

Project ACCESS



Transitioning to
the next
Environment

With

Julie A. Donnelly, Ph.D
Associate Director,
Project ACCESS

Transitions are hard for everyone.



- Individuals on the Autism Spectrum have an even harder time with transitions, than most of us.
- Some planning and preparation can make life easier for them and for us.
- Think ahead. Each year is a transition, but when it is a change of building and level (elementary to Middle on to secondary, etc.) it is especially important that we prepare them and the staff.

The Case Manager (CM)

- CM is often responsible for making contact with the new staff.
- She/he invites them to visit the semester before.
- She/he invites them to the IEP and transition meeting.
- She/he prepares a description of the student and his needs—perhaps a picture book of the supports he has been receiving.
- She/he shows the visual schedule and shares resources.



Preparing the student

- The student may visit during the semester before.
- During the summer, he may walk around the empty building and learn to locate his classroom.
- The student may have photographs or a video of the new school.
- The student may meet his teacher, support person or some peers before school starts.
- A known staff member may go with him the first day to help make the transition.
- The student may email or write to his new staff before the semester starts.
- The student may bring some comfort items with him.
- Talk positively about the transition. Bring out the pluses in the situation.

The new staff

- There is a new case manager that has been to meetings about and met the student.
- The teacher is chosen carefully based on the student's needs.
- Extra support staff may be provided for the transition period.
- Staff have been trained in general understanding of Autism and specifically about this student's needs.
- The administration is aware of the new student and any special supports needed.
- The administrator may come to greet the student the first day to make initial contacts positive.

Remember, the first days are often the hardest.

- Once the student is settled in, behavior often decreases.
- Misbehavior during the initial transition is often about fear. Allow the student to get used to the setting and new staff.
- Help them to learn the new routine.
- Provide visual supports.
- Let the student know you like him/her. Relationship means a lot!!

