

# Options and supports for students with disabilities

by Heidi Riley

Community Resources

**T**he Transition Expo 2010 for Students with Disabilities and their Families was held in Charlottetown and February in Montague. Approximately 40 organizations and services participated in highlighting options and opportunities available in our community.

The Transition Expo focused primarily on resources available to students in grades 8 to 12 and to those who are making the transition to post-secondary education, employment or other programs.

Many agencies were available to assist students and their families with future planning in the areas of education and training, employment opportunities, recreation and leisure, support and advocacy, life skills and day programs, financial assistance, residential options, respite care, and transportation.



The team which planned Transition Expo 2010 included (bottom row, from left) Patt Allen, Terry Brennan, Shelley Nelson, and Alison Campbell. (top row) Shellee Mann, Kim Mason, Kathy Doucette, and Cynthia Shoemaker.

## Transition planning

“Transition planning is different for every individual, depending on his/her skills, strengths, interests and needs,” says **Shelley Nelson**, Community Access Facilitator with the **PEI Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**.

“A transition planning process is a team approach that works to facilitate students’ abilities to successfully reach their goals as they move from one step in their lives to another.

“A successful transition is achieved through the efforts of the student, and support of our educators in partnership with parents, care givers and the community.”

### The transition planning process helps students progress by:

- starting by age 14 or earlier
- involving the student in setting personal goals and making a plan of action
- reflecting the strengths, skills, interests, and needs of the student
- identifying realistic outcomes for work, further education, or community living that are attainable given appropriate supports

- providing critical information for developing appropriate goals
- defining actions needed to help the student achieve their goals.

“There are many supports available, and early planning will assist students to develop a greater awareness of present and future options.

The Expo was a wonderful opportunity for organizations to network and to provide increased awareness of available services and resources. Transition opportunities have never looked more exciting!”



## Software helps students succeed

**Lana MacIsaac** attended the expo. She is an IT Facilitator with the PEI Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and supports student learning through assistive technology. She works with students and teachers to install software, train students and teachers to use it, and provide follow-up support.

**Kurzweil 3000** software converts text to speech. **Dragon Naturally Speaking** is voice recognition software that turns speech into text. “Assistive technology has really grown in the last five years as we have dedicated more funding and human resources to support it,” says Lana. “Assistive technology makes classroom learning accessible and allows students with disabilities to keep up with class work. It keeps children motivated and gives them a feeling of independence they will carry with them in the years ahead.”

Another Transition Expo will be held in western PEI later this school year. For more information, call **Shelley Nelson** at 620-3746 or e-mail [slnelson@edu.pe.ca](mailto:slnelson@edu.pe.ca)

For more information on transition planning, visit [www.edu.pe.ca](http://www.edu.pe.ca) and click on Special Education Needs.

The Transition Expo in Charlottetown was organized in partnership with the PEI Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Eastern School District, and community agencies and services.

