

The transition to high school is difficult with so many changes in their environment, social demands, and educational and independence expectations, and all this with less support than they may be used to.

Planning Ahead

Start discussions a year or two before the transition.

Over the 6 months before starting:

- Connect the current special education team at elementary school with the new secondary school team
- Plan visits and start communication by meeting teachers, EAs, and principal
- Plan an IEP meeting – ensure the team is up to date on the goals of your teen for after high school (ex. Work or live independently, attend further education, etc.)
 - Ensure goals are achievable, appropriate, and relevant to their future aspirations
 - Actions need to be defined clearly and specifically with the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved broken down year by year to maximize the teens potential
- Attend an orientation day and become familiar with routines, timetables, and new rules
- Make all travel arrangements for getting to and from school
- Practice the upcoming schedule (ex. eat lunch when they will at school)
- Ensure they have the equipment they need to stick to their schedule (watch, timer on a phone, morning visual schedule, etc.)

Self-Advocacy, Communicating Needs, and Staying Safe

- Teach your teen about themselves and how to communicate their needs
- If they cannot communicate this on their own, then equip them with a profile card that they can use to show what they are feeling or need help with
- Ensure your teen can get their work done and that they are being provided the materials needed both by you and their teachers (ex. homework checklist, detailed instructions, morning routine visual schedule, etc.)

Socializing

- This can be hard for any teen, and a teen with ASD might struggle with how to find friends
- Encourage your teen to join groups, clubs or programs that your teen is interested in
- Use social stories, social skills groups, and role play to prepare your teen for the feelings and interactions that they might encounter
- Prepare your teen by discussing hygiene (personal and gym class), healthy eating at lunch, schedules, school and community safety, and the increase in expectations of adults and peers
- Discuss what is appropriate behaviour with peers, in class, and when with a group and why they are different

References:

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