

Parent Update on Inclusive Education



INCLUSION IS A WAY OF THINKING...COMMUNITY IS A WAY OF LIVING

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Transitions...smoothing the long and winding road of public education in Manitoba

“Bridging to Adulthood: A Protocol for Transitioning Students with Exceptional Needs from School to Community” was recently introduced by Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth. This document outlines suggested timelines for schools, community service workers, child and adult support agencies, and families to use when planning a student’s transition from the educational system into the community. Planning begins upon high school entry and continues until the student leaves school and is initiated into the world of adult services for people with disabilities.

This document was created as a collaborative effort between Manitoba

Departments of Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY), Family Services and Housing, Justice, Supportive Living as part of the Healthy Child Initiative. These departments in turn worked closely and consulted with groups within the community that work with people with disabilities including Community Living Manitoba (CL-MB).

“Bridging to Adulthood” will be formally rolled out this fall with workshops planned across the province for different team members to attend.

CL-MB will be involved in the roll-out and will work with MECY to provide an overview to the new protocol for parents and caregivers as well as all

other stakeholders in the planning process to enable all transition planning team members to participate to their fullest extent and to help better prepare Manitoba’s young adults with disabilities to more smoothly move from child to adult services.

A fuller listing of the location and dates for this training is listed below.

As another school year begins, CL-MB is gearing up for the 50th anniversary of the Community Living movement in Canada. The Canadian Association for Community Living is hosting a series of events in Ottawa during the week of November 17th to 22nd and we are very pleased to be able to not only participate but share Manitoba’s stories of success in inclusive



With inclusive education, all students:

- ATTEND AND ARE WELCOMED IN THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHOOLS
- ARE EDUCATED TOGETHER IN AGE-APPROPRIATE REGULAR CLASSES
- ARE SUPPORTED TO LEARN, CONTRIBUTE AND PARTICIPATE IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Coming to your community this fall and winter

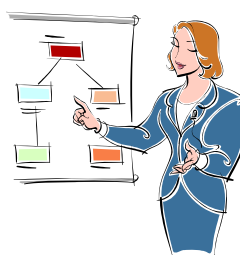
The Transition Planning Road Show is coming soon to your community. Dates have been proposed for both Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth and Community Living Manitoba to come for day-long and evening sessions as follows:

Norway House Sept 29
Flin Flon Oct 6
The Pas Oct 7
Swan River Oct 14

Dauphin Oct 15
Thompson Oct 21
Brandon Oct 28
Portage Oct 29
Morden Nov 4
Arbours Nov 6
Steinbach Nov 10
Selkirk Nov 12
Beausejour Nov 19 (parent evening Dec 11)

There will also be three presentations in Winnipeg on November 24, 26, and December 1.

These dates are subject to change and will involve parents, teachers, school division personnel, community service providers and invited guests.



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Parent Update on Inclusive Education

Transition Planning and The Vulnerable Person's Act



On October 4, 1996, *The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act* came into force in Manitoba, replacing Part II of *The Mental Health Act*. The Act promotes and protects the rights of adults living with a mental disability who need assistance to meet their basic needs. The legislation recognizes those Manitobans as "vulnerable persons".

The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act reflects the right of all people to make their own decisions and have help, where necessary, in a manner that respects their independence, privacy and dignity. To help cultivate the ability of people with disabilities to make their own decisions, we, as their parents and caregivers need to work with the education system in order to build on some basic foundations...

What are some of the basic foundations of adolescent development that should be considered as transition planning occurs?

Supporting youth to plan for the future and to reach their adult goals includes fostering a sense of hope, sense of the future, and helping them stay connected so they will remain in school. Youth development and prevention strategies have

looked beyond the legal and educational goals to provide a holistic approach to education and transition.

Blum, McNeely, and Rinehart cite ten strategies to foster connections between youth and their schools (2002):

- Help youth get to know each other
- Involve youth in planning, problem-solving, and assessing classroom curriculum
- Promote cooperation over competition
- Build strong relationships between youth and teachers/administrators
- Convey attentiveness to youth and passion about learning through nonverbal cues
- Involve all youth in responsibilities
- Integrate responsibility and respect throughout all curricula
- Give youth a stronger voice
- Involve youth in the criteria by which their work will be assessed
- Use first person plural (we, us, let's) to reinforce the concept that 'we are all in this together.'

There are many institutions, programs, and researchers who are involved in youth and adolescent development, working for positive results in the lives of all youth. Although each may list slightly different words to define essential

elements, there is uniformity in concepts. Youth need:

- academic skills and competencies
- a sense of safety and structure
- self-worth and self-esteem
- a feeling of mastery and future
- belonging and membership
- responsibility and autonomy
- self-awareness and spirituality (Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 2003)

Youth also need motivational, emotional, and strategic supports to succeed in life. They must experience opportunities to learn about their world, explore ideas and interests, and believe they belong to their school and local communities and have something to give back that makes a difference. They also need meaningful services that engage them in education, health, employment, and more by using relevant instruction. In addition, they need caring support from adults, and challenging opportunities to express themselves and to take on new roles within groups (Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 2003; Ferber, Pittman, & Marshall, 2002; University of Minnesota, 1999; Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1995; Simpson, 2001; America's Promise-The Alliance for Youth, 2000).



One Family's Story: Traditional Community Gives Strength and Guidance

I am a mother of three children, two of whom have fetal alcohol syndrome disorder and thus show strengths and weaknesses in many areas. I first compared my son to my sister's children, but stopped doing that when I began to realize that he was showing a "failure to thrive" and a "failure to bond" and that I needed to focus on him. His sister, however, just "fell into me" and is still very affectionate.

We did have a traditional medicine man work with our son and feel that has "brought him around" a great deal. He has a wonderful attitude and is very positive with a beautiful smile. He has a detail for noticing. Our son loves hockey and has been on a team for two years. He may not be the fastest on the rink, but he enjoys being with the other boys and enjoys the sport. He still is a "follower" though and sometimes this worries me. His sister has mothered her brother and for quite awhile they only played with each other. They were inseparable. Now they have separate play mates, but are still very close. His sister loves to sing, make up songs, and is very spiritual. She had trouble with speech when she was younger and we thought it was "cute" in the way she pronounced words. We would mimic her rather than correct her so we had to learn to stop doing that. She will certainly live on

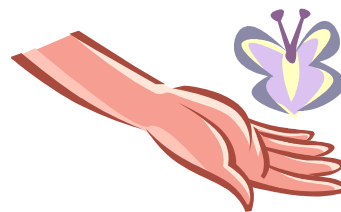
her own independently if I can "let go." We have been so possessive with both of them and now it is time to make that shift. We have to "let go." I really hope that both of them can live independently. I worry more about his ability to do so more than his sister's. Our oldest daughter is actually the one teaching us about "kids having freedom." She has been totally involved in the care and nurturing of her younger brother and sister, but now as a teenager she wants to be the only child as she thinks everything we do is focused on the younger ones. We are trying to work through this. She is telling us that she wants to have a career first and then a family. She also wants her independence and it is so difficult for me to "let any of them go." She and her sister are showing characteristics that tell me they will manage fine on their own. It's just me wanting to ensure their safety and happiness that makes me this way.

All I really want is for each and all of them to be happy. Here, in our community, people are wonderful. People know them and nobody is mean to them. Out there it is different, but I need to prepare them and myself for independent living.

(from "My Heart is Full...a snapshot into the real lives of families."The Mawiw Council Incorporated and The New Brunswick Association for Community Living)

This story, and many others, remind us that when our children go through the many transitions within their lives...into day care, into school, into a different grade, into high school, and eventually, into the community, we also transition with them. Their transitions are our transitions. Their Individual Education Plans and goals sometimes challenge us to think of them in different ways and to think of our role in their lives in different ways. This can be very difficult. Letting go of our sense of control, and our ability to comfort our children makes us rethink our role as caregiver and as a member of our own community. Any yet, this is so important to the development of independence in our children.

We need to challenge ourselves and the educators of our children to think of them as independent adults in-the-making and to nurture their strengths and interests so that they can find their rightful places in the community.



GOALS FOR TRANSITION

PLANNING:

- LIFE-LONG LEARNING
- EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT
- BUILDING SOCIAL NETWORKS AND INCLUSION
- LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY WITH INDEPENDENCE

Sibling support...sharing the load

Usually about the time they begin attending school with their peers, siblings of individuals with disabilities express concerns around caregiving responsibilities for their brother or sister. Initially this may take the form of protecting their brother or sister from bullying or acting as their ambassador among other school children and teaching staff. When children are younger they may be resentful if this interferes with plans with friends but, as the siblings age, the concerns may become more burdensome as they contemplate the mortality of their parents and begin thinking about the longterm care of their brother or sister.

The best way to help alleviate these concerns is for families to encourage open discussions and to plan well ahead for the time when the parents will no longer be able to provide care.

The responsibility for these

discussions to be meaningful and fruitful lies with both parties.

Parent Responsibility:

- Begin sharing information with siblings about their brother or sister at a very young age in an age appropriate manner.
- Work with your child's school to ensure that they are not assuming too great a responsibility for their sibling with special needs' well-being.
- Involve the entire family, including the siblings with and without the disability, in family decisions.
- When siblings are mature enough, usually around high school age, parents should involve them in discussions about their brother or sister's future.
- Inform siblings about any will, trust, letter of intent, insurance policies and government benefits they have set up for the child

with the disability and how to access information about those things.

- Share information about the dreams they have for each of your children's futures.

Sibling Responsibility:

- Let your parents know when you are feeling anxious about caregiving responsibilities.
- As you get older, be clear about the role you want to play in your brother/sister's life. This role most likely will fluctuate over time and during various circumstances.
- Share your dreams for your future.
- Ensure that you have a circle of support around you with other individuals who understand your family's circumstances.

(Adapted from "How siblings can effectively participate in and contribute to the future of individuals with FXS," www.fpg.unc.edu)



There is no trouble so great or grave that cannot be much diminished by a nice cup of tea.
- Bernard-Paul Heroux

Community Living—Manitoba

DEDICATED TO THE FULL INCLUSION IN THE COMMUNITY OF PERSONS OF ALL AGES WHO LIVE WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

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National News and Views

Visit www.inclusiveeducation.ca to see how inclusive education is progressing across the nation. One of the newer features of the website has been the profiling of school principals from all over Canada who promote the inclusive education message. Recently, Manitoba's own John Isbister from Gillis Elementary School in Tyndall was featured and more of our leaders will be presented in the coming months. If you would like to nominate an inclusion leader from your child's school, please contact CL-MB.

Members of the Canadian Association for Community Living's National Action Committee on Inclusive Education have been busy churning out brochures and videos to be used across the nation to promote the message that inclusive education is good education for everyone. These products are available through each of the provincial and territorial ACLs. Contact CL-MB for more information.

Do you have an idea for a presentation that you would like to see hosted in your community? Please contact Community Living Manitoba with your wishes and we will see what we can do to help you attain your goals. Knowledge is power and can help you to become a more effective advocate for your child.