

WE FIND IN

LIFE EXACTLY
WHAT WE PUT INTO IT

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nothing in life

is to be feared.

It is only to be

understood.

Marie Curie

A word to parents about transition

AS A PARENT, YOU ARE YOUR TEEN'S GREATEST SUPPORTER. You know your teen's strengths, abilities, skills, interests, hopes, dreams and challenges better than anyone. For this reason, your involvement in the transition planning process is vital.

Transition is an ongoing process that will take months or even years to complete. Expect your role in the process to be both rewarding and demanding. You may at times find yourself surrounded by experts who are focusing on your teen's disability and the challenges that go along with it. One of the hardest and most important tasks you face is to maintain a positive attitude and high expectations for, and of, your teen. How you view your teen can have a profound influence on how others view your teen.

Throughout the transition process, you may feel the strong pull of your teen towards independence, which is a perfectly normal part of growing up. Your teen's disability may make it hard for you to decide how to react. On one hand, you may want to support your teen's move toward independence but on the other, you will likely be concerned about your teen's particular health and safety needs.

The following suggestions may help with some of these concerns:

- Accept that transition can be a challenging and confusing time.
- Take an active role on your teen's transition planning team. Find out all you can about transition planning.
- Find support inside the school system. Develop strong relationships with teachers, administrators and other professionals who you feel understand and support your teen.
- Join (or create) a support

group for parents of teens with the same disability as your teen.

- Identify your needs.
- Do not assume you know what your teen needs—ask and then really listen to and value your teen's answer. Work together towards a solution, one step at a time.
- Encourage your teen to take a key role in making decisions, planning, researching and other aspects of transition, as appropriate.

Every teen has hopes and dreams. It is a parent's task and privilege to help shape those hopes and dreams into realistic, attainable goals.

fairness does not

mean treating

everyone the same

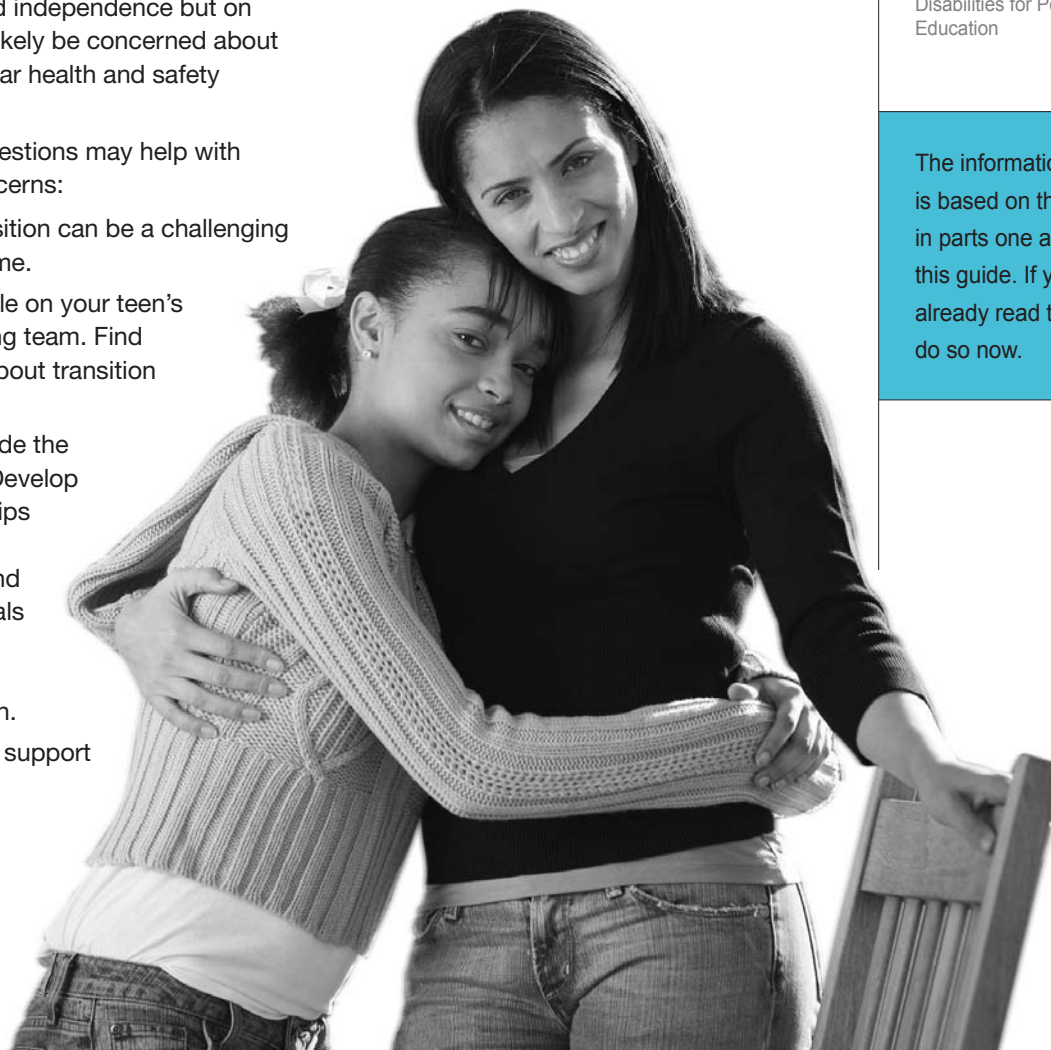
way. It consists of

giving each person

what he really needs.

Drover, Owen and Wilson. A Family Affair: Preparing Parents and Students with Learning Disabilities for Postsecondary Education

The information in part three is based on the content in parts one and two of this guide. If you have not already read them, please do so now.



INTERESTED IN LEARNING A TRADE?

For information, contact your local Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training office or visit www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca



Connecting work with school

To help your teen understand the importance of high school to a future career, point out connections between the world of school and the world of work. For example, if your teen's future career plan is to become a chef, you could help him or her see the connection between science and food production and preparation. Point out the connection between math and measuring ingredients or bulk ordering supplies for a commercial kitchen or managing a restaurant budget. If these seem like a stretch, then be sure to equate good marks with future opportunities, including entrance requirements for post-secondary programs.

Encourage your teen to problem solve in a variety of everyday situations so he or she understands how classroom learning can be of benefit throughout life. Take your teen to your workplace and talk about your work with your teen. When you keep the lines of communication open about what you are doing at work and about what your teen is doing at school, you can help your teen make connections between formal learning and real life situations.

Discovering interests

Help your teen to identify interests and to connect interests to specific occupations. Encourage your teen to talk about topics related to careers and post-secondary education planning. Listen to your teen's ideas. Help your teen find mentors in his or her field of interest.

Exploring volunteer and part-time work

Explore volunteer work as a family. If you participate in your community, your teen will be more likely to do the same. Volunteering can be a good way for teens to make contacts in the community and the larger world of work and to learn new skills.

If it is appropriate, encourage your teen to find part-time work that uses and develops his or her skills. Help your teen develop strategies to manage his or her disability at work. Encourage your teen to use time

management skills to ensure that school remains the number one priority.

Finding career information

Look for ways to help your teen explore and learn about occupations:

- Encourage your friends and family members to talk about their work. Every family gathering is an opportunity for aunts, uncles and grandparents to tell their career stories.
- Encourage your teen to talk to friends and older students about their career explorations.
- Seek opportunities for your teen to meet and talk with business people, professionals and skilled tradespersons. Suggest that your teen find out what kind of post-secondary education is required for the positions featured in the career stories he or she hears.
- Check out job shadowing opportunities through the school, as well as your own network.
- Encourage your teen to visit a career day on-campus or at school.

Encouraging your teen to think about transition

- Talk with your teen about adult life—interests, what matters, friends, how time might be spent.
- Help your teen understand that once a decision is made, it does not mean that it cannot be changed. Sometimes things do not work out. You are “allowed” to change your mind.
- Look at the messages your teen is receiving about his or her future from all sources. Develop the positive messages that you want your teen to understand.
- Find out what your teen loves to do and encourage the development of any natural strengths. Emphasize these strengths as you and your teen look at post-secondary choices.

- Treat barriers as challenges that may lead to something new.
- Be conscious of the skills your teen is developing and look for ways to develop them even further.
- Allow your teen the opportunity to make mistakes. Dealing with mistakes in a positive way is a necessary part of learning to be independent.

Career exploration checklist

Discovering interests and careers

- _____ I listen to my teen and discuss interests, hopes and dreams.
- _____ I help my teen explore talents, strengths and interests.
- _____ I provide books and other resources about things my teen has an interest in, including biographies and sport, hobby and discovery interests.
- _____ I set aside time to talk with my teen about goals for the next year and for the next five years.
- _____ I have taken steps to ensure that my teen will have some real experience with his or her chosen career path before graduating from high school.

Supporting my teen at school

- _____ I am familiar with my teen's school program and discuss classroom activities, assignments and exam preparation regularly.
- _____ I have set aside a place in the home where my teen can study in quiet and with appropriate learning materials.

Exploring volunteer and part-time work

- _____ I read employment ads with my teen and discuss qualifications.
- _____ I support my teen in finding summer or part-time employment, as appropriate.
- _____ I regularly create opportunities for my teen to assume responsibility.
- _____ I help my teen find job shadowing opportunities.

Planning for post-secondary

- _____ My teen and I are taking active roles on the transition planning team.
- _____ I encourage my teen to explore post-secondary programs that reflect his or her interests and strengths.
- _____ My teen and I are developing a financial plan for post-secondary education.

Visit alis.alberta.ca for more information or consult the publication **This is Your Life - a Career and Education Planning Guide**, from the Government of Alberta.

We can do anything

we want to do if we

stick to it long enough.

Helen Keller



Encouraging self-advocacy

YOUR TEEN WILL LEARN SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS by watching how you advocate on his or her behalf. By modelling effective advocacy skills, you will prepare your teen to eventually take over your role. The other members of the transition planning team will also be modelling advocacy skills.

The best advocates are skilled at maintaining positive working relationships while creating win-win solutions.

They have a clear and realistic vision of what they want for their children and they are able to communicate this vision to others.

The Learning Team: a handbook for parents of children with special needs. Alberta Learning, 2003.

To teach your teen self-advocacy skills:

- Discuss learning strengths and challenges with your teen. Observe how your teen learns best. Offer helpful feedback.
- Encourage your teen to build on strengths.
- Involve your teen in conversations about transition planning.

- Encourage your teen to play a key role in the transition planning process by attending all meetings and taking part in discussions and decision making.
- Help your teen prepare for transition planning meetings.

Encouraging him or her to write down and rehearse raising issues or concerns. Model and role-play appropriate interactions.

- Provide opportunities for making plans and decisions.

- Help your teen set and evaluate realistic learning goals.
- Effective advocates need to be organized and prepared. Help your teen achieve these standards.
- Encourage your teen to show appreciation for the efforts others make on his or her behalf. An important part of self-advocacy is the ability to positively influence others.
- Provide opportunities for your teen to meet other students and adults with disabilities. Films, books and news items about successful individuals with disabilities may be inspiring for some teens.
- Acknowledge how difficult self-advocacy can be and support your teen's attempts at it.
- Expect and allow your teen to gradually play an expanded advocacy role as he or she approaches graduation.
- Ask the members of the transition planning team for other suggestions to help your teen learn and practise self-advocacy skills.

Adapted from The Learning Team: a handbook for parents of children with special needs. Alberta Learning, 2003.



Understanding accommodations and learning assessments

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS are arrangements that support students with disabilities. Accommodations do not create an unfair advantage: they are available because disabilities put some students at a disadvantage compared to others. Students who receive accommodations must meet the same standards that all students must meet. Accommodations make sure that students with disabilities have the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

To be effective, an accommodation must match the specific learning needs of the individual student. Typical accommodations include:

- tutors
- note takers
- alternate format texts, including Braille, large print or audio
- extended time for exams; special location for exams; oral exams
- assistive technology including adaptive hardware or software
- assistance in research libraries
- interpreters
- captioning services

Learning assessments enable schools and post-secondary institutions to determine what accommodations are necessary to support students with disabilities. While your teen is still in school, early identification and coding will enable the school to develop an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) that will support your teen's learning needs.

The IPP will be updated as your teen

progresses through the school system.

In order to receive accommodations at a post-secondary institution, your teen may need to take part in a learning assessment specifically for this purpose. Depending on how recent your teen's last assessment is, information may need to be updated. Because of the difference in academic demands between high school and post-secondary programs, your teen may require accommodations for post-secondary studies that were not required at high school.

The Disability Services Office (DSO) at the post-secondary institution your teen is interested in attending can help you set up an appropriate learning assessment, if needed. Be aware of timing—the assessment should be completed no earlier than six months prior to the start of classes. You will need to be prepared to pay for the assessment and to apply for reimbursement from the Canada Student Grant program. (See part two of this guide for more details.)

continued next page



DISCLOSURE

Please read "Disclosure" in part one of this guide if you have not already done so. Without disclosure and documentation your teen cannot expect to receive accommodations or supports.

If your teen is reluctant to disclose...

Your teen may be reluctant to disclose his or her disability and may not want to request accommodations from the Disability Service Office. In this situation, pay close attention to your teen's marks during the first semester of post-secondary studies. If the marks are lower than they should be, your teen may need to withdraw from classes before he or she is at risk of academic disqualification. Your teen can re-enroll later and request accommodations as needed. Find out about withdrawal and other policies in the institution's calendar.

Accommodations and assessment checklist

- _____ I can describe how my teen's disability affects him or her as a student.
- _____ I can describe the accommodations and strategies my teen currently uses.
- _____ My teen and I regularly discuss strategies and accommodations with the Individualized Program Planning and transition planning teams.
- _____ I am staying up-to-date with assistive technology that might benefit my teen.
- _____ My teen and I have met with or contacted the Disability Service Office at the post-secondary institution(s) my teen is interested in.
- _____ I am aware of the documentation and assessment requirements for accommodations at the post-secondary institution(s) my teen is interested in.
- _____ I am aware of the documentation and assessment requirements and application process for grants and bursaries my teen may be eligible for, including learning assessment fee reimbursement.

Success stories

What are Kim, Roman, Renée and James' plans for the future?

"If you've got a dream... run with it—even if there are hurdles you have to climb over."

"I love my job!" says **Kim**. Now that she has completed her master's degree, her focus is on getting her permanent teaching certificate. She hopes eventually to get a PhD and to become a professor. "I'll teach the teachers! Catch them early and show them how they can help all their students with disabilities!"

Travelling is a goal for **Roman**. He would like to work overseas, possibly in an internship program. He graduates soon, so finding a job is an immediate priority but he also has his sights set on graduate studies, possibly in a masters of business administration (MBA) program. "My goal is to have a work life that doesn't overwhelm my other interests," says Roman. "I need enough money for tea and the Internet."

After finishing her degree at Mount Royal College, **Renée** hopes to enroll in a graduate program in applied psychology at the University of Calgary. She would eventually like to earn a PhD in counselling psychology. She would like to work with the homeless and with troubled teens.

James is planning to complete a double masters degree in child psychology and family counselling. "If you've got a dream," he says, "take a look at it in practical terms. If it's at all attainable, run with it—even if there are hurdles you have to climb over."

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Your leadership in the transition planning process

AS THE PARENT OF A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY, you have the opportunity to play a leadership role in the transition process. No one knows your teen better or cares as much about his or her future as you do. Teachers, health care professionals, mentors, friends—they are important to your teen’s development but they will come and go. Chances are you have been advocating for your teen all the way through the school system, modelling a key role that your maturing teen will increasingly take on. Your support will provide the continuity that your teen needs to make a successful transition to post-secondary studies.

Use the following checklist to help you keep on track through the transition planning process.

Junior high

- _____ I help my teen identify strengths, learning preferences and strategies for successful learning.
- _____ I encourage my teen to begin looking at interests and skills.
- _____ I encourage my teen to begin career explorations.
- _____ I encourage my teen to explore post-secondary programs and admission requirements.
- _____ I help my teen select high school courses.
- _____ I help my teen learn to communicate his or her needs effectively.
- _____ I offer my teen opportunities to practise decision making.
- _____ I help my teen investigate assistive technology.
- _____ I encourage my teen to take part in community activities and develop friendships.
- _____ I work with my teen on a plan to finance post-secondary studies.
- _____ I encourage my teen to take part in job shadowing activities.
- _____ I help my teen practise describing how the disability affects him or her as a student and strategies that help.

High school

- _____ I encourage my teen to take part in transition planning, especially as an active member of the transition planning team.
- _____ I keep track of my teen’s accommodations and strategies as my teen grows and changes.
- _____ I help my teen gather information about post-secondary programs and begin to narrow down post-secondary choices.
- _____ I encourage my teen to take part in volunteer and community activities and, if appropriate, part-time or summer work.
- _____ I give my teen opportunities to practise independent living skills.
- _____ I have made sure that my teen has a Social Insurance Number (SIN).
- _____ I have helped my teen get a bank account and manage it, as appropriate.
- _____ I encourage my teen to develop a résumé and portfolio.
- _____ With my teen, I continue to evaluate and refine our plan to finance post-secondary studies.

continued next page

The Registered Apprenticeship Program, RAP, means getting a head start in building a portfolio. Beginning in Grade 10, students can start learning a trade...gaining real work experience and getting paid!

In addition to a wage, RAP apprentices may earn credits toward their high school diploma and begin acquiring the hours of on-the-job training required to become a certified journeyman.

For more information visit www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca

we find in life

exactly what we
put into it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Last year of high school

- _____ I encourage my teen to take an increased responsibility for transition planning, as appropriate.
- _____ I have helped my teen identify and select (or choose) a post-secondary program(s).
- _____ With my teen, I have visited the Disability Service Office at the post-secondary institution(s) my teen is interested in.
- _____ I have helped my teen apply for admission to the program(s).
- _____ I have helped my teen meet the requirements for accommodations at the post-secondary institution(s).
- _____ I have helped my teen apply for funding.

Record keeping

TAKING ON THE ROLE of record keeper is one of the most significant contributions you can make to an effective transition for your teen. You are probably already well aware of the amount of paper involved in documenting your teen's skills, strengths, challenges and needs. Organizing these records may take some time at first but it will be worth it. Having complete and accessible records will help you be more effective:

- Get into the habit of dating all reports, articles, lists and notes and sorting them into a dedicated storage system such as a binder or an expanding file.
- Take notes of all conversations and meetings you have that pertain to your teen's disability and its effects. Make sure to note who you talked to and when, their contact information and any action agreed to as an outcome.

- Compile a contact list of everyone you have talked to, or intend to talk to, about your teen's transition.

Keep the following records:

- a complete personal history of your teen, including birth certificate, medical history, tests or interventions, list of health care providers and specialists who have been or are involved
- reports and records of all learning assessments and standardized tests
- details about current and previous accommodations and strategies used by your teen
- report cards, Individualized Program Plans, course waivers or substitutions
- any correspondence with the school

Guardianship and trusteeship

You are the legal guardian for your teen until he or she becomes 18 years of age, at which time your teen is an independent adult and you no longer have the right to make choices for him or her.

A person who turns 18 and cannot make personal, financial or legal decisions for him or herself may require a guardian and/or a trustee.

A guardian is a person who has the legal authority and responsibility to make or help to make decisions about personal matters for a dependent adult. In most cases, a guardian is a close

relative of a dependent adult. A trustee is someone who handles the financial and legal affairs of a dependent adult.

Depending on your teen's disability, you may want to consider trusteeship or guardianship in your transition plan.

Once your teen is 18, and if you are not your teen's guardian or trustee, Disability Service Office staff and other staff at the education institution will not be able to communicate with you about your teen's progress without your teen's written permission.

- work experience reports
- information about your teen's community involvement and volunteer work
- notes you have made and minutes from Individualized Program Planning meetings
- notes you have made and minutes from transition planning meetings
- notes you have made of important phone conversations
- copies of important e-mails
- key and insightful things that others have said about your teen and you have written down

- copies of applications to post-secondary programs
- copies of application to the Canada Student Grant program
- copies of scholarship(s)/bursary(ies) applied for and letters for same regarding scholarships/bursaries awarded

Leadership checklist

_____ I have read Parts One and Two of this guide.

_____ I have learned all I can about my teen's disability and the accommodations and strategies available to assist my teen.

_____ I have helped my teen choose a transition planning team.

_____ I take an active role on the transition planning team.

_____ I make sure my teen's and my own needs and concerns are addressed.

_____ I am fully informed about the school programs and courses in which my teen is involved.

_____ I encourage my teen to take part in a variety of career exploration discussions and activities.

_____ I encourage my teen to develop self-advocacy skills.

_____ I have taken on the role of record keeper and can access appropriate information when my teen or others need it.

Whether you

think you can

or you can't—

you are right.

Henry Ford

Final words

THE TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL is a complex and exciting journey that takes time, patience, determination and above all, a belief that post-secondary education is a worthy goal to pursue.

This transition is not your child's first and it will not be the last. Use the skills and techniques you develop on this journey to help your child achieve success in their post-secondary studies and, ultimately, a rewarding career.

Bon voyage and good luck!



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British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2005

Building on Success: Helping students make transitions from year to year

Alberta Education, 2006.

Managing School Transitions: Promising practices in Alberta's schools, a support resource

Alberta Education, 2009.

Resources

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology

advancededucation.gov.ab.ca

This government website provides links to the websites of Alberta's post-secondary institutions as well as information about apprenticeship and adult learning.

Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training

www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca

This website provides information about trades and designated occupations in Alberta.

Alberta Career Information Hotline

Sponsored by Employment and Immigration, this information service helps Albertans make informed career, education and employment decisions. Career advisors are available by telephone, fax, or e-mail.

To reach the Hotline, throughout Alberta phone: 1 (800) 661 3753

- In Edmonton phone: (780) 422 4266
- Fax: (780) 422 0372
- Deaf or hard of hearing - TDD: (780) 422 5283 (Edmonton)
- Deaf or hard of hearing - Message Relay Service: 1 (800) 232 7215 (Alberta)
- Online: at alis.alberta.ca Click on "Career Information Hotline" then on "e-Question"

Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities

www.accd.net

ACCD is a consumer-directed organization that actively promotes full participation in society for Albertans with disabilities. This website provides links to many other disability advocacy groups. You can access their Resource guide for Post-Secondary Students from this site.

Alberta Education

education.gov.ab.ca

This government website provides information for students and parents including curriculum handbooks, transcripts, homework help and more.

Alberta Education's Learning Resources Centre (LRC)

lrc.education.gov.ab.ca

This website lists learning resources available for purchase. You can also phone (780) 427 5775. (For toll free access, dial 310 0000 first).

Employment and Immigration Service Centres

alis.alberta.ca/career

Visit this site to locate a career consultant through an Alberta Service Centre or Canada-Alberta Service Centre near you.

Alberta Learning Information Service

alis.alberta.ca

This website provides a wealth of career, learning and employment information and services. Look here for information about

- occupational profiles
- student loans, scholarships, grants and bursaries information
- links to other resources
- useful publications you can download.

CanLearn

www.canlearn.ca

This Government of Canada website helps you save, plan and pay for your post-secondary education. The site provides a calculator for estimating costs and links to scholarship opportunities.

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Resources

continued

Council of Canadians with Disabilities

www.ccdonline.ca

CCD is a national advocacy group for Canadians with disabilities.

e-Career Shop Catalogue

alis.alberta.ca/publications

The Catalogue offers current, well-researched and easy to understand career, learning and employment resources. Most of the print materials are available free of charge in Alberta and many can be downloaded directly from the site.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

www.hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca

This website provides links to job search and career development programs and services.

National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS)

www.neads.ca

NEADS advocates for increased accessibility at all levels so that disabled students may gain equal access to college or university education. Click on “Moving On” for information about the transition from high school to post-secondary studies.

Student Finance

alis.alberta.ca/studentsfinance

Start looking here for information about financial assistance for post-secondary education. You can also call the Student Funding Contact Centre (SFCC) at 427 3722 in Edmonton, or 1 (800) 222 6485 across Canada.

Scholarship Connections

alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships

Students can search over 300 scholarships, grants, bursaries and awards, including those that target students with disabilities, on this website.

Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta

www.ldaa.ca

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Edmonton, Alberta T6H 3Z6

This publication is available to view online at
alis.alberta.ca/disabilities

Additional copies can be ordered from the
Learning Resources Centre:
lrc.education.gov.ab.ca

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Fax: 780-722-9750

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are subject to change, and you are encouraged
to confirm with the resources the information
often and seek additional sources of information
when making career and education decisions.



ARE CAPABLE

WE

OURSELVES

ASTOUND