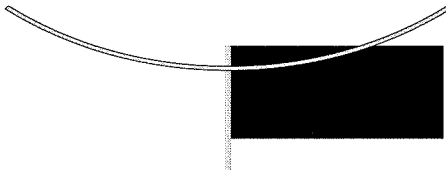


From Here to Next Year...



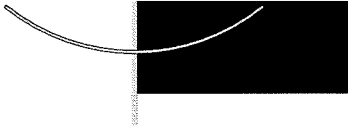
Albert Lea Area Schools

**Special Education Transition
Guide**

Presented by the Special Education Advisory Council



PREPARED FOR:



Change. It's part of everyone's life. Homes, jobs, daily routines—they all seem to change from time to time. Most of us accept change as inevitable and learn to manage it with only a little stress. For children with special educational needs, though, change can be frightening, even overwhelming. What many of us see as opportunity appears scary to them. It is for that reason that this booklet was prepared.

Each year, hundreds of students in the Albert Lea Schools change school buildings. Pre-school students move to kindergarten, sixth-graders become middle school students and eighth-graders go on to high school. For most of them, learning new busing arrangements, class schedules and teachers, along with a new lunch schedule, is challenging enough. For the 20% of them with special needs, that task is daunting. This booklet was designed to help make those transitions easier for students, their parents and educational staff alike.

Just as no two students are alike, no two transition plans can be alike. It's not the intent of this guide to make the building-to-building transition process the same for all students with special needs. Instead, it is hoped that it will help parents and teachers in considering everything that might have a bearing on any particular student's move from one school to another. Some of the information offered may not apply to an individual case. Any ideas considered and not used still serve a purpose.

When is a good time to start planning for my child's transition?

A year in advance is not too soon. The fall of a school year before a change to a new building is a good time to begin talking to your child, his or her teachers, special education case facilitator, social worker and special education case manager about next year. If your child's annual Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P.) meeting occurs during the fall of the year, that's a great opportunity to begin talking about the future. If your child's IEP meeting isn't scheduled to happen until the latter half of the current school year, this communication process should begin in the fall.

Start the transition planning by asking questions, such as...

- Exactly what changes will my child experience next year?
- What do you think my child needs to move successfully to a new building?
- What can I do to help in this transition?

Success in managing change starts with early and frequent communication among everyone involved. Make your child a part of the planning process from the beginning and encourage him or her to ask questions of anyone. Studies have shown that students who help in planning their own education are more successful in completing that education. Let your child help. You'll be glad you did.

Can my child's Individualized Education Program help in planning a transition?

Absolutely. Your child has an Individualized Education Plan designed according to strict guidelines outlined in the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. That I.E.P. contains some very precise procedures and measurement standards to guide your child's educational process. Much of that information relates to just how your child learns best. The transition process to a new school is something that must be learned, and the I.E.P. can help greatly. Being familiar with your child's I.E.P. is a vital part of the transition.

Can my child and I visit the new school and meet the people who will be most involved in his or her education during the next school year?

Definitely, but timing is important. Late in the current school year is a good time to do so, when most staff assignments for the following year are fairly certain. A visit can be arranged by your child's case facilitator or case manager. Sometimes those visits are automatically scheduled, often in groups with other students who will be making the same transition. Whether that is the case or not, please make a point to visit with your child.

While visiting your child's future school, he or she will probably have a number of questions racing through his or her mind...

Where will I get off the bus?
Where will I come in to the school?
Where is my classroom? Is there more than one?
Where are the restrooms?
Where is the lunch room? How long is lunch?

Make sure those questions, along with any others you have, are answered, even if they aren't asked. Remember, knowledge in the face of change is very comforting. That is especially true of students with special educational needs. ***The best way to get all the answers you need is to make a list of questions before you make the visit.***

Face **and** name recognition is important to **all** young people. While visiting next year's school, try to meet such people as case facilitators, case managers, classroom teachers, para-educators, building administrators, social workers and office staff members. The more people your child recognizes during those first few stressful days in the fall, the more likely he or she is to make a successful transition.

Sometimes one visit isn't enough, even counting a before-the-beginning-of-the-school-year conference. If you feel that more visits are needed, please talk to your child's current case facilitator or case manager about additional ones.

If I visit my child's next school during the current school year, do I really need to go to pre-school parent/teacher conferences in August?

Certainly. That's a perfect time to review what was discussed during the previous visits. It's also your chance to share with teachers and para-educators any specific information about how your child learns, his or her temperament, personal habits, lifestyle and eating likes and dislikes. That information is often used to make sure that your child has consistent success in a new school.

Before going to the pre-school parent/teacher conference, ask your child and yourself such questions as...

Do you have any questions about getting off or on the bus?

Does your child have a favorite wardrobe or item of clothing?

What medications does your child take? When? What are the effects of those medications? Are there any side effects to watch for?

What about lunch? Any favorite foods? Any food allergies? Any strong dislikes?

What helps your child relax in times of stress?

What does your child do well? What frustrates your child?

What do you do to help your child learn?

Does your child receive physical therapy? If so, for what reason?

What does your child like to do in his or her free time? What does he or she not like to do?

The answers to these questions, along with any others you can think of, are valuable to your child's educators. Those answers help your child succeed in school.

Once the school year starts, should I visit my child's new school?

After your child has had a few weeks to settle in, by all means, make a visit. The message you send to your child and his educational team by doing so is that you do indeed care. That's the most important message of all. Just contact your child's case facilitator or case manager to schedule a visit.

Child Information

Safety/Medical/Diet Information

Examples to be listed here may include any medications your child is taking, any special diet, physical restrictions or limitations as well as safety issues as far as who can or cannot pick up your student.

Communication

Examples of items to list here may include if your child uses pictures, social stories or some other tool to communicate.

Behavior (what increases stress level)

Information that may be included here are any fears your child may have, anything that may trigger some sort of behavior – for example loud noises.

Behavior (calming strategies)

Information to be provided here could be utilized to help your child calm down – for example swinging, time alone, listening to music.

Likes

Examples of things your child likes. Can include their favorites - foods, toys, friends, movies.

Dislikes

Examples of dislikes could include loud noises, certain foods, animals.

Contact Information

Parent or daycare phone numbers, email addresses

Other Information to Share

Information to be included here could be anything else important for staff to know about your child.

Who can I call if I have questions?

Current Case Manager	
Current Case Facilitator	
Current Classroom Teacher(s)	
Current Para-Educator	
Current School Office	
Current School Social Worker	
Future Attendance Line	
Future Case Manager	
Future Case Facilitator	
Future Classroom Teacher(s)	
Future School Office	
Future School Social Worker	
Special Services Office	Sue VanRyswyk 379-4822
District Offices	Receptionist Desk 379-4800
Albert Lea Bus Company	373-1467
School Lunch Services	379-5300
Freeborn County Human Services	General Information 377-5400
Any Other Important People	
Who will help my child find places in the new school?	

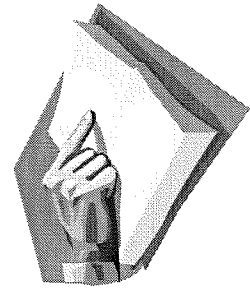
Movin' On!

Use this list to help you to keep track of what needs to be done to make a smooth change to a new school building next year.

Finished	January/February	Notes On Your Actions
	Begin talking about the next year with your child. Talk about how things in life change from time to time. Use examples from your child's own life.	
	Begin discussing transition for the following year with your child's current case facilitator, case manager and teacher(s).	
	Prepare a list on information for your child's new teachers, parents and other educational staff. Start with the most important information that they will need and want to know.	
	Ask your child's current teacher(s) if there are any transition issues you should know about before the end of the current school year.	
	List equipment, adaptations, computer software, other learning and teaching tools that your child is currently using, if any. Ask your current teacher or case manager if equipment, adaptations, etc. are available in the new school.	

Finished	April/May	Notes On Your Actions
	Continue to discuss next year's changes with your child. Talk about busing to a new building, classrooms, teachers, lunch-room, etc.	
	Make a list of questions you have about the coming transition. You probably want to know the same things your child does. Continue to work on list of information about your child.	
	Make a visit(s) to next year's school with your child. Take along your list of questions. If possible, take photos of the new building, classroom, etc.	
	June/July	
	Continue talking about the coming transition with your child. Reassure him or her that the change is something you'll be doing together.	
	Continue to work on list of information about your child and also write down any questions that you may have since the end of the school year.	

Finished	August/September	Notes On Your Actions
	Attend your child's parent/teacher conferences. Bring the list of information you've prepared.	
	Visit school again with your child and the pictures you took in the spring to help familiarize them again with their new school.	
	October	
	Plan to visit your child's new school to see how the transition process has gone and to keep the lines of communication open.	
	Plan to attend all parent/teacher conferences. It's well worth the time and effort.	



Transition Feels Like...

Your First Airplane Ride: It's exciting, but also scary!

Going Upstairs: You take one step at a time.

Trying a New Recipe: You hope that all the ingredients will add up to a good taste.

A Bridge: It's a crossing between two places of security.

A Vacation: Planning helps prevent mishaps.

Playing Cards: It's more fun to do it with friends.

Diving Off a Cliff: It's a step into the unknown.

Your First Date: You don't want to look foolish.

A Sandwich: The significant stuff is wedged between the bread and everyday routines.

A Marriage: It happens one day but requires a lot of effort both before and after.

A Rainbow: A hopeful new beginning.

Reprinted from
"Taking the Next Steps Together"
Iowa Department of Education

How can I get more involved in the education of my child?

The Albert Lea Schools offers numerous opportunities for parents and other community members to become directly involved in what's happening in our community schools. One of those opportunities is the Special Education Advisory Council. A Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) is a group of parents and staff that support, advocate, and advise on special education matters for Albert Lea Area Schools. SEAC is comprised of parents of children who are currently receiving special education services in District 241. District staff members are also a part of the council. SEAC acts as an advisory body on behalf of students to advocate for changes and/or improvements, advocate for system and program changes in ways that school district staff alone cannot. By sharing their unique perspectives of what it is like to use these services, parents can help the district be more effective.

You'll find you're always welcome!

To view minutes and agendas from SEAC meetings please log on to
<http://albertlea.k12.mn.us>,
click on Parent and Student Tools,
Click on "SEAC"
and click on any agenda or minutes.

*Contact your child's classroom teacher for other volunteer opportunities!

Questions???



If you have any questions about transition OR you have suggestions to improve this transition guide, please contact the following SEAC members.
Your suggestions are always welcome.

Karen Erickson, Special Services Supervisor
507-379-482

We'd be happy to help.

Student Information

Name _____ Date _____

Safety/Medical/Diet Information

Communication

Behavior (what increases stress level)

Behavior (calming strategies)

Likes

Dislikes

Contact Information

Other Information To Share
