

### Learning Guide – Collaborating for Smooth Transitions



Alberta **Regional** Consortia

This learning guide is designed for use by Professional Learning Communities, instructional/learning coaches, teacher-leaders or as a self-paced study to enhance and support instruction, conversation and critical reflection about creating inclusive learning environments. This conversation guide is intended to be used after viewing the video clip entitled Collaborating for Transitions on this website.

#### General Synopsis

Transitions are life-long, from one grade to another, from one stage of life to another. In this video, a high school student and his family are transitioning to a new life in Alberta from another province and settling into a new school community. The video shows how this transition can be made smoother and easier by preparing ahead, and making both the student and his parents welcome in the learning community.

#### Key Understandings

- Transitions through the school years may lead to parents, including parents of students with disabilities, feeling that they are "starting all over" each time their child moves to a new grade, a new class or a new school.
- It is helpful for a teacher to understand some of the common transitions, and the needs of parents at each stage in order to best support both parents and students (see Tip Sheet "Collaborating for Transitions").
- Understanding the changing needs of parents at different transition points can help teachers to meet these needs of parents, assisting them to manage the transitions of their children effectively.
- Teachers and schools can be agents of change in helping parents engage in their child's education and become members of a school community.
- The school can play an important role in explicitly clarifying for parents, and for their children, that parents are welcome and specifying ways in which parents can be directly involved, or can easily contact teachers to discuss concerns.
- When a student comes to a school, there is a "process of joining" in which teachers play a major role by:
  - WELCOMING students and parents,
  - HONORING the knowledge parents have about their child, and
  - CONNECTING with parents to focus together on the child and learning.

### Key Understandings

- The keys to successful transitions are:
  - Planning for change or transition,
  - Including parents in the planning process,
  - Establishing at least one individual who the parent can feel comfortable approaching, and with whom a closer relationship will be established,
  - Ensuring that people have an opportunity to meet each other prior to the transition occurring,
  - Providing opportunities for parental peer support by linking parents to parents of older children,
  - Using multiple modes of communication, and
  - Celebrating successful transitions by recognizing the roles parents and teachers have played in meeting student needs through collaboration.
- For each student, both parents and teachers are working toward increased self-determination, and increased self-sufficiency.

For further information on this topic, please see *Support for Implementation Tip Sheet: Collaborating for Transitions*.

### Continuing the Conversation: Questions for Discussion

1. What transitions did you see occurring in the video?
2. What transition(s) for students do you most commonly see in your role/school?
3. What do you do at your school to avoid parents feeling like they are "starting all over"?
4. From the discussion, or from your own thinking about this, what is one thing you could add to what you are already doing that would help students and their families with transitions?



## Research References

- Bostrom, P.K., Broberg, M, & Hwang, P. (2009). Parents' descriptions and experiences of young children recently diagnosed with intellectual disability. *Child, Care, Health and Development*, 36(1), 93-100.
- Cimera, R.E. (2000). From bridges to beyond: A perspective of special education's future. *Journal of Disability Studies*. Retrieved March 2011 from *accessmylibrary*: <http://accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-65642627/bridges-beyond-perspective-special.html>
- Halsey, P.A. (2005). Parent involvement in junior high school: a failure to communicate. *American Secondary Education*, 34(1), 57-69.
- Singer, G.H.S. (2002). Suggestions for a pragmatic program of research on families and disability. *The Journal of Special Education*, 36(3), 148-154.

**Acknowledgement:** This guide was developed through the leadership of ERLC and is freely provided in support of improved teaching and learning under the following Creative Commons license.

