

Vernon Public Schools
Autism Spectrum Disorder Steering Committee
Suggested Practices Around Major School Transitions
DRAFT, May 2009

Guiding Principles

1. Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) progress through the same developmental stages as all other children and are expected to adapt to a variety of changes within the educational system (changes in teachers, schedules, buildings, grade levels, etc) and beyond (from school to the work force, etc).
2. These changes can be extremely challenging due to an individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder's need for sameness and routine.
3. As such, it is often essential to begin to plan transitions further in advance than is typically done for other students with disabilities.
4. Transition plans should be driven by the individual needs of the student. These guidelines are provided as a tool to be considered when individual transition plans are developed for students.

Major School Transitions

1. For children who receive Birth to Three services, there is a transition to the public school system at age 3.
2. Within the public school system, major program and program location transitions take place from elementary to middle, middle to high school and from high school to postsecondary opportunities.

Birth to Three to Public School Preschool Special Education

1. Federal law requires that a transition conference take place no later than 90 days before a child turns 3 and if eligible, an Individualized Educational Plan must be in place no later than the child's third birthday.
2. In addition, the Vernon Public Schools ASD Steering Committee recommends the following.
 - (a) Families are invited to their child's school for a tour, observe programs and informal question and answer meeting. District provides PTO contacts as well as contact names and numbers of parents who have volunteered to act as resources.
 - (b) A Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting is held to develop a transition plan for an individual child.
 - (c) Children are offered a transitional program which may include a period of combined and/or jointly delivered services provided by personnel from the Connecticut Birth to Three System and the

school district. If needed, evaluations may be administered during this period.

- (d) A second PPT is held prior to child's third birthday to develop an IEP.
- (e) Team meetings (or PPTs if IEPs are being revised) are offered at any point through out the transition process and beyond.

Transition from Elementary to Middle/Intermediate and Middle/Intermediate to High School

1. Information should be shared between present and future programs. Teams should schedule planning meetings prior to the change in program to discuss specific accommodations necessary to assist the student in transitioning and supports needed for the student to successfully participate in the broader school community.
2. Facilitation of social interaction and school environments that naturally lend themselves to social interactions should be considered and in compliance with Section 504 (cafeteria, sports, after school activities, etc)
3. Transition iep mandates plan for transition beginning at age 14/15
4. Specific recommendations re VCMS and RHS
 - (a) Families and current team meet, transition plans are initiated 12 months prior to the change.
 - (b) Sending teacher visits and observes receiving school.
 - (c) Families and visit schools.
 - (d) Receiving staff observe student in current program.
 - (e) Sending and receiving teams meet.
 - (f) Student visits new school to establish familiarity.
 - (g) The last team meeting and/or PPT includes discussion around transition and the appropriate staff are present.

Transition from High School to Postsecondary Education/Employment

1. Federal law requirements
2. Recommendations specific to RHS
 - (a) Team observes post secondary opportunities ie Next Step

Many of the suggested practices included here were taken from the "Guidelines for Identification and Education of Children and Youth with Autism" adopted by the Connecticut State Department of Education, July 2005. Recommendations specific to Vernon Public Schools were developed by the Vernon Autism Spectrum Disorder

**Steering Committee, a joint effort of families and professionals
dedicated to improving educational outcomes for children with ASD.**