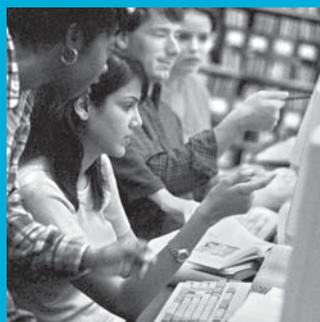


# The Program Planning Process: A Guide for Parents



Student Services



Supporting  
Student  
Success



## **The Program Planning Process: A Guide for Parents**

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The Program Planning Process: A Guide for Parents

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# Introduction

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Education is more successful when there is a partnership between home and school. For some students, their individual strengths and needs require a team approach to planning the appropriate education for them. Parents play an important role in this process, known as the program planning process. The program planning process with the involvement of parents is fundamental to the successful implementation of the Special Education Policy. When this policy was reviewed in 2000, it was recommended that a document be written as a guide for parents in the program planning process.

This guide outlines the program planning process and provides information for parents in understanding their rights, roles, and responsibilities. If you have further questions about the program planning process or would like more information, you should contact your child's school, the school board, or the Student Services Division of the Department of Education.

## Supporting Documents

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Documents that support the program planning process include

- *Education Act*
- *Public School Programs (PSP)*
- *Special Education Policy*
- *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*

Appendix A, on page 31, provides more information on each of these documents.

## Statement of Principles

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The following principles are fundamental beliefs related to programming and services for students with special needs in the province of Nova Scotia. These principles are adapted from those found on pages 5 and 6 of the *Special Education Policy* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2008).

**Right to an Appropriate Education.** The right to an appropriate education means the fundamental educational human right of every individual to have their unique learning needs responded to on an individual basis.

**Right to Quality Education and Qualified Teachers.** All students have the right to a quality education taught by licensed, qualified teachers.

**Right to Inclusive Education.** The goal of inclusive schooling is to facilitate the membership, participation, and learning of all students in school programs and activities. The support services that are designed to meet students' diverse educational needs should be co-ordinated within the neighbourhood school and, to the extent possible, within grade-level/subject-area classrooms.

**Teachers' Responsibility.** Teachers are responsible for teaching all students who are placed under their supervision and care. This includes responsibility for safety and well-being, as well as for program planning, implementation, and evaluation. This is not a responsibility that can be transferred or delegated to non-teaching staff.

**Parental Involvement.** Parents have an obligation and a responsibility to be an integral part of their child's education and should be involved in program planning from the outset.

**Student Involvement.** All students are expected to achieve the common essential learnings as stated in *Public School Programs* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2003) to the best of their individual abilities.

**Individual Program Plan and Accountability.** For some students, individual program plans are necessary. Within the broad outcome areas, each student's outcomes will reflect the diversity of their individual strengths and needs. The outcomes in the IPP form the foundation for the evaluation of student progress. This progress is one of the integral components used in measuring school success.

**Collaboration.** Collaboration and consultation are essential in planning and supporting students with special needs to ensure a co-ordinated and consistent approach to program planning and service delivery.



# The Program Planning Process

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The program planning process, as shown on page 7, is a team approach to planning an appropriate education for students with special needs. Members of program planning teams are those who have responsibility for the student's learning. These include

- parent(s)/guardian(s)
- principal/vice-principal
- teachers, including resource teachers
- other professional staff involved
- if appropriate, the student
- additional members, depending on learning needs of the student and personnel resources of the school board and community

Through the program planning process, students with special needs are supported in the achievement of learning outcomes of the *Public School Programs* (PSP) curriculum and/or the student's individualized program plan (IPP). An IPP is a statement of annual individualized outcomes and specific individualized outcomes based on the student's strengths and needs that is developed and implemented for every student for whom Nova Scotia's public school programs curriculum outcomes are not applicable and/or attainable.

## Learning Outcomes

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Learning outcomes are statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do at various points in their school career.

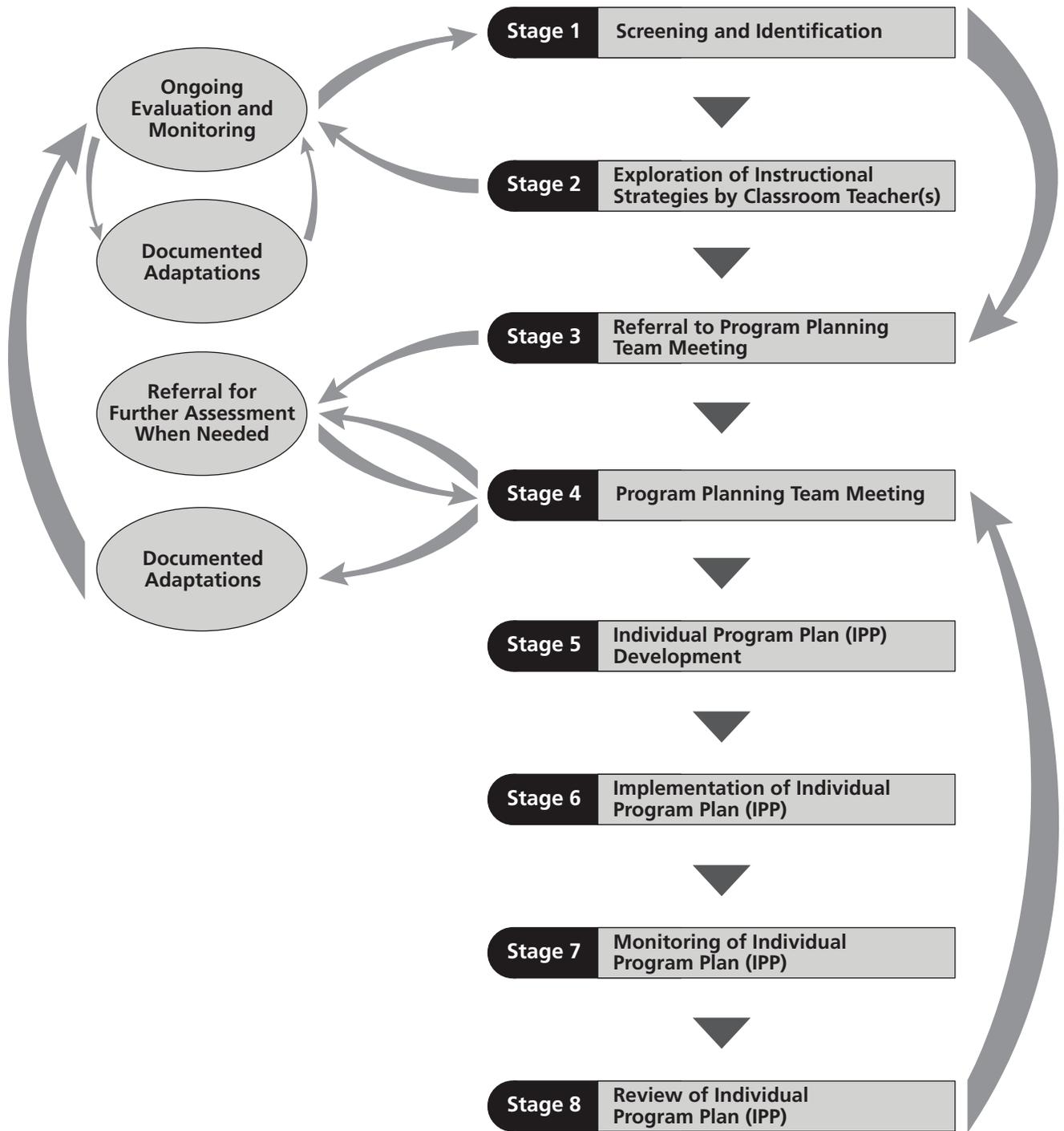
### **PSP Learning Outcomes**

- Specific curriculum outcomes (SCOs) are statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do in a curriculum area at a particular grade-level.
- Key-stage curriculum outcomes are statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do in a curriculum area at the end of grades 3, 6, 9, and 12.
- General curriculum outcomes are statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do in a curriculum area upon completion of study in that area.

### **IPP Learning Outcomes**

- Annual individualized outcomes developed for an IPP are statements of what a student is expected to know and be able to do over a one-year period and/or a semestered period.
- Specific curriculum outcomes developed for an IPP describe the steps to reach an annual individualized outcome.

# Program Planning Process



## Stage 1

### Screening and Identification

If your child with identified special needs is entering or moving to a new school, appropriate identification and assessment for program planning is essential. A referral should be made to the program planning team (Stage 3). Information from previous assessments, records, and/or program planning should be made available to the program planning team. Those responsible for the student's learning will review and/or gather any additional information about the student's strengths and needs. Some or all of the following areas will need to be considered:

- learning ability
- learning style
- communication
- social skills
- emotional development
- behaviour
- physical development
- sensory functioning
- cultural diversity issues

## Stage 2

### Exploration of Instructional Strategies by Classroom Teacher(s)

When a student has been identified as requiring additional planning and support to meet his or her unique needs, the student's classroom teacher(s) will explore strategies and/or resources specific to the strengths and needs of the student to help the student meet the outcomes of Nova Scotia's PSP. These strategies and/or resources are called adaptations.

Adaptations may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following strategies or resources.

## Organizational Strategies

Consideration of classroom support structures, such as

- buddy systems, paired reading, peer tutors
- learning contracts/independent study
- classroom management techniques (e.g., positive behaviour reinforcement)
- notes in advance

## Environmental Strategies

Consideration of changes to the environment, such as

- making specific seating arrangements (e.g., class seating, study carrels)
- varying lighting conditions
- organizing space
- using a variety of locations in the school

## Presentation/Instructional Strategies

Using a variety of presentation strategies, such as

- providing multiple texts on related topics
- highlighting key concepts/vocabulary
- providing supplementary materials (e.g., tapes, CDs)
- organizing learning experiences around a theme or topic

## Motivational Strategies

Using strategies to create and maintain a positive learning environment, such as

- involving students in decision making around topics, assessment strategies, and projects
- using a weekly home-school journal with positive reinforcement attached
- developing a reward system with students
- matching teaching strategies and resources to learning styles and interests

## Assessment Strategies

Providing a number of options for students to demonstrate what they know, such as

- administering assessments in alternative formats (e.g., oral, audio)
- varying time/location during testing
- transcribing of student responses
- offering students choices in assessment formats (e.g., portfolios, individual contracts)

## Resources

Providing a variety of learning supports to access or extend the curriculum, such as

- assistive technology
- various print formats (e.g., large print, high contrast, braille)
- teacher- and student-made manipulatives and models
- mentors

Some things to keep in mind about adaptations include the following.

- Adaptations support students to meet the outcomes of the Nova Scotia public school program and are documented in a student’s cumulative file. However, adaptations are not documented on the report card or transcript.
- Adaptations used to support the student during instruction should be provided during classroom and provincial assessment, if such adaptations do not compromise or alter the validity of the assessment. For example, with the Elementary Literacy Assessment administered in grade 6, one of the outcomes addressed is

By the end of grade 5 students will be expected to answer, with increasing independence, their own questions and those of others by selecting relevant information from a variety of text (*Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4–6*, page 27).

Therefore, if a strategy intended to support the student in the classroom directed the student to particular sections of the text to obtain relevant information, this strategy could not be used on the Elementary Literacy Assessment as the results of the assessment would not be a valid representation of the student’s ability to meet this outcome.

- Adaptations are monitored on an ongoing basis for their effectiveness in meeting the student’s needs.

For many students, the identification, assessment, and program planning process does not go beyond this stage as their needs will be met through adaptations in the classroom. However, the adaptations will need to be reviewed at least once annually for their effectiveness.

For students whose learning needs are not met, the process proceeds with a referral to a program planning team meeting.

## Referral to Program Planning Team Meeting

## Stage 3

A referral to the program planning team may occur when

- There has been an assessment and identification of special needs prior to entering school for the first time or when transferring from another school.
- The information gathered at Stage 1 recommends referral.
- Adaptations implemented in Stage 2 are not sufficient in supporting the student to meet the public school program grade-level outcomes.

A referral to a program planning team can be initiated by the student, the student's parents, the student's teacher(s), or the guidance counsellor.

The first point of contact when parents request a program planning team meeting is the child's teacher. If either the teacher or parent disagrees on the need for a referral, the matter should be referred to the principal.

## Program Planning Team Meeting

## Stage 4

Parents play a vital role as members of the program planning team. The initial program planning team meeting should not be a forum for teachers, administrators, and other agency personnel to present a completed program to parents. All members of the team work collaboratively to clarify the child's strengths and needs and to decide on future actions. For strategies to help you be an effective member of this team, please see the section of this guide entitled "Supporting Parents/Guardians as Effective Members of the Program Planning Team."

At this stage, the program planning team, based on the student's strengths and needs in relation to the learning outcomes, decides whether to

- develop adaptations beyond those implemented at Stage 2, while maintaining public school programs outcomes, and/or
- seek information or refer the student for further assessment, and/or
- develop an IPP

If the team decides that an IPP is required in one or more areas, the process proceeds to Stage 5. Such a decision is based on the program planning team's determination that the outcomes of Nova Scotia's public school program must be changed or deleted or that additional outcomes are required to meet the needs of the student.

## Stage 5

### Individual Program Plan Development

Depending on a student's strengths and needs, an IPP is developed in one or more areas, in accordance with Policy 2.6 of the *Special Education Policy* ([www.EDnet.ns.ca/pdfdocs/studentsvcs/specialed/speceng.pdf](http://www.EDnet.ns.ca/pdfdocs/studentsvcs/specialed/speceng.pdf)).

An IPP may involve any or all of the following:

- It follows the same general curriculum outcomes but at a significantly different outcome level than would be expected for the grade level in which the student is enrolled.
- It deletes a specific curriculum outcome or outcomes when the deleted outcome(s) is/are necessary to develop an understanding of the general curriculum outcome
- It provides programming for outcomes that are not part of Nova Scotia's public school program (e.g., behaviour programming, life skills).
- New outcomes are added where students require enrichment.

Some students may require a combination of adaptations and an IPP. For example, a student may require adaptations in language arts and an IPP in math. The following table outlines the differences between adaptations and IPPs.

Adaptations	IPP
<p>Adaptations are teaching strategies that are developed in one or more of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessment/evaluation</li> <li>• class organization</li> <li>• environment</li> <li>• motivation</li> <li>• presentation</li> <li>• resources</li> </ul> <p>Adaptations are not noted on the student's report card or transcript.</p> <p>Adaptations are documented in the student's cumulative record card.</p> <p>There are no changes to PSP outcomes.</p>	<p>An IPP may involve any or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• following the same general curriculum outcomes but at a significantly different outcome level than would be expected for the grade-level in which the student is enrolled</li> <li>• deleting of a specific curriculum outcome or outcomes when the deleted outcome(s) is/are necessary to develop an understanding of the general curriculum outcome</li> <li>• where there is a need, providing programming for outcomes that are not part of Nova Scotia's public school program (e.g., behaviour programming, life skills)</li> <li>• adding new outcomes where students require enrichment</li> </ul> <p>An IPP is indicated on the student's report card and/or transcript. A copy of the IPP is filed in the student's cumulative record file.</p>

An IPP includes the following:

- **a summary of student strengths and needs**—including learning ability/style, communication, social skills/emotional development behaviour, and physical development/sensory functioning
- **annual individualized outcomes**—statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do over a one-year period
- **specific individualized outcomes**—steps in the student’s individual plan to reach the annual individualized outcome
- **recommended services**—includes strategies and resources to support the student to meet the annual individualized outcomes
- **responsibility areas**—specific responsibilities for deleting, adding, extending, teaching, and evaluating outcomes must be assigned to individuals with the appropriate professional competencies
- **review dates**—the team is responsible for setting dates for the review of the overall plan; the overall plan should be reviewed at least twice a year.
- **signatures**—the IPP should be signed by parents and the chair of the program planning team at a meeting with the parents at which team members from the school, or representatives of that group review and discuss the program; the signatures indicate agreement on the IPP

The process then continues on to the stages of implementation, monitoring, and review.

## Stage 6

### Implementation of Individual Program Plan

Implementation involves instruction and assessment of the outcomes. The teachers responsible for teaching the student are also responsible for evaluating the student’s progress and sharing this information with parents as part of the school’s reporting procedures. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to share with the program planning team their observations of their child’s progress towards meeting the outcome(s) in settings outside the school.

## Monitoring of Individual Program Plan

## Stage 7

Ongoing monitoring of the appropriateness of the outcomes and strategies by program planning team members is necessary.

Changes that do not alter the student's learning outcomes, such as an adjustment to an educational strategy or use of educational materials, may be made without a referral back to the program planning team. Such changes, however, should be recorded and shared with the team members during the regular review process.

Changes that alter the student's individualized outcomes require a referral back to the program planning team.

## Review of Individual Program Plan

## Stage 8

An IPP should be reviewed at least twice in each school year. If the school has a semestered schedule, the IPP should be reviewed at least once in each semester. Adaptations should be monitored on an ongoing basis for their effectiveness in meeting the student's needs. A review involves evaluating the student's progress towards meeting IPP outcomes and/or PSP outcomes.

If individualized outcomes have been achieved, new outcomes are developed to reflect student progress in relation to the student's strengths and needs. This could include a return to PSP outcomes.

If individualized outcomes have not been achieved, the IPP is revised to better reflect the student's strengths and needs. These revisions may include consideration of learning variables such as pacing and changing the incremental steps, instructional strategies, materials, and/or resources.



# Roles and Responsibilities of the Program Planning Team

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The program planning process is a collaborative effort as outlined in Policy 2.2 of the *Special Education Policy*. Every member of the team has a role and responsibilities, which typically include the following.

## **Parent(s)**

- are involved from the beginning in the program planning process
- share information related to their child's strengths, needs, and aspirations
- ensure that information that supports effective transitioning is shared
- share relevant information related to events, family circumstances, and educational history that could affect programming and services, positively or negatively
- share with the team pertinent information from other professionals/agencies involved with the child
- carry out the specific parts of the program plan that are the parent's responsibility, as collaboratively agreed upon through the program planning process

## **School Administrators (principals or vice-principals)**

- assume a leadership role in the program planning process
- ensure that appropriate team members, including parents, are notified of the date, time, and location of program planning meetings
- chair the program planning meeting or designate a person to act as chair
- ensure that a written record of proceedings is kept
- keep aware of communication regarding programming and services for students
- ensure that the program plan developed through the program planning process is implemented, tracked, and monitored

### **Teachers and Other Professional School-based Staff**

(e.g., resource teachers, guidance counsellors, severe learning disability (SLD) specialists)

- participate in the program planning process for students for whom they have responsibility
- implement program plans, as required
- track, monitor, and report on student progress
- review student records to support transitioning and programming

### **Student** (when appropriate)

- advocates through sharing strengths, needs, and aspirations
- shares information related to personal/academic circumstances that could affect programming, positively or negatively
- is involved to the best of his or her ability in the development of appropriate programming and services
- carries out the specific parts of the program plan that are his/her responsibility, as collaboratively agreed upon through the program planning process.

### **Board-based Support Staff** (when appropriate)

(Board-based support staff refers to professional staff employed by the board to support programming and services for students such as speech-language pathologists (SLP), psychologists, program co-ordinators and consultants, student services co-ordinators/consultants, directors of programs and services, etc.)

- participate in the program planning process as required
- provide, as appropriate, programming and services as agreed upon through the program planning process
- support a team to work effectively
- bring to the team an understanding of resources and services available either within the board or within the larger school community

# Supporting Parents/Guardians as Effective Members of the Program Planning Team

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As members of the team, you, as parents, may want to think about how you can

- prepare for your participation in the program planning team meeting
- contribute during the meetings
- support the outcomes of the program planning process following meetings
- follow-up on your child's progress

## **Prior to Meetings**

- Share information about your child with the team to help to support effective programming.
- Identify successes and challenges in school programming to date or that you anticipate for the upcoming year.
- Consider the main hopes/goals for your child this year.
- Outline other information (e.g., changes in family circumstances such as additions to the family, separation, illness, death, moving, employment) that would help us gain a better understanding of your child.
- Advise the school before the meeting if you want to be joined at the program planning team meeting by a friend or support person.
- Make notes or outline your thoughts, concerns, or questions to assist you in the process.

## During Meetings

- Ask for clarification of the roles and responsibilities of all meeting participants.
- Contribute to discussion of your child's strengths and needs.
- Ask questions about your child's performance at school (see Appendix D: Some Questions to Consider, page 39).
- Be prepared to share your thoughts, concerns, and questions about your child.
- Consider other points of view during discussions.
- Consider that your child may react differently in different circumstances. Your child's behaviour at home may differ from his or her behaviour at school.
- Summarize recommendations and responsibilities at the end of the meeting.

## Following Meetings

- Review the minutes of the meeting.
- Talk with your child regularly about what he or she is doing in school, both academically and socially.
- Support your child in becoming a self-advocate through an understanding of his or her strengths and needs.
- Provide, when appropriate, learning opportunities at home that are consistent with the learning that is taking place in school.
- Support the teacher's expectations and the classroom routines by reinforcing such behaviours at home.
- Maintain close contact with the classroom teacher(s) regarding your child's progress and plan to attend future meetings.

## Monitoring Student Progress

Keeping informed of your child's progress will help you to continue to play an important role in program planning over your child's school years and assist with further planning at key transition points. Monitoring progress through program planning must take into consideration that a student's strengths and needs change over time.

- Communicate regularly with your child about his or her progress at school.
- Attend, when possible, all meetings about your child's progress (e.g., parent/teacher meetings, IPP review meetings as part of program planning).
- Follow-up with the school when you are unable to attend a meeting.
- Participate in ongoing communication to track progress (e.g., communication logs, e-mail, phone calls, homework journals/agendas).
- Share with the school circumstances that may have an impact, good or bad, on progress (e.g., changes in family circumstances such as separation, illness, death, additions, moving, employment).
- Read your child's report card carefully. If you do not understand any part of the report, contact your child's school for more information or clarification.
- Share with your child the strengths and needs identified on the report card.
- Follow-up after receiving the report card (e.g., by attending, if possible, parent/teacher meetings, making phone calls, completing the comment sections of the report).



# Transition Planning: Supporting Parents

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Transition is the passage from one stage to another. It implies change and is a lifelong process. Important transition milestones occur when a student moves from home to school, from grade to grade, from school to school, from community to school, or from school to community. Throughout these transitions, the role of the parent or guardian is vital. You, as a parent or guardian, may be the only permanent member of the program planning team throughout your child's education. It is important to understand that course selections, programming, and services may affect your child's options after high school.

Transition planning is part of the program planning process that

- involves parents and takes into consideration all major aspects of a student's life experiences
- helps in determining appropriate educational resources, programming supports, equipment requirements, transportation needs, and accessibility
- assists in ensuring successful entry into school
- supports students to remain in school
- ensures that a plan is in place at the end of their public schooling for taking the "next step" in their lives

*Transition Planning for Students with Special Needs: The Early Years through to Adult Life* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2005) is a resource to support individualized program planning at key transition stages.

A transition plan sets down transition outcomes based on the student's strengths, needs, and aspirations. It is developed collaboratively by the program planning team as part of the individual program plan (for more information see Policy 2.7 of the *Special Education Policy*).

Following are some things that parents and guardians should consider at these key phases:

### **Home to School**

- Share information about preschool programming and services.
- Help your child to become comfortable with his or her new school, teachers, and the school routines (for example, prior visits, photographs, virtual tours).
- Encourage early planning in the year before your child starts school by contacting the school principal.

### **Grade to Grade and School to School**

- Share your child's strengths and needs with the program planning team.
- Address your child's concerns about upcoming changes.
- Review ways to encourage and increase appropriate independence and/or self-advocacy.

### **School to Community**

- Invite planning as early as possible (age 14 or younger when appropriate).
- Identify with your child desired after-school goals (education, employment, housing, transportation, recreation, etc.) and, as a member of the program planning team, assist in developing outcomes based on this information and the resources and opportunities available.
- Help your child to self-advocate for supports and to explore eligibility criteria for disability support programs and services after high school.

# Resource Support

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The *Special Education Policy* states ...

The goal of inclusive schooling is to facilitate the membership, participation and learning of all students in school programs and activities. The support services that are designed to meet students' diverse educational needs should be co-ordinated within the neighbourhood school and to the extent possible, within grade-level/subject area classrooms. (p. 13)

Two effective ways of providing resource support are co-teaching and instruction in resource settings.

Co-teaching is defined as a classroom/subject area teacher and a resource teacher working together in the same setting to provide instruction to students.

When considering provision of resource services for a student outside the classroom, the following should be taken into account:

- The support should be tailored to meet the unique needs of the student; however, it should not extend beyond the student's need for specialized programming and interventions. This is known as support which is “only as special as necessary.”
- The purpose of providing support and the duration of the support outside the classroom should be clearly understood by program planning team members.
- Programming in resource centres must be designed to support programming in the classroom.



# Minimizing and Resolving Conflict

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Using a collaborative consultative approach throughout the program planning process will enhance opportunities to address concerns that may arise. A collaborative consultative approach is one where people work together in partnership to support programming for children and youth. Each person contributes to the discussion. All participants in the collaborative process should be afforded mutual trust and respect. Each person's perspective and expertise should be recognized and valued.

Communication is key to effective collaboration. Advocating for your child involves being assertive, which may be a difficult task. Being assertive involves getting your point across or achieving goals without damaging the collaborative relationship or another person's self-esteem.

However, sometimes the process may break down. The collaborative consultative process may not settle disagreements involving any one or all of the following:

- the program planning process
- programming and services
- the proposed or existing IPP outcomes or placement of the student

The table on the next page shows steps to take to minimize and resolve conflict, if such disagreements arise.

Steps for Minimizing and Resolving Conflict
<p><b>The Program Planning Process</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Address the issue(s) with the school principal.</li> <li>2. If the issue(s) remains unresolved, contact Student Services staff at your school board.</li> <li>3. If the issue(s) continues to remain outstanding, follow school board parent concern protocols or processes. For information on protocols and processes, contact the school board central office.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Programming and Services</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact the appropriate teacher(s).</li> <li>2. If the issue(s) remains unresolved, contact the school principal.</li> <li>3. If the issue(s) continues to remain outstanding, follow school board parent concern protocols or processes. For information on protocols and processes, contact the school board central office.</li> </ol>
<p><b>The Proposed or Existing IPP Outcomes or Placement of the Student</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Address the issue with the school principal.</li> <li>2. If the issue remains unresolved, contact Student Services staff at your school board.</li> <li>3. If the issue continues to remain outstanding, you may be able to request a School Board Appeal. Refer directly to School Board Appeal Procedures for information on this process.</li> <li>4. If the school board appeal decision does not resolve the issue(s), you may make a request in writing to the Minister of Education asking the Minister to establish a Board of Appeal to provide a ruling. For information on this appeal process, refer to the <i>School Board and Ministerial Appeal Guide</i> (Nova Scotia Department of Education).</li> </ol>

# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Excerpts from Documents Supporting the Program Planning Process

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### Education Act

The *Education Act* outlines the roles and primary responsibilities of

- students (Section 24)
- parents (Section 25)
- teachers (Section 26)
- principals (Section 38)
- superintendents (Section 39)
- support staff (Section 40)
- school boards (Section 64)

The *Education Act* is available

- online at <[www.EDnet.ns.ca](http://www.EDnet.ns.ca)> in the Document Depot under Related Categories: Legislation
- at your local school
- at your school board office
- by contacting the Department of Education

### Public School Programs (PSP)

The primary mandate of the public school system as stated in the *Public School Programs* is to provide education programs and services for students to enable them

- to help all students develop to their full potential cognitively, affectively, physically, and socially
- to help all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for them to continue as thinking, learning, physically active, valued members of society
- to develop their potential and acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy

The PSP document identifies the six areas of learning for all students called essential graduation learnings. These learning areas are described below.

- **Aesthetic expression** has to do with response to experiences and involves the students directly. Students become aware of such qualities as rhythm, repetition, unity, symmetry, contrast, sequence, climax, balance, harmony, counterpoint, pact, and tone.  
Opportunities to develop aesthetic awareness enable students to recognize the importance of aesthetic expressions in their daily lives (whether it be the music they listen to, the videos they view, the local art gallery they visit, the buildings around them, or their own poetic musings) as those expressions enrich and shape self and community, cultural identity, and diversity.
- **Citizenship** education involves helping students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable them to have a sense of belonging and to understand, actively participate in, and contribute positively to local, regional, national, and global communities.
- **Communication** involves articulating and interpreting information, ideas, or emotions to learn, create, or inform. To communicate, we use not only written and spoken language, numbers, and symbols, but also images, gestures, movements, music, and other sounds.
- **Personal development** offers students opportunities to develop their intellectual potential and to develop attributes that promote individual, social, emotional, and physical well-being. The school program at all levels provides opportunities for fostering students' growth as collaborative and independent lifelong learners who can take responsibility for their own health and lifestyle.
- Students demonstrate the important techniques of **problem solving** as they show curiosity and open-mindedness, ask for explanations, make generalizations and supply specific evidence, question their own assumptions and those of others, read critically, and evaluate ideas and examples.
- **Technological competence** involves an understanding of the interrelation of technology, society, and the environment and the ability to use technology to manage information.

These six learning areas are addressed in a learning outcomes framework. Outcomes are statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do at various points in their school career. Outcomes are expressed as

- **general curriculum outcomes:** what students are expected to know and be able to do upon completion of study in a curriculum area
- **key-stage outcomes:** what students are expected to know and be able to do at the end of grades 3, 6, 9, and 12 in a curriculum area
- **specific curriculum outcomes:** what students are expected to know and be able to do at a particular grade-level in a curriculum area

The learning outcomes framework plays an important role in the program planning process for students with special needs. It provides the basis of consistent language and structure for program development. It serves as a reference point for program planning teams in determining student needs and in making decisions on programming adaptations and/or individual program plans (IPPs).

*Public School Programs* is available

- online at <[www.EDnet.ns.ca](http://www.EDnet.ns.ca)> in the Document Depot under P–12 Public School Information
- at your local school
- at your school board office
- by contacting the Department of Education

## Special Education Policy

As outlined in the *Special Education Policy Manual*, each school board is responsible for establishing a process of identification, assessment, program planning, and evaluation for students with special needs. The program planning process (detailed in policy 2.2 of the *Special Education Policy Manual*), carried out by school-level program planning teams, provides collaborative support networks to address a student's identified educational needs.

The Special Education Policy focusses on

- meeting diverse learning needs of the student
- parental involvement in the program planning process
- collaborative individualized program planning
- an inclusive approach to the education of students with special needs

The *Special Education Policy Manual* is available

- online at <[www.EDnet.ns.ca](http://www.EDnet.ns.ca)> in the Document Depot under Student Services
- at your local school
- at your school board office
- by contacting the Department of Education

## **Charter of Rights and Freedoms**

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that every person is entitled to be treated equally and without discrimination. Specifically, Section 15 (1) states:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* can be found online at <[laws.justice.gc.ca](http://laws.justice.gc.ca)>.

## Appendix B: Some Commonly Used Terms

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**Adaptations:** Strategies and/or resources to accommodate the learning needs of an individual student. They are planned, implemented, and evaluated to enable the student to achieve Nova Scotia's public school program.

**Advocate:** A person, or persons, who provides encouragement and support for the provision of programming and services for students with special needs.

**Annual individualized outcomes on an IPP:** Statements of expected achievement over a one-year period. These statements are estimates of future performance based on past achievement, present performance, and priority areas of desired development.

**Collaborative consultation:** A shared problem-solving process. This process requires consensus building. To build consensus there must be mutual commitment by all members of the program planning team to both the process and the outcomes.

**General curriculum outcomes:** Statements identifying what students are expected to know, be able to do, and value upon completion of study in a curriculum area.

**Individual program plan (IPP):** Written documentation of annual individualized outcomes and specific individualized outcomes developed to meet a student's strengths and needs and implemented for every student for whom Nova Scotia's public school program curriculum outcomes are not applicable and/or attainable.

**Key-stage curriculum outcomes:** Statements identifying what students are expected to know and be able to do by the end of grades 3, 6, 9, and 12 as a result of their cumulative learning experiences in a curriculum area.

**Learning outcomes:** Statements describing what knowledge, skills, and attitudes students are expected to demonstrate as a result of their cumulative learning experiences in the primary–graduation continuum.

**Learning styles:** Different approaches or ways of learning; for example, visual learners have a preference or a strength in learning through seeing, auditory learners have a preference or strength in learning through listening, and

tactile/kinesthetic learners have a preference or strength in learning through moving, doing, and touching.

**Program planning team:** Those who have responsibility for the student's learning. These include parent(s); principal or vice-principal; teachers, including resource teachers; other professional staff; if appropriate, the student; and additional members depending on the learning needs of the student and the personnel resources of the school board and community.

**Psycho educational assessment:** A comprehensive assessment/profile conducted by a psychologist that identifies the strengths and needs of a student in such areas as learning, behaviour and social-emotional development.

**Public School Programs (PSP):** A document outlining the goals and policies of public education in Nova Scotia, describing what students should know and be able to do and describing the programs and courses offered in the public schools.

**Self-advocacy:** The ability to explain one's strengths, needs, and aspirations.

**Specific curriculum outcomes:** Statements identifying what students are expected to know and be able to do at the end of a particular grade-level or a particular course.

**Specific individualized outcomes on an IPP:** Statements outlining specific steps that lead to the attainment of the broader outcomes (annual individualized outcomes).

**Transition planning:** Developing and documenting transition outcomes based on a student's strengths, needs, and aspirations. This is done collaboratively by the program planning team as a part of the IPP.

## Appendix C: Some Commonly Used Acronyms

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**ADD:** Attention deficit disorder

**ADHD:** Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

**AP:** Advanced placement

**APSEA:** Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority

**ASD:** Autistic spectrum disorder

**CAP/D:** Central auditory processing disorder

**CAYAC:** Child and Youth Action Committee

**CUM FILE:** Cumulative Records File

**DOE:** Department of Education

**DSM IV—TR:** *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fourth Edition, Text Revision

**EAPD—LMAPWD:** Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities—Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities

**EIIS:** Early Identification and Intervention Services

**ESL:** English as a second language

**IBI:** Intensive behaviour intervention

**IFSP:** Individual family service plan

**IPP:** Individualized program plan

**LD:** Learning disabilities

**NVLD:** Non-verbal learning disability

**OCD:** Obsessive compulsive disorder

**ODD:** Oppositional defiant disorder

**PEBS:** Positive and effective behaviour support

**PDD:** Pervasive developmental disorder

**PPT:** Program planning team

**PSP:** Public School Program

**SEIRC Report:** Special Education Implementation Review Committee Report

**SEPS Committee:** Special Education Programming and Services Committee

**SID:** Sensory integration disorder

**SLD:** Severe learning disability

**SLP:** Speech Language Pathology

**TEACCH:** Treatment and education of communication handicapped children

**TS:** Tourette's syndrome

## Appendix D: Some Questions to Consider

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1. What is a typical day in school like for my child?

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2. Has my child been attending classes regularly?

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3. Has my child been completing class assignments?

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4. How do teachers describe my child's learning style?

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5. Does my child have major strengths or weaknesses in specific subject areas that I don't know about?

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6. Is my child working at or meeting the specific curriculum outcomes? If not, why not and what would be the best way to proceed?

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7. Is my child meeting the outcomes outlined in his or her IPP? If not, why not and what would support my child's learning?

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8. What supports or adaptations does my child need to learn? What supports are needed for my child's safety? What strategies/resources have worked well for him or her?

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9. Does my child need a referral to the school resource teacher, speech-language pathologist, psychologist, or guidance counsellor? What would be involved with the referral and how would that affect my child's programming?

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10. Are there any potential social issues with peers I need to be aware of?

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11. What can we be doing at home to support my child's learning?

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12. How can we support my child to move toward greater independence?

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