parents reviewed the pictures and some video clips of her new school during the summer months.

### **Routine**

Weeks before school started Marcie and her parents organized their morning, bedtime and meal routines to match school time routine.

### **First weeks of High School**

Time was spent making sure Marcie knew how to find places in the school and had opportunities to build relationships with peers and staff. Her schedule was organized to be similar to the one she followed in middle school. She had time to complete her IAS and to do preferred activities such as her work out.

See you next week with new tips!

### **About Us**

Autism Learning Partnership, a branch of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) in New Brunswick (Canada), is the sole provider of the Provincial Autism Training curriculum for preschool autism agencies and educational personnel in New Brunswick. The Autism Learning Partnership provides bilingual, evidence-based, high-quality professional learning and resources to support families, preschool agency personnel and educational personnel in the province, and has a mandate to establish partnerships with organizations nationally and internationally.