



Working together: Moving through secondary school



This resource supports students with disability and their parents and caregivers with the transition from primary to secondary school and post-school pathways.

About this resource

This resource was funded by the Australian Government. It was designed by students and young people with disability and their parents and caregivers, with help from Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) and Inclusion Australia.

The Australian Government acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, water, and community. We pay our respects to them and their Elders past and present. We pay our respects to the continuing cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Note on language

This resource uses person-first language (e.g., 'student with disability'). But this approach does not suit everyone, and many people prefer identity-first language (e.g., 'disabled student').

It is up to each person how they choose to identify. We encourage you to ask people what they prefer. We also acknowledge the deep history behind all these terms.

This resource is for students with disability and their parents and caregivers. When we say 'your child' this means any child you are responsible for.

People use '**reasonable adjustments**', 'adjustments', 'supports' or 'accommodations' to mean the same thing. We use these phrases interchangeably in this resource. '**Reasonable adjustments**' is used in the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

Additional resources

This is one part of a group of resources. You can find them on the [Australian Government Department of Education website](#) or by scanning the QR code.



Scan the QR code

This resource is also available in Easy Read, Auslan, and several other languages. You can access those versions on the [Australian Government Department of Education website](#) or by scanning the QR code.

Content note: *This toolkit mentions feeling nervous and having trouble at school. For support you can call Lifeline on **13 11 14** or text **0477 13 11 14**. You can also contact Kids Helpline on **1800 55 1800**.*



Who this toolkit is for

This toolkit is for:

- secondary students with disability
- parents and caregivers of secondary students with disability.

What this toolkit is for

This toolkit is to help you:

- understand your rights under the ***Disability Standards for Education 2005***
- work together with each other and your school to support your education.

What this toolkit covers

This toolkit is about working together from the start to the end of secondary school. It covers:

- [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(p. 1\)](#)
- [Moving through secondary school \(p. 2\)](#)
- [Starting secondary school \(p. 5\)](#)
- [Making decisions during school \(p. 7\)](#)
- [Leaving school \(p. 9\)](#)

Disability Standards for Education 2005 (DSE)

What are the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (DSE)?

The DSE are **standards** for the education of students with disability.

Standards

Standards are what we use to measure how well something is done. Standards help us make sure things work well.

The DSE

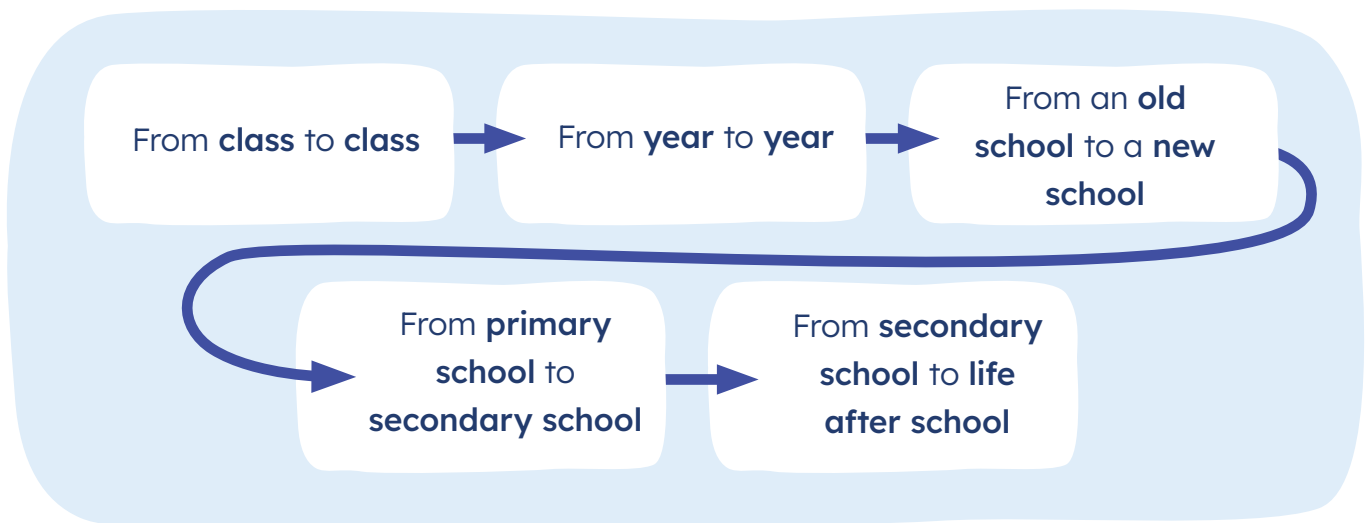
The DSE explain two important things:

1. The rights of students with disability.
2. What schools have to do to help students with disability to get their rights.

+ Moving through secondary school

Starting or moving through secondary school is a big **transition**. A transition is when you move from one thing to another. There are lots of transitions at school.

For example:



Everyone goes through these transitions in a different way.

You're always:

- growing
- learning
- finding out what you can do and what your strengths are.

Remember that secondary school is a journey

Your secondary school journey starts when you leave primary school. It ends when you finish school.

No matter where you are in your journey, your school has to:

- support you to join in and learn
- put steps in place to stop you from being mistreated.



Reasonable adjustments

Your school must provide the support you need to join in and learn. This means they have to make changes that help you join in with your peers.

These changes are called **reasonable adjustments**.

What are reasonable adjustments?

Schools might call reasonable adjustments by another name – e.g., accommodations or supports. They are changes that help you join in with your peers. They can be:

- people (e.g., support staff)
- materials (e.g., screen reader)
- changes in how things are done (e.g., rest breaks during an exam).

You might set up supports:

- when the school year starts
- when things change in your life
- when things change at school.

You can learn more about:

- your rights in our video [A day at school](#)
- how you should be treated at school in our [Respect at school](#) resource.





You should work together

As a **parent or caregiver**, you should work together:

- with your child to understand their needs and choices
- with the school to organise and monitor supports.

It might only take one email or meeting with the school to do this.
It might take a few meetings.

As a **student**, you should have the opportunity to:

- share your thoughts, opinions and ideas
- go to meetings about your education if you want to
- try things out and change them if needed.

Do you need support in these areas?



Physical environment?

E.g., the classroom, buildings or playground



Schoolwork?

E.g., classroom materials, activities, assignments or exams



Communication?

E.g., written, verbal, visual or auditory



Social and emotional?

E.g., how you feel or interact with other people or places

It's a good idea for students and parents or caregivers to think about this question together. Then you can bring your ideas with you when you meet with the school.

You can learn more about supports at school in our [Explaining the Disability Standards for Education](#) resource.

Starting secondary school

The transition to secondary school can be a big one. It's exciting to start on this journey. There are also lots of changes and things to get ready for.

As a student, you will:

- build on what you've learned in primary school
- meet new teachers and classmates
- get to know new buildings and grounds
- take more subjects
- have assignments and exams.

You might feel nervous about these changes. This is very normal. It can take time to adjust.



Tips for working together

For students

- *Be open about how you feel.* Don't hide it if you're worried or have questions.
- *Let people know if something isn't working for you.* This could be your schoolwork, your classroom setup or something else. Your school should support you to join in. It's okay to ask them to change things.
- *Share what's happening at school with an adult you trust.* This way your trusted adult knows what's going on. It helps them to help you.

For parents and caregivers

- *Talk about how the move from primary to secondary school works and what will happen.*
- *Learn about the school and what your child will do.* This way you can answer your child's questions.
- *Start the conversation early.* You can take your child to the school before the move. They can get to know the buildings and teachers.
- *Explain any supports or adjustments.* Help your child understand how the school will be accessible. Let them know what to expect.
- *Set goals with your child.* What do they want? What's their vision for their time at school? Keep these goals in mind when you meet with the school.
- *Encourage your child to share what's happening at school.* Check that your child feels supported. You may like to ask questions if you have concerns, or check on your child's progress.
- *Let the school know if things aren't working.* Ask your child what they want the school to know.
- You can learn more about:
 - making the move to secondary school in our [Milestones and transitions](#) resource
 - including your child in these conversations in our [Advocating with and for your child: Primary school](#) resource.

Making decisions during school

During school you'll have lots of decisions to make.

This can start as early as Year 7. You may get to choose which subjects you will take.

These decisions are like coming to a fork in the road. You choose a path or option to follow. This path will lead you to where you want to go. You should not be pushed down someone else's choice of path. You have the right to the full range of options.

After school ends, you might choose to move to:



You can combine these options. You can also change your mind and swap between them.

No matter what you decide, you should:

- be included by the people around you
- have the same choices as your peers.



You can use these questions to start thinking about your choices:

- What subjects do you enjoy?
- What are your strengths and interests?
- What jobs or careers interest you?
- What types of learning interest you?
- What steps do you need to take to follow these interests?
- What does each step involve?
- Is there anything you need to plan for early on?
- Have you done work experience yet? If so, what did you learn about yourself?

You may need to do some research as you go.





Tips for working together



For students

- *You are capable of making these choices.* Think about what you want to happen.
- *Reach out for help or advice if you need it.* You can ask for help from a trusted person. This might be a friend, parent, caregiver or teacher.
- *It's okay to be unsure or overwhelmed.* Don't try to hide it – tell people and discuss it with them.



For parents and caregivers

- *Let your child decide what they want to do.* Don't make choices for them.
- *Support your child if they ask for help.* You can share your opinions or help them plan. You can explain the different paths and where they lead.
- *Don't be afraid to offer help.* You don't always need to wait for your child to ask.

Leaving school

There are many different paths you can take after school. This toolkit focuses on education pathways.

Leaving school is a big transition.

You will:

- have a big change in your routine
- learn and study in different ways
- get to know new buildings and grounds
- have a different relationship with your teachers.

This move might also come with a change in where you live.



Tips for working together

First, check out our tips for:

- [Starting secondary school \(p. 5\)](#)
- [Making decisions during school \(p. 7\)](#)



For students

- *You're allowed to take more control.* You're also allowed to have support. You don't have to do things alone.
- You can learn more about making the move in our [Disability Standards for Education in practice: Action plan](#) resource.



For parents and caregivers

- *Support your child to take more control.* How much control will depend on what they need or prefer.
- *Don't be afraid to offer help.* The end of school isn't the end of your support.
- You can learn more about making the move in our [Milestones and transitions](#) resource.





Good luck on your journey

Speak up for what you need

Everything will be okay

Love yourself (and others)

Keep going

You're going to be fine

Accept yourself

Don't beat yourself up

You can do it!



More information and support

- *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2005L00767>)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00125>)
- Disability Australia Hub (<https://www.disabilityaustraliahub.com.au/>)
– A list of disability organisations
- Disability Gateway (<https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/>)
– Links to services, advocates and information
- Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) (<https://humanrights.gov.au>)



<https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/information-resources-students-disability-and-their-caregivers>