



Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders OAFCCD

TRANSITION PLANNING RESOURCE GUIDE

Speech and Language Impairment

Since a language impairment often co-exists with a speech impairment, we have grouped these two exceptionalities together. A language impairment is a learning disorder characterized by an impairment in the comprehension and use of oral and/or written language, which significantly interferes with communication and academic achievement while a speech impairment is an impairment in speech production which significantly interferes with the student's communication and learning (e.g., articulation, and/or phonological disorder, apraxia, dysfluency/stuttering, dysarthria, voice and resonance). However, it should be noted that a language impairment often co-exists with a speech impairment, although they can also occur independently.

It is also anticipated that only a few students, at the age of 14, would have a single identification of speech impairment. In most cases the speech impairment would be associated with a language impairment, or another exceptionality including, autism/pervasive developmental disorder, developmental or physical disability. The exception would be students with dysarthria, apraxia or stuttering who may continue to present with significant difficulties in speech, which would likely be lifelong.

Language impairment may also be associated with other exceptionalities such as learning disability, mild intellectual disability, behaviour, autism/pervasive developmental disorder and developmental disability. It is likely that transition planning for students in many of these exceptionalities will need to consider the student's speech and language skills and should, therefore, be cross referenced with this section.

1. Support at the school board level:

For most students identified as exceptional in the area of speech and/or language, transition plans will likely be integrated with the IPRC, IEP and AEP processes. These processes usually involve the Special Education Teacher as a leader or team member, as well as the Principal or a designate.

Language:

Students with language impairments usually require special education assistance in academic settings including modified language and learning curriculum, individualized program focused on oral and written language development, comprehensive accommodations and may require the specialized services of a speech-language pathologist

Speech:

Speech impairments which may require transition planning include stuttering, dysarthria and apraxia. Students with severe difficulty in speech, such that it may be non-functional, require

accommodations such as communication boards, voice output devices and may require the services of a speech-language pathologist from the board of education, community care access centre (school health support services) or other community agency (e.g. technology access centres).

2. Special considerations in forming transition teams:

Students with speech or language impairments will require many of the same supports and personnel as other Exceptional Students. Transition teams for these students will need to make connections with the relevant post-secondary institutions and employers, and should also consider the following:

Language:

The transition planning team should include special education teachers familiar with the student's strengths and needs. Where a speech-language pathologist has been closely involved in the assessment of the student's strengths and needs or in providing ongoing support for the student, his/her professional input may be needed in formulating goals and actions which are appropriate to the student. Other supports may include services such as psychologists, guidance counselors, etc.

Speech:

For students identified with speech impairment, the transition planning team should include speech-language pathologists. For some students, specialists in the areas of augmentative and alternative communication may need to be involved, particularly regarding equipment recommendations. Specialized equipment may be funded through ISA grants for school use and ADP for home use. For some students with physically or neurologically based speech disorders, medical input may be beneficial.

For some students with severe speech and language impairment it may be appropriate that the SLP be the team leader.

When another exceptionality is the primary exceptionality (e.g. developmental disabilities, autism/PDD) the team should request input from an SLP if there has been previous involvement, or if assessment or programming information is required. The team may also consider information/involvement from advocacy groups (see appendix for further information).

3. Special considerations in transition planning process:

In the transition planning process, the following should be taken into consideration when developing the student's long term goals for employment and/or further education, and when identifying the actions towards achieving these goals. For the students who have another primary exceptionality, consideration of transition planning for independent or supported community living will be important. For most students who have a language and/or speech impairment *alone*, specific planning activities for community living are not anticipated.

Language:

Students with language impairment will typically have the following characteristics:

- difficulty with the listening and learning demands of the classroom or workplace
- difficulty using oral expressive language to communicate and interact in academic and social situations
- difficulty with reading and writing
- difficulty organizing and formulating oral and written information
- difficulty using oral language to problem solve and reflect on behaviour
- may be frustrated with communication difficulties
- may also have a speech impairment

Speech:

A student with a severe speech impairment (e.g. articulation, apraxia, dysarthria, dysfluency/stuttering) or who may be almost non-speaking will typically have the following characteristics:

- may exhibit poor communication skills with strangers or in new situations
- may require extensive accommodations in the classroom/workplace e.g. visual supports, communication devices
- may use an alternative or augmentative communication system
- may demonstrate frustration and social isolation

Transition planning for these students will require the team to consider the listening, speaking, reading and writing demands of post secondary or workplace setting. The team will need to identify the student's strengths and needs, and the compensatory strategies that the student will need to function in the workplace or in a post secondary institution. Strategies to consider may include the following:

- identification of the student's personal learning style and accommodations necessary for successful learning and working
- for students who stutter, modifications and accommodations may include: support for class participation, intervention by a Speech-Language Pathologist and alternative oral presentation options (e.g. in writing, audio or video taping or one-on-one with teacher)
- investigation of assistive technology tools that can increase community involvement, post secondary and employment opportunities
- training in the use of assistive technology, communication devices, and/or computers in a variety of settings
- development of student's study skills including strategies for improved listening skills, note taking, test performance, and small group or class participation
- development of appropriate interpersonal communication and social skills for different settings (school, recreation, employment, with peers. etc.)
- development of self advocacy skills to obtain support and necessary accommodations for post secondary or work environments
- identification and development of specific vocational/job skills for targeted workplace (e.g. competence in latest versions of computer software and hardware, woodworking, metal working or technical knowledge, fine art or performance portfolio, etc.)

- development of good work habits, including punctuality, responsibility, timely task completion, and appropriate appearance
- participation in a co-op program, possibly with the assistance of a peer mentor, or a job coach (paid or volunteer)
- ongoing monitoring of courses, with program modifications and accommodations of required secondary school programs
- adequate preparation and appropriate modifications and accommodations of Grade 10 Test of Reading and Writing

4. Content of transition plan:

The need for retention of an Exceptional Student identification at post-secondary level needs to be discussed at the transition planning meeting. Factors to be taken into consideration include:

- impact of secondary school credit substitutions or curriculum modifications on post secondary course prerequisites
- assessments or documentation required by post secondary institution
- availability of human and other resources at post secondary institution (e.g. tutoring, note takers, readers, audio or visual tape recordings of course materials and lectures, alternative formats for tests and exams, financial assistance, bursaries, etc.)
- student and parent preferences and professional recommendations

NOTE: For some language impaired students it may be beneficial for them to be assessed by a psychologist to determine whether they meet the criteria for identification as students with a language learning disability, since services for this population are more clearly defined at the post secondary level.

The transition plan should:

- consider the student's strengths and needs and identify necessary program/workplace modifications and accommodations
- provide guidance regarding career choices and opportunities to increase knowledge and familiarity with employment and post secondary opportunities
- identify necessary program accommodations and modifications (such as specialized equipment required) for successful completion of secondary school credits
- identify any specialized human supports required (current and future) including mentors, a job coach, note taker, reader, etc.
- include an outline of the skills and strategies the student will require to be successful in the workplace or post secondary institution (e.g. resume writing, interview skills, role playing, etc.)
- include consideration of work experience and co-op plans
- investigate whether needed accommodations are available in post secondary or workplace
- identify availability of speech and language pathology support beyond secondary school
- make student and family aware of how to access services in the future, link up with advocacy groups

5. Additional resources:

The Transition Planning Resource Guide Appendices include a number of resources which are relevant for students with speech or language impairments. Many of the resources for learning disabled are also appropriate for students with language impairments. The following advocacy/support groups are also recommended:

- Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO)
- Canadian Association of People who Stutter (CAPS)
- Head Injury Association
- Aphasia support groups
- Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD)

Information about speech and language impairment may be obtained from:

- Ontario Association of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists (OSLA)
- Canadian Association of Speech - Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA)
- College of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists of Ontario (CASLPO)

For students requiring communication devices and other technology the following organizations may be contacted:

- Assistive Devices Program (Ministry of Health)
- Vocational rehabilitation services (Ministry of Community and Social Services)
- Financial assistance and grant programs, scholarships and bursaries at individual post secondary institutions

Source: OAFCCD 1999