



# Transition Task Force Recommendations

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## Transition – Early Intervention to Preschool

### Transition Supports & Timeline Currently in Place For All Students (Regular & Special Ed.)

1. **January** – New regular education students register for enrollment in the Acton Public School Preschool.
2. **March** – The preschool arranges orientations for all children attending in the fall.
3. **July** – The APS Preschool sends a welcome letter to all enrolled families.
4. **September** – The Preschool offers an orientation for all students and their families. In addition, the Preschool PTO sponsors a picnic at one of the local Acton playgrounds to provide an opportunity for parents and children to connect with one another early in the school year.

### Transition Supports Currently in Place For Students With Special Needs

1. **At 2.6 years of age** – Early Intervention refers students receiving services to the Acton Public Schools. The Early Childhood Coordinator for the Acton Public Schools then schedules a transition meeting with parents/guardians. At this meeting the district explains the Initial Evaluation process to families.
2. **Prior to 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday** – The Initial Evaluation takes place prior to your child’s third birthday. At the Initial Evaluation meeting the Team (including parents) will determine whether or not your child is eligible to receive special education services in the Acton Public School system. If eligible, together the Team will write an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and determine an appropriate placement for your child.
3. **On 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday** – If your child is found eligible for special education services, those services will begin on your child’s third birthday. As children turn three throughout the school year they will move into Preschool. If attending the APS Preschool, an orientation visit will always occur prior to the child’s first day.

### Task Force Recommendations to Improve This Transition for Families

1. **At initial evaluation meeting** – Provide each family with an information packet about their child’s disability.
2. **Prior to 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday** – Provide each family with an organization chart illustrating “chain of command” within special education and the relationship between special education staff and regular education staff along with an explanation of whom to contact for what. This communication chart should include all specialists’ names, email addresses and phone numbers.
3. **Prior to 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday** – Send a letter to families from Pupil Services confirming special education services for the child, the name of the child’s SpEd teacher, the name of the child’s assistant and service providers (if applicable), and all related contact information.
4. **4-8 weeks after start of Preschool** – Have the preschool offer an optional, informal parent-teacher meeting for each new child 4-8 weeks into the school year to check-in with families, share additional information about programs, and evaluate the child’s transition into the public school system.

## Transition – Preschool to Kindergarten

### Transition Supports & Timeline Currently in Place for All Students (Regular & Special Ed.)

1. **January** – The district schedules its annual Kindergarten transition meeting/information session. At this meeting district staff describe the Kindergarten lottery system and provide a schedule of all Elementary school tours. In addition, staff share information about Community Education and provide a general description of special education services and supports. Note: Individual special education information will not be shared due to confidentiality.
2. **March** – Kindergarten registration is completed.
3. **May** – School lotteries are held and Kindergarten placement is determined. The school district sends families a letter confirming the Elementary school their child will attend in the fall.
4. **August** – The Kindergarten teacher will send a personalized letter home to welcome each child to Kindergarten. The elementary schools will schedule their Kindergarten orientations.
5. **September** – Each elementary school holds a Kindergarten orientation and/or Back to School Night for all students. In addition, Kindergarten screenings are scheduled and conducted during this month.

### Transition Supports Currently in Place for Students with Special Needs

1. **In December** – The Coordinator of Early Childhood Services arranges a Kindergarten Transition Meeting/Information Session for all parents of children with special needs whose children are age eligible to enter Kindergarten. The Early Childhood Coordinator, Elementary Special Education Chairperson and at least one of the Elementary School Principals attend this meeting. They discuss the enrollment process and describe the special education programs and services available in the district's elementary schools. This meeting precedes the broader, district-wide meeting about Kindergarten registration, which takes place in January of each year.
2. **Prior to Kindergarten registration in March** – Individual Team meetings are held for each student to determine the student's educational needs, write an IEP and determine Kindergarten placement. The decision to include Elementary special education staff is currently made on an individual basis. **Note:** *All families must register their children for Kindergarten in March.* (See the timeline above.)
3. **Close to the end of the school year** – Preschool staff will provide information to Elementary specialists and clinicians who will be working with your child the following year. In addition, parents of resource room students are invited to visit the Elementary program and meet resource room staff during the spring.
4. **In August or September** – Each elementary school holds a Kindergarten orientation and/or Back to School Night for all students, including both regular and special education students.
5. **September** – The school district conducts Kindergarten screening of each child.

### **Task Force Recommendations to Improve This Transition for Families**

1. **In December** – Provide families with an information packet regarding each elementary school and what special education services are available at each school.
2. **In August** – Send a letter to families from Pupil Services confirming special education services for the child, the name of the child’s SpEd liaison, the name of the child’s assistant and service providers (if applicable), the name of the child’s teacher and all related contact information.
3. **In August** – Provide families with a special education handbook. Provide information about screening days, such as information regarding whether children with special needs will be screened in areas of known disability, information regarding what to do if school is delayed on a screening day, what to send to school on a screening day, e.g., drink, snack, and contact information for educators performing screening tests.
4. **In August** – Pair each new kindergarten parent with a 2<sup>nd</sup> year parent to help each new family navigate the transition into elementary school.
5. **In September** – Host a Back to School night for Special Education families, including an opportunity for parents to meet all the specialists working with their child, an explanation of the services each specialist provides, a tour of the specialists’ rooms, an organization chart illustrating “chain of command” within special education and the relationship between special education staff and regular education staff along with an explanation of whom to contact for what. This communication chart should include all specialists’ names and phone numbers.

## Transition – Elementary to Junior High School

### Transition Supports & Timeline Currently in Place for All Students (Regular & Special Ed.)

1. **RJ Grey website** – has an extensive and informative website. Slides/handouts from select parent meetings are available, along with a wealth of additional information.
  - a. The APS and AB Regional School website is: <http://ab.mec.edu/>.
  - b. Click on the *RJ Grey JHS* link. Click on the *Family Resources* link then *6<sup>th</sup> Grade Transition* link for specific information related to transitions.
2. **In January, February, March, and April** – RJ Grey Administration and Faculty hold Parent Forums for current 6<sup>th</sup> grade parents to discuss such topics as Adolescent Development, Haggling Over Homework, School Discipline, and Stress Management.
3. **In March** – The RJ Grey PTSO presents two Parent Forums in which RJ Grey parents from all six elementary schools in the district discuss their children’s experience transitioning into R. J. Grey Junior High School.
4. **In April** – RJ Grey Administrators and current junior high school students visit the 6<sup>th</sup> graders at each elementary school and distribute 7<sup>th</sup> Grade registration forms.
5. **In April** – RJ Grey Administrators and Faculty present a Parent Information meeting for all 6<sup>th</sup> grade parents to discuss such topics as curriculum, scheduling, and registration.
6. **In April** – RJ Grey Administrators offer two open houses for 6<sup>th</sup> grade parents where administrators answer questions and current students provide school tours.
7. **In May** – Completed registration forms are due back to the transitioning students 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers.
8. **In June** – there is a 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Social and Parent Information Session held at RJ Grey Junior High School.
9. **In August** – the weekend before school begins the school posts student Team placements by ID number.
10. **In September** – 7<sup>th</sup> Graders start on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of school while the 8<sup>th</sup> Graders start on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of school. This allows the 7<sup>th</sup> graders to have the building to themselves on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of school as they find their way from class to class.

### Existing Transition Supports for Special Education Students

1. **In February** – Elementary Special Educators from Acton and Boxborough meet with Junior High Special Educators to discuss the needs of the incoming 7<sup>th</sup> graders. RJ Grey Special Educators use this time to describe junior high services delivery, how the schedule interfaces with services, and helpful hints regarding the curriculum and self-advocacy. Through selected observation and discussions, dialogue between junior high and elementary staff and clinicians occur.
2. **January through June** – Individual transition meetings occur with parents of special education students, the elementary school Team, and *sometimes* representative(s) from the junior high school to revise the student’s IEP for junior high school. The decision to include Junior High staff is currently made on an individual basis.

3. **In March** – The parents of 6<sup>th</sup> grade special education students meet with Junior High School Administrators and Special Educators to discuss the special education programs available at RJ Grey Junior High School.
4. **In August** – *Some* 6<sup>th</sup> grade special education students are invited to spend two days at RJ Grey Junior High School to ease the transition to junior high prior to the beginning of the school year. This program is run by special education staff and allows students to spend two days at RJ Grey Junior High School prior to the beginning of the school year to learn how to use a combination lock, follow a mock schedule to individual classrooms, and promote understanding and independence. Pupil Services believes that only a small number of students require this opportunity in order to make a smooth transition to Junior High School. However, you are welcome to bring your children to R. J. Grey on your own to help them become familiar with the school at any time. Just contact the main office to let them know when you would like to come visit the school.

### **Recommendations to Improve This Transition for Families**

1. **January through June** – Special educators in the elementary schools need to be better informed about the programs and services available to their students at the junior high school. In many instances it is left up to the parents to seek out this information. To improve this process either the special educators running team meetings for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students should be fully versed in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade programs and services available at R. J. Grey Junior High School or a Junior High Special Education representative should attend the Team meeting.
2. **In August** – Send a letter to families from Pupil Services confirming special education services for the child, the name of the child’s SpEd liaison, the name of the child’s assistant and service providers (if applicable), the name of the child’s regular education teachers and all related contact information. Also include an organization chart illustrating “chain of command” within special education and the relationship between special education staff and regular education staff along with an explanation of whom to contact for what. This communication chart should include all specialists’ names and phone numbers.
3. **In August** – *All* 6<sup>th</sup> grade special education students should be invited to spend one or two days at RJ Grey Junior High School to ease the transition to junior high school prior to the beginning of the school year. Parents should be a critical part of the decision about whether or not their child would benefit from this service. Currently, most families don’t even know this opportunity exists.

## Transition – Junior High School to High School

### Transition Supports & Timeline Currently in Place for All Students (Regular & Special Ed.)

1. **March** – The high school has an 8<sup>th</sup> grade Parent’s Night to introduce parents to the high school, provide information about programming and answer any questions families may have.
2. **Summer** – The high school sends out a letter inviting all incoming freshman to an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student orientation session in August.
3. **August** – The high school holds an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student orientation for all incoming freshman. The school shares its expectations for students, provides each student a copy of their class schedule for the fall, answers questions and provides tours of the building.

### Existing Transition Supports for Special Education Students

1. **January through June** – Individual transition meetings occur with parents of special education students, the junior high school Team, and *sometimes* representative(s) from the high school to revise the student’s IEP for high school. The decision to include high school staff is currently made on an individual basis.
2. **February** – R.J. Grey Special Educators, specialists and clinicians meet with ABRHS staff to discuss the needs of the incoming 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The ABRHS staff uses this time to describe high school services delivery, how the schedule interfaces with services, and helpful hints regarding the curriculum and self-advocacy. Through selected observation and discussions, dialogue between high school and junior high staff and clinicians occur.
3. **In May** – There is a meeting for parents at the high school run by the lead Special Educator to discuss the special education services available at the high school. This meeting involves a general discussion of services followed by questions and answers.
4. **In August** – *Some* 8<sup>th</sup> grade special education students are invited to spend one or two days at ABRHS to ease the transition into high school prior to the beginning of the school year. This program is run by special education staff and allows students to spend a day or two at the high school prior to the beginning of the school year to learn their way around the building and promote understanding and independence. Pupil Services believes that only a small number of students require this opportunity in order to make a smooth transition to high school. However, you are welcome to bring your children to ABRHS on your own to help them become familiar with the school at any time. Just contact the main office to let them know when you would like to come visit the school.

### Recommendations to Improve This Transition for Families

1. **January through June** – Special educators in the junior high school need to be better informed about the programs and services available to their students at the high school. In many instances it is left up to the parents to seek out this information. To improve this process the special educators running team meetings for 8<sup>th</sup> grade

students either should be fully versed in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade programs and services available at the high school or a high school special education representative should attend each child's IEP Development meeting.

2. **March** – It would be helpful to move the May meeting with high school special educators up to March and have as many special educators from the high school attend this meeting as possible to discuss the special education programs available at the High School.
3. **March** – This meeting should include a tour of the school, an explanation of all of the resources available to students including the Academic Support Center, peer counseling, the Counseling Office, all Learning Centers and Resource Rooms, as well as specialty therapists and their rooms, and an organization chart illustrating “chain of command” within special education and the relationship between special education staff and regular education staff along with an explanation of whom to contact for what. This communication chart should include all specialists' names and phone numbers.
4. **August** – During the summer send a letter to families from Pupil Services confirming special education services for the child, the name of the child's SpEd liaison, the name of the child's assistant and service providers (if applicable), the name of the child's teachers and all related contact information.
5. **August** – All 8<sup>th</sup> grade special education students should be invited to spend a day or two at the High School to familiarize themselves with the building, meet staff, and ease the transition to high school prior to the beginning of school. Parents should be a critical part of the decision about whether or not their child would benefit from this service. Currently, most families don't even know this opportunity exists.