

# **Planning and Programming**

# PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

## Planning Your Child's Programming

### Learning: An Individual Process

All children can learn, but not all children learn in the same way, at the same time, or at the same rate. Learning is an individual process. Students with special needs have different learning needs, and there are many different ways of meeting those needs. What is right for one student may not be the best for another.

Meeting students' individual learning needs means

- identifying current needs and skills
- choosing and developing individual outcomes or goals for a student
- choosing the best learning setting
- deciding on and planning for appropriate programming

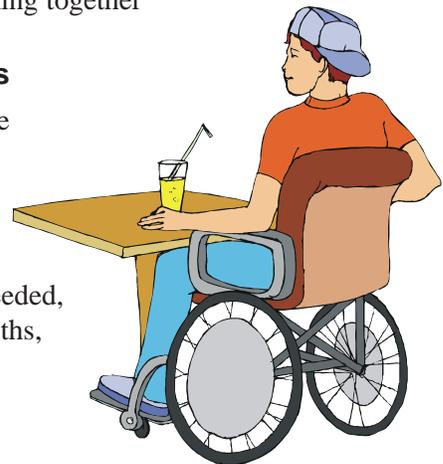
### Planning Effective Programming

Effective programming is

- based on an individual student's needs
- planned and active, continually adjusted as necessary to meet a student's needs
- inclusive, allowing students to participate in the regular curriculum to the fullest extent possible
- consistent across environments
- dependent upon parents and teachers working together

### Meeting Students' Programming Needs

Most students with special needs require some programming assistance to learn. This may involve changing the way a student is expected to learn, complete assignments, or participate in the classroom. To determine the type and extent of programming assistance needed, a team considers the student's abilities, strengths, and needs.



### Types of Programming Assistance

In addition to *differentiating instruction* for all students, schools use *adaptation*, *curricular modification*, or *individualized programming* to support students. An explanation of these ways of meeting students' programming needs follows.

- **Differentiated Instruction:** All teachers attempt to provide programming that responds to different learning needs among all students by differentiating their classroom teaching. Teachers will often vary their teaching methods or approaches when planning daily lessons, when working with students in the classroom, and when assessing student progress.
- **Adaptation:** When a student is capable of meeting the learning goals or outcomes of the Manitoba curriculum but needs physical accommodation or a different form of instruction or assessment, adaptations may be used. Adaptation means changing the teaching process, the types of materials, and/or the assignments or products a student may produce. For example, some students with physical disabilities cannot write and need a computer to do their written work. Students who are blind may need their learning materials to be available in Braille. These are adaptations.
- **Curricular Modification:** Some students with special needs may have significant cognitive learning difficulties that mean they cannot meet the Manitoba curriculum outcomes, even with adaptations. They need the curriculum to be modified. Modification means that the number or content of the Manitoba curriculum outcomes changes to meet a student's learning needs. It is important that a student's team discuss why and how the modifications are being made. Parents need to be informed and involved in the discussion. Modifications should be outlined in an IEP.

In the Senior Years (high school), when the school team determines that a student's courses will receive a Modified (M) designation, the student and parents must be included in this decision. Parents and students should be aware that M-designated courses do not meet entry requirements for post-secondary institutions and that they are reported on students' report cards.

- **Individualized Programming:** Some students whose cognitive disabilities are so significant that they do not benefit from participating in the Manitoba curriculum need highly individualized, functionally appropriate learning goals. A team makes the decision to provide individualized programming based on a student's cognitive abilities. Individualized programming is based on planning in the areas of cognitive/functional academic skills, communication skills, social/behavioural skills, self-help or personal-management skills, and fine and gross motor skills. These student-specific outcomes or goals should be outlined in an IEP.

For older students, individualized programming often includes vocational planning. Senior Years students who receive an individualized programming designation (I) must have an IEP documenting the programming goals.

Talk to the classroom teacher about the type of programming assistance your child needs or is receiving. If your child is receiving adaptations, curricular modifications, or individualized programming and you would like more information, contact your child's classroom teacher or resource teacher.

“*Have a good communication system.*

*Make sure you know what's going on with your child at school.*

”

## Your Child's Team

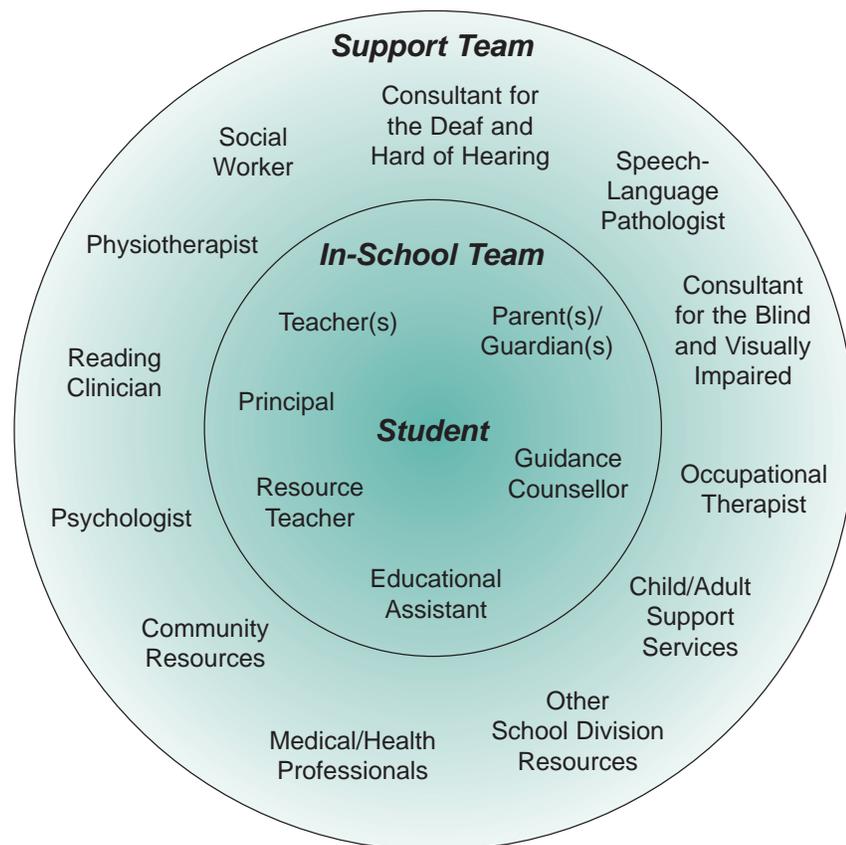
“ Find out if the local school has a parents' association for students with special needs. If it doesn't have one, start one. Contact community groups for assistance to get started. ”

A team may be formed for a student who has learning needs that require support. The number of people involved on a team can vary. For students who have severe learning needs, a variety of support persons may be involved, including a resource teacher, an educational assistant, a psychologist, an occupational therapist, or others. The number of people on your child's team will depend on the needs of your child and the expertise needed to plan and develop a programming plan.

### Team Members

The circle below identifies people who may be on your child's team.

- **In-School Team:** This team usually consists of people who may be involved with a child at school on a daily basis.
- **Support Team:** The people on this team consult with the in-school team and provide expertise in the areas of planning, assessment, and programming.



Adapted from *Individual Education Planning: A Handbook for Developing and Implementing IEPs, Early to Senior Years* (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Education and Training, 1998), 3.5.

“*Keep in contact with your child’s team. Make sure the school staff know you want to be part of your child’s team and that you are there to help.*”

### Contributing to Your Child’s Team

As a parent, you play an important role in ensuring that your child has a successful educational experience. Being a strong advocate for your child includes being an informed, contributing member of your child’s team.

You can actively support and participate in your child’s school experiences in ways such as the following:

- Participate in decisions that affect your child’s education.
- Let the teacher(s) know when you respectfully disagree and ask to discuss issues as they arise.
- Give your informed, written consent for any needed assessments of your child.
- Be fully informed of school/division policies and practices.
- Share your preferences regarding your child’s placement and be part of a discussion about options in your school/division.
- Obtain information on your child’s learning and growth from teachers and others on your child’s team.
- Review reports on your child’s progress with the teacher at regular intervals throughout the school year.
- Participate in the development of your child’s individual education plan (IEP).

When working as a team, all members participate in making decisions and share information with each other. As a parent, you may want to share

- current medical information about your child
- successful learning and behaviour techniques that you are using at home
- changes in the home setting that might cause emotional reactions
- past school experiences
- ongoing goals for your child that you are supporting at home

Sharing relevant information with your child’s teacher can have a positive effect on your child’s learning experience.

“*Have a book to introduce your child to the teacher. Include your child’s likes/dislikes, photos, and so on.*”

### Getting to Know Your Child’s School

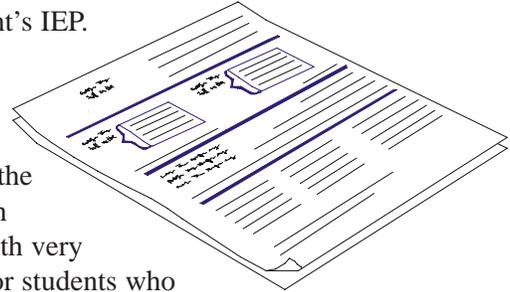
One of the most important ways of building an effective team is to establish positive working relationships with your child’s teachers and other school staff. You can make meaningful connections in a variety of ways:

- Get to know the staff early in the school year and ensure there is ongoing communication.
- Drop by the school at the beginning or end of a day to introduce yourself.
- Call the school to find out the best time to have a brief conversation with the teacher.
- Welcome parent conferences as an important opportunity to exchange information and to work together.
- Get to know your school principal. Under *The Public Schools Act*, the principal is responsible for the school as a whole. He or she can be a source of information and is an important member of your child’s team.

“*When the school year starts, be prepared for things to change...things will need to be worked out.*”

## Individual Education Planning

Individual education planning (IEP) is the process whereby teachers, support personnel, and parents work together as a team to meet the needs of individual students who require a range of supports. The team develops outcomes or goals based on a student's current needs and skills, and writes the plan for the school year in the student's IEP. The written plan is called an IEP.



### Who Needs an IEP

All teachers are encouraged to consider the potential benefits of individual education planning for a wide range of students with very different needs. Most IEPs are written for students who need support for behavioural and learning or cognitive skills.

An IEP will be developed when parents and staff together decide that this is the best way to meet a student's special needs. An IEP must be developed for a student who needs course modifications (M designation) or individualized programming (I designation).

### Purpose of an IEP

The purpose of an IEP is to provide a plan to help a student meet individual outcomes or goals beyond his or her current skills. For this reason, an understanding of what a student can and cannot do is essential to the individual education planning process.

Each IEP is individual to the student for whom it is designed. As members of the IEP team, parents should be part of the individual planning process and sign the IEP for their child.

### Components of an IEP

All IEPs, regardless of the individual needs of a student, contain certain essential components:

- student identification and background information
- current levels of performance that reflect team consensus on the student's abilities and needs
- student-specific outcomes or goals
- performance objectives
- teaching methods, materials, and strategies
- the names of team members who will implement the IEP, and the setting(s) where it will be implemented
- plans and timelines for evaluation and review

## Stages of Developing an IEP

Developing an IEP involves the following four stages:

1. gathering and sharing information
2. setting direction
3. developing and writing the IEP
4. implementing and reviewing the IEP

These stages may occur in different sequences or may be worked on simultaneously, depending on the individual needs of the student. As parents and as members of your child's team, you can be actively involved in all stages of the IEP-development process.



- **Stage 1: Gathering and Sharing Information:**

You are a source of valuable information in the initial stages of developing and setting the direction of the IEP for your child. You can provide information about your child in areas such as the following:

- aspirations and goals for your child
- personality traits
- interests, talents, and desires
- strengths and needs
- family and educational history that affects your child's present learning situation
- current medical history and health care needs

- **Stage 2: Setting Direction:** Choosing priorities helps the team focus on what is most important for your child to learn each school year. At this stage, the team establishes these priorities based on all the information that has been gathered so far.

To determine priorities, the team needs to do the following:

- List your child's learning needs.
- Rank your child's learning needs in order of importance.
- Select your child's most important learning needs for the school year.

To determine your child's most important learning needs, the team needs to consider the following questions:

- Does your child need this skill now?
- Will this skill be used for other learning?
- Will this skill help your child be more independent?
- Is the goal appropriate for your child's age and grade?
- How long will it take to learn the skill?
- How useful will the skill be for your child in other environments?

- **Stage 3: Developing and Writing the IEP:** As part of your child’s team, you can offer ideas and information for the development of student-specific outcomes. These outcomes or goals usually indicate what the student might accomplish in a specific area in a determined amount of time during the school year. They are often written according to subject areas (e.g., language arts, mathematics) or planning domains (e.g., communication, self-help, functional, academic, social, behavioural, fine and gross motor skills).
- **Stage 4: Implementing and Reviewing the IEP:** At this stage of the IEP-development process, the team members review the student-specific outcomes and decide how they will know when the student has met the goals. Teaching and assessment strategies are put into practice. At this time the team reviews the content of the IEP in relation to the student’s timetable (either classroom or individual) to make sure that the IEP is being carried out daily.

The team will decide how often it is necessary to meet throughout the school year. During review meetings, your child’s progress within the IEP is discussed, and possible changes to the plan are considered. It is important for you to attend these meetings so that you can discuss your child’s progress and be part of the planning for next steps. At least once a year, usually in the late spring, the team will review the IEP and plan for the following school year. An IEP is written for the next school year using the information gathered from the current school year.

### Promoting Successful IEPs

The IEPs that are most effective in promoting student learning

- involve parents as active and equal team members in planning and implementation
- are working documents, linked to daily planning and activities
- identify clearly who is responsible for teaching a student on a daily basis and for gathering information about progress
- are “living” documents, changed to reflect a student’s circumstances and progress
- link clinician and consultant reports and recommendations to daily programming

### For More Information...

For more information about Individual Education Planning, see <<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/specedu/iep/index.html>>.

## Programming Supports

“*Seek to understand how services will be delivered.*”

An appropriate placement or learning environment should be chosen on an individual basis for a student with special needs. Educating students with special needs in regular classrooms in local schools is the first placement option considered by schools/divisions, in consultation with parents and students.

Most students with special needs attend their neighbourhood or local schools, and are provided with programming, supports, and services to meet their individual needs. However, when a team decides that a student's needs and IEP cannot be met in a regular classroom even with supports and services, alternatives to programming in the regular classroom are considered for part or all of the school day.

### Placement Options

Schools/divisions in Manitoba offer a wide range of placement and learning options. Students may attend school

- in their neighbourhood school in a classroom with their peers for the majority of the day
- in their neighbourhood school in a classroom with their peers and a special learning environment for part of the day
- in their neighbourhood school in a special learning environment for the majority of the day
- in a special learning environment that may not be in their neighbourhood school

Supports within these environments could include

- resource teacher
- clinician(s)
- educational assistant(s)
- specialized teacher
- consultant(s)

Determining the appropriate placement for a student with special needs is a shared responsibility:

- **The Team:** Parents have specific views on what would be the most enabling placement or learning environment for their child. Parents should communicate with school/division staff to become aware of options available locally. A student's team takes a number of factors into consideration in determining the most appropriate placement or learning environment for the student. These factors include the particular needs of the student, available resources and supports, the views of the student's parents, and what is appropriate and reasonable under the circumstances.

- **The School and School Division:** The school needs to identify any additional resources required to support the student-specific plan. School divisions allocate resources to schools. It is the responsibility of each school division to identify students with special needs, assess each student's strengths and needs, and, within resources available, plan and deliver educational programming that will best meet the needs of all students. Schools/divisions, in keeping with available resources and policy, are ultimately responsible for making placement decisions that are in the best interest of individual students and of all the students they serve.

If you have questions regarding programming or supports for your child, or if you wish to have information regarding funding, contact your child's classroom teacher, school principal, or school division office.

### Clinical and Specialist Support

At times, the school team may work together with other support people to meet your child's needs. The teacher may discuss with you the need for additional programming support to help determine and meet your child's needs.

Schools/divisions hire or contract clinicians to provide support in schools. Most school divisions have psychologists, social workers, and speech-language pathologists on their student services team. In addition, some hire or contract reading clinicians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, health professionals, consultants, and others, depending upon their resources and local needs. Each support person can provide the team with information and services to help identify a student's needs, skills, learning style(s), physical needs, adaptations, or programming strategies. If a clinician is to be involved, the student's parents should be included in the referral process. For definitions of each clinician, please see the Introduction to this handbook.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth provides schools/divisions with support for students who are Deaf/hard of hearing or blind/visually impaired. In addition, schools/divisions across the province can access the support of the Department's Special Education Consultants in a variety of areas.

A team for a student with special needs may also access the support of community service providers and specialist agencies. The Services for Persons with Disabilities Division of Family Services and Housing is one of the common supports used by families who have children with special needs.

“*Seek to understand the role of each educator or professional who will be involved in your child's educational life.*”

## Educational Assistants

When the school team is planning or carrying out the IEP for a student, it may be decided that the support of an educational assistant is necessary. You may hear many terms used to identify the assistant, such as teaching assistant, paraprofessional, and so on, but the accepted term in Manitoba is educational assistant.

Educational assistants provide supportive and complementary services to enhance the learning experiences of students, particularly those with special needs. They receive directions from teachers or the school principal.

Educational assistants may be asked to take on the following roles and responsibilities:

- Carry out the daily implementation of the student-specific IEP outcomes or goals, as directed by the teacher.
- Reinforce a concept or skill that the teacher has taught with a small group of students.
- Provide personal care in areas such as personal hygiene, dressing, or helping a child use adaptive equipment (such as computer technology).
- Help prepare materials for an individual student, classroom, or school.
- Provide the teacher with information and/or written documentation about a student's performance, behaviour, growth, and needs.

The amount of time an educational assistant is assigned to a classroom, a resource program, a group of students, or a particular student varies. Teachers are ultimately responsible for planning, implementing, and assessing student progress.



Schools/divisions hire or contract educational assistants and have hiring, qualification, and assignment policies. Please contact your school principal or school division office for more information.

## Planning for Transitions

Transitions are a normal part of life and occur at different times throughout our lives. For children and youth, transitions occur at various times during their education. Transitions occur when students

- enter the school system
- move between activities and settings
- move from grade to grade
- move from Early Years (Kindergarten to Grade 4) to Middle Years (Grade 5 to Grade 8)

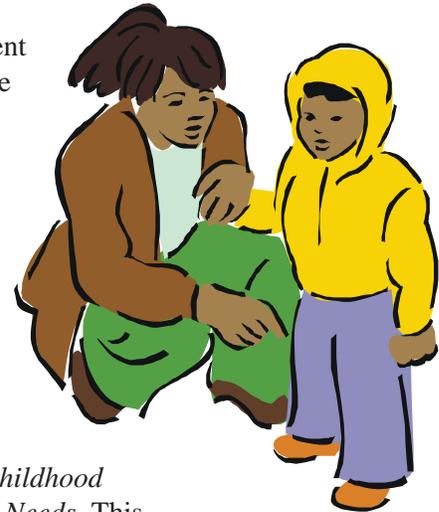
- move from Middle Years to high school or Senior Years (Senior 1 to Senior 4)
- prepare for adult life

Starting school, changing grades, changing schools, and moving to a new setting after completing school are common transitions for everyone. Getting used to a new classroom or school, new classmates, a new teacher, a new bus, or a different educational assistant can be difficult for many students.

Children and youth with special needs frequently experience difficulty in making transitions. The new situations they face because of life changes such as entering or leaving school require planning. When teams are meeting it is important that they discuss and plan for any issue related to students' current or upcoming transitions.

### Early Childhood Transition to School

Entering the school system is an important event in a young child's life. Much of a child's future success in school depends upon his or her transition into school and upon having successful experiences in the early grades. For many children with special needs it is necessary to consider programming requirements and physical modifications to the school and/or classroom (e.g., ramps, special equipment) before they begin school.



To help parents and schools in planning for children's transition to school, Healthy Child Manitoba has prepared *Guidelines for Early Childhood Transition to School for Children with Special Needs*. This protocol promotes information sharing and collaborative planning between community-based agencies working with preschool children with special needs and the school system (one year) prior to the children's enrollment in school.

Many schools/divisions meet regularly with agencies providing services for children with special needs to discuss school transition planning. In addition, many use transition-planning processes to help make the beginning of school successful for students.

If your child is starting school, there are some important things for you to know and do. The following checklist may help you in planning for this important transition in your child's life.

## Checklist

### Plan Ahead

- When planning for your child's entry to school, ask yourself some questions.
  - What is your vision for your child's educational experience?
  - Is there information about your child that would be helpful for the school to know?
  - Does your child have specific programming needs?
  - Are there placement choices that you want for your child?
- Taking into consideration your child's needs, explore local resources and practices.
  - What services are available in your school division? In your neighbourhood school?
  - What are your school/division policies on inclusion, placement, transportation, programming, student services, or special education?

### Inform the School

- At least a year before your child starts school, contact your child's local school to let staff know when your child will be coming. Ask to have a meeting to begin planning.
- If you are not sure about where your child should attend school, contact your school division.
- If your child is currently receiving services from a preschool program or service, ask that a meeting to support your child's entry to school be organized between the preschool agency and the school.

### Work Together

- Once your child is registered in school, arrange a meeting with the classroom teacher, resource teacher, and relevant preschool service providers to discuss your child's educational programming. If there are specific plans for programming, equipment, or services, ask for a written plan that outlines what will be done, by whom, and when.
- You may wish to include preschool service providers in discussion with school staff to identify the supports and services most beneficial to enhancing your child's strengths and addressing your child's needs.
- Discuss the programming or training needs of the school staff who will work with your child. Ask what supports will be available to the school.
- Provide the school with copies of reports that may assist them in making programming decisions for your child.
- Let the teacher know that you want to participate in the planning meetings. Discuss how that will work.

## Transition Planning for Students Reaching Age 16

As students get older and prepare to enter the Senior Years (high school), there is a need to identify what their hopes and dreams are for the future, and to begin to plan for the next phase in their life after school. This is a time for families to discuss and outline realistic plans for the future, taking into consideration the child's and parents' preferences for living and work options, training or educational opportunities, and recreational needs.

Transition planning often begins at school because that is where students spend the day and have individuals or a team of people who know them. To work towards a successful and smooth transition to adult life, planning needs to expand to include other parts of students' lives.

This is a time for the student, parents, and school team to begin the following steps in transition planning:

- Identify the student's strengths, abilities, skills, interests, and needs.
- Identify programs that may be available to address the student's individual needs.
- Explore the availability of and requirements for
  - post-secondary education, vocational training, and employment (including supportive work options)
  - independent or supported living options
  - leisure or social opportunities
- Develop a person-centred plan for leaving school, based on the student's individual needs and desires.

In Manitoba, transition planning for students with special needs should begin by at least age 16. Students, parents, the school, support services workers, and others develop a written plan that outlines roles and responsibilities, timelines, and actions to be taken before students leave high school. The guidelines are outlined in *Manitoba Transition Planning Process Support Guidelines for Students with Special Needs Reaching Age 16*.

Students with special needs require more intensive and coordinated planning than most high school students to enable them to make a successful transition when leaving school. The following checklist may help you and your child plan for important transitions in your child's life.

## Checklist

### Communicate

- Ask for a meeting with your child's team to begin transition planning.
- At this meeting, discuss the supports currently in place for your child and some of the new or adult-focused supports that will be needed.

### Plan Ahead and Work Together

- In planning during this stage of your child's life, begin with a clear understanding of
  - who your child is and where he or she wants to be
  - what supports and services are available or need to be available
  - what actions need to be taken to achieve the transition plan
- Ask yourself some questions.
  - What are your child's strengths and needs?
  - What do you see your child doing in four or five years?
  - Where does your child see himself or herself?
  - Do you and your child have enough information to make decisions?
  - Do you need to investigate what opportunities or options are available?
  - Are there some specific skills your child needs to focus on to be as independent as possible?
- Talk to your child's teacher or other family or community support workers to assist you in the transition process.
- Gather information from various sources, such as the following:
  - Children's Special Services
  - The Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD)
  - Supported Living Programs
  - Vocational Rehabilitation Services
  - Employment and Income Assistance
  - Office of the Vulnerable Persons' Commissioner
  - Regional Health Authority
    - Mental Health
    - Home Care

### For More Information...

To find out more about the Healthy Child Manitoba protocols, talk to your child's classroom teacher or resource teacher or visit the Department's Special Education website: <<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/spcedu/protocols/index.html>>.