



# Transitions

## Transitioning from primary school to secondary school

Starting secondary school is an important milestone for all students. It can involve many changes such as new travel arrangements, new teachers, a different school setting and new classmates. Moving from one secondary school to a new secondary school can involve similar changes. For students with disabilities and their families these changes can be particularly challenging.

## Planning the transition

### Transition plan

Schools and teachers can support students with disabilities as they move from Year 6 to Year 7 with a [transition plan](#). The aim of a transition plan is to make sure the new student feels confident about starting secondary school and that the school is fully prepared to meet their learning needs.

### Student Support Group

The transition plan can be organised by a [Student Support Group \(SSG\)](#) who can meet regularly and keep the transition process on track. Members of the group usually include:

- the school principal (or nominee)
- a key teacher (or teachers) from secondary school
- the student and their parents

Key teacher(s) from primary school may also be involved during the transition planning stage. Health professionals who work with the student, such as speech pathologists or occupational therapists can be invited to join the SSG.

Members of the SSG work out what adjustments the school needs to make so that a student with a disability can fully participate in all aspects of school life. This may include making changes to the buildings and classrooms (for example, adding ramps, or creating quiet spaces), providing assistive devices and furniture (for example, providing 'cut out' desks) or allowing students to use specialist software and personalised computer settings (for example, software for writing and translating Braille). The SSG provides ongoing support for the student throughout their schooling. This involves the regular monitoring of adjustments in relation to the student's educational progress and care for their overall wellbeing at school.

### Individual Education Plan

Another important focus of the SSG will be to create an Individual Education Plan (IEP). To do this, teachers and parents collaborate and share information about the student's strengths and interests as well as the learning strategies that worked best for them at primary school.

It is important that the student can have input into their IEP and let their new teachers know about their likes, dislikes, favourite past-times and hopes for the future. This can be done in the form of an [about me statement](#) (from page 35) that the student can respond to in words, writing or pictures.

This will help secondary teachers to draw on a student's interests and strengths to create learning goals that fit with the curriculum of secondary school.

Be sensitive to cultural and language differences. Check that the family are comfortable with all aspects of the learning plan. If you develop the goals and strategies together everyone will likely have more commitment to them.

# Supporting a student with the transition

A student with a disability may feel anxious about the upcoming changes. In particular, many students may worry about whether they can manage school work and homework in secondary school. Some may be anxious about changes to routines and friendships. Below are a few strategies for teachers that may help a student with the transition:

## Consider a student's strengths and abilities when planning orientation activities

Plan activities that ALL teens can fully participate in. Some key considerations might include:

- 'Do activities allow a teen who has a physical disability or who has low or blind vision to join in?'
- 'Have we planned for activities in small groups or pairs for teens who feel anxious or overwhelmed in large groups?'
- 'How can we manage noise levels on the day?'

## Tell students what doesn't change from primary to secondary

Highlight the similarities so that they feel confident they already have some of the skills they will need. Access AllPlay Learn's [secondary stories](#) for an animation on What will change in secondary school and what will remain the same.

## Local primary schools can partner with secondary schools

Primary schools could identify 'Year 7 work' that students could work on while in Grade 6. This helps students feel that they can manage high school work before they transition. It is important that the work is not more difficult than what a student can already do. If appropriate, students could even begin an assignment in Grade 6 that will be completed in Year 7.

## Provide visual supports

Visual supports such as photos of school buildings, maps, photos of teachers and staff, checklists and visual timetables may be helpful for some students.

## Consider a peer buddy system or a safe person/space for students

Peer buddies can provide social support, in addition to a safe person or place that a student can access when they need support.

## Help them access positive stories about high school

Help students and their families access AllPlay Learn's story How to be organised in our [secondary stories](#) page to help prepare them for the transition.