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ABSTRACT

This examination of individual transition plans (ITPs) for students with disabilities in New South Wales, Australia, looked at effectiveness of the system and procedures, and involvement of teachers in the development of the ITPs. It found that the numbers of written ITPs grew from 156 (56 percent of potential) in 1989 to 340 (74 percent) by June 1990. A majority of the ITPs were developed for students with intellectual disabilities. ITPs have facilitated program planning based on student needs rather than broad-based curricula. Advantages of the ITP system, as reported by teachers in both special schools and special units in regular high schools, included increased levels of student and parent involvement and increased vocational options for students. Teacher workloads, however, increased dramatically with the introduction of the ITP system, an increase which became more manageable with time. Key issues were identified, including: a need for better preparation before the ITP meeting; relatively few (only 35 percent in 1990) students themselves attending ITP meetings; and a low percentage of objectives written in behavioral and observable terms. The major recommendation is for ongoing staff training and support, especially in such priority areas as practical and functional assessment and curriculum development. An ITP format and a documentation checklist are appended. (Contains 10 references.) (DB)

UNIT FOR REHABILITATION STUDIES
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

# Establishing Individual Transition Planning for students with disabilities within the NSW Department of School Education

1990

Trevor R. Parmenter
Vivienne C. Riches

# Transition Education

**A pilot program for students with disabilities in transition in the NSW Department of School Education**

# Establishing Individual Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities within the N.S.W. Department of School Education

**Trevor R. Parmenter & Vivienne C. Riches**
**Macquarie University**
**December, 1990.**

# Executive Summary

## Individual Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities within the NSW Department of School Education

Development of the NSW model of Transition Education within the Department of School Education has meant the introduction and establishment of an individual transition planning process for students with disabilities from 12 years of age onwards.

This process involves the assessment of student needs in a number of life spheres; consultation with the student, parents and significant others; negotiation and development of realistic long term goals and short term, specific objectives in relevant curriculum areas; determination of tasks, strategies and methods to achieve the objectives; and agreement as to who will be responsible for the implementation of each task.

Individual transition plans (ITPs) begun during 1989 and 1990 in the four original pilot areas were examined to determine the effectiveness of the system and procedures, and teachers directly involved in the establishment of the I.T.P. process were surveyed.

### Results

During 1989, I.T.Ps for 156 students with disabilities had been commenced. This represented 56 percent of the potential number of 258 students with disabilities for whom teachers in 16 schools were responsible. By the end of June 1990, the number of written I.T.Ps commenced in 18 participating schools in the original four pilot areas had increased to 340 or 74 percent .

Students with a range of disabilities were included although the majority of ITPs to date have been developed for students with intellectual disabilities.

ITPs have facilitated program planning based on student needs, as identified by parents, students, teachers and other relevant school and community personnel. This, for many, represents a substantial change in the model of service delivery, from curriculum driven programs provided to all students regardless of need, to an individual needs based system.

Advantages of the ITP system, as nominated by teachers in both special schools and units in high schools included, in addition to the programming and goal setting areas, increased levels of student and parent involvement and increased vocational options for students.

Teachers reported initial difficulties in implementing the system that were related to their professional needs to develop greater knowledge, confidence and skills in establishing and using the ITP process and procedures.

Teachers were very positive about parental involvement in individual transition planning meetings, and subsequent programming where applicable, but encountered a number of problems in implementation due to :

a) Lack of support or interest by some parents
b) Unrealistic expectations (either too high or too low) and/or
c) Lack of knowledge about options for people with disabilities.

Workloads for teachers appeared to increase dramatically with the initial introduction of the ITP system, however once the system was in place, workloads appear to become more manageable.

### Issues

The first evaluation in 1989 identified lack of adequate preparation before the ITP meeting as a serious issue. Critical components of the planning phase were therefore identified and included preparation of parents and students to effectively participate in the I.T.P. meetings, and liaison with other key personnel such as TAFE consultants and job coaches. This preparation phase is now being more effectively addressed in many schools.

A serious problem was the low number of students themselves recorded as attending the I.T.P. meetings. Only 35% appear to have attended ITP meetings in 1990. All students with disabilities, even those with communication problems and high support needs should be included, where necessary for a small section of the meeting rather than the whole meeting.

A low percentage of objectives were written in behavioural and observable terms. Objectives should be clear, precise, observable and measurable.

A scarcity of implementation, review and evaluation data was noted on those I.T.Ps begun in 1989 and continued in 1990.

Some special schools following the curriculum statement for the education of students with severe intellectual disabilities have experienced difficulty in successfully and efficiently integrating the I.T.P system with the activity catalogue and IEPs already being developed for students. This problem is presently being investigated.

The introduction of part time transition co-ordinators within each pilot area has been strategic. However the number of duties and the workload in administration, staff support and training, liaison with other service agencies and contact with the local community transition team requires that these positions be further extended.

Transition coordinators require an adequate administrative base and support system.

The need for on-going staff training and support in the field has been and will continue to be crucial. Many teachers have been required to develop new skills in individual as opposed to group planning and programming, and to move more and more from the classroom into the community. They have also had to develop and extend their skills in such areas as meeting procedures, liaison and negotiation.

**Priority areas for inservice training:**

- development of methods and skills in practical and functional assessment across a number of curriculum areas;
- development of appropriate and effective curriculum in key areas;
- writing goals and objectives in clear observable and behavioural terms;
- promotion of skills in individual planning as distinct from individual instruction;
- administration, timetabling and programming skills to accommodate student needs,
- time management skills to handle imcreased workloads and work demands
- refinement of meeting and negotiation procedures;
- ongoing training and support in I.T.P. implementation procedures and skills;
- ongoing training and support in evaluating I.T.P. plans and programs
- implementation and evaluation of data based training skills; and
- training in follow up and follow along procedures.

## Conclusion

The establishment and evaluation of the I.T.P. process has assisted in a clearer understanding and identification of the benefits and issues arising from the introduction of such a system. One of the keys to future success has been identified as that of continuing professional development needs within the schools. The ability of staff to faithfully and credibly implement many of the individual transition plans that have been prepared will no doubt be affected by the ability of the Department of School Education to support teachers and meet these important staff training needs.

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## Introduction

Transition education has been an acknowledged priority area in Australia and overseas for a number of years, for transition here entails the passage of students from school to the post school world. For students with disabilities this transition phase has been a particularly critical time, since the aim is to promote *"the greatest independence, increased productivity, and fullest integration into the community."(Schwamm, 1986).*

During the first half of the 1980s, under the auspices of the OECD, selected Australian educationalists, employment specialists, community groups and unions, and departmental administrators examined the issues and concerns of transition for students with disabilities, and determined a national strategy. They recognised the lifelong process of transition but in the context of the student with a disability moving from school to adult life, defined it as :-

> *"the building up of an adult identity, confidence that one is competent and can survive without the parental support that was necessary as a child. The move from childhood to adult status can be defined as the gradual process of building up self esteem and confidence in one's capacity to stand on one's own; to be able to solicit the support when necessary, but not live under it permanently as in childhood.*
>
> *(C.E.R.I. 1988)*

The purpose or goal of transition is therefore to ensure that individuals with disabilities have choices in a range of options that enable them to reach their potential for successful community independence, taking into account working, living and socialising/friendship factors.

These opportunities and options have not always been available, and even today are often limited. A survey of people with disabilities, for example, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (McLennan, 1990) indicated that the number of persons with disabilities between the ages of 15 and 64 totalled 1,122,000 and comprised ten percent of the working age group. Yet only seven percent of these people with disabilities were in the labour force.

The labour force participation rate for people with disabilities was 46 percent, compared with 72 percent for all persons aged 15 to 64 years. The participation rate for people with mild intellectual disability was 52 percent while for those with severe disabilities the participation rate was 34 percent. Unemployment rates were also found to be higher for people with disabilities (12%) than for the general population (8%).

The report of the Handicapped Persons' Program Review, entitled *New Directions* ( Grimes, 1985), indicated that the following specific outcomes were most important for consumers with disabilities :

- a place to live;
- paid employment;
- being competent and self reliant;
- participating in community activities;
- feeling secure;
- having choices in life; and
- having an image which is regarded positively by other people.

Since these outcomes are the focus of the consumers themselves, community services should be structured in such a way that best meets these needs.

It is now recognised in Australia and overseas that past failures to achieve these outcomes, and failure to achieve smooth transition from school to successful community independence has been a systemic problem. It is the lack of collaboration and co-ordination between the schools and the many other community agencies and organizations involved in the lives of persons with disabilities which has been a major inhibiting factor in preventing those with disabilities reaching the desired outcomes outlined above.

Halpern (1985), found that links between Oregon's secondary special education programs and community agencies were poor. Only 10 percent of school administrators indicated the existence of formal agreements and less than 50 percent indicated that informal agreements existed with adult service agencies concerning the transition needs of students with disabilities. Furthermore, while 60 percent of teachers stated that other agencies had been contacted concerning transition services, only 20 percent of the parents acknowledged ever receiving such services.

A three year national study in the U.S.A. (Cox, 1984) highlighted the importance of inter-agency co-operation, and noted the prevalent lack of long term planning between agencies and the public school system in terms of vocational training placements and independent living for people with disabilities. They also found that virtually no follow-up of graduates with disabilities was done to ensure a match between the services provided by the schools and the students' post-school experiences. Their conclusion was that the organizational structure to bring together the schools and appropriate community agencies was not in place, or was insufficiently utilized.

The response to these and similar findings has been varied. Federal initiatives in the U.S.A. led to legislative amendments recognising the need for transitional services, while numerous states in the U.S.A. developed their own models to address the problem. These have ranged from the establishment of Transition Service Centres to the negotiation of formalised inter-agency co-operation agreements on a state wide level.

Preliminary findings from the N.S.W. Department of School Education's Transition Pilot Program, established in 1989, have supported these American findings. A lack of co-operation between school based and community based programs and need for follow-up and post school support, was a recognised feature in N.S.W. These deficiencies are currently being addressed by this pilot program.

## Transition Model

Educators agree that, to experience successful transition from school to work and community living in its fullest sense, each individual should have access to the full array of support and training opportunities possible. To this end, consumers, parents, community resources, government agencies and private industry need to co-operate and collaborate in such a way as to supply leadership in, as well as provision of a comprehensive and dynamic system of transition services.

Moreover efforts to address transition services should address key issues at all phases of the process, namely :

1) The secondary schooling phase- curricula concerns, individual program planning and management, and career development,
2) the transitional phase - linkage between school-based services and community-based services, and
3) the adult/community living phase - employment, training and education, leisure and recreation, and daily living needs.

Some models of transition exist that only focus on the process of moving students from school to employment. Increasingly evidence points to the fact that employment should not be targeted alone (Halpern :1985; Patton and Browder :1988) . Indeed social skills and networks, and the residential environment are other independent and critical variables which also needed to be addressed during transition if successful community independence is to be achieved. Accordingly Halpern's model has been adapted to suit the N.S.W. Department of School Education's pilot program.

To achieve smooth transition from school to community independence for individuals with disabilities, a two-pronged attack has been adopted. This has involved the establishment of two structures, school-based and community-based transition teams.

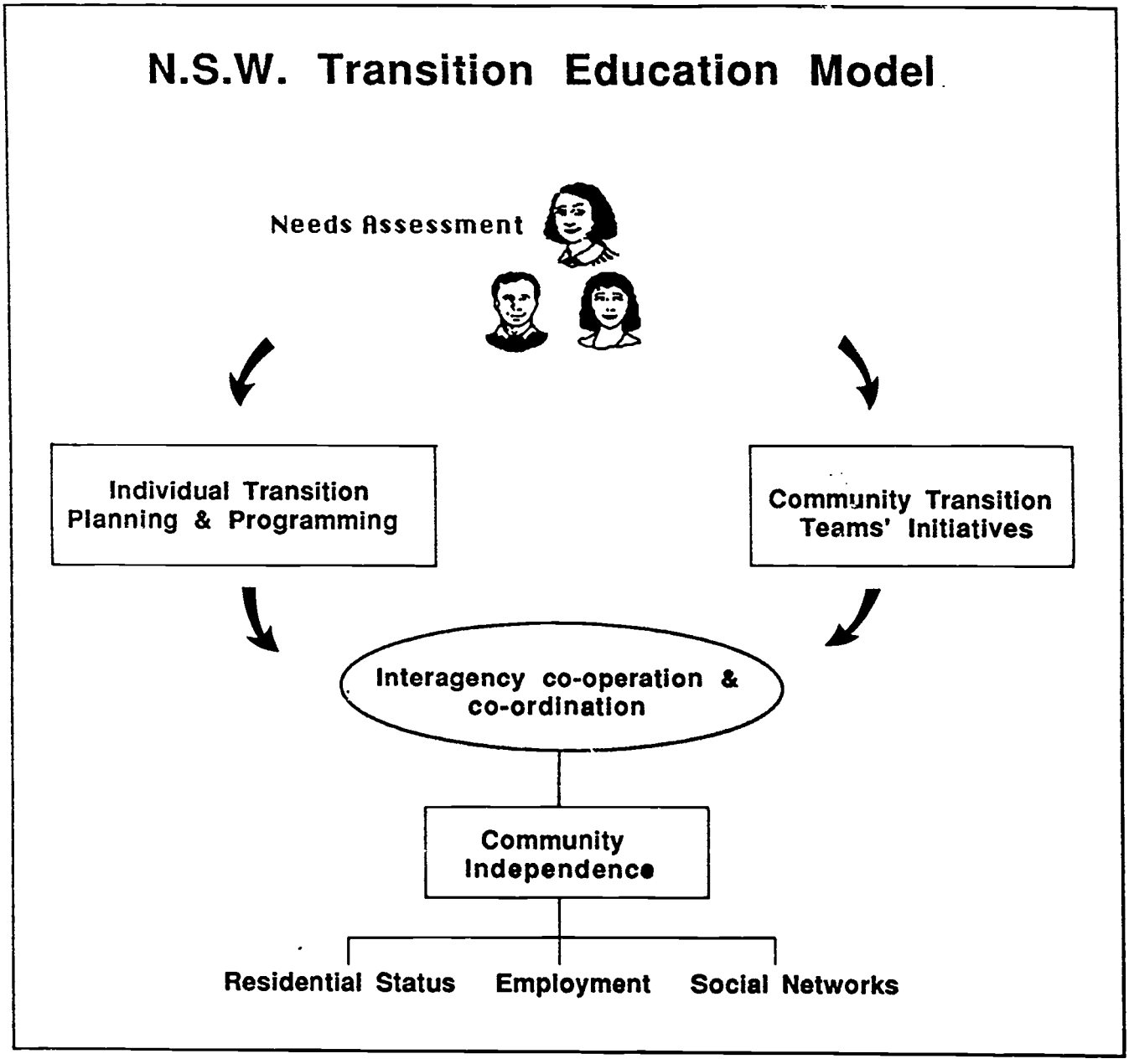


**Figure 1: N.S.W. Transition Education Model**

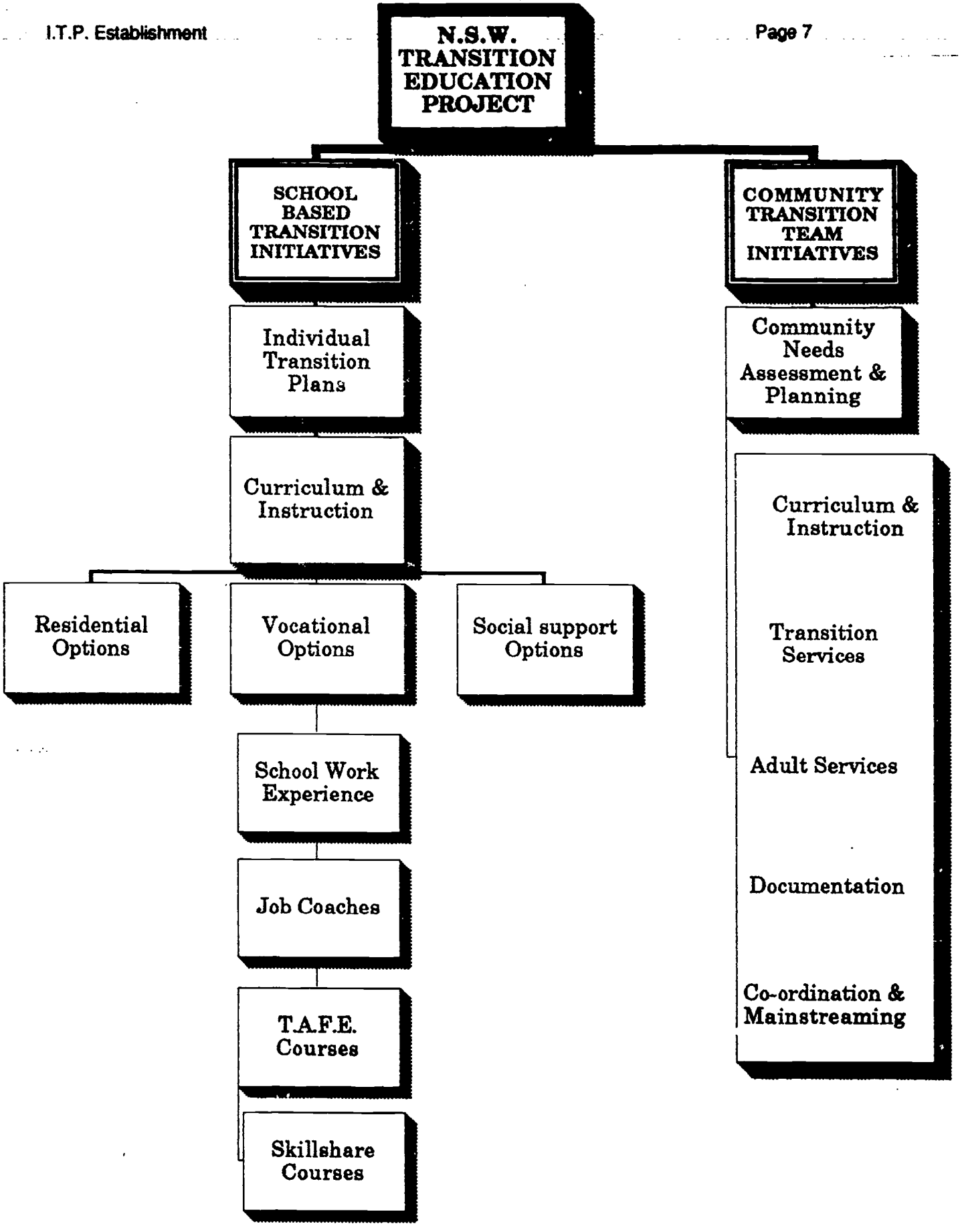


**Figure 2: Flowchart of the School-based and Community-based Teams**

## A. School-Based Transition Teams

In recommending an appropriate strategy in transition for youth with disabilities, the Australian National Steering Committee report (1988), suggested that planning must begin early in the education of a child with a disability. Before school is formally completed in the period 16 + years:

- a personal transition plan should have been developed by a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency team, including the young person and parents;
- which sets out the essential data about each youth;
- is an agreed plan setting out options available in further education , training and community living; and
- identifies the pathways to be followed among the options which lead to agreed objectives in adult life.

The aim of school-based teams is therefore the development of an individual transition plan (I.T.P.) for each student, to address each student's needs to live and work as independently as possible in the community, with the highest quality of life possible, and the planning for and provision of special transition services , instruction and support to meet those needs.

## B. Community-Based Transition Teams

Community Transition Teams enable co-operation and collaboration between all services and agencies at the local level. They consist of school teachers and administrators, representatives of adult service agencies, both government and non-government, community service and local council representatives, parents who wish to serve as advocates for a group of students with disabilities and employers.

The aim of community-based teams is the assessment and planning for present and future transitional needs and priorities at the community level for people with disabilities. Teams work towards enhancing the capacity of schools, adult service agencies, employers and parents to deliver effective transition services to meet the needs of that community.

While the focus of the school teams is to provide improved services to individual students with disabilities, through the development and implementation of I.T.P.s, the focus of the community teams is to enhance the capacity of the various service provisions available during transition.

## The Establishment of School Based Transition Teams

The Special Education Transition Program for Students with Disabilities was established in 1989 in four pilot areas of N.S.W. The four areas selected by a Steering Committee were The Hills District, Penrith and the Inner City West of metropolitan Sydney, and the country city of Orange.

Once pilot areas had been selected, schools within clusters were nominated at a regional level for inclusion in the program, individual schools invited to participate and school personnel then trained in the philosophy and model of transition, as well as in the use of the systems and procedures necessary for individual transition planning. The flowchart below sets out the administrative steps and procedures which were developed and followed to bring each cluster on line to establish the school based teams.

Establishment Plan Metropolitan North Region

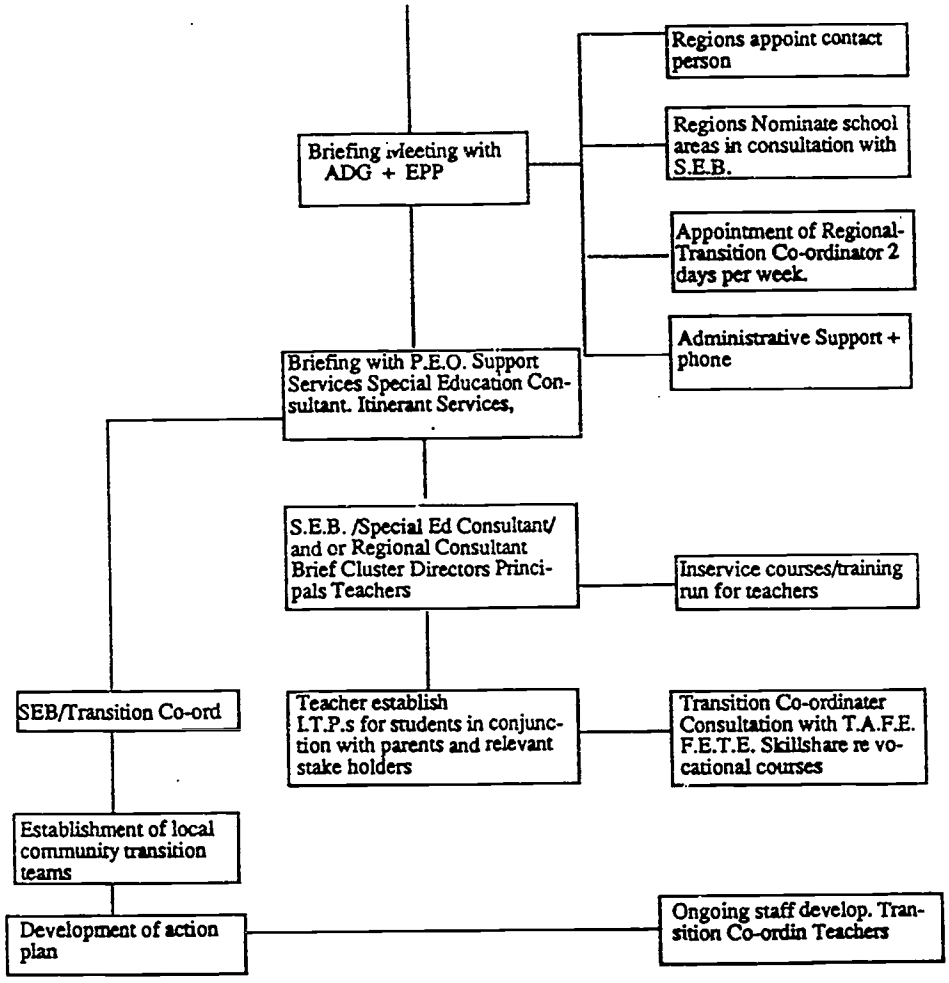


**Figure 3: Administrative Establishment Procedure**

## Individual Transition Planning

The individual planning process is quite complex and time consuming. It involves the assessment of student needs in a number of life spheres; consultation with the student, parents and significant others; negotiation and development of realistic long term goals and short term, specific objectives in relevant curriculum areas; determination of tasks, strategies and methods to achieve the objectives; and agreement as to who will be responsible for the implementation of each task.

Relevant and practical systems and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of individual transition plans (I.T.Ps) had first to be developed by representatives from the Special Education Branch of the Department of School Education and the Unit for Rehabilitation Studies, Macquarie University. This involved :-

- establishing systems for the development of Individual Transition Plan (I.T.P) forms and procedures to service students with disabilities;
- providing staff training to enable the development of I.T.P's for each student being served through the project,

- developing forms and procedures for tracking the implementation of I.T.P.s and their outcomes,
- developing and using procedures for collecting and interpreting ongoing information on the implementation and outcomes of each I.T.P.

**Original Pilot Areas - 1989**

Twenty seven staff from sixteen participating schools were involved in 1989 in the initial establishment process. Four special schools and twelve high schools with special units participated. Two of these schools included units for students with physical disabilities which were in the process of relocating from special schools to new premises within high schools.

While a number of staff from special schools were familiar with individual educational plans, no high school staff had been involved in individual planning or programming and no prior knowledge or experience could be assumed. Teachers within the four pilot areas or clusters initially attended a two day workshop held for each cluster. At this workshop teachers were introduced to the background, goals and operational model of transition as adopted by the N.S.W. Department of School Education.

Nine relevant curriculum areas were identified as crucial in life style planning to maximise the aim of independent living for all students with disabilities. These are :

- Continuing Education
- Vocational Training and Placement
- Advocacy/ Citizenship and Legal issues
- Finance/ Income
- Leisure/ Recreation
- Living Arrangements/ Independent Living Skills
- Health/ Community Services
- Personal Management / Social Skills
- Transportation/ Mobility

Possible long term goal options for students with disabilities in these curriculum areas were explored. The importance of developing a written individual transition plan (I.T.P.) for each participating student was stressed, and various formats were examined which would meet required standards, and a format suitable to each cluster was developed. Meeting procedures and roles of I.T.P team members were examined briefly, and teachers were invited to request further in- school training and support as required.

Teachers were assisted to develop a set of procedures and a timeline for establishing I.T.Ps within their specific schools, including briefing other school staff; making initial contact with parents to inform them of the program, gaining co-operation and arranging appointments; scheduling I.T.P. meetings with support from other staff such as school counsellors and career advisers where necessary; and preparing students for their meetings. Additional duties included liaison with Technical and Further Education (T.A.F.E.) disability consultants where students required access to T.A.F.E. Transition courses.

The number of extra duties involved and the amount of liaison and critical out of class activity led to the appointment of part time cluster co-ordinators for each cluster. These co-ordinators were employed to assist with the many administrative duties, with inservicing staff in the I.T.P. process, and with the negotiation of suitable Tafe courses for students.

**Extension Pilot Areas - 1990**

By 1990 the number of schools participating in the original four areas had increased to 18, while public demand resulted in expansion and inclusion of four new pilot areas. This increased the total number of participating schools to 34. The new areas involved the far north coast (Coffs Harbour , Port Macquarie and Kempsey), the far south coast (Nowra, Bateman's Bay and Moruya), Newcastle and the Padstow - Bankstown area of metropolitan Sydney.

Based on the 1989 findings, the decision was made to standardise the I.T.P. format to one applicable state wide, to continue to employ cluster co-ordinators in each cluster to assist in the administrative, training and implementation duties. Staff turnover in the original schools as well as the inclusion of staff in the 4 new areas meant that the number of staff requiring inservicing increased dramatically. Results from the 1989 experience contributed to the decision to provide this intensive training within the clusters and schools themselves.

## Method of Evaluation

The Unit for Rehabilitation Studies, School of Education, Macquarie University had been contracted to assist in the research and development of the four year pilot project. From its initial involvement, a systems model of evaluation had been adopted, whereby each component of the system, namely the inputs, process data and the outcomes could be evaluated.

Evaluation of the I.T.P. establishment process was seen as a critical component of the evaluation, and was undertaken in the four original pilot areas by :-

a) Determination, in consultation with the Department of School Education, of the standards considered essential for ITPs to meet to be effective planning and implementation tools. From these standards a documentation checklist was constructed to measure the effectiveness with which written ITPs actually met the required standards.

b) Direct observation of all written I.T.Ps using the documentation checklist . Observation occurred either at the appropriate school where I.T.Ps were held by the relevant teacher, or at a central location where all updated copies were held by cluster co-ordinators for each cluster.

   Two reviews occurred, the first towards the end of 1989 after the first six months of operation. Preliminary results from this review were summarised and problem areas highlighted, and this information was fed back to the teachers involved and to the centrally based officers in charge of the program.

   The second review occurred in the original pilot areas in mid 1990 after the second six monthly period of program operation . The additional new areas were not included in this review as they were still in the early phases of planning and holding I.T.P. meetings.

   All I.T.Ps were viewed and rated by independent evaluators.

c) Structured interviews of teachers directly involved in the I.T.P. process occurred in the latter part of 1989 within the participating schools.

## RESULTS

### 1.0 Numbers Commenced

At the completion of the 1989 school year, twenty five teachers in the then 16 schools participating in the Transition Pilot Project were interviewed. They reported a total of 145 individual transition plans (I.T.Ps) had been commenced, (although not all were found to be in written form) out of the potential number of 258 students for whom these teachers were responsible. All pilot areas had consequently initiated I.T.Ps for over half of their students, as recorded in Table 1. This represented an I.T.P. commencement rate of 56 percent after 6 months of the program's operation.

By the end of June 1990, the number of written I.T.Ps commenced in the now 18 schools involved in the original four pilot areas had increased to 340 or 74 percent . A substantial increase in numbers of written I.T.Ps occurred in 1990, and a percentage increase is evident in all but one cluster.

Table 1: I.T.Ps commenced in the four pilot areas 1989 - 1990

| Cluster | Number 1989 | Percent | Number 1990 | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Orange | 24/44 | 55% | 73/77 | 95% |
| Inner city west | 28/51 | 55% | 72/72 | 100% |
| Hills | 50/81 | 62% | 106/110 | 96% |
| Penrith | 43/82 | 52% | 89/199 | 45% |

### 2.0 Student Information

### 2.1 Disability Type

The Department of School Education determined to include all recognised disabilities in the transition education project. Departmental coding for these disabilities which has been used throughout this report is : severe intellectual disability (IS ); moderate intellectual disability (IO); mild intellectual disability (IM); physical impairment (IP); visual impairment (IV) and hearing impairment (IH).

The disability type was not specifically recorded on the 1989 I.T.Ps, and a breakdown by disabilities was not possible for 1989 data. The 1990 data on disability groups indicated by far the largest percentage of students who had written I.T.Ps fell in the intellectual disabilities category, particularly in the IS/IO range (data did not distinguish between IS and IO students). Only small numbers of students with physical and sensory disabilities were represented at this stage of the project, as can be seen from the graph in figure 3.

Altogether there were I.T.Ps for 177 students with a moderate or severe intellectual disability, 128 for students with a mild intellectual disability, 28 for students with a physical impairment (14 of whom were in units within high schools and 14 fully integrated within regular high schools), 3 for students with a hearing impairment, 1 for a visually impaired student and 1 for a student with visual and intellectual impairment. Information on the type of disability for 2 students was missing.

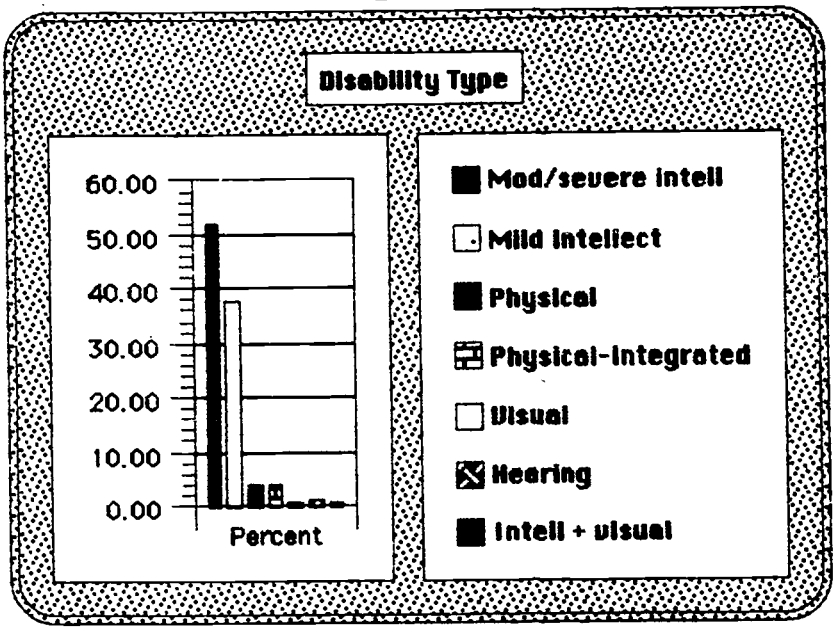


**Figure 4: Percentages of I.T.Ps commenced by disability type**

## 2.2 Student Ages

Ages were not recorded on 1989 data, and some data were missing from the 1990 I.T.Ps. Ages of students recorded for 1990 ranged from 11 to 19 years, with the majority of students being 15 years and over (See table 2 for details).

Table 2: Distribution by Age 1990

| Ages | Number | Percent | Cum.Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11 years | 1 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| 12 years | 4 | 1.2 | 1.5 |
| 13 years | 26 | 7.6 | 9.1 |
| 14 years | 37 | 10.9 | 20.0 |
| 15 years | 62 | 18.2 | 38.2 |
| 16 years | 67 | 19.7 | 57.9 |
| 17 years | 50 | 14.7 | 72.6 |
| 18 years | 28 | 8.2 | 80.8 |
| 19 years | 2 | 0.6 | 81.4 |
| Unknown | 63 | 18.5 | 100.0 |
| Total | 340 | 100.0 | |

## 2.3 Sex

The majority of I.T.Ps written in 1989 related to males, with the distribution being 74 percent males to 26 percent females. This figure was similar for 1990.

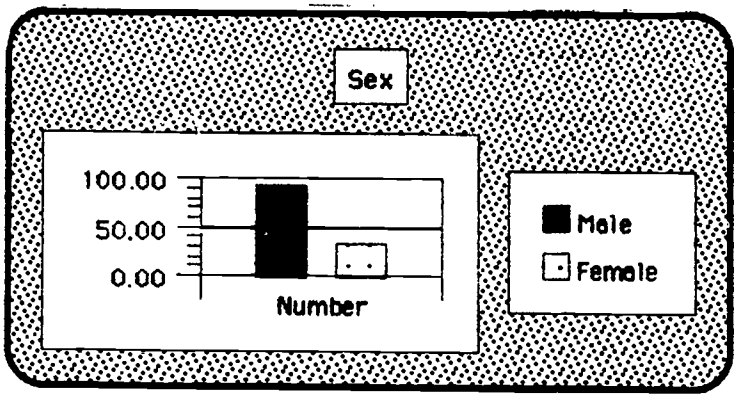


**Figure 5: Sex Distribution 1989**

### 3.0 I.T.P. Documentation Results

Visits were made in the last quarter of 1989 to each school in the pilot program, and I.T.P. documentation was examined within each school for the purpose of identifying problem areas and verifying that predetermined standards were relevant and applicable, and had been met.

Although 145 I.T.Ps had reportedly been commenced, only 92 written I.T.Ps (or 63%) were available in written form, these being located in thirteen of seventeen schools in the pilot areas. Of the remaining four schools, one school had been included in the pilot area late in the year and so staff had not been inducted into the I.T.P. process, and 3 schools had either not written up any information and/or they had not begun developing I.T.Ps for their students in 1989.

Each of the 92 written I.T.Ps was reviewed against a documentation checklist to determine the type, quantity and quality of information recorded. As anticipated at this preliminary stage of formulating and introducing new systems and procedures in transition planning, many gaps were found to exist which highlighted significant areas necessary for development and modification in planning and staff training for 1990.

The review completed in June 1990 involved the examination of each of the 340 written I.T.Ps within the same 4 pilot areas. The majority of these were newly commenced I.T.Ps, but some cases involved students whose I.T.Ps had been begun in 1989 and therefore were up for review in 1990.

### 3.1.1. I.T.P. Teams 1989

The majority (85%) of the 1989 I.T.Ps sighted had been developed by a team, while the other 14 (15%) appear to have been developed and written by the teacher alone. Teams were often small and consisted of the student, the teacher and one or two parents or caregivers. Some teams consisted of the teacher and parent together. In some cases the T.A.F.E. disability consultant also attended the meeting as part of the team, and in the Penrith area in particular the disability consultant had assisted the teachers in running meetings and training school staff in the new procedures and tasks involved. Additional community personnel such as FACs workers, psychologists or group home personnel were occasionally involved, but to a lesser extent than originally anticipated. This may have been partly influenced by the heavy emphasis placed upon vocational goals, to the exclusion in some cases of goals in independent living, residential and recreational and leisure areas.

Documentation of team members completed on each I.T.P form revealed the following data on numbers attending I.T.P. meetings:

Table 3: I.T.P. Team representation 1989

| Team Participants | 1989 Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Student | 68 | 74 |
| Parent/s | 73 | 79 |
| Advocate | 1 | 1 |
| Teacher | 77 | 84 |
| Other | 20 | 22 |

Only one citizen advocate attended an I.T.P. meeting. The whole area of advocacy and legal rights was one in which schools had not previously participated, despite the fact that increasing interest and enquiries for information on self advocacy and citizen advocacy is growing.. Teachers in some schools reported that parents were resistant to the idea of a citizen advocate, from fear that the parents themselves would be perceived as incompetent.

### 3.1.2. I.T.P. Teams 1990

Participation in I.T.P. meetings throughout the first half of 1990 saw in contrast the involvement of many more school and community based personnel. The number and type of participants was found to vary with type of disability, with significantly more service providers being involved in I.T.P. meetings, particularly for students with high support needs in the moderate intellectual disability category. Included for example were house managers, case managers and caregivers from residential services, a respite care worker, social workers and community nurses, psychologists etc. In contrast students with a mild intellectual disability tended to attract more school-based personnel, with school counsellors and careers advisers, school principals, cluster co-ordinators and extra teachers participating in planning meetings.

Students with physical disabilities attracted high parent involvement, with 26 of the 28 parents attending, and the only 2 advocates involved to date in the program. A range of school based personnel were also involved, including school counsellors, extra teachers, and teacher's aides, as well as specialist services in occupational therapy, speech therapy and vocational counselling. Numbers of I.T.Ps for students with visual, hearing or combined visual and intellectual impairments were very small, totalling only 4. Representation at these meetings varied with disability type, as can be seen from Table 4.

A significant finding was the substantial drop in student representation at I.T.P. meetings, which fell as low as 35 percent across all disability groups. Figures were low for all disability groups except hearing impairment in which 100 percent student presence was recorded. Only 31 percent of students with moderate intellectual disability, 38 percent with mild intellectual disability and 46 percent with physical disabilities were recorded as participating in their meetings.

Tafe Disability consultants attended 37 I.T.P. meetings in the January to June 1990 period. This involved 23 students with moderate intellectual disabilities, 9 students with mild intellectual disability, 2 students with physical disability, and 1 each with visual, hearing and intellectual and visual disability. (See Table 4 for details of 1990 participants).

### 3.2 Curriculum Areas Addressed by I.T.Ps.

Many I.T.Ps begun in 1989 addressed the vocational curriculum area only in their planning, while some plans tried to cover every one of the nine curriculum areas. Generally teachers had been advised to cover about three curriculum areas at any one planning meeting, as more than this could be unmanageable and fragmented, less could be too narrow. The 1990 figures reveal that the vocational curriculum area has continued to play a major focus role, although continuing education, leisure and recreation and living arrangements/skills have also been addressed in over 50 percent of the I.T.Ps. Table 5 sets out the number and percentage of specific curriculum areas addressed, as identified from the documentation recorded on the I.T.Ps for both 1989 and 1990.

Table 4: I.T.P. Team Participation 1990

| I.T.P. Team Participants | IO/IS | IM | IP | IV | IH | Intell+ Visual | Total Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student | 55 | 49 | 13 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 120 | 35.3% |
| Parent/s | 131 | 92 | 26 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 255 | 75.0% |
| Other family rep | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 2.1% |
| Advocate | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | .9% |
| Teacher | 131 | 95 | 28 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 259 | 76.2% |
| Extra teacher | 8 | 18 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 45 | 13.2% |
| Teacher's aide | 3 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 4.1% |
| School counsellor | 6 | 29 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 38 | 11.2% |
| Careers adviser | 2 | 17 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 23 | 6.8% |
| Principal | 9 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 7.1% |
| Job coach | 15 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 5.0% |
| Cluster co-ordinator | 14 | 45 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 67 | 19.7% |
| Tafe consultant/rep | 23 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 37 | 10.9% |
| Program support rep | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 1.8% |
| House manager | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 3.5% |
| Case manager | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 2.4% |
| Voc. Counsellor | 1 | 0 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 4.4% |
| Social Educator | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | .3% |
| OT/Speech Therapist | 14 | 1 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 30 | 8.8% |
| Caregiver | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 1.8% |
| Itinerant/consultant | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 1.5% |
| Social worker/nurse | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 1.8% |
| Psychologist | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | .6% |
| Aboriginal liaison | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | .3% |
| Interpreter | 5 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 3.5% |
| Respite care worker | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | .3% |
| other | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 2.1% |
| Total Student I.T.Ps | 177 | 128 | 28 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 340* | 100% |

* Disability unknown for 2 cases

Table 5: Curriculum areas addressed in I.T.Ps

| Curriculum Areas | 1989 Number | Percent | 1990 Number | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Cont. Education | 53 | 57.6% | 214 | 62.9% |
| 2. Vocational | 70 | 76.1% | 281 | 82.6% |
| 3. Advocacy | 12 | 13.0% | 35 | 10.3% |
| 4. Finance | 22 | 23.9% | 145 | 42.6% |
| 5. Leisure/recreation | 51 | 55.4% | 189 | 55.6% |
| 6. Living skills | 47 | 51.1% | 176 | 51.8% |
| 7. Health | 23 | 25.0% | 79 | 23.2% |
| 8. Personal/social | 43 | 46.7% | 169 | 49.7% |
| 9. Transport | 29 | 31.5% | 161 | 47.4% |

A further breakdown of the 1990 curriculum areas by disability groups has been presented in Table 6. While numbers are very small for some categories, the figures for both intellectual and physical disability groupings do indicate the extent of program planning now occurring across the 9 curriculum areas.

Table 6: Curriculum areas addressed across Disability Groups

| Curriculum Area | IO/IS | IM | IP | IV | IH | IM+IV | Total N | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cont. Education | 46% | 81% | 86% | 0% | 100% | 100% | 214 | 62.9% |
| Vocational | 80% | 85% | 89% | 100% | 67% | 100% | 281 | 82.6% |
| Advocacy | 5% | 13% | 32% | 0% | 0% | 100% | 35 | 10.3% |
| Finance | 46% | 35% | 57% | 100% | 0% | 0% | 145 | 42.6% |
| Leisure/Recreation | 72% | 35% | 57% | 0% | 0% | 100% | 189 | 55.6% |
| Living skill | 72% | 26% | 46% | 0% | 0% | 100% | 176 | 51.8% |
| Health | 25% | 17% | 39% | 0% | 0% | 100% | 79 | 23.2% |
| Personal/ social skills | 69% | 25% | 39% | 100% | 0% | 100% | 169 | 49.7% |
| Transport | 54% | 38% | 50% | 0% | 0% | 100% | 161 | 47.4% |
| Total | N=177 | N=128 | N=28 | N=1 | N=3 | N=1 | N=340 | 100% |

### 3.3 I.T.P. Standards

In formulating systems and procedures for the I.T.P. process, a number of predetermined standards had been set indicating the type and quality of information to be recorded on the I.T.P. format . Much of the standard information was found missing or only partially complete in 1989, particularly basic information such as names of team members, review dates, and signatures showing agreement to the plan between the key team members. Often where this type of information was missing, the whole front sheet of the plan had not been filled in or was not attached. The following table 7 sets out results of numbers and percentages of *completed* documentation on standard information required on each I.T.P. form at both review points.

Student /family preferences were to be recorded on the new format used in 1990. Not all schools were found to have received this format in time for their I.T.P meetings, which may partly explain why only 187 cases (55%) of I.T.Ps had recorded these preferences.

Additional data sought in the 1990 review concerned implementation data, since some of the students whose I.T.Ps had been begun in 1989 were still attending school and were due for review. Records of progress were deemed relevant in 77 cases, but documentation on progress was only partially complete in 14 of these cases, and complete in only 8 cases or 10.4 percent.

Table 7: Documentation recorded on Standard I.T.P. Information

| Information required | 1989 No. Complete | Percent | 1990 No. Complete | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Names of team members recorded | 56 | 60.9% | 203 | 59.7% |
| Date of meeting/plan finalised | 80 | 87.0% | 321 | 94.4% |
| I.T.P. co-ordinator assigned | 60 | 65.0% | 306 | 90.0% |
| Long term goals recorded | 80 | 87.0% | 309 | 90.9% |
| Short term objectives recorded | 80 | 87.0% | 300 | 88.2% |
| Plan of action recorded | 76 | 82.6% | 301 | 88.5% |
| Implementation Person assigned | 64 | 69.6% | 296 | 87.1% |
| Dates set for implementation and review | 58 | 63.0% | 232 | 68.2% |
| Written in simple language | 81 | 88.0% | 318 | 93.4% |
| Objectives stated behaviourally | 80 | 87.0% | 166 | 48.8% |
| Endorsement by all team members | 17 | 18.5% | 109 | 32.1% |
| Student/parent received copy | 39 | 42.0% | * - | * - |

* Information not recorded on new format

### 3.4 Summary of Documentation Results

Of the written I.T.Ps reviewed in 1989, 84 (91.3%) had relevant documentation partially or primarily complete, while 8 (8.7%) had only scant or partial information documented. However most of these I.T.Ps had been developed for students with disabilities in their last year of school, and in many cases for students wishing to access T.A.F.E. courses. The pressure to complete the I.T.Ps in preparation for determining and planning T.A.F.E. transition courses meant that in practice :-

a) few teachers documented all programming that was already occurring for students
b) a number of transition plans addressed the vocational goal solely, and
c) team representation had been very small, in some cases consisting of the teacher and parent alone or the student and/or teacher.

I.T.Ps sighted in June 1990 by contrast were generally more balanced in the number and range of curriculum areas addressed, although some wide discrepancies were still evident. Far wider team representation occurred. Unfortunately this did not often include the students themselves, with as few as 35 percent of students recorded as attending their I.T.P. meetings. In some cases this may have been a recording oversight, or due to the fact that the new I.T.P. format had not been received. However the low figure was sustained across all 4 pilot areas and is cause for concern.

In several cases group programming for certain curriculum areas appears to have occurred, which meant that the I.T.Ps were identical and did not in fact constitute an individual plan addressing the specific needs of the student. Rather the plan appears to have been used in a few cases as simply another method of recording a class activity regardless of individual need. Basic information was more uniformly in place in the 1990 plans, and information on goals, objectives and plan details was often of a superior quantity and quality to the 1989 plans. However many gaps and inadequacies continue

to exist, particularly in the data based instructional area. The number of parent/student preferences for the areas of employment, living and social/recreation were low, and endorsement by all key team members was also poor. In many cases only one or two persons had signed the I.T.P., and often the missing signature was the student, the parent or a significant other.

Only 48.8 percent of objectives had been written in such a way as to be observable and measurable, and very little information had been recorded on the frequency and duration of specific programs, nor was information recorded on progress and achievement data. These are critical areas still to be addressed if transition planning is to have real power and effectiveness. These identified deficiencies are to be expected to some degree in the establishment process but their presence demonstrates the continuing staff training and support needs, and raise concerns regarding the implementation and monitoring of student plans over time.

## 4.0 Teacher Evaluations

At the end of 1989 teachers were interviewed regarding the I.T.P. process and its effectiveness and operational problems found to be occurring within their own situations. Teachers involved in the I.T.P. establishment process were very supportive of the concept and positive about their initial attempts to operationalise the system. Seven teachers from special schools and eighteen from high schools were interviewed, and all reported a number of significant advantages to using I.T.Ps. No real disadvantages were registered, although several problems encountered in initiating the system and developing confidence, expertise and workable structures were raised.

### 4.1 Advantages

Teachers in both special schools and units in high schools detailed a number of advantages evidenced by the establishment of the I.T.P. system, and although responses were open ended and very individual, some classification of these responses has been possible. Most commonly noted advantages were found to involve the programming and goal setting area, increased levels of student and parent involvement and increased vocational options for students. These have been summarised in table 8.

Table 8: Teacher Nominated Advantages evidenced by the I.T.P. system

| Advantages of I.T.Ps | Special schools | High schools | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Assists formalised programming & curriculum | 7 | 6 | 13 |
| Increased parent involvement | 3 | 12 | 15 |
| Increased student involvement, decision making | 2 | 9 | 11 |
| Assists in clarifying / achieving goals | - | 8 | 8 |
| Assists in organising priorities | 4 | - | 4 |
| Addresses the individual needs etc | - | 2 | 2 |
| Assists in liaison with other professionals | 1 | - | 1 |
| Tafe courses increase vocational options | - | 3 | 3 |
| Other | - | 2 | 2 |

(Multiple responses possible)

Some commonalities and some major differences were apparent in the responses from special schools and high schools. Staff in special schools reported that the I.T.Ps had assisted in a number of areas. Advantages nominated included:

- Assisted to formalise programming;
- Organised priorities for individual students;
- Was in line with the curriculum for the severely handicapped;
- Justified the program with emphasis upon realistic goals in comparison to primary type programs;
- Justified pressing for after school activities;
- Increased parent involvement and helped break the "perpetual child" thinking;
- Increased student involvement and decision making;
- Increased student self esteem and identity; and
- Assisted in liaison with other professionals.

High school teachers also reported significant benefits among curriculum and programming issues, with several teachers commenting that I.T.Ps. implemented to date have already dramatically affected student directions.

Among the benefits registered were:

- The involvement of more curriculum areas than previously addressed;
- Provision of a more formalised and continuous record of student performance;
- Provision of a realistic long term focus through the development of clear goals for students, parents and teachers, especially in the vocational area;
- Increased chances of actually achieving goals;
- Greater individualisation of instruction;
- Increased parent involvement and movement from parent concern to co-operation;
- Increased student involvement, career awareness and aspirations;
- Increased and expanded vocational options ; and
- The collection of data regarding student needs for utilisation in school programming and the allocation of resources.

### 4.2 Difficulties encountered establishing I.T.Ps

Questions were open ended to allow teachers the opportunity to freely discuss problems without slanting or biasing the responses in any way. Only one teacher reported experiencing no problems or difficulties at all, while most teachers reported encountering several problems of varying intensity. A total of 79 responses were recorded from among the 25 teachers. Often teachers from the same school nominated the same problems, although this was not always the case, since in some instances the teachers were handling different age groups and /or different disability groups, and therefore varying circumstances were found to apply.

Total responses from the twenty five teachers completing the interview/ questionnaire indicated that the major difficulties encountered in establishing the I.T.P. system in the schools had centred around the need to:-

4.2.1. Develop the knowledge, confidence and skills to be able to commence the I.T.P. process and establish workable procedures in the school (31.6%);

4.2.2. Gain appropriate parent involvement and support (26.6%);

4.2.3. Find the necessary time to plan, co-ordinate and implement the team meetings and develop and write up the I.T.Ps (21.5%)

4.2.4. Overcome difficulties in implementing the I.T.Ps once established (6.3%);

4.2.5. Determine relevant Tafe courses (5.1%) and

4.2.6. Find other co:nmunity options for students (5.1%). (See figure 6)

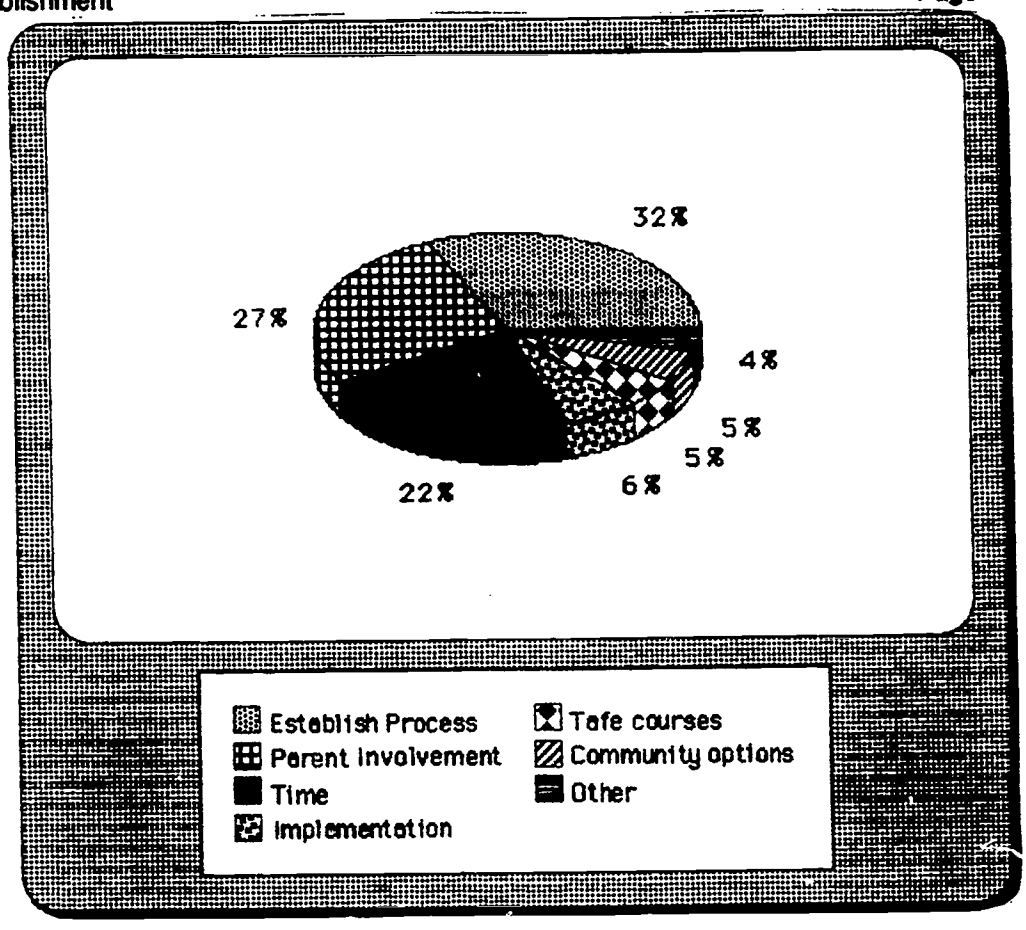


**Figure 6 Difficulties identified in 1989 in establishing I.T.Ps**

### 4.2.1. Difficulties with the I.T.P. Process and Procedures

While the aims and objectives of individual transition planning for students with disabilities appeared clear to teachers, the greatest number of problems related to the teachers' own professional need to develop knowledge, confidence and skills in the process and procedures required.

This was not surprising, given that staff training had been limited to a two day introductory workshop, with later follow up in the schools once the process was underway. Several staff commented that assistance from consultants (Tafe Disability Consultants, Macquarie University U.R.S. staff and Community Agencies) given specifically within the schools was invaluable at this point.

The range of concerns and issues that arose in the schools when attempting to establish the process and procedures have been detailed in table 7. Attempts were in most instances made to overcome these difficulties, particularly where the problems involved establishing, trialling and modifying systems and procedures, developing written guidelines and where necessary learning through practice. The flowchart of the I.T.P. process presented in the discussion section (Figure 7) has greatly assisted in clarification of many issues.

Many teachers indicated that planned structural changes would be made in 1990 to accommodate the extra duties and responsibilities brought about by this process. Planned management particularly in the timetabling area for High Schools appeared to be a major issue for the successful implementation of the program.

Table 9: Difficulties in process and procedures

| Difficulties with the I.T.P. process and procedures | Responses |
|---|---|
| Determining how to do I.T.Ps, interpreting formats, amount of detail, instructions etc | 11 |
| Defining manageable objectives | 2 |
| Skills to involve younger and more severely handicapped students in the process | 2 |
| Communication problems | 2 |
| Writing up I.T.P's- detail, terminology | 2 |
| Determining priorities | 1 |
| Confusion re the target audience for I.T.Ps | 1 |
| Number of I.T.P's required for Tafe, Work experience, curriculum areas | 1 |
| Fluctuating student population | 1 |

Staff felt that continuing training needs centred around:

1) Planning for and restructuring the school and department to effectively develop I.T.Ps;
2) Determination of target curricula areas and priorities;
3) Development of skills in structuring the team meetings to maximise their effectiveness (particularly in the light that many initial I.T.P. meetings ran for one and a half to two hours or more in length); and
3) Clarification of goals for the team meetings.

### 4.2.2. Parent Involvement and Expectations

The second major area of teacher concern was that of parent involvement and expectations. Teachers were very positive towards parental involvement in transition planning, but encountered a number of problems in the implementation of this.

a) Lack of support or interest by a percentage of parents was noted by many teachers. This may be a result of wide spread attitudes in N.S.W. where the functions of the classroom and the home have too often been viewed as dichotomous.
b) Some parents were found to have unrealistic expectations for their children, these being either too high or too low.
c) Some parents had difficulty in thinking about and planning for the future, particularly post school options, and had to be informed about and challenged to consider realistic vocational and residential possibilities.

A great deal of effort was made by staff to contact parents, to provide information and establish good working relationships with parents and schools in partnership. This involved extra time and co-ordination, but overall staff appeared pleased with the results. Difficulties reported by staff have been set out in table 10.

Teachers reported a number of strategies had been attempted to involve parents effectively. These included establishing frequent contact either personally and/or through phone calls; sending written information home; and running parent nights or more informal parent occasions such as barbecues and morning teas at school to provide initial information and to set up times for meetings regarding individual students. On the whole these strategies were found to be very successful and where parents did attend, helped break down the barrier between the school and the home.

Where parents were resistant, they were encouraged to talk with other parents already involved, and when necessary teachers simply worked with the student and hoped the parents might eventually become involved. Concern was expressed by one teacher about the problems of getting parents to make decisions about the future so early, but recognition was given to the point that I.T.P. goals need to be reviewed regularly and changes made based on appropriate data.

Table 10: Difficulties encountered with parent involvement

| Difficulties encountered with Parent involvement and expectations | Responses |
|---|---|
| Lack of support/interest | 9 |
| Challenge of parents planning beyond school years | 4 |
| Developing working relationship school/parent | 3 |
| Unrealistic expectations (too high or low) | 3 |
| Parent language and/or reading problems | 2 |

### 4.2.3. Time Factor

A total of 17 responses (21.5 %) indicated that the extra time required was a significant concern to teachers in implementing the I.T.Ps, since this was additional to already existing teaching duties. The biggest time spender appeared to be the I.T.P. meetings themselves. In many cases teachers had to spend a great deal of time initially providing information and arranging times for parents and significant others to come to the meetings. Times had to be found to cater for busy Tafe consultants, working parents and other community personnel such as mental health workers, psychologists or therapists, in addition to teaching staff and the student. In country areas this also involved significant travel time between Bathurst and Orange.

As indicated, some schools ran parent information sessions such as evenings, more informal barbecues or morning teas, while other schools made individual contact. In addition a number of staff prepared questionnaires which were sent home to parents to assist them in planning for the meeting. I.T.P. meetings themselves were often lengthy, taking in some cases several hours each. Responses are tabled below.

Table 11: Difficulties in time required

| Time Factor | Responses |
|---|---|
| Preparation and running I.T.P. meetings | 10 |
| Team co-ordination - parent, teacher, other agencies | 4 |
| Time to write up the I.T.Ps | 2 |
| Implementing targetted objectives | 1 |

The use of paid release time was the single most utilised strategy in attempting to overcome these time difficulties, although many teachers willingly picked up some extra time commitments out of hours. Several made suggestions that an 8 day week may ease the situation!

Several schools determined to do one I.T.P. a week or as time permitted and stagger the load throughout the term. This meant that not all students could be dealt with in 1989, and plans were being made for accommodating numbers in 1990.

### 5.0 Effects of I.T.Ps on programs

Nineteen teachers (76 %) indicated that the effects of I.T.Ps had been significant and either had already or would in 1990 effectively cause significant changes to programming. These changes reflected a shift in focus for individual students, as well as shifts in the curriculum content being addressed and the methods of instruction utilised. The remaining teachers indicated that the I.T.Ps built upon the direction staff were already working towards, and as such consolidated and strengthened efforts in programming.

## Discussion

Analyses of the 1989 results highlighted a number of areas that required modification and refinement for 1990. These included :

a) Revision of the I.T.P. format,
b) Provision of completed examples of I.T.P. forms to assist teachers in their understanding of the standard requirements and amount of detail necessary,
c) Refinement of the systems and procedures within schools,
d) Revision of the manual with additional guidelines and information for various facets of the program operation, and
e) Continued and additional staff training and inservicing.

Examination of the 1989 data led to the decision at the beginning of 1990 to standardise the I.T.P. format across all regions, to ensure necessary information was documented and to gain maximum consistency and utility from the document. Consequently a standard I.T.P. format was developed for use in all schools and areas in 1990, and completed examples were distributed. The new format (see Appendix 1) consists of :

- a front sheet for essential information, including names of all I.T.P. team members and signatures of those agreeing to the plan,
- a page nominating curriculum areas to be covered within the meeting and documenting student and/or family preferences in the areas of employment, living arrangements and leisure/recreational choices,
- for each nominated curriculum area, specific details of long term goals, short term behavioural objectives, action plans, person responsible, target and completion dates and relevant frequency and duration data,
- provision for individual programming information to be attached where relevant, &
- a review or summary sheet for monitoring and recording progress

The 1990 results have indicated a substantial rise in the amount and quality of information documented, although unfortunately some schools had not received the new format in time for some I.T.P. meetings and essential information was still missing in those cases.

Several problems continue to cause concern. The first relates to the involvement of students themselves in the I.T.P. meetings, as only 35 percent appear to have attended in 1990. This figure may be slightly higher as student's presence may have been inadvertently omitted on some documents. However the fact that so many were not present is of great concern. The involvement of the student has been found to increase motivation and commitment to the program, and to increase personal responsibility. Most students, even those with severe disabilities can be included, where necessary for a small section of the meeting rather than the whole meeting.

A number of time commitments were able to be exchanged or restructured, for example a few schools opted to drop their traditional parent /teacher nights in favour of the I.T.P. briefing and individual meetings, and structural changes were planned for 1990 to cater for a number of the extra duties incurred.

### 4.2.4. Implementation Problems

Problems arising in the implementation of the I.T.Ps themselves accounted for another 6.1 percent of the difficulties nominated by teachers. At this early stage the problems reported involved transport issues, management of the variety of goals and objectives set in different curriculum areas and follow through of agreements by parents.

Two schools experienced difficulties with transportation, particularly because their students' vocational goals required attendance at Tafe Colleges which were difficult to access using public transport. Taxis and private arrangements had to be utilised to transport students to and from Colleges or work experience sites and these were not always successful.

Two teachers reported difficulty managing the number and variety of goals agreed to in the I.T.P. because of the variety and spread in the curriculum areas being covered.

Another area of difficulty for one teacher and an area which many other teachers have expressed concern is the extent to which all parties involved in the planning will be committed to following through the specific plan agreed to in the I.T.P. The failure to follow through with the plan noted in this instance emanated from the parents, and resulted in a high level of frustration among teaching staff who had spent the time and effort required in the planning and negotiating phases.

### 4.2.5. Difficulties determining Tafe courses

Tafe Disability Consultants attended a number of I.T.P. meetings to assist in planning relevant Tafe courses as part of the vocational options for students. Teachers throughout the year had commented on their lack of information about what suitable Tafe courses could be accessed, although only two teachers in the evaluation stage reported difficulties in determining relevant and realistic Tafe course offerings. These difficulties primarily related to a lack of labour market information, coupled with concern about placing students in courses that may not lead to appropriate jobs. Other problems nominated related to lack of knowledge regarding what Tafe could provide, and changes to the number of students who could be serviced under the program.

### 4.2.6. Community Options

Several responses indicated that lack of information about, liaison with or support from community agencies and services was significant. Furthermore the lack of community options, particularly for students with more severe disabilities was a genuine problem when attempting to plan transition for students. While the number of teachers volunteering these responses was not high, these problems are ones which have been raised regularly by teachers throughout the short course of the project, and are also ones the communities themselves are aware of and wish to address.

### Other Problems

One teacher running a special class in a regular high school expressed feelings of isolation when attempting to introduce the program single-handedly in the school and another teacher felt the I.T.P. form was inappropriate for some students, particularly where issues in advocacy and other areas were not considered relevant.

A number of I.T.Ps had been signed by only one or two of the participants, and endorsement by all relevant team members has so far only reached 32 percent for 1990. The signatures do not represent a contract, but an agreement by all concerned to carry out the plan as arranged. Re-negotiation and modification can take place as necessary. The reason for this low endorsement rate is unclear.

Perhaps the most disturbing finding has been the low percentage of objectives written in behavioural and observable terms. Unless the objectives are clear, precise, observable and measurable, team members may all interpret the objectives differently, the persons responsible for implementation may fail to address the real needs adequately, and there will be no way of clearly evaluating how well the objectives were in fact achieved, and where modification may be necessary to better achieve the desired results. The lack of behaviourally stated objectives and the scarcity of implementation, review and evaluation data on those I.T.Ps begun in 1989 and continued in 1990 raises real concerns about the continuing need for staff assistance and on site inservicing to ensure plans are not only drawn up, but are implemented faithfully and credibly.

Teams are currently reviewing the 1990 I.T.Ps, and planning for 1991 is taking place. Informal reports from cluster co-ordinators and teachers involved in this process are extremely positive and indicate that implementation and evaluation is beginning to yield real rewards for those involved. Continued monitoring of this process will be essential however to ensure that the system is efficient and effective.

Special schools following the curriculum for the severely handicapped have experienced difficulty in successfully and efficiently integrating the I.T.Ps with the activity catalogue and individual educational plans developed for students. This problem is presently being investigated.

One possible solution is about to be trialled in Orange in 1991. There the school has determined to begin with the I.T.P. process, identifying at the meeting key priority curriculum areas, after which activity catalogues within these designated areas will be sent home for parents to identify more specific activities required. Teachers will then program in the relevant areas, and attach their programs to the I.T.P. as a comprehensive document.

## I.T.P. Process Flowchart

The results from 1989 and 1990 have highlighted the importance of a system which apportions correct weightings to the various phases of the individual transition planning process. Results from the teacher interviews and the first review necessitated the development of a flowchart which identified the critical components of the system. The second review confirmed this need and indicated areas for modification and improvement. The resulting flowchart depicts the four major phases of the I.T.P. process, including

1) the planning stage, where preparation by all team members is essential
2) the I.T.P. meeting phase at which point the individual's plan is developed and endorsed
3) the implementation phase where constant monitoring, review, and modification of the agreed plan takes place on a regular basis, and lastly
4) the handover or transition phase where handover to other agencies, parents, advocates and/or the individual him/herself occurs, thereby enhancing and facilitating the desired outcomes of increased community independence in the post school environment (Figure 7).

The initial rush to get I.T.Ps written and under way, particularly when access to external programs was at stake meant that sometimes the necessary planning was truncated. This caused many problems, particularly when parents, students and/or service providers were not adequately prepared. These problems have been avoided where more careful and planned preparation has occurred. Critical components of the planning time include preparation of parents and students to effectively participate in the I.T.P. meetings, and liaison with other key personnel such as Tafe consultants and job coaches.

Clarification of the purpose and the desired outcome of the meeting to all concerned, identification and preparation for the various roles participants fulfil within the meeting (including those of chairperson and scribe), and adherence to good meeting procedures have been important issues. These skills and issues have not previously been part of teachers' duty statements, and additional inservicing has been and continues to be required in these areas.

The importance of implementation and handover phases is recognised, but at this stage most effort has naturally gone into the earlier phases of planning and holding meetings to establish individual plans. Evaluation of these later phases of implementaion and handover is critical and it is the achievements at this point which, in many ways, will determine the feasibility and ultimate success of the transition education project.

Many new links have been forged between the schools and the post school service providers, and the establishment of local community transition teams has had an impact upon the number of services to which students with disabilities in transition now have access. However maintaining these contacts and working together to establish better cooperative ventures also takes time and commitment, and represents a further non teaching role added to the already numerous responsibilities for teachers of students in transition.

One of the most critical facets of the whole establishment process has been the preparation and continuing inservicing of staff involved in the pilot. Naturally as the project has developed more efficient and effective methods have been discovered and systems have been streamlined to assist in administrative and other duties involved. New information and even new and extended service provisions have continued to open up for students in the transition phase, including the establishment of job coaches within the pilot areas to enhance student employment options.

However the need for on-going staff training and support in the field has been and will continue to be critical. This is an area that teachers themselves have identified as essential for success not only in this project but also for their professional development. It should be remembered that many teachers have had to develop new skills previously not required in the classroom, such as individual as opposed to group planning and developing new skills in running meetings and negotiating.

Priority areas for inservicing in addition to those already identified by teachers include development of skills in practical and functional assessment across a number of curriculum areas; the development of appropriate and effective curriculum in key areas; training in writing goals and objectives in observable and behavioural terms; developing skills in individual planning as distinct from individual instruction; administration, timetabling and programming skills to accommodate student needs; refinement of meeting and negotiation procedures; ongoing training and support in I.T.P. implementation and evaluation procedures and skills; implementation and evaluation of data based training skills; and training in student follow up and follow along procedures.

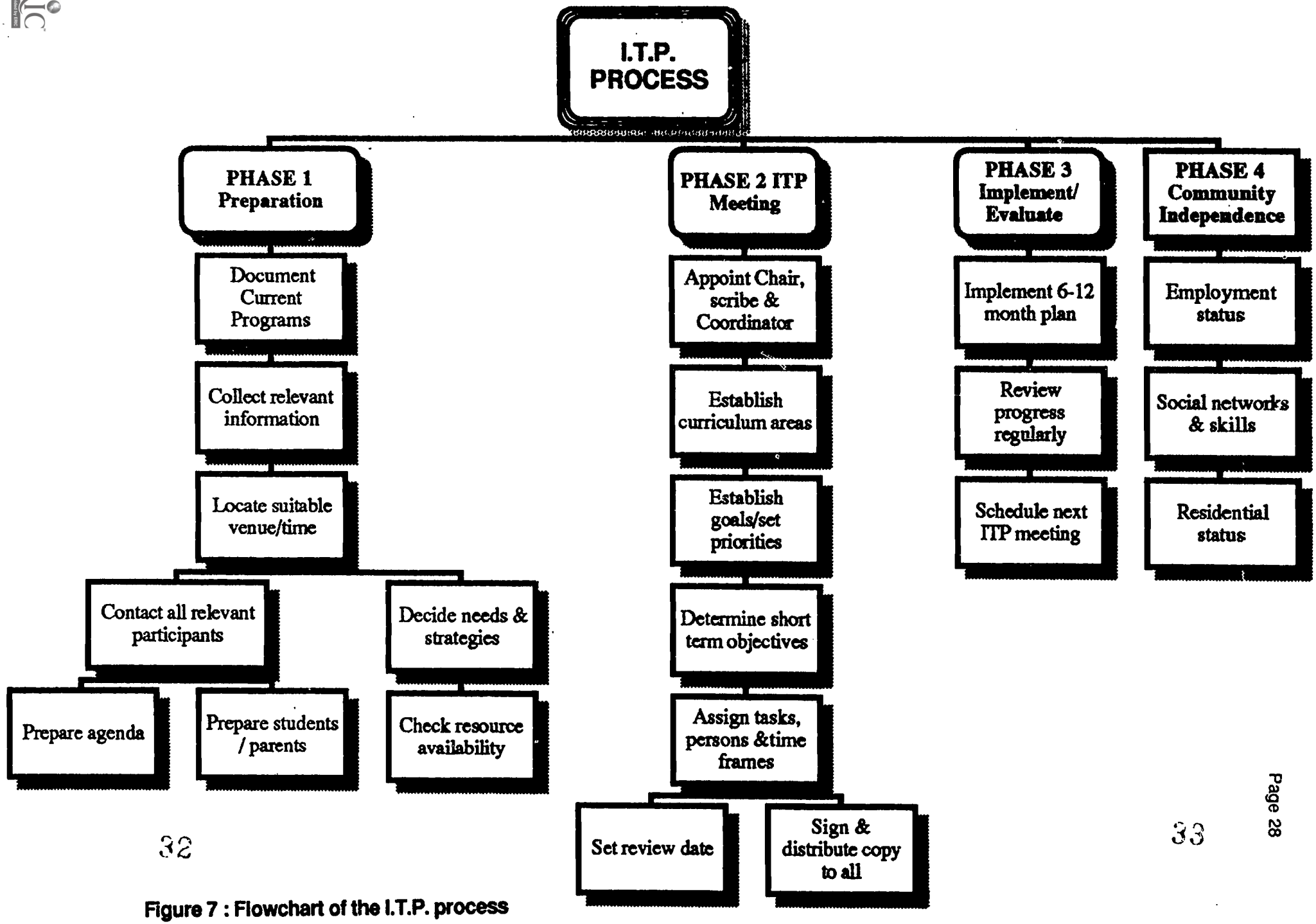








**Figure 7 : Flowchart of the I.T.P. process**

The existence of the cluster co-ordinator has been critical, and the number of duties in administration, staff support and training, liaison with other service agencies and contact with the local community team has made this position a lynchpin of the operation. The development from a part time - 2 days per week position to a full time position is in all probability essential for success.

The dynamic nature of the project has meant that ongoing changes and developments occur frequently, guidelines need continual update and modification, and the ability for head office personnel to communicate quickly and effectively with staff in the field is critical. The cluster co-ordinators have played an invaluable and indispensable role in this, through assisting in communication exchange, taking on increasing administrative responsibilities and through the inservicing of field staff within their own locations, including attendance and assistance with individual transition plan meetings and involvement with the local community team.

A continuing problem for these co-ordinators has however been lack of an adequate administrative base and support. Usually located in schools where they share already overcrowded offices with other personnel, the co-ordinators have lacked basic requirements to complete their job, such as appropriate access to telephone lines (for both incoming and out-going calls), photocopying, typing and clerical support. In some cases, co-ordinators and job coaches have lacked an actual base address, desks and filing cabinets. Communication problems and delays in essential information reaching school personnel, parents and community members in sufficient time have occurred because of these difficulties, and some complaints have been received on these grounds.

# Conclusion

The introduction and establishment of the transition project for students with disabilities in selected N.S.W. Department of Education schools has effectively and positively changed the focus of programs being delivered in these classrooms and in the community.

Programs for students with disabilities in transition are now based on student needs as developed through planning meetings involving parents, students, teachers and other relevant school and community personnel. This represents a substantial change from curriculum driven programs delivered to groups of students regardless of current ability level, interest or need to a needs based model of service delivery.

Although some difficulties were encountered in establishing the systems and procedures and ensuring that teachers were adequately trained and supported for such a major undertaking, the results indicate that on the whole teachers, students and parents have accepted the challenge and significant numbers of individual transition plans have been prepared and are in the process of being implemented. Moreover increasingly positive feedback is being received on the effects of this process, while reviews and planning currently underway for 1991 have been reported as extremely rewarding and practical for all parties concerned.

Many of the difficulties which had been encountered are being addressed, as the systems model evaluation has enabled feedback to be given directly and immediately to the relevant parties at the Head Office, regional and/or school level so that problem solving stategies can be explored and implemented.

However the successful establishment and implementation of the individual planning process within the school system relies heavily upon the ability of the Department to support and train staff in essential areas such as the writing of clear and precise objectives. It is for this reason that two major areas requiring attention concern cluster co-ordinators and the continuing inservice needs of staff.

Naturally a new and challenging project can generate its own momentum and enthusiasm, and while the extra demands on cluster co-ordinators, teachers, teaching staff and others such as T.A.F.E. disability consultants generally have been enormous, the commitment and dedication of these people has enabled much to be accomplished. The challenge for the transition project now is to ensure that methods and procedures are suitably streamlined and necessary support is available so that individuals are not unduly burdened by unrealistic workloads.

This is particularly true for the cluster co-ordinators. With expansion of the program and regionalisation these positions have become increasingly important and should in all probability be full time positions. They certainly require an adequate base with administrative services and clerical support available. The role encompasses liaison with the community, the community transition team and with the various local T.A.F.E. Colleges and vocational agencies, as well as provision of training and support for teachers within the local schools. All of these functions have proved essential.

The importance of continued staff inservicing and training is of paramount importance. Not only is training required because of further expansion in 1990-1991 to include schools in the additional 3 Department of School Education regions of the state not previously included, but numerous inservice needs have also been identified by those already involved in the transition project.

The establishment and evaluation of the I.T.P. process has assisted in a clearer understanding and identification of staff professional development needs within the schools. The ability of staff to implement many of the individual transition plans that have been prepared will no doubt be affected by the ability of the department to support teachers and meet their training needs.

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# APPENDIX 1

## Individual Transition Plan Format

# INDIVIDUAL TRANSITION PLAN
## (Cover Sheet)

CLUSTER _____ SCHOOL _____

STUDENT'S NAME _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____ CURRENT CLASS PLACEMENT _____

ADDRESS _____ EXPECTED YEAR OF LEAVING _____

TELEPHONE _____

PLAN CO-ORDINATOR _____ TELEPHONE _____

| TEAM MEMBERS | CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER | RELATIONSHIP TO STUDENT/AGENCY |
|---|---|---|
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| | | |
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| | | |

AGREEMENT TO PLAN:

| MEETING DATE | CO-ORDINATOR'S SIGNATURE | STUDENT'S SIGNATURE | PARENT'S SIGNATURE | OTHER'S SIGNATURE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| REVIEW DATE | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

STUDENT'S NAME _____

DATE OF MEETING _____ DATE OF NEXT MEETING (REVIEW) _____



CURRICULUM AREAS

(Circle preferred areas for action during this review period).

1. **Continuing Education**
2. **Vocational Training**
3. **Advocacy/Citizenship/Legal**
4. **Financial/Income**
5. **Leisure/Recreation**
6. **Living Arrangements/Skills**
7. **Health/Community Services**
8. **Personal Management/Social Skills**
9. **Transportation/Mobility**

- **Behaviour Management**
- **Communication**

- These programs need to be incorporated in all curriculum areas.

What does the student and/or family want for the student in these areas when he/she leaves school?

Employment _____

Where and how the student is going to live _____

What they want to do for social and leisure activities _____

# INDIVIDUAL TRANSITION PLAN

NAME _____ DATE OF PLAN _____ REVIEW DATE _____

CURRICULUM AREA TO BE ADDRESSED _____ CURRENT CLASS PLACEMENT _____

| LONG TERM GOALS | SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES | ACTION REQUIRED | PERSONS/ AGENCY RESPONSIBLE | TARGET DATES | FREQUENCY/ DURATION | DATES ACTION COMP. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |

## SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES

| OBJECTIVES | ACHIEVED (YES/NO/ PARTIALLY) DATE | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|
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# APPENDIX 2

# I.T.P.
# Documentation Checklist

# I.T.P. CHECKLIST

STUDENT NAME :_____ SCHOOL_____

Disability: _____

| Standards / Date | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The student has a written individual transition plan | | | | |
| 2. The I.T.P.has been developed, implemented and reviewed by a team. | | | | |
| 3. The team includes :<br>3.1 the student<br>3.2 a parent or caregiver<br>3.3 the teacher<br>3.4 an advocate<br>3.5 a service provider (specify) _____<br>3.6 others (specify) _____ | | | | |
| 4. There is clear designation of the ITP co-ordinator | | | | |
| 5. Date of ITP meeting and/or plan finalised | | | | |
| 6. Date, time and venue for next review meeting set | | | | |
| 7. Agreement to plan (signatures) by **all** team members | | | | |
| 8. Clear designation of curriculum areas to be addressed:<br>8.1. Continuing Education<br>8.2. Vocational Training and Placement<br>8.3. Advocacy, Citizenship and Legal Services<br>8.4. Finance and Money Management<br>8.5. Leisure and Recreation<br>8.6. Living Arrangements and Skills<br>8.7. Health and Community Resources and Services<br>8.8. Personal Management and Social Skills<br>8.9. Transportation and Mobility | | | | |
| 9. Student/family preferences recorded in areas of employment, residence and recreation/ leisure | | | | |
| 10. Long term goals for each curriculum area in place | | | | |
| 11. Short term objectives to achieve goals recorded | | | | |
| 12. Plan of action to achieve objectives recorded | | | | |
| 13. Person / agency nominated as responsible for implementation of tasks or strategies recorded | | | | |
| 14. Target dates for implementation and review set | | | | |
| 15. Duration/frequency data recorded where applicable | | | | |
| 16. Record and dates of progress completed | | | | |
| 17. Summary of program achievements in terms of objectives met / not met (including reasons) | | | | |
| 18. The I.T.P.is written in language that is understandable to the student, parent and service providers | | | | |
| 19. All objectives written in observable, behavioural terms | | | | |
| 20. Clear documentation of collaboration between special education and adult service agencies (e.g. TAFE) present | | | | |
| 21. The student received a copy of his/her I.T.P. | | | | |

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