

TRANSITION PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

The Board recognizes that the move from one school to another as the result of a boundary review or school closure review can be a stressful time for students, parents, and staff. It can also be a time of joy and celebration as new school communities begin to form. Transition planning typically occurs in the 6 months leading up to the move and/or once a principal is assigned to the new school (applicable for new school construction only). Transitions from one school to another are most successful when everyone (administrators, parents, staff, students, etc.) has a clear vision (e.g. a smooth transition for students, building a cohesive new school community) and is working together to achieve that desired end goal by being open minded and willing to adapt to every aspect of the change.

Purpose of this Framework

- To provide support to school communities following a decision of an accommodation review (boundary or school closure).
- To provide families with assurance that they will be well supported as they integrate into a new school community.
- To provide a menu of options for administrators and the school community to consider as they transition from one school community to another.

Priorities for the Transition Process

- Consideration should be given first and foremost to students. Then staff, then parents, then the broader community.
- High level of communication with the parent, student, and staff community is essential.
- Always remain calm and positive in front of students.

Recognizing that each school community and boundary change is different (number of students affected, school closure, merging of two school communities, etc.), this framework is intentionally not prescriptive but rather meant to facilitate discussion and spark ideas. The following table outlines a menu of options that have been successfully implemented in previous reviews or have been suggested by the WCDSB community through various public consultation processes. Activities could be organized by the principal, school council, a transition planning committee (members might include principals, superintendent, parents, school staff, students, priest, etc.), or any element could have a separate organizing committee (e.g. major events).

	Before the Move	The Move	After the Move	New School
Community Building – Activities, Events & Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask school communities for suggestions to include in transition plans. • Develop a theme or catch phrase to bring focus to the transition (e.g. We Are One) • Introduction letter from new principal • New principal writes column in existing school newsletter • New principal to visit students at existing schools (may be helpful to have a small assembly of students who will be moving). • Mass held at each school for all students before merging. • Junior play day • Primary picnic at the park (splash pad) • Grade 7 leadership day (first Grade 8 class at new school) • Establish a committee to oversee the transition process & activities. • Student ambassadors from receiving school to visit departing school to answer questions from students • Set up pen pals between students who are transferring and students in the same grade at the school they'll move to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playdate in August for new JK/SK families so everyone has one friend on the first day. Students given colour-coded stickers to help identify who will be in their class. • T-shirts made before the merge and ready for the 1st day of school (purchased/subsidized by school council) • T-shirts given to new students on the first day to welcome them to their new school (purchased/subsidized by school council) • 2 JK/SK orientation nights – 1 at previous school for parents only, 1 at new school with kids to meet the teacher • If a school is closing, transfer artefacts, pictures, trophies to the new school to display 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening assembly held in afternoon on first day – introduce staff, theme of the year, read a story • First assembly held 1st or 2nd week of school (after kindergarten starts) • Welcoming mass at local parish • 3-Pitch exhibition game between old & new school so friends can see each other. • Take a group/aerial picture in new t-shirts – “we are one” or spirit wear • Develop new mascot – Principal presents options at first assembly. Give each student a ballot to vote. • School councils merged, co-chair from each • Representation on school council from each neighbourhood • Create a video of the school’s history & the joining of the school communities to post on the website (e.g. St. John). • Spend 1st week of school celebrating using play-based getting-to-know activities • Spirit wear day with treats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly school newsletter specific to the new school. • New principal to attend school council meetings. • Assembly for new student community held off-site at local parish. • June or August open house (timing & location depends on construction) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff attends • Displays of new school (if not ready) • Slideshow of construction progress & community building events. • Board staff attend to answer questions about construction. • Welcoming day for kindergartens held at the new school or local parish if construction does not permit. • Opening ceremony/First day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • invite police, firefighters, mayor, MPP, board officials, radio, priest • Parade around school • New t-shirts/spirit wear

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan school trips together to get kids meeting offsite - neutral zone Involve students by asking them what their concerns are work together toward solutions. Students march from one school to another Review school council budgets to identify expenditures to benefit students and determine joint/new priorities going forward Ability for students to participate in after school activities with possible transportation Invite students to Drama production in the spring Design new logo together Carnival/BBQ 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students write down their favourite & memorable activities from last year regardless of which school they attended (done individually or summarizes as a class, school council can also complete). This is used to bring the best of all worlds to the new school community. Celebration at the school welcoming new students Plant a tree to signify a new beginning Graffiti wall (on paper) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ribbon cutting at each classroom (all done at once when announced over the PA) Opening ceremony starts outside. All students, staff, & community members walk into school together. Plaques gifted from each school council where the students came from at the end of the first school year. Previous school councils send gifts (e.g. Christmas tree) to new school. Creation of a time capsule to be brought to new school and opened at a later anniversary of the school to reflect the joining of communities.
Staffing & Student Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint staff meeting with all new staff in the spring. Team building activities for staff (prayer, reflection, icebreakers) Develop a communication strategy Develop new logo, flag, and mascot as a surprise for students. Hire some staff (teachers & EA's) from the same schools that the students are coming from. Transition meeting with EA's and Spec Ed teachers at outgoing and incoming schools. Support from Spec. Ed. staff at board office should be involved. Discussion of student needs with incoming & outgoing principals and teachers. Teachers from both schools involved in putting the classroom lists together - determined by friends, academic needs, gender, behaviour. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wherever possible try to put friends in the same classroom and ensure separation of students where there have been past difficulties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First staff meeting in (June or August) with team building activities. Provide a tour of the school. Give access to staff earlier in the summer so they can unpack their classrooms. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold June staff meeting at new school and include a tour of school. New principal assigned in January to prep for opening. VP assigned to existing school if principal is still in charge of an existing school (this may occur in a merge).

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All principals involved meet with principals who have gone through a similar process in the past. Staff from the departing school prepare summaries highlighting the particular learning styles of each student. Provide school staff with information so they can talk to students about the change process. Offer support for students having difficulty with change. If a walking school, hire buses to do a “test run” with students to help them get used to being on a bus. 			
Getting to know the new school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EA’s & Spec. Ed teachers create DVD’s for each student of new classroom, new school, washrooms, library, gym so they can see the school before they move. Give students a hard copy photo book of what the new school looks like (inside & outside) for the summer to help with anxiety. Letters/messages pertaining to construction or merge have a separate logo or letterhead as a visual cue that it’s important. Mark important communication with a sticker indicating that it should be translated (depends on community needs). Communicate any construction changes to the community. School tours for students and/or families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mail invitations regarding first day of school information if not known at the end of June. June or August open house (timing may depend on construction) Invite spec. ed. students and families to visit the school at their convenience during the last 2 weeks of August. August open house <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families tour new school. Slideshow showing each teacher in front of their new classroom played on a loop Give maps out for self-guided tours Signs on rooms explaining what they’ll be used for Greeters at doors School song playing in library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scavenger hunt with teachers stamping when students find various items around the school. Helps students explore every area of their new school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open house to view construction plans (February). Update letters to community, including WRDSB school, neighbourhood association, and posted on website. Display boards of new school in schools that students currently attend. Photos of construction progress. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If school is being rebuilt, create a wall of photos of the progress (could use the photos to build a bridge from the old building to the new building)