

Student Tips for Successful Transitions

Note: This article is also available in French and the link is at the end of the article.

Starting secondary school and thinking about your future is exciting and can be scary. For students with disabilities planning for transitions may be more challenging because of needs for:

- Accessibility
- Special equipment
- Health and/or personal care supports at school
- Special education programs and services

The following tips have been written to help you with transitions from elementary to secondary school, and as you plan to leave secondary school. Remember that you are not alone and there are many people who can help.

Tip 1

Start Early and Dream Big:

1. Think about your future before you start secondary school
2. Think about the life you would like to have in the future
3. Figure out what is important to you and what you like doing
4. Make a list of jobs or careers that interest you
5. Find out what type of qualifications or experience you might need for each job or career
6. Talk to your family and friends, your teachers and coaches or other important people in your life about your dreams

7. Ask for help to develop a plan to get to your future dream, or even to the next step
8. Identify any possible barriers to your future activities and create a list of possible solutions
9. Find someone who could be a mentor and help you develop your plans. A mentor can be a family member, a teacher or an adult who works in a job or career that you are interested in learning about.

Tip 2

Know Yourself:

1. Identify your strengths, interests, abilities
2. Identify your needs and challenges
3. Find out more about your diagnosis and what it means
4. Learn about what equipment, programs or services are helpful
5. Find out about your rights as a person with a disability

Tip 3

Explore Opportunities:

1. Find out about different jobs and career fields and the qualifications needed
2. Ask the school Guidance Counsellor or student success teacher for course and career information
3. Attend career fairs and post-secondary information sessions
4. Use opportunities at school, including career courses, school-wide activities and special projects to learn more about specific careers and jobs
5. Investigate secondary school programs such as Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) or Dual Credits
6. Use co-op (cooperative education) placements to experience different work places and develop skills
7. Get involved in your community and volunteer in areas of

interest. Join clubs or get involved in the community to develop your knowledge and skills

Tip 4

Use the Planning Opportunities at School:

1. Talk to the teacher about on-line planning tools, such a 'Individual Pathways Plan' (IPP), a web-based tool for students in grades 7 to 12
2. Answer the four key questions:
 - Who am I?
 - What are my opportunities?
 - Who do I want to become?
 - What is my plan for achieving my goals?
3. Update your plan or IPP twice a year

Tip 5

Select Your Courses Carefully:

1. Pick the career that you are most interested in and work backwards to figure out what you need to do to get there
2. Find out about requirements for careers or post secondary courses at colleges or universities that interest you
3. Investigate programs including:
 - Ontario Skills Passport
 - Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)

Tip 6

Take Responsibility:

1. Increase responsibility for your life
2. Become involved in decisions about school, your health and your equipment
3. Attend meetings and appointments with your parents
4. Participate in discussions about your future

5. Use the Individual Education Plan (IEP) to record the next steps that need to take place
6. Listen carefully and ask questions about things you don't understand
7. Gradually start to take the lead as you plan for the future

Tip 7

Learn to Problem Solve and Advocate for Yourself:

1. Identify solutions when you are faced with a barrier or problem
2. Find out who can help you to solve the problem
3. Look at how your parents advocate for you
4. Learn how to advocate for your self
5. Find out about opportunities through school or the community to develop self advocacy skills

Tip 8

Recognize Your Feelings:

1. Think about how you are feeling – changing grades, starting high school and thinking about your future can be scary. You may feel excited and nervous and frightened all at the same time.
2. Share your feelings with your family and friends, or an adult or mentor
3. Ask questions and get more information about the things that are worrying you
4. Find ways to cope with your feelings – physical exercise and music help
5. If you think you need extra help or you are worrying a lot, find out who else you can talk to at school or in the community

Tip 9

Connect with Other Students:

1. Connect with other students facing the same challenges
2. Ask whether there are students, with similar challenges, at high school that would be willing to talk to you
3. Find out about student groups or organizations that might be able to help you

>Helpful Websites:

CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability: canchild.ca

- Taking the Leap: Helping Children with Cerebral Palsy (CP) Transition to High School
- A Guide for Teens with Cerebral Palsy (CP)
- A Guide for Parents of Children with Cerebral Palsy (CP)
- A Guide for Educators

Ontario Ministry of Education: edu.gov.on.ca

- Transition Planning: A Resource Guide (2002)
- The Individual Education Plan (IEP) A Resource Guide (2004)
- Creating Pathways to Success, New Education and Career Life Planning Program for Ontario Schools (2012)

French translation:

[French – Student Tips for Successful Transitions_rev_2016](#)