

The principals' associations of Ontario are pleased to welcome you to the first webinar of three webinars in the 2021-22 year pertaining to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

CATHOLIC
PRINCIPALS'
LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT | ONTARIO

LEADERSHIP
EN ACTION

PRINCIPAL
ASSOCIATION
PROJECTS

Welcome to the all participants, from ADFO, CPCO and OPC, to this first of three Webinars on supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)



Building a Tree of Transition Support:

Guide to successful transition planning



This first webinar is one of three learning modules developed to support principals in learning more about ASD from what you need to know, best practices to collaborative partnerships.

To ensure the best possible learning experience and engagement for this webinar, please allow 45 minutes of your time with opportunity for follow-up questions.

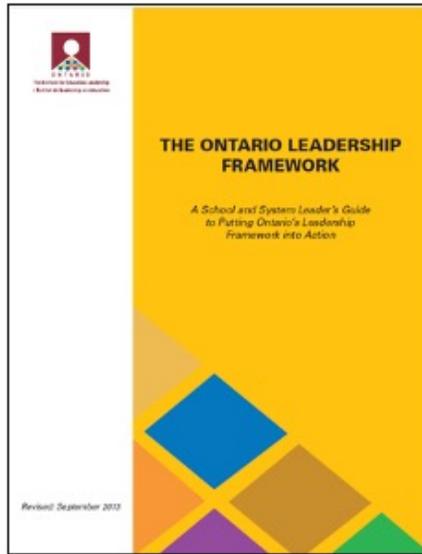
As we move through this webinar please reflect on the following: - What lessons can we develop as principals and vice-principals and/or skill set to support our students with ASD?

Land acknowledgement (for Toronto)

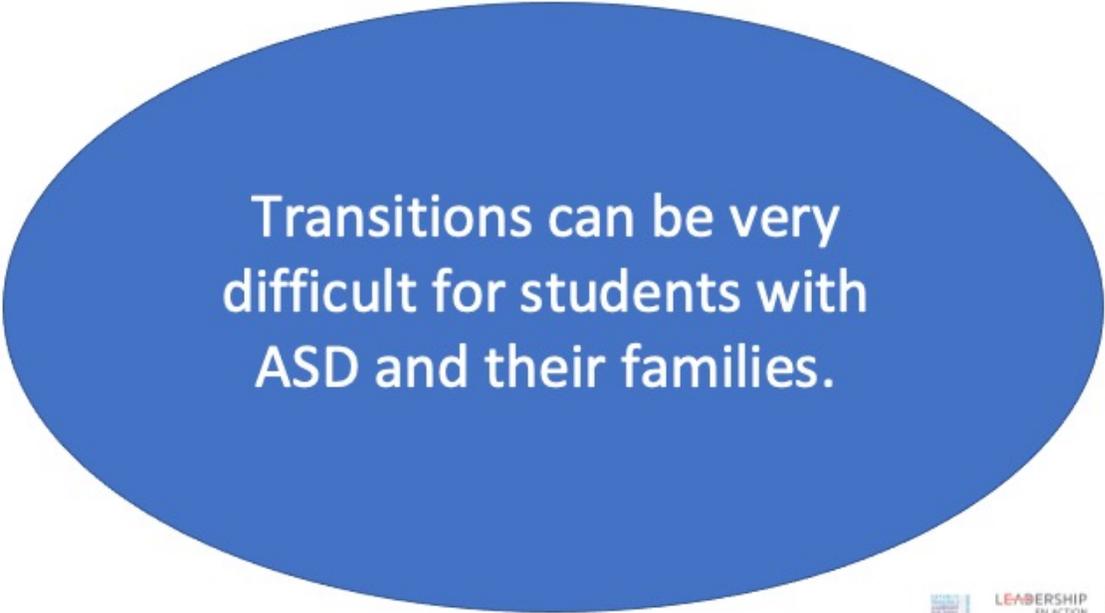
I acknowledge that I am on the traditional territory of nations within nations including the Anishnabe, the Ojibwe and the Michi Saagiig. This land has been and continues to be home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

I would like to acknowledge the enduring presence of Indigenous peoples on the lands on which I gather with you today across Ontario and I thank the past, present and future caretakers of this land. I am grateful to have the opportunity to work and learn on these lands in a community of sharing.

As users of the land, we must continue to work to keep it clean and use it with care so that generations to come can also continue to benefit from the land.



This webinar supports the development of the Leadership Practices, particularly those included under the Building Relationships and Developing People column. It also supports the application of the PLRs, particularly Problem-solving expertise and Knowledge of effective school and classroom practices that directly affect student learning.



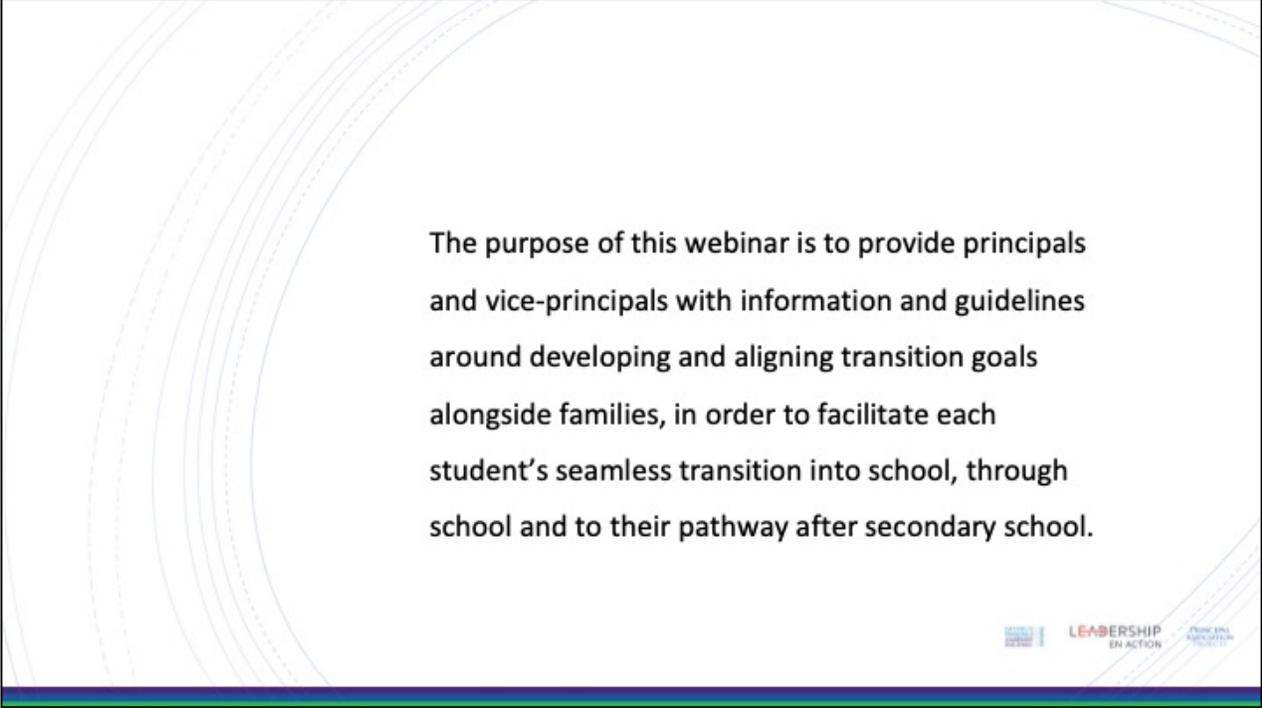
Transitions can be very
difficult for students with
ASD and their families.

However, by building strong, trusting relationships with these students and their families, it is possible for principals, vice-principals and their school transition teams to produce transition plans that help students with ASD and their families successfully navigate their way through new experiences. The support and sincere empathy of the school transition team and of the principal or vice-principal are invaluable to ensure students with ASD and their families feel listened to and involved in planning next steps.



Like a tree that needs roots and a sturdy trunk for support... a good transition team plans together to create roots and a sturdy trunk for the school, the family and the student so that they can reach their full potential. A good plan ensures that everyone feels supported and accepted. The plan needs to support all aspects of the child and family, taking into account the family's history, culture and values.

The plan has to ensure that the child, and the family feel safe and welcome. Like a tree, each child has a unique narrative and identity. It's important that the school team look beyond the OSR, and see the child as a whole. To this end, we must work collaboratively with families for the success of the child. As the principal / vice principal, it is important we get to know the families and establish an environment that clearly shows they are welcome and that we value their input and feedback.



The purpose of this webinar is to provide principals and vice-principals with information and guidelines around developing and aligning transition goals alongside families, in order to facilitate each student's seamless transition into school, through school and to their pathway after secondary school.

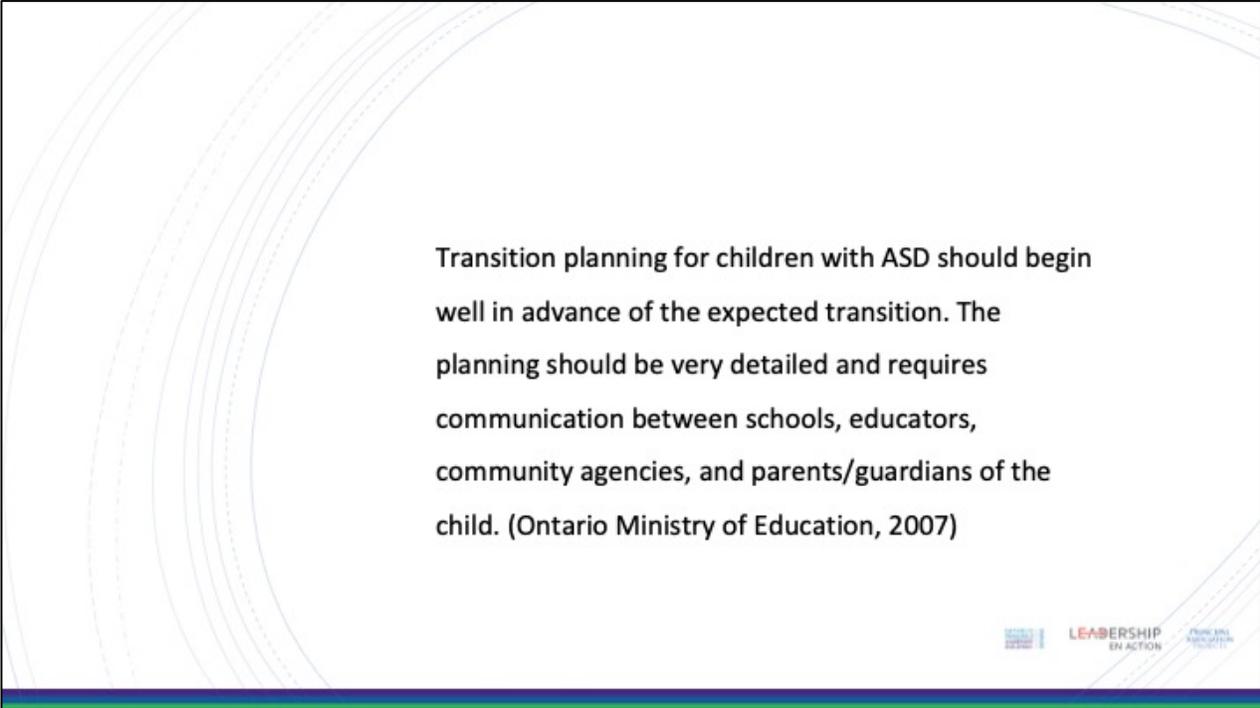
LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

There are 3 major BIG T transitions for students with ASD

1. Transition to primary school
2. Transition to secondary school
3. Transition to post secondary

Transitions are a challenge for students with ASD and their families. They are frequently a source of intense stress for families. As principals and vice-principals, we need to use our position of privilege and power to help alleviate, as best we can, some of this stress by being actively involved in the process and by supporting staff, students and families as they navigate these often uncharted waters. Parents look to the school to help them make the best decisions for their child's future. We need to be there for them to produce a successful outcome for all.

Once again please take a moment to reflect on the following question :
How have you captured the parent/student's voice in transition planning?



Transition planning for children with ASD should begin well in advance of the expected transition. The planning should be very detailed and requires communication between schools, educators, community agencies, and parents/guardians of the child. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007)

Framing from the parent lived experience and the research

How have your transition meetings gone?

What emotions do you see when parents are faced with these decisions? How can you support them.

Today we would like you to look at transition planning from the parent and student perspective.

Background Information

Regulation 181/98

PPM 140 (May 2007)

PPM 156 (September 2014)

Regulation 181/98 requires that a transition plan be developed as part of the IEP for exceptional students who are 14 years of age or older, unless they are identified solely as gifted

PPM 140 (May 2007) requires school boards to plan for transitions for students with ASD. Staff must plan for the transition between various activities and settings involving students with ASD.

PPM 156 (September 2014) requires school boards to develop a transition plan for all students who have an IEP, whether or not they have been identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) and including those identified as exceptional solely on the basis of giftedness. The transition plan is developed as part of the IEP

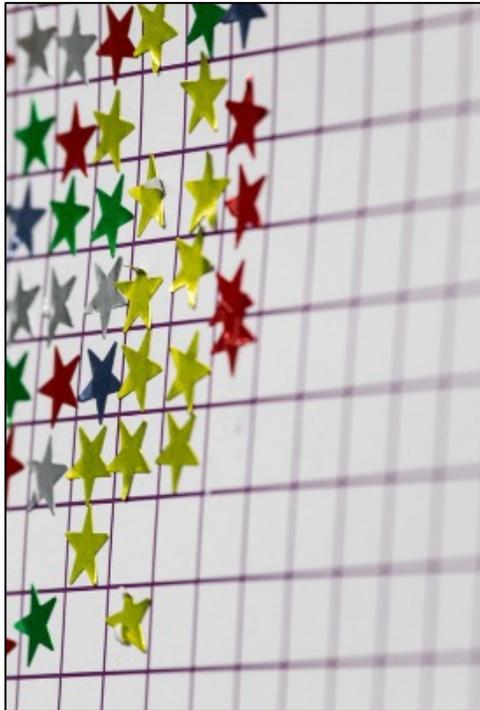


What we know

- Transitions takes into account the following :
 - The student profile
 - Students emotional well being
 - The school environment
 - Student voice / agency
 - Parent's hopes and dreams
 - Transition planning should begin well in advance of the expected transition
 - Big T : Significant changes to many aspects of student routine (new school, grade, teacher, post secondary)
 - Little T: regular basis ie activity to activity

LEADERSHIP EN ACTION

Here are some items to keep into consideration when transition planning for students and families.



Big T

- Entry to school
- Change in grade level
- Elementary to Secondary
- Outside agency to school
- Program to program
- Secondary school to Community Living
- Secondary school to Day program
- Secondary to post secondary

Big T requires lots of planning and teamwork.

The biggest ones are: entry into school and exit from school

Most schools do significant planning for the child's entry into school. We gather with the family and community partners. We visit daycares and invite children and their families into visit the classroom before school begins.

This planning and collaboration continues for the transition to high school. The elementary panel who knows the student best works with the receiving secondary school staff to prepare for the transition. The secondary school often invites the student and their family into the school to participate in this planning.

However, research shows that schools continue to need to do better transition planning to support families and their young adult to transition from secondary school to the postsecondary world.

Impact on Families

- Often causes stress:
 - Emotional
 - Physical
 - Financial
 - Shift/change in family dynamics
- Other sources:
 - Minimal understanding of autism
 - Inferences
 - Obtaining assessments, services, interventions

We need to consider this as we approach Big T transitions - they also carry a lot of fears and worries (emotions) for parents. It is important for schools to be aware of the unique challenges confronting families of children with ASD. They live intense daily lives that are marked by ongoing chronic stress from a variety of sources such as unpredictable behaviors, financial strain, mental health, to name a few. They are not easily remediated, Schools can offer support to parents and by including them in the transition process can build long lasting strong relationships. It is important that parents be welcomed as they are and to not dismiss them. Parents often feel the need to be heard, and be an active part of the process. As discussed in the year one webinar if you want more information go back to to webinar 3 of year one (links to videos can be found on your association websites).



Little T

- Change of activity
- Change of setting
- Change of subject
- Home to school and school to home
- Lunch
- Change of staff
- Change of routine
- Unstructured time
- Unexpected situations

These transitions are easily remedied and generally schools do a good job, providing that there is good communication and team work with families.



What is the principal's role in transition planning?

- To attend all meetings and play an active role to:
 - Facilitate
 - Coordinate
 - Ensure the process is coherent
 - Ensure that all staff are available to attend and participate
 - Offer support to student, families and staff
 - Ensure that the parent's/student's voice is heard and reflected in the planning
 - Ensure that the written plan is developed and put into practice
 - Be engaged and supportive
 - Be curious to hear and consider all viewpoints

It is important that the principal (vice principal) be a key part of the transition plan.

Parents are nervous, scared and anxious as they want the best for their child.

Parent conversations can be difficult and emotional, it is important to be mindful and respectful.

It is always important to keep in mind that with Big T transitions, there is a period of mourning for parents and sincere empathy is key.

Principals need to take the time to get to know the student and the parents and to listen to them talk about their hopes and dreams.

Principals should also listen about the lived-experiences of the student and their families. It is important to make that connection of how lived-experiences, may have compounded navigating the world of ASD (advocacy, supports, financial resources, etc.)

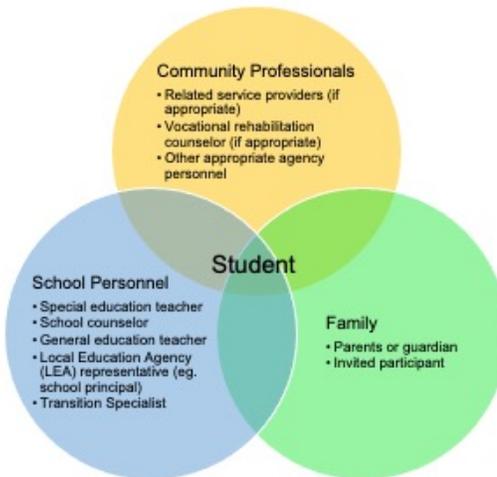
Principals should remember to meet families where they are and to work with them from there.

This process takes time, and a few meetings may be required to build enough trust to lead to a strong relationship.

As a principal, ensure you are fulfilling their needs while also being an advocate for them. Parents can be overwhelmed and have no idea where to begin. Often, principals are looked upon as having all the answers, and it's ok to not have those answers, to roll up your sleeves and to work with parents to make a durable bond.

It's ok for principals to say: "Although I emphasize with you, I cannot even begin to understand how you are feeling right now. I may not have the answers at the moment, but together we can find them".

Transition Planning



- Principals feel threatened by outside agency recommendations
- How do we make it so that its not confrontational
- Work together
- How to make families feel safe safety leads to confidence and trust
- Indigenous families - bringing an elder looking at individuals as translate language and emotion from party to another
- Transition doesn't look one way (ultimate goal is that student feels safe)
- This diagram looks like a meeting putting ourselves in the position that family is alone what does a meeting with

Transition Planning

Expertise for complex cases
Mental health problems in
schools
Inclusion
Equality
Equity
Social justice

- Bring an advocate
- Ensure that the family feels confident and empowered



Parent perspective regarding transitions are complex. It is known that individuals with ASD have difficulty with transitions, which can cause confusion and anxiety. Listening to parents acknowledging the experience they have acquired by daily interactions with their children and incorporating their suggestions in school practice is essential.

Here is a scenario that put this quote into context.

Turn this into a conversation ... tell a story ... make it more dynamic make this your own story

The following is a scenario between a Parent and a member of the senior team

ST: In regards to your recent email I am calling you today. How can I help you?

P: As you can see from my email I am extremely frustrated at the lack of transition planning for my child who is graduating. I have communicating with the school for a few months now and have little to no information as to what is going to happen upon graduation.

ST: I truly understand what you are going through. As I have quite a lot of experience with Special education.

P: I am sorry, how can you understand what I am going through? Unless you have experienced the anxiety of not knowing what program that your child is going after graduation because there are no options that have been made available to you , and that know one from the school or agency has



contacted you, You cannot know how I am feeling right now. Please with all due respect if you have not been in my shoes do not tell me how to tie my laces.

ST: you are right, I am so sorry I have not been in your shoes, and I apologize. I would like to understand how I can help you.

P: In this entire process you are the first person to call me, and have a conversation with me. I truly think that he school should have called and we should have been working towards a solution together.

Remember that it is OK to apologize and it is ok to have missed something yet always be ready to listen.

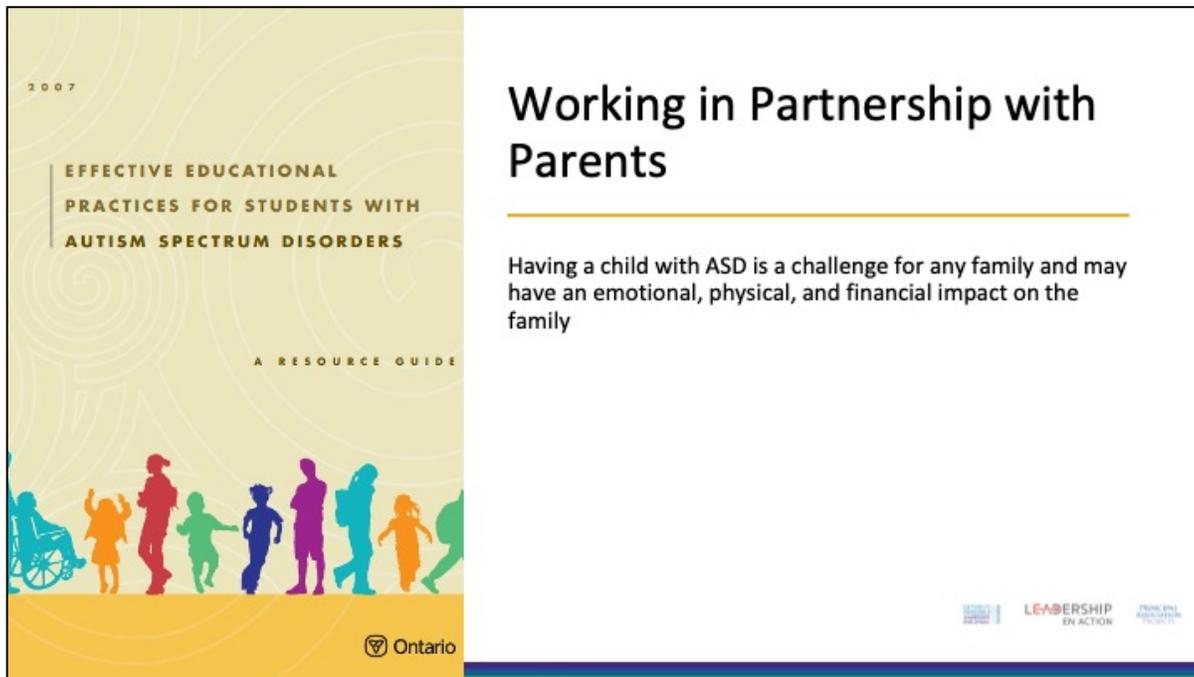
This parent had sent communication after communication to the school, and no one had the courage to call and ask how can I help you?

Emails are great tools yet always remember that a phone call can go a long way.

The studies have shown that parents want to be involved and that want good communication.

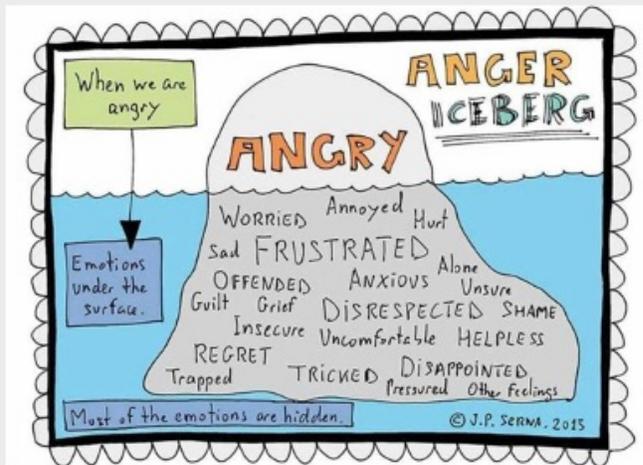
It is ok to not have all of the answers ,and it's ok to say to a parent I am listening, let's work together and see what solutions we can find.

We as a school want the best for your child too. Be sincere in your actions.



It is important to keep in mind that many parents are on their own journey of acceptance of the diagnosis and its significant implications for both their own lives and the life of their child. Having a child with ASD is a challenge for any family and may have an emotional, physical, and financial impact on the family (Higgins, Bailey, & Pearce, 2005). The impact on families can vary considerably across situations. Some families are able to cope with these additional stressors; however, for others it can be more difficult.

Don't make assumptions from what we are seeing from the parents - we don't know where the parent is at. Understand behaviour / don't judge
Understanding what the parent is saying through the anger
Fairness is not sameness - demystify this - what is best for this child at this time



As you look at the iceberg, think back to a time where you were angry and upset. I am quite certain the reason lies underneath the water.

It is so important to remember that parents are presenting their best selves at any given moment. It is important to take the time to find out where the anger is coming from, and work with them from where they are.

Parent conversations can be difficult and emotional, it is important to be mindful and respectful. Our role as School Leaders is to see beyond the anger or presenting emotion and to look deeper to understand the parent's perspective.

As principals and vice-principals, we must help our staff to also see beyond the emotion. It is our responsibility to seek a relationship with parents and to work in partnership. This happens when we take the time to get to know families. Communication is key. If a meeting needs to be rescheduled do so, in order to take time to talk, do so. In order to move forward you have to understand where they have been, and where they want to go. Again It is important to know that parents of children with ASD are anxious and scared and they need the reassurance that you are working with them.

Seeing beyond the presenting emotion, requires the Principal/Vice-Principal to use their Personal Leadership Resources (as outlined in the Ontario Leadership Framework).

Successful transition planning



The success of the transition team relies on the circle of trust the school creates with parents and guardians. This is a team approach. Transition planning cannot be done alone. The circle is made up of school staff, parents/guardians, the student, community professionals and YOU the principal. You have a duty to work towards this. As the leader you set the tone, and create a safe environment for courageous conversations to happen.

Trust leads to success inclusion which leads to better enduring relationships.

By including community and family members and giving them equal powers to contribute to the development of educational goals, educational leaders promote inclusive and sustainable culturally responsive practices for student success.

Know who is your circle- know that you are not alone, it is important that you know who in your board you can reach out to if you have any questions.



Successful transition plans are person-centered, meaning they are created around the student's abilities, interests, and goals.

Here are some recommendations to successful transition planning

- Listen and communicate with parents with care and attention since parents have a unique understanding of their child's ability to handle transitions
- Communication is the vital link for success
- Be consistent in the use of transition strategies as this builds the trust of the student and helps to alleviate anxiety
- Allow time for transition
- Document the transition and identify successes and misses
- Recognize that parents of children with ASD are constantly dealing with transition issues Assist them in developing plans that encourage home/school consistency .

The Autism Community in Action (TACA)

IEP Transition Planning - The Autism Community in Action (TACA)

What makes a successful transition

Involve student/ parents/guardians

Be student centered (reflects strengths and needs)

Promotes independence

Reflect inclusive practices

Involve outside agencies

Collaborative team approach

Create a shared vision for the student

Set goals

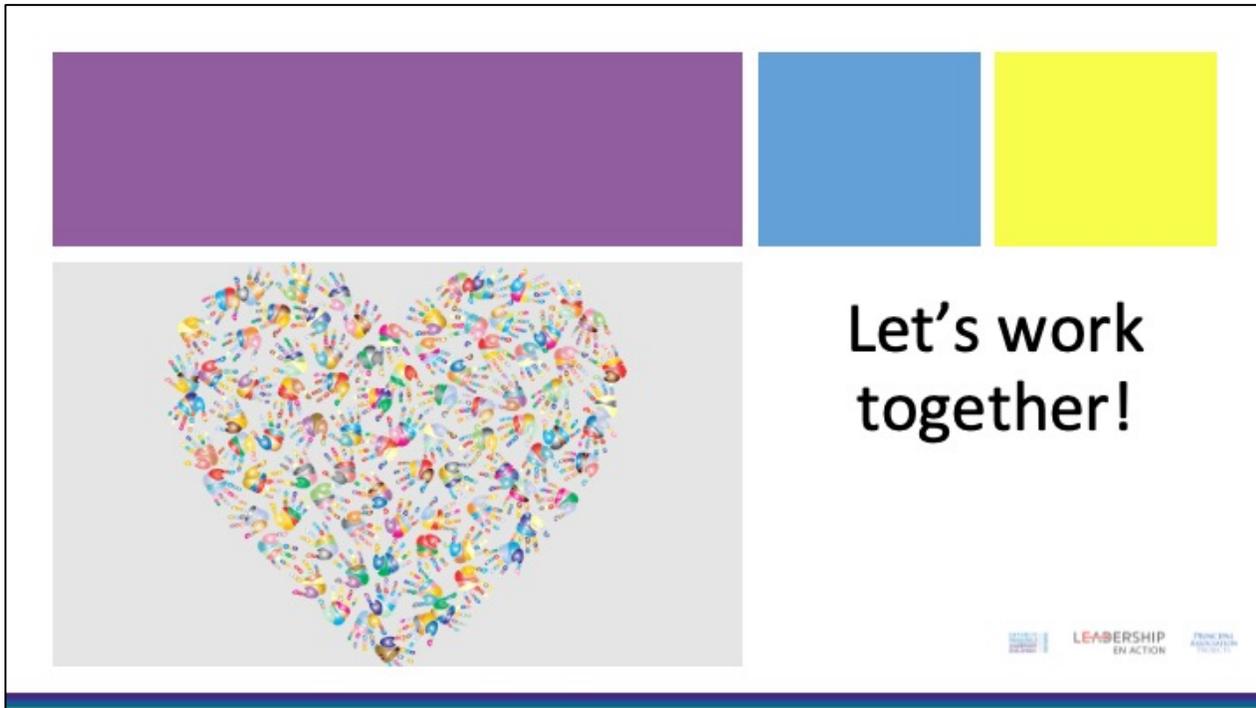
Start early

Create a comprehensive, structured plan for the future with a timeline



LEADERSHIP
IN ACTION





Educators must realize that the Euro-American values of independence and self-sufficiency are not values shared by family members of all cultures. Some cultures, for example Asian and First Nation cultures, are more collectivist in nature.

Often in these cultures children are primarily viewed as parts of family and community.

A certain degree of dependence on family throughout the life is expected and valued.

Thus, the typical goal of increased independence may not be seen as important to these families.

A family's unique historical and cultural backgrounds influence factors such as the following:

- The goals the family selects
- Which family members will be involved in school intervention efforts
- A family's willingness to seek help
- The family's communication styles
- The amount and type of participation that family members choose

Special educators can become more effective in working with all families across cultures by recognizing their own cultural identities and values and considering how these may be shaping their present professional beliefs.

This is an interesting article on the topic of stigma as it relates to autism.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/autism-stigma>

Conclusion

School and community leaders must be accountable and build professional cultures to ensure that every child succeeds.

"In Cree, the word used to describe autism is pitoteyihtam – he/she thinks differently."

"There's no disorder, there's no deficit...."

Grant Bruno,
University of Alberta Ph.D. student studying autism in First Nations communities

cbc.ca/news

#EveryChildMatters



LEADERSHIP
IN ACTION

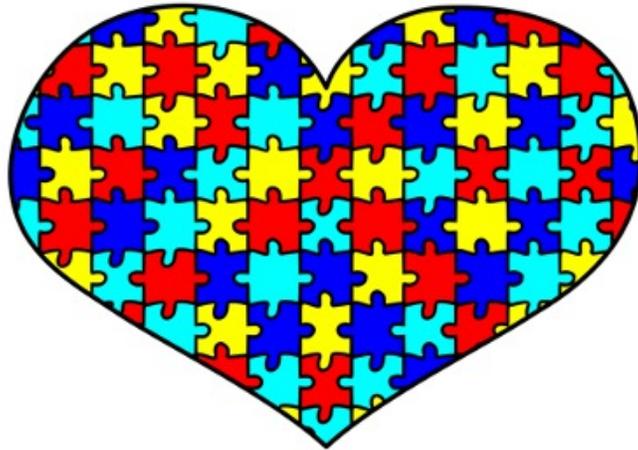
In conclusion, I invite you to take a moment to reflect on the following: In Cree, the word used to describe Autism is pitoteyihtam, which means he/she thinks differently... Today, I am hoping you have seen the pivotal role you play as a principal/vice principal in the lives of students and families. If we can begin to think differently about transitions, we can begin to make a big difference.

Effective transition planning teams can help alleviate the complexities related to student success by creating a powerful web of proficiency through parents, teachers, and community experts working together.

Be mindful, of Holy Days, Days of Significance and Holidays when scheduling meetings and/ or assessments for diverse students with Autism and their families.

School and community leaders must be accountable and build professional cultures to ensure that every child succeeds

Autism doesn't come
with a manual.
It comes with a
parent that never
gives up.



LEADERSHIP
EN ACTION

This quote rings so true with so many parents ... With a successful school transition team it could read Autism doesn't come with a manual, it comes with a parent and a school team that never gives up. Whether you are an elementary, middle or secondary school leader keep this in mind as you start to plan transitions for the school year to come.

This leads us into inviting you back to Webinar Two on February 15th (English) February 16 (French). Webinar Two is entitled Understanding Conflict as a Catalyst for Change. Through a panel discussion (with a parent, a principal and other team members) we will explore strategies used to prevent and resolve conflicts when supporting a student with ASD to develop their full potential and succeed in school. We'll discover how our panel participants have turned conflict into positive outcomes.

Final words

- Quick polls – Please respond to the following questions
- Survey – Please complete the survey at the end of this webinar. You will also receive it by email .
- Glossary, references and some resources will be made available in a PDF format and emailed to you tomorrow.



Thank you



CONTACT US

- ADFO www.adfo.org
- CPCO www.cpco.on.ca
- OPC www.principals.ca



@adfo

@CPCOofficial

@OPCouncil

References

Connolly, M., & Gersch, I. (2016). *Experiences of parents whose children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are starting primary school*. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 32(3), 245-261.

Griffin, M. M., Taylor, J. L., Urbano, R. C., & Hodapp, R. M. (2014). *Involvement in transition planning meetings among high school students with autism spectrum disorders*. *The Journal of Special Education*, 47(4), 256-264.

Missiuna, C. A., Pollock, N. A., Levac, D. E., Campbell, W. N., Whalen, S. D. S., Bennett, S. M., ... & Russell, D. J. (2012). *Partnering for change: An innovative school-based occupational therapy service delivery model for children with developmental coordination disorder*. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 79(1), 41-50.

Nuske, H. J., McGhee Hassrick, E., Bronstein, B., Hauptman, L., Aponte, C., Levato, L., & Smith, T. (2019). *Broken bridges—new school transitions for students with autism spectrum disorder: A systematic review on difficulties and strategies for success*. *Autism*, 23(2), 306-325.

Ontario Ministry of Education (2007). *Effective Educational Practices For Students With Autism Spectrum Disorders*.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/autismSpecDis.pdf>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2013). *Learning for All*.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/LearningforAll2013.pdf>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2007). *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 140*.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/140.html> Ontario Ministry of Education (2007)

Smith, L. E., & Anderson, K. A. (2014). *The roles and needs of families of adolescents with ASD*. *Remedial and Special Education*, 35(2), 114-122.

Stoner, J. B., Angell, M. E., House, J. J., & Bock, S. J. (2007). *Transitions: Perspectives from parents of young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)*. *Journal of developmental and physical disabilities*, 19(1), 23-39.

Szidon, K., Ruppap, A., & Smith, L. (2015). *Five steps for developing effective transition plans for high school students with autism spectrum disorder*. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 47(3), 147-152.

Wilson, C., Marks Woolfson, L. & Durkin, K. (2020). *School environment and mastery experience as predictors of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs towards inclusive teaching*. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(2), 218-234.

Whitaker, T., Zoul, J., & Casas, J. (2015). *What connected educators do differently*. Routledge.

Szidon, K., Ruppap, A., & Smith, L. (2015). *Five steps for developing effective transition plans for high school students with autism spectrum disorder*. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 47(3), 147-152.

Resources

[Transition Guide](#)

[Shared Solutions](#)