



## Off to School – Starting School on the Right Foot (Part 2)

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In last week's Friday tips, we reviewed some best practices for helping to set the tone for a positive working relationship with families from the very beginning of the school experience, even prior to the transition meeting. In this edition, and in subsequent Friday tips, we will review the various components of a sample agenda for the transition planning meeting (see below) to gather essential information about the child's strengths, needs, skills and learning profile. These tips are based upon our experience in working with families, and best practices for transition planning. They may serve to validate or supplement your current processes.

**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.

**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.

### Opening the Transition Meeting

*Welcome and introductions:* The team member facilitating the meeting helps to set participants at ease, and to remind them of shared purpose in coming together (example: *It's our pleasure to welcome everybody here today to talk about Billy, who is going to be starting school in the fall. We're really happy to have him come to school and we're looking forward to getting to know him and learning how we can help him be as successful as possible. Before we talk about Billy, let's begin with introductions.*).

*Acknowledge the parents/guardians' anxiety:* Show the family that you care about their well-being and their child (example: *I'm sure this meeting might feel a little overwhelming, but we want you to know that we're going to work with you to make sure things go as smoothly as possible as Billy makes the transition to school*). We have attended some meetings where schools offer water and snacks, as a sign of hospitality. Having tissues somewhere in the room (but not on the table) is a good idea. If you have asked the family to bring a picture of the child, ask whether they can share it with the group near the beginning of the meeting.

*Purpose and format of the meeting:* Provide some context for the meeting and how you expect the discussion to unfold (example: *The purpose of the meeting today is to gather information about Billy's strengths and challenges so that we have the best possible starting point to think about what his educational plan should look like. Everybody has the agenda that outlines the main points we want to talk about today. It's also important to know that we won't be making any final decisions here today. We just want to gather as much information as we can to help with planning and decision-making over the next few months. Our purpose is to help Billy have a successful transition into school. A couple of questions to keep in mind for our discussion today will be: What would a successful transition look like? How will we know if this transition has been successful? We will start with some of the required documents, and then we will talk about Billy's strengths and needs.*

*Time Frame:* As you review the agenda, remind the participants of the time allotted for the meeting, and that you may interject and ask questions to keep the meeting on track to ensure that you obtain the necessary information.

In the next edition, we will review key questions to ask the family and service providers to help obtain a picture of the child's learning profile, strengths and needs, as well as the current supports in place.

## Appendix A

### Transition to School Sharing and Planning Meeting – Sample Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
  - Welcome the participants
  - Acknowledge the parents/guardians' anxiety
- Purpose and format of meeting
- Documentation of diagnosis and any additional written information
- Medical and/or dietary concerns
- Strengths and challenges
  - Communication
  - Social interaction
  - Self-help
  - Safety
  - Behaviour
- Medical and/or dietary concerns
- Current preschool services
- Current programming
  - Program goals and summary
  - Effective teaching strategies
  - Communication method and any required communication supports
  - Visual supports
  - Environmental supports
  - Social supports
- Environmental sensitivities
- Behaviour support plan
- Transportation considerations
- Method of communication between home and school
- Any additional parent/guardian concerns
- Transition and orientation activities
- Next meeting date or follow-up plan
- Closing and thank you

#### About Us

Autism Learning Partnership (ALP), 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.