

# The School Board's Role

The school board's role is to support and coordinate the transition-planning process in its various schools. This role may be performed in different ways by different school boards, depending on local needs. For example, one school board may choose to designate a staff person to coordinate transition planning at the board level, while another board might achieve similar objectives by establishing a board policy to ensure consistency among schools in their approach to transition planning.

In many school districts, it will be more efficient for the school board to maintain certain contacts and information centrally than for each school to develop and maintain them individually. The suggestions that follow do not necessarily require new or additional school board activities. Many supports may already be in place, perhaps in another context. For example, a network of employers for student placements may already have been established through the cooperative education program.

In school boards that serve large geographic areas, responsibilities related to transition planning might be shared by a group of schools located relatively close together. For example, a list of contacts at community agencies, potential employers, colleges, and universities might be developed and shared among neighbouring schools, with staff at different schools assuming responsibility for maintaining liaison with different sectors.

## Supporting and Coordinating the Transition-Planning Process

The school board, or a group of neighbouring school boards, can assist school principals and transition-planning teams by providing certain services and resources centrally. Examples could include:

- developing a board transition-planning policy;
- providing teachers with in-service training on transition planning;
- providing ongoing advice and problem-solving assistance to teachers;
- leading the transition-planning process for some students with high or complex needs;
- developing an inventory of available agencies, services, or support systems;
- maintaining a "library" of resource materials on transition planning;
- establishing and maintaining a transition-planning advisory committee or a network of community resource persons;
- establishing links with various provincially and federally sponsored programs that can assist students during or after transition;
- developing protocols with employers, employer groups, unions, providers of further education, service agencies, and others to facilitate cooperation in transition planning;
- developing an inventory of potential work experience or volunteer placements for exceptional students;
- monitoring individual student transition plans and working with teachers to achieve improvements.

Some of these ideas are elaborated below.

## Developing a Board Transition-Planning Policy

A board-level transition-planning policy could meet a number of needs. For example, it could:

- define roles and responsibilities for the board and for individual schools;
- identify services and resources that will be provided to support transition planning;
- stipulate which of the many suggestions in this resource guide are adopted as board policy;
- define how transition planning is to be coordinated with other planning activities (see the section "An Integrated Planning Process", pp. 29–31).

## Providing In-Service Orientation

It is recommended that school boards design and deliver their in-service programs in cooperation with local social service and health care agencies, employer groups, and postsecondary institutions. A joint in-service program for staff of school boards, social service agencies, and others will:

- bring school staff together with staff of other organizations who can provide information that will assist in transition planning; and
- assist school staff and staff of other organizations to understand one another's programs, services, and operating constraints.

Staff of the Ministry of Education may be able to assist with advice and additional resource materials for in-service programs. Initial contacts with social service and health care agencies can be facilitated by staff of the regional offices of the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services and by the Community Care Access Centres of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (Internet addresses for current lists of these offices can be found in Appendix 3.)

## Establishing and Maintaining Links With Other Organizations

School board special education staff can assist schools by establishing working relationships with regional and local agencies. Boards in cooperation with such organizations may find it useful to define and document local procedures as a guide for those who are developing transition plans for individual students.

In the employment sector, school boards may contact employers, chambers of commerce, boards of trade, unions, service clubs, and community employment agencies in their districts in order to bring together information about potential work placement and employment opportunities. School and board resources that may be available to assist in this work include the following:

- school councils;
- the school board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC);
- guidance and career education departments;
- cooperative education departments.

The Canadian Council for Exceptional Children and its Ontario federation, as well as various parent associations (national, provincial, and local), may be able to provide advice, assistance, and resource materials to help with transition planning. A number of provincial parent associations (such as the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario and the Association for Bright Children) have developed resource materials to support transition planning for exceptional students and have made it known that they are pleased to share these materials with school boards.

## Establishing a Transition-Planning Advisory Committee

One means of establishing and maintaining a network of contacts with health care, social service, further education, and workplace organizations is through a transition-planning advisory committee. This committee could assist the board to document community resources and to develop procedures schools can follow, where appropriate, to involve other organizations in transition planning for individual students.

Several models are possible for such a committee:

- In some communities there may be existing groups that serve (or could have their mandates extended to serve) this function.
- Alternatively, a transition-planning advisory committee might be established as a subcommittee of the school board's Special Education Advisory Committee.
- Another model is a committee with open and unlimited membership. Such a committee is a means of recruiting broad community support and creating a network of resource persons for transition-planning teams to draw on for advice and support. The committee might meet only once a year in a general meeting. A smaller executive committee and/or a number of task-oriented subcommittees could meet more frequently, as needed.