

# **Back to School Part 2: Strategies for Connecting with Your School Team**

Tracie Lindblad M.Sc. Reg. SLP, M.Ed., BCBA  
Danielle Nolan MSW RSW



**Autism**ONTARIO

# Statements

## Conflict of Interest

- Disclosure of financial conflicts
- Disclosure of non-financial conflicts

## Language

- Person-first (e.g., person with autism)
- Identity-first (e.g., autistic person)

# Disclaimers

## General Disclaimer

- Opinions are of the presenters
- Make informed decisions

## Professional Disclaimer

- Specific questions
- Additional Resources



# Learning Objectives

1. Increase your ability to plan effectively for your child's school transition
2. Be able to identify the activities within the first 60 days of school which may lead to smoother transitions
3. List strategies and activities which assist you in connecting with your child's school



# Agenda

- Where We are Today
- Your Child's Pathway for School Success
  1. Preparing & Planning
  2. What to Expect in the First 60 Days
  3. Developing Your School Team
  4. Problem Solving

# COVID-19

- During the school shutdowns, 45% (in 2020) and 47% (in 2021) of parents reported feeling dissatisfied with their child's educational experience
- Negative impacts of school closures in 2020 and 2021:
  - Social functioning (48% and 67%)
  - Overall development (30% and 54%)
  - Mental health (21% and 50%)

[Findings from 2020 Ontario Autism Caregiver Survey](#)

[Findings from the 2021 Ontario Autism Caregiver Survey](#)

# Mental Health

There are two main ways we can help our children's anxiety and stress around returning to school:

1. Helping them find ways to reduce the stress level itself
2. Teaching them ways to cope with their feelings of stress

([School Mental Health Ontario, 2020](#))

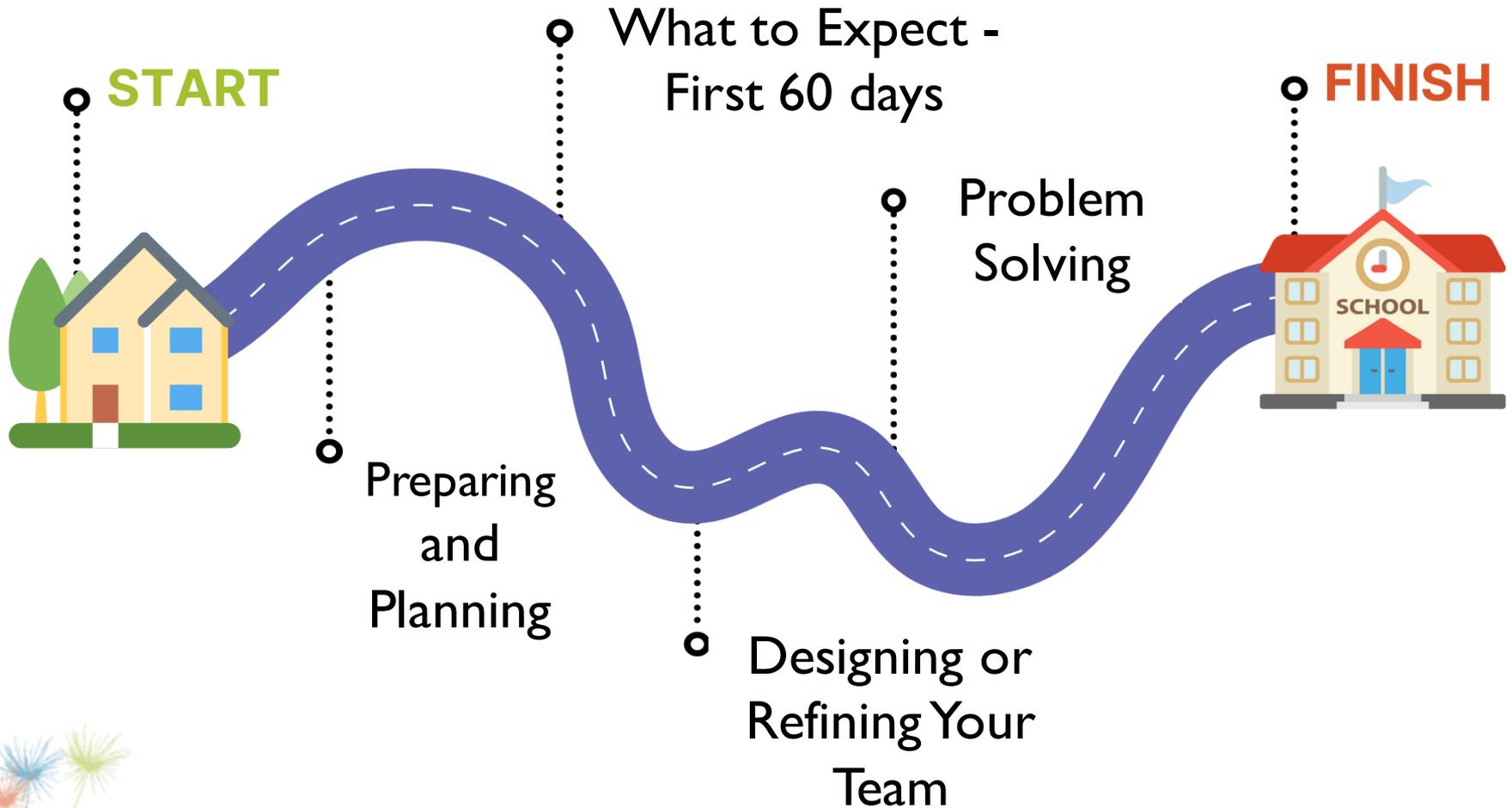


# What Can You Do?

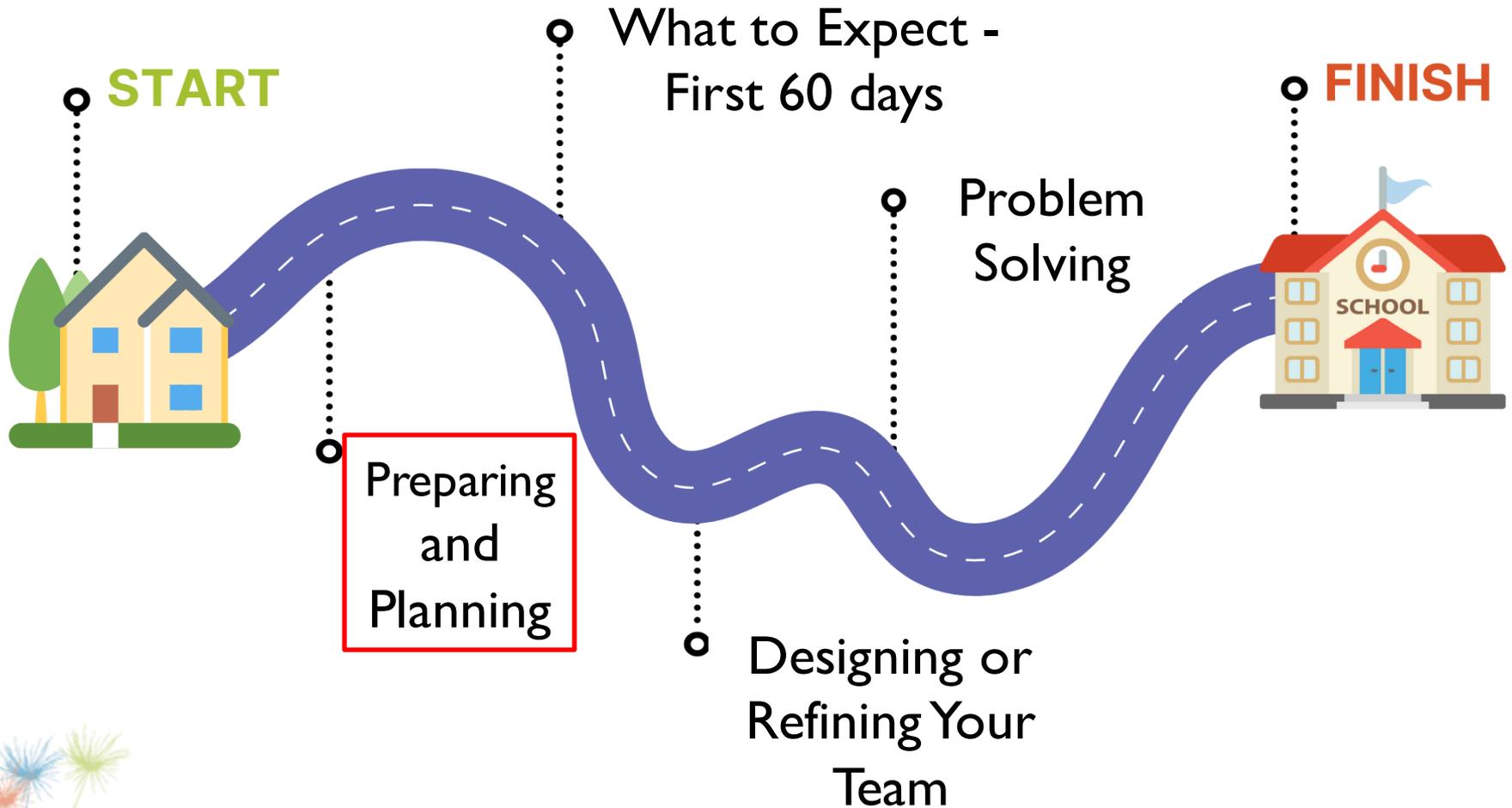
- Self-care
- Talk to your child about the return to school and what to expect
- Activities to support your child's mental health  
([School Mental Health Ontario, 2020](#))



# Pathway for School Success



# Pathway for School Success



# Preparing & Planning

Take a Look in the Rear View Mirror to Assist in Determining Goals for this Year

- Your child's strengths
- Your child's weaknesses
- What worked well last year
- What could be improved upon



# Preparing & Planning

2016

## The Kindergarten Program



DRAFT

Special Education  
in Ontario

Kindergarten to Grade 12

## Complete a Review of the Curriculum and Your Child's Skills

- Curriculum Documents are online for all grades Kindergarten – Grade 12
  - [Elementary Curriculum](#)
  - [Secondary Curriculum](#)
  - [Special Education Curriculum](#)

# Preparing & Planning

Assess foundational skills as priority areas:

Attending  
Skills

Imitation  
Skills

Listening  
Skills

Expressive  
Language  
Skills

Academic  
Skills

Social Skills

Self-Help  
Skills

Difficult  
Behaviours



# Preparing & Planning

## Attending Skills

Consistently responds to their name

Uses gaze checks during group instruction

# Preparing & Planning

## Imitation Skills

Developed gross and fine motor skills for drawing, printing, and activities of daily living (ADLs)

Can imitate complex sequenced actions with peers during play

# Preparing & Planning

## Listening Skills

Can follow 3-step instructions without assistance

Can answer Wh-questions (who, what, where, when, how, why)

# Preparing & Planning

## Expressive Language Skills

Can independently and spontaneously request items that they want and/or need

Can answer Wh-questions (who, what, where, when, how, why)



# Preparing & Planning

## Academic Skills

Knows the alphabet, can count to 100, can complete patterns, can identify rhyming words, can identify logos/familiar words

Can understand basic concepts (colour, size, shape, location words, material properties, time words, and family relationships)

# Preparing & Planning

## Social Skills

Interacts with peers, responds to peers, offers and accepts assistance from peers

Waits for their turn, shows observational learning, can participate in small group activities (e.g., show and tell, story-time, projects)

# Preparing & Planning

## Self-Help Skills

Dress/undress independently (can do snaps, buttons, zippers)

Toilet trained and self-initiates requests to use the washroom

Eats and washes/dries their hands independently

# Preparing & Planning

## Difficult Behaviour

Safety concerns  
(elopement/running away, self-injurious behaviour, difficulties with appropriate behaviour with others)

Attention, cooperation,  
and difficulties with independent skills



# Preparing & Planning

First steps for the new year:

- Request a meeting
  - What to bring:
    - Updated assessments and/or treatment plans from the summer
    - [‘All About Me’](#) book
    - A communication book or notes on your most important concerns



# Preparing & Planning

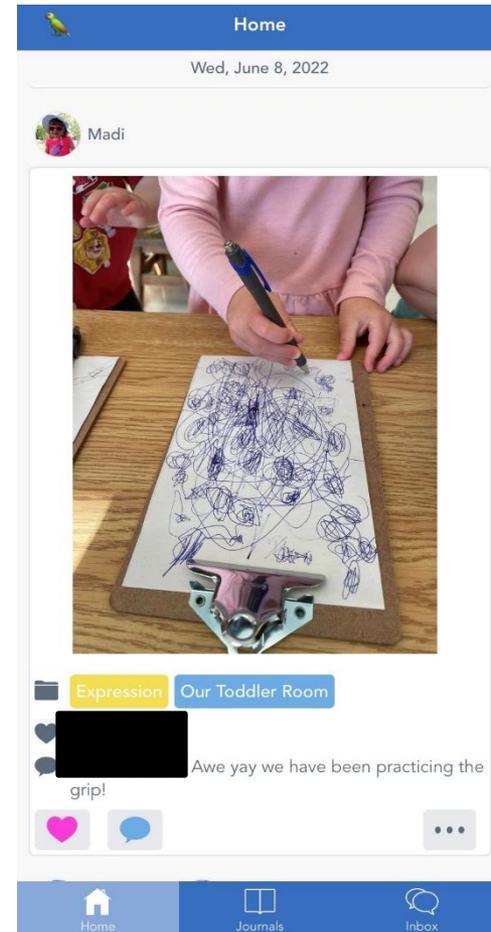
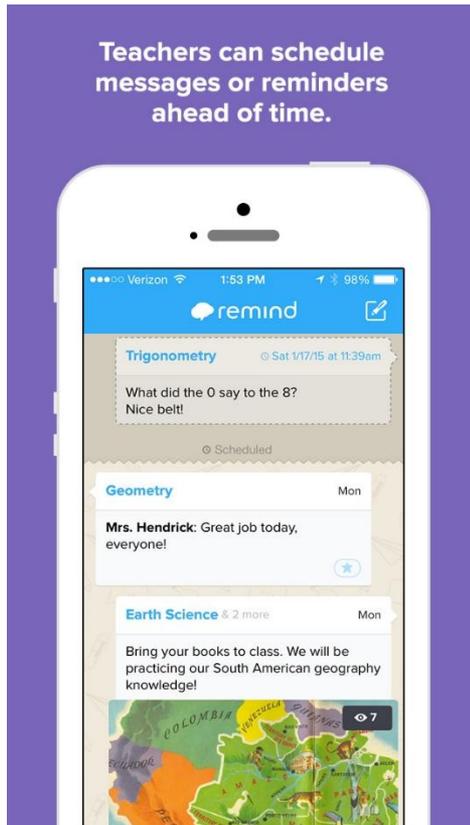
Communication improves:

- Relationships
- Understanding
- Consistency
- Sense of safety



# Preparing & Planning

## Communication Methods



# Pathway for School Success



# What to Expect – First 60 Days

## What is an IPRC?

- **I**dentification, **P**lacement, and **R**eview **C**ommittee
- The IPRC “*will decide whether the student is an exceptional pupil and, if so, what type of educational placement is appropriate*”

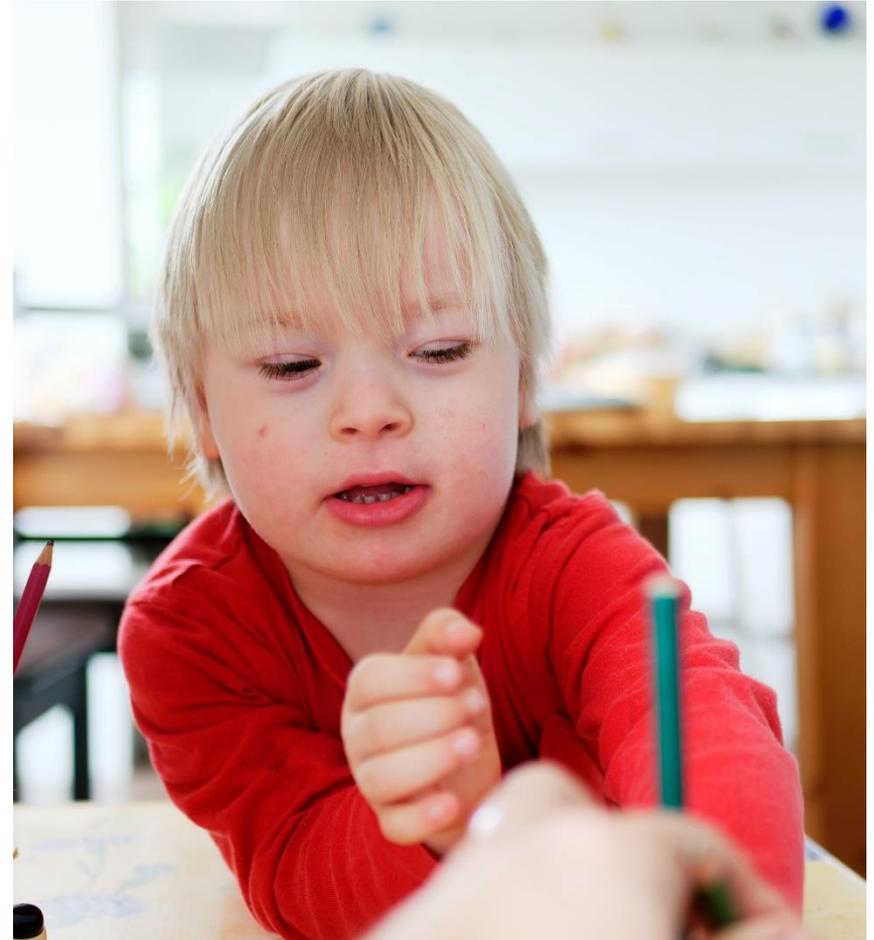
([Ministry of Education, 2007](#))



# What to Expect – First 60 Days

Why is an IPRC important?

- An IPRC helps ensure that children have access to either:
- A Special Education classroom\*
- Regular classroom with appropriate supports

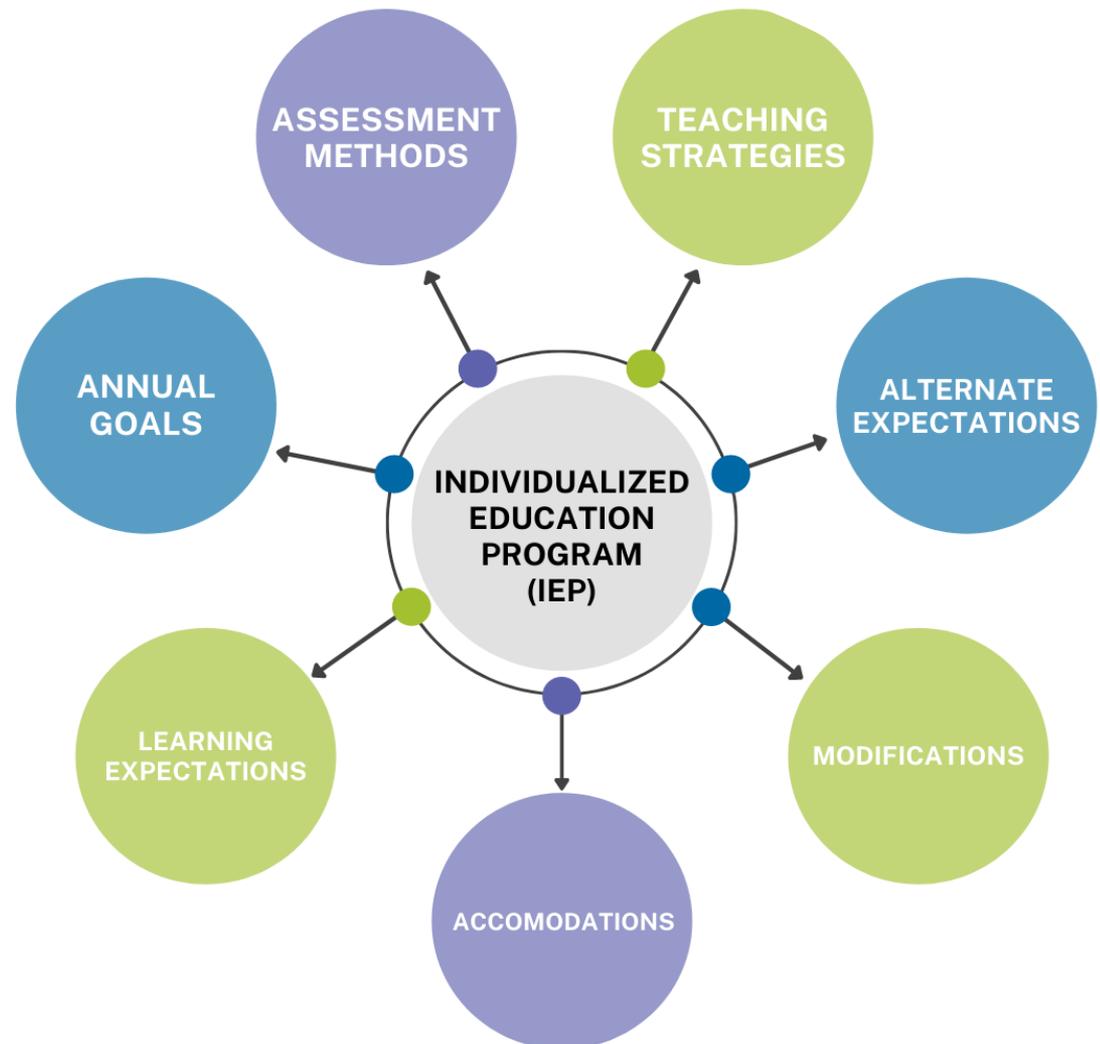


# What to Expect – First 60 Days

## What is an IEP?

- An **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** is an active, working document that gives information on your child

([Autism Ontario, n.d.](#))



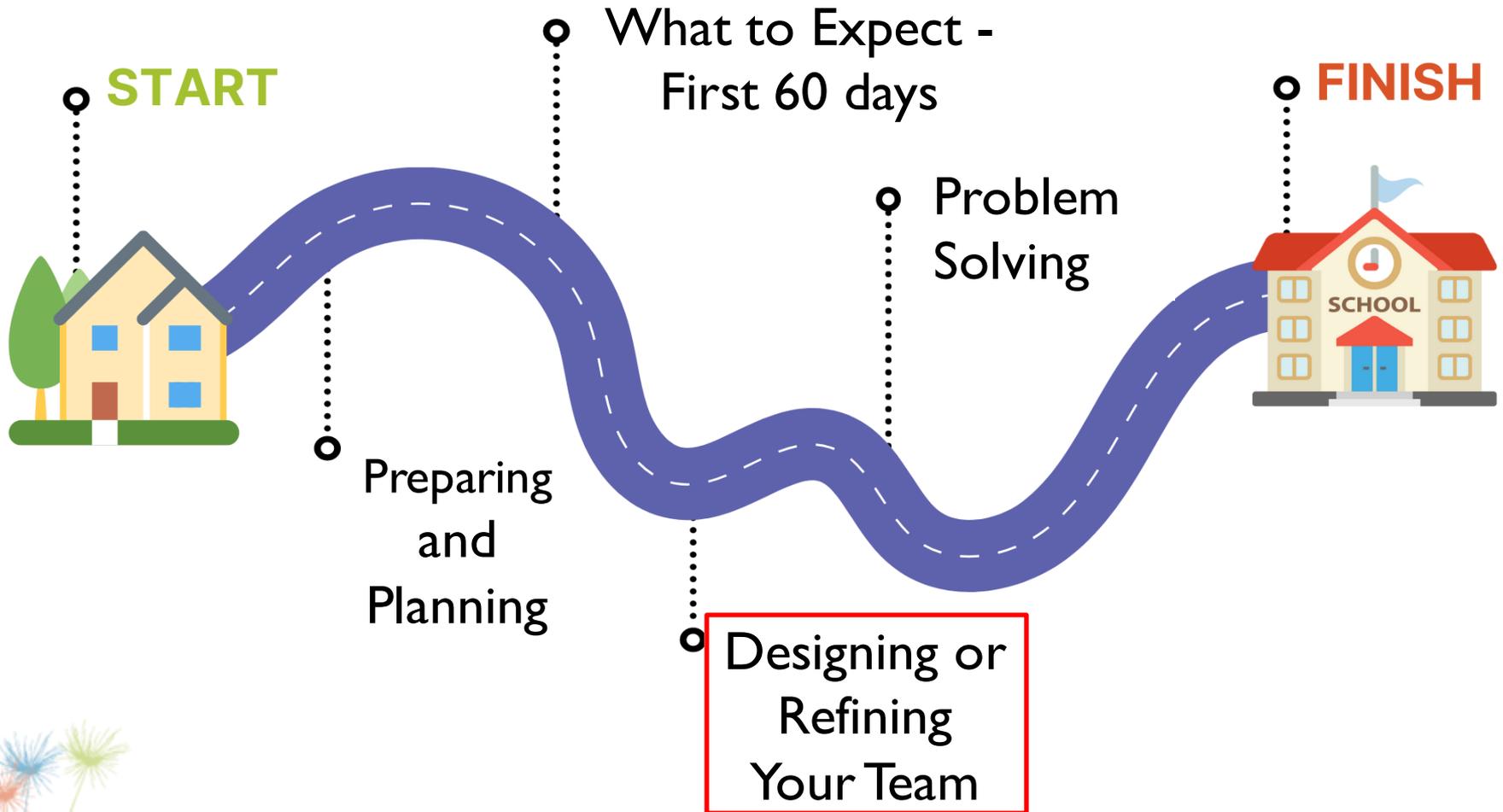
# What to Expect – First 60 Days

Why is an IEP important?

- An IEP is required if:
  - An IPRC has been completed
  - The child needs assistive technology or adapted equipment
  - The child's needs have changed in order to access the curriculum



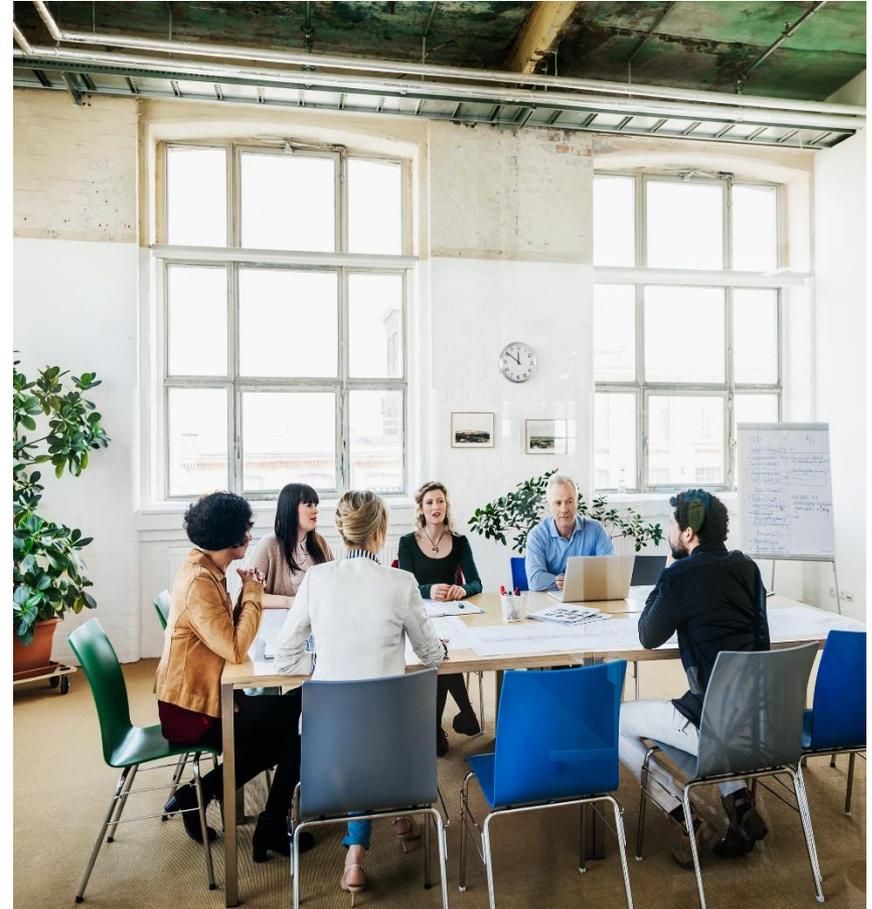
# Pathway for School Success



# Developing Your School Team

## Child-Centered Planning

- Ensure your child's "presence"
- Stay calm and attentive
- Remember that you are the expert on your child!

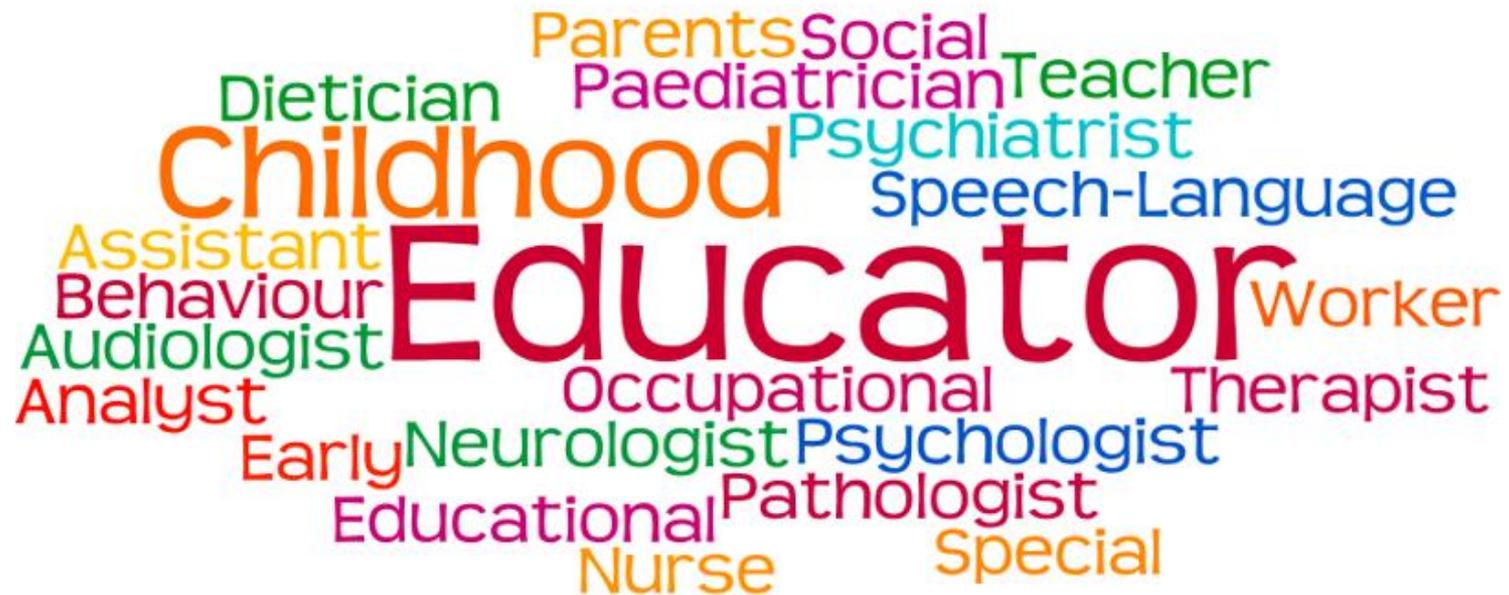


# Developing Your School Team

## Trusting Relationship

- It is important to gather information about your school team early in the year so that you are informed and can begin to participate as the central player on the team
- Information should focus on:
  - who is on the team
  - where they are located/how do you access their services
  - their expected role

# Developing Your School Team



# Developing Your School Team

Teacher/Early  
Childhood  
Educator

Occupational  
Therapist

Physician

Behaviour  
Analyst

Caregivers

Sibling(s)

Social Worker

Speech-  
Language  
Pathologist

Special  
Educator



# Developing Your School Team

## Multidisciplinary School Team



Occupational  
Therapists



**GOAL**



Special  
Educators



**GOAL**



Speech  
Language  
Pathologists



**GOAL**



Board-Certified  
Behaviour  
Analysts



**GOAL**



Teachers &  
Early Childhood  
Educators



**GOAL**



Psychologists &  
Mental Health  
Professionals



**GOAL**



# Developing Your School Team

## Interdisciplinary School Team



Families & Caregivers



Occupational Therapists



Special Educators



Speech Language Pathologists



Board-Certified Behaviour Analysts



Teachers & Early Childhood Educators



Psychologists & Mental Health Professionals



**GOAL**



# Developing Your School Team

Collaboration in an interprofessional team and teamwork will allow for:

*Development or selection of appropriate **IEP goals** while drawing on the specific **strengths** from each team member.*

# Developing Your School Team

## Additional Team Members

- Can include:
  - An advocate
  - Outside professionals that know your child
    - Behaviour Analyst
    - OT
    - Psychologist/Psychiatrist
    - SLP

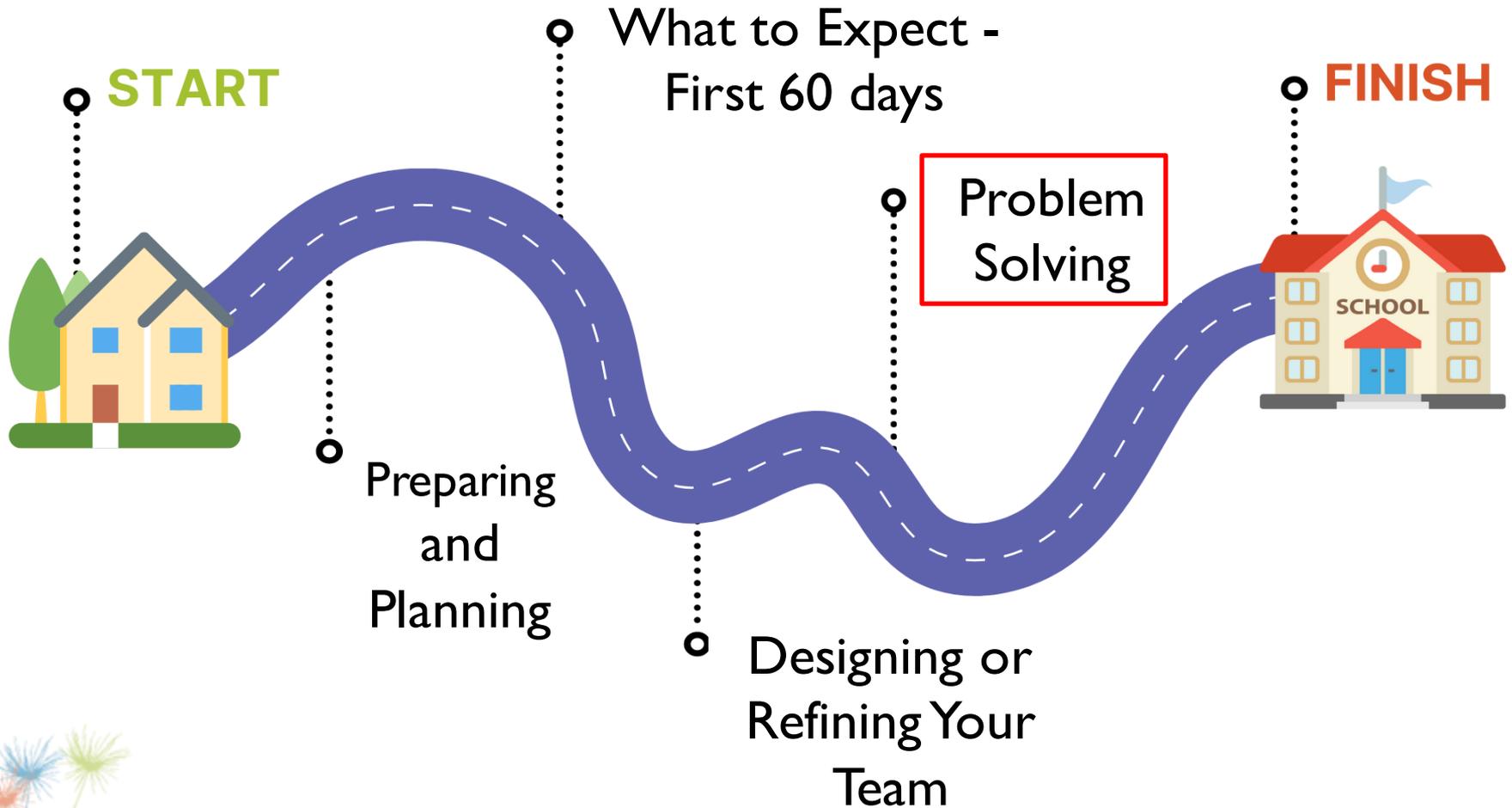


# Developing Your School Team

## The Education Act

- Some school board team members are not mandated under the Education Act
- Your school board may not have these professionals as part of their staff
  - Audiologist
  - Behaviour Analyst (BCBA)
  - Occupational Therapist
  - Speech-Language Pathologist

# Pathway for School Success



# Problem Solving

Additional assessment/treatment information may be helpful

- Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) assessments
- Medical assessments
- Occupational Therapy (OT) assessments
- Psychological/Psychoeducational assessments
- Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) assessments



# Problem Solving

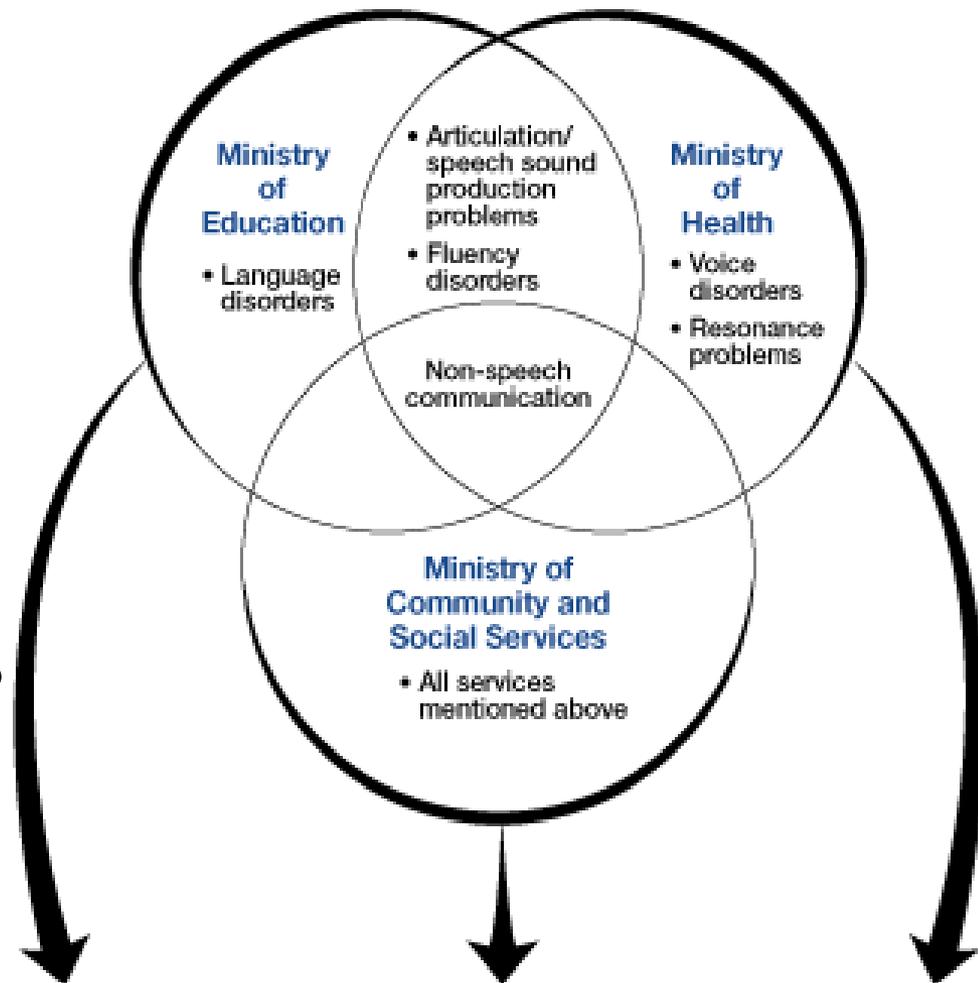
## Additional School Board Services Policy and Program Memorandums

- PPM 81 – Provision of health support services in school settings
- PPM 140 - Incorporating methods of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) into programs for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD)
- PPM 156 - Supporting transitions for students with special education needs

# Problem Solving

What are School-based Rehabilitative Services (SBRS) under [Policy and Program Memorandum 81 \(PPM 81\)](#)

- Covers nursing supports, SLP therapy, and OT services
- Restrictions on what is covered (see graphic for SLP services)
- Needs to be initiated by the School



# Problem Solving

An Applied Behavior Analysis Subspecialty

## BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS IN EDUCATION

### SUB AREAS

- ▶ Classroom Management
- ▶ Curriculum and Instruction
- ▶ Direct Instruction
- ▶ Educational Technology
- ▶ Evidence-based Education
- ▶ General, Gifted, Mainstream, and Special Education
- ▶ Instructional Design
- ▶ Personalized System of Instruction
- ▶ Precision Teaching
- ▶ Programmed Instruction
- ▶ School-wide Positive Behavior Support
- ▶ Systems of Schooling (Administration, Policy)
- ▶ Teacher Education

### OVERVIEW

Behavior analysis has been used to improve teaching and increase learning across content areas, grade levels, and student populations for over 60 years. It provides a scientific approach to designing, implementing, and evaluating instruction based on analyzing interactions between what the teacher does and student learning. Behavioral strategies and tactics have been used to teach academics, social, vocational, and daily living skills, and to improve entire systems of schooling. Key features include high rates of relevant learner responses with contingent feedback and ongoing instructional decision-making based on direct and frequent measures of student performance. Behavioral instructional design informs curriculum development from basic academics to concept formation and problem solving.

### LEARN MORE

**Initial Publication**  
Skinner, B.F. (1954). The science of learning and the art of teaching. *Harvard Educational Review*, 24, 86-97.

**Recommended Reading**  
Keller, F. S. (1968). "Good-bye, teacher ...". *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 1, 79-89.  
Barrish H. H., Saunders M., & Wolf, M. M. (1969). Good behavior game: Effects of individual contingencies for group consequences on disruptive behavior in a classroom. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 2, 119-124.  
Heward, W. L., Heron, T. E., Neef, N. A., Peterson, S. M., Sainato, D. M., Cartledge, G., Gardner III, R., Peterson, L. D., Hersh, S. B., & Dardig, J. C. (Eds.). (2005). *Focus on behavior analysis in education: Achievements, challenges, and opportunities*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Vargas, J. S. (2020). *Behavior analysis for effective teaching* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

**Additional Resources**

- ▶ [ABA Statement on Students' Right to Effective Education](#)
- ▶ [Behavior Analysis & Technology ABA Special Interest Group](#)
- ▶ [National Institute for Direct Instruction](#)
- ▶ [Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports](#)
- ▶ [Journal of Behavioral Education](#)

## What is Policy & Program Memorandum I40 (PPM I40)

### Ministry of Ed - PPM I40

1. School boards must offer students with ASD special education programs and services, including, where appropriate, special education programs using ABA methods
2. School board staff must plan for the transition between various activities and settings involving students with ASD

# Problem Solving

What is Policy & Program Memorandum 156 (PPM 156)

[Ministry of Ed - PPM 156](#)

Governs when students make transitions:

- upon entry to school
- between grades
- from one program area or subject to another
- when moving from school to school or from an outside agency/facility to a school
- from elementary to secondary school
- from secondary school to the next appropriate pathway

# Problem Solving

## Ministry of Ed - PPM 156

1. A transition plan must be developed for all students who have an IEP, whether or not they have been identified as exceptional by an IPRC. The transition plan is developed as part of the IEP.
2. At the discretion of the board, a transition plan may also be developed for students who receive special education programs and/or services but do not have an IEP and have not been identified as exceptional.

# Problem Solving

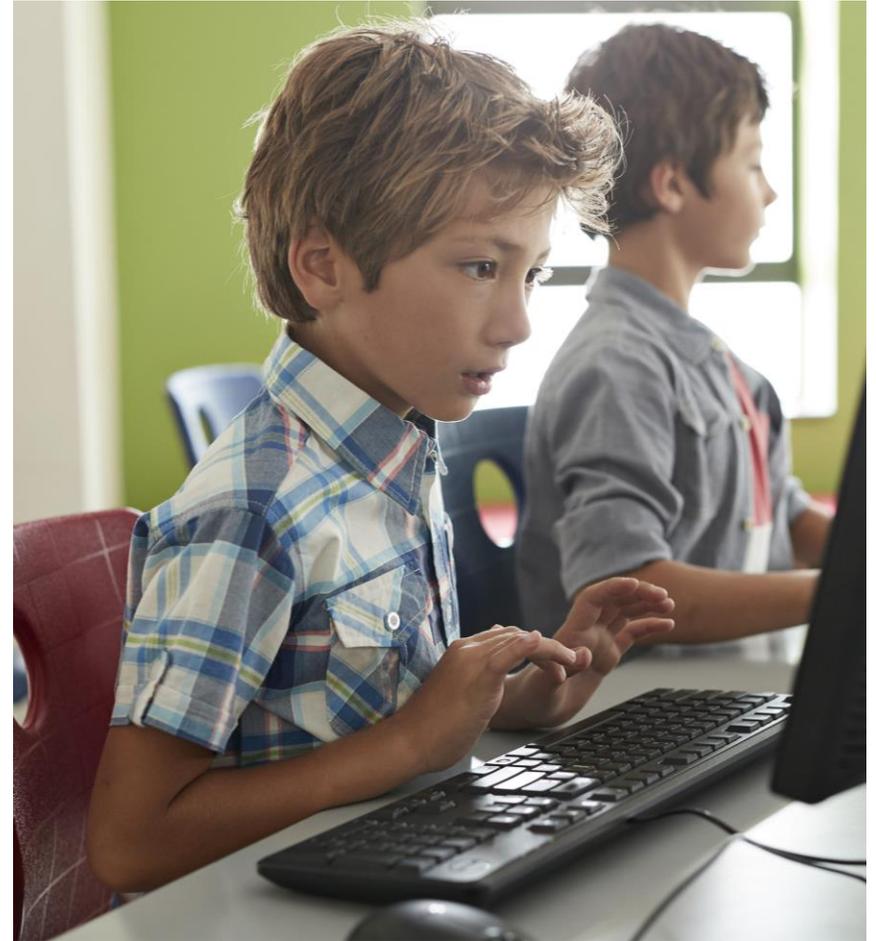
## Ministry of Ed - PPM 156

3. All transition plans must be developed in consultation with the parent(s), the student (as appropriate), the postsecondary institution (where appropriate), and relevant community agencies and/or partners, as necessary.
4. Every transition plan will identify specific transition goals, support needs, the actions required to achieve the goals, roles and responsibilities, and timelines for the implementation and/or completion of each of the identified actions.

# Problem Solving

## Additional Services and Supports Outside of School

- Additional learning opportunities may be required for your child's academic, social, and emotional wellbeing
- Some schools and school boards may not be able to meet all of your child's needs.



# Problem Solving



## **Academic Tutoring/Learning**

Various tutoring, educational, and learning services might be applicable to meet your child's needs.

- Precision Teaching and Direct Instruction centres (e.g., Fit Learning, Bridge to Better Learning)
- Kumon Math, Sylvan Learning centres
- Learning Disabilities Associations

# Problem Solving



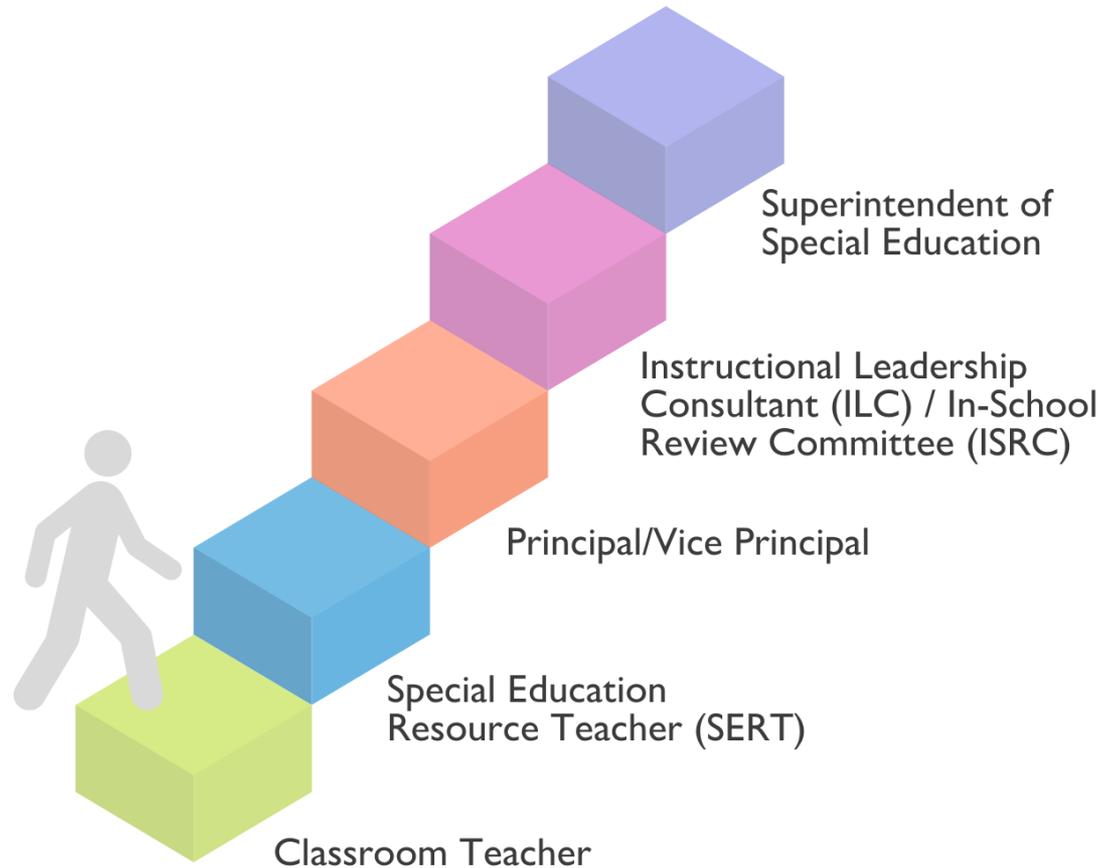
## Software, Apps, and Technology

Many software programs, apps, and technology have been shown to be beneficial for specific applications for learning.

- DT Trainer – broad curriculum
- Rosetta Stone, School version, American English – learning English
- Headsprout Kids Reading Program
- Communication apps

# Problem Solving

## Who to Contact and When



# Problem Solving

## Tips for Successful Advocacy

- Always know specifically what you want
- Remember that negotiating is part of the advocacy process
- Be willing to make concessions
- Do not blame and do not get angry
- Be persistent – don't give up at the first sign of opposition
- Listen carefully to what the others are saying
- Acknowledge points of agreement
- Plan and Prepare - establish a strategy based on definite goals
- Keep Records - establish a paper trail

[Negotiating the Maze: Strategies for Effective Advocacy in Schools](#)

# Problem Solving

## Be Prepared

Schools are a complex 'system' and so may require different approaches to facilitate change.

- Build a relationship with those individuals who can affect a change in your child
- Ask for additional resources
- Assist them in exploring possible solutions
- Know the barriers or roadblocks that they may be subject to
- Be kind and a good team member

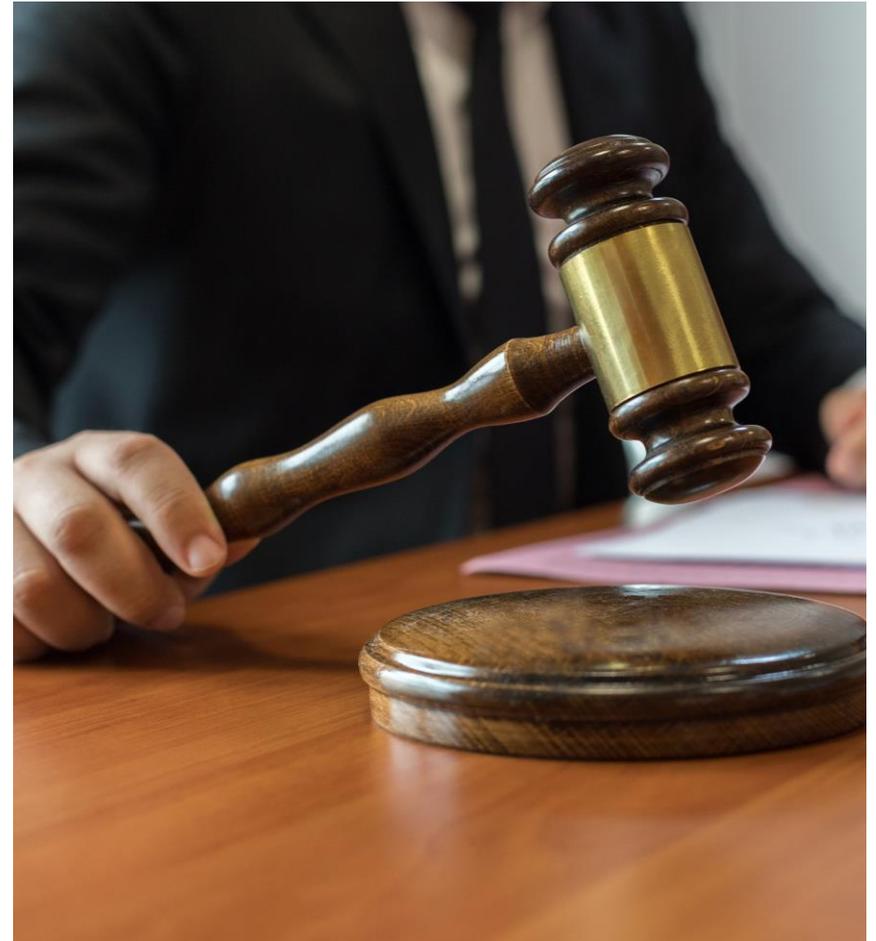


# Problem Solving

## Know Your Rights

Some education 'truths':

- Parents do not get to pick what type of accommodation a student receives
- It is up to the parent to gather the evidence, usually professional assessments, to show what the school is not doing for their child



# You Are Not Alone!

- Building relationships takes time
- Use your support system
- Focus on the positive
- Consider joining a [support group](#)



# Your Child is Unique

**“A lot of  
different  
flowers make  
a bouquet”**

- Muslim proverb  
(speaker unknown)



# Questions



# Resources

- Art of the Child-Centered IEP  
<https://cde.coe.hawaii.edu/jobsnow/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2021/03/Art-of-the-Child-Centered-IEP.pdf>
- School Mental Health Ontario- Parent activities. <https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EDMH-ParentActivities-FINAL-EN.pdf>
- York Region District School Board –The ABCs of Mental Health. <https://www2.yrdsb.ca/student-support/mental-health/abcs-mental-health>



# Thank You for Attending

“ No family or person on the spectrum in Ontario should ever feel alone, experience autism as a barrier to inclusion, or be without meaningful resources and opportunities. ”

MARG SPOELSTRA  
Executive Director, Autism Ontario

# Contact Us

Phone: 416-246-9592

Toll Free: 1-800-472-7789

Email: [sme@autismontario.com](mailto:sme@autismontario.com)

[www.autismontario.com](http://www.autismontario.com)



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[youtube.com/user/autismontario](https://www.youtube.com/user/autismontario)



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ConnectABILITY.ca. (n.d.). All about me. <https://connectability.ca/2011/04/15/all-about-me/>

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- Hawaii Statewide Family Engagement Center. (2021). The art of the child-centered IEP. <https://cde.coe.hawaii.edu/jobsnow/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2021/03/Art-of-the-Child-Centered-IEP.pdf>
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[http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/2017/spec\\_ed\\_content.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/2017/spec_ed_content.html)

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<https://www.ontario.ca/document/education-ontario-policy-and-program-direction/policyprogram-memorandum-81>



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