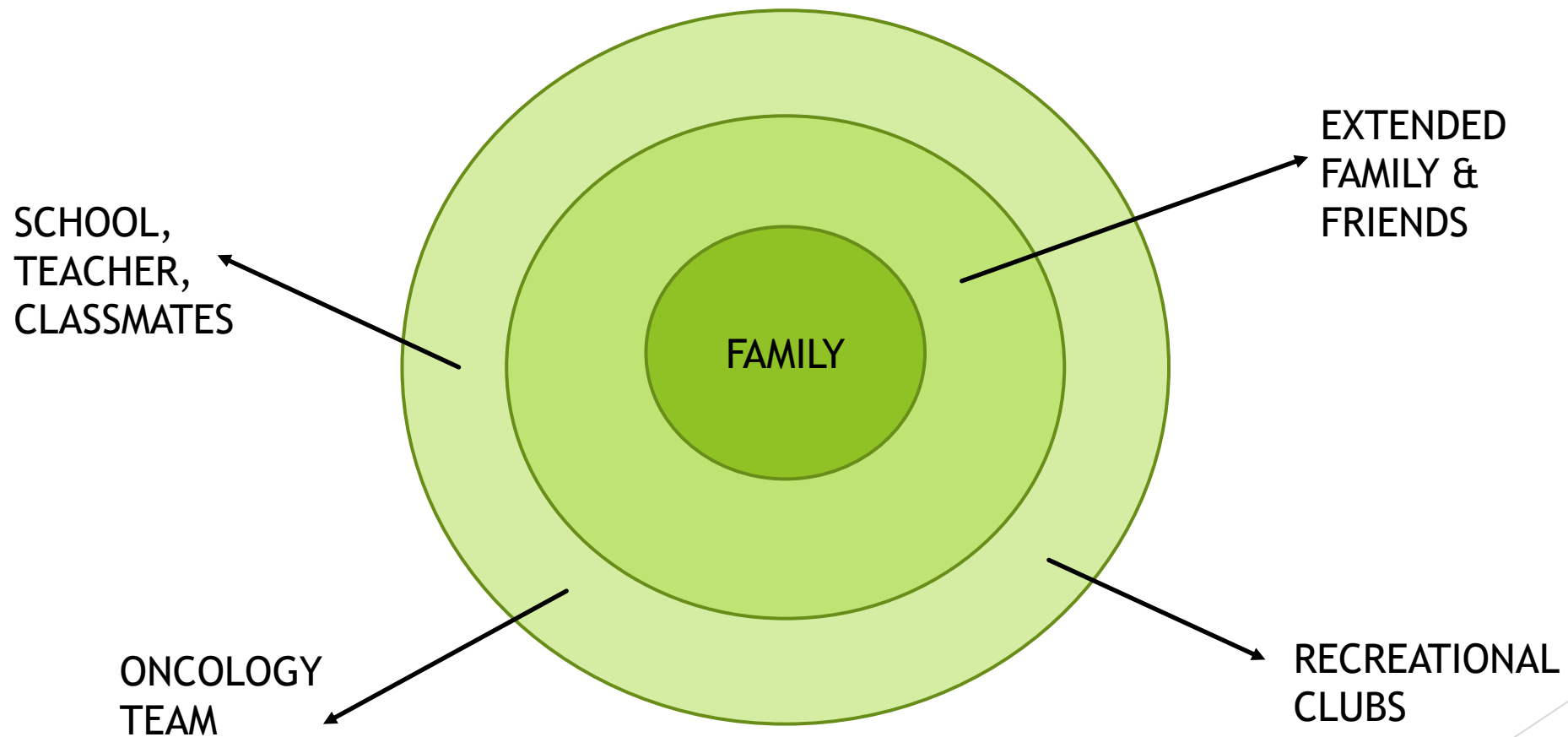


School Planning During and After Cancer Treatment

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Cancer Affects Everyone



School Needs & Your Child(ren)

- ▶ Current School Plan
 - ▶ Child: In hospital or at home
 - ▶ Sibling: Academic and social needs
- ▶ Planning Ahead For Reentry
 - ▶ Linking your oncology point person with the school team
 - ▶ Collaborating with the school team
 - ▶ Developing an Individual Education Plan, if necessary
 - ▶ Including all your children for the school's consideration and support
- ▶ Once There:
 - ▶ Academic/Cognitive
 - ▶ Physical
 - ▶ Social
- ▶ And Afterwards:
 - ▶ Continuing to monitor your child's progress

Current School Plans

Your Child

- ▶ Adjusting academic expectations
- ▶ Focusing on strengths and core subjects (reading & math) - obtaining work from school, having hospital school support
- ▶ Receiving social support from friends and classmates through email, cards, etc.
- ▶ Maintaining contact wherever/whenever possible, e.g., visits and special school events, when possible

Sibling

- ▶ Potential challenges: Fear, loss, jealousy, change of role in family & decrease in family activities, being kept out of information, helplessness, social stigma
- ▶ Potential impact: Decrease in concentration & academic functioning, social isolation, behavioural outbursts
- ▶ Necessary for school to recognize and support

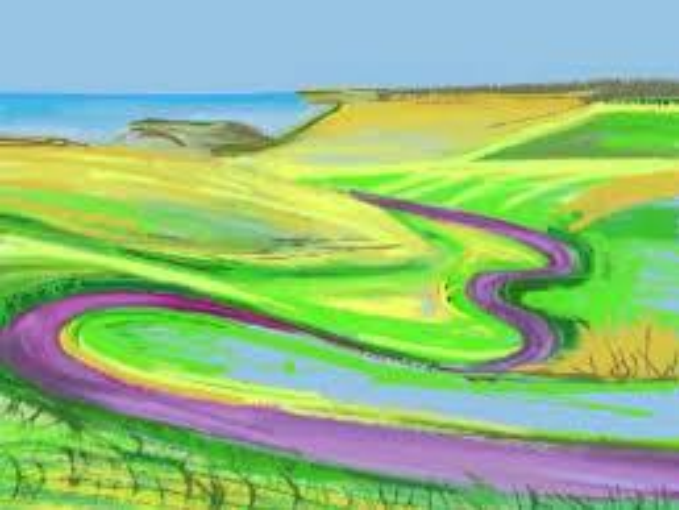
Planning Ahead: School Meeting

- ▶ **Parents' contribution:**
 - ▶ Advocacy
 - ▶ Conveying and receiving relevant information: Child's health status, specific needs & challenges
 - ▶ Your attitude towards school re-entry
- ▶ **School's contribution:**
 - ▶ Understanding your child's cancer and needs
 - ▶ Providing curriculum in a manner that maximizes your child's learning potential
 - ▶ Individual Education Plan: Teaching accommodations and direct instruction
 - ▶ Designation of Exceptional Student, if applicable
 - ▶ Securing resources: Staff - school psychologist, social worker; Learning equipment as needed

Planning Ahead: School Meeting

- ▶ **Hospital's contribution:** Providing liaison person to assist school with information
- ▶ **Your child's (and sibling's) contribution:**
 - ▶ Attitude towards school, learning, socializing
 - ▶ Deciding what information to provide
 - ▶ Working with parents or other supports to cope with school stressors

Issues To Discuss Now & Later



- ▶ Adjusting expectations and plans to meet the current need over time
- ▶ What:
 - ▶ Our child's cancer and his needs
 - ▶ Academic expectations
 - ▶ Behavioural expectations
 - ▶ Social expectations
 - ▶ Medical crisis plan
- ▶ Who: Supports will vary over time

School Meeting: Parents' Contribution

- ▶ Advocacy
- ▶ Conveying relevant information: Balance between protecting your child's privacy and ensuring the school has the necessary information
 - ▶ How much to tell, what to tell? Who needs to know?
 - ▶ Signing a Release of Information form
 - ▶ Providing the diagnosis and treatment
 - ▶ Providing updated contact list
 - ▶ Providing list of appointments
- ▶ Exchanging information: Communication book

Your Child's Current Status

1

Health: Side effects of treatment - fatigue, hair loss, nosebleeds;
Medical equipment and needs

2

Academic: Grade levels, if your child had been receiving instruction in hospital or home

3

Social-Emotional: Mood, anxiety, loneliness, jealousy, helplessness? Eager to return? In contact with peers?

Medical Information

- ▶ Medicines needed and how to administer
- ▶ Medicines and treatments your child can and cannot have; activities your child can and cannot engage in
- ▶ Special devices your child will use
- ▶ What problems to look out for and let you know, e.g., high fever, if another child has an infection, e.g., chicken pox
- ▶ Emergency plan:
 - ▶ Management of potential problems
 - ▶ Who to call

Academic Information

- ▶ Causes:
 - ▶ Child's prior learning abilities and performance
 - ▶ Type of cancer, e.g., brain tumour
 - ▶ Cancer treatment: Radiation and chemotherapy
 - ▶ Areas affected: Hearing, eyesight, gross and fine motor skills
 - ▶ Length of absence from school
- ▶ Current academic achievement and learning
- ▶ Possible short- and long-term effects of treatment

Cognitive Effects

- ▶ Comprehension and problem-solving
- ▶ Memory: Difficulty retaining and recalling what is seen and/or heard
- ▶ Concentration - not able to pay attention, appearing confused, not “thinking straight”
- ▶ Processing or understanding information more slowly
- ▶ Transferring information from brain to hands

Social and Emotional Information

- ▶ Current emotional adjustment including body image
- ▶ How have your child and his siblings felt supported by family, friends, classmates, school, larger medical/social contexts (recreational organizations)?
- ▶ Children's connections to their friends as important as those to their parents
- ▶ Child(ren)'s contribution: Prior experience before illness influences present expectations
 - ▶ Motivation, self-esteem

School: A Place to Learn and Play

- ▶ Learning: Adequate abilities and skills
 - ▶ Cognitive: Intelligence, memory
 - ▶ Executive functions: Inhibiting impulses, planning, self-monitoring, organizing
 - ▶ Attention
- ▶ Playing: Fun in friendship
 - ▶ Social skills
- ▶ Generic skills:
 - ▶ Self-confidence
 - ▶ Motivation
 - ▶ Competence
 - ▶ Sense of autonomy

School Meeting: The School's Contribution

- ▶ Their team: School principal, teacher, school psychologist, special educational resource, mental health counsellor
- ▶ Providing education and support to their team, potentially with consultation from the hospital
- ▶ Child's Learning:
 - ▶ Reviewing past and current academic achievement & psychological evaluations
 - ▶ Determining need for future evaluations and submitting necessary requests
- ▶ Social & Emotional:
 - ▶ Safe, welcoming, supportive

School's Contribution: Individual Education Plan (IEP)

- ▶ Developing an Individual Education Plan with parents/caregivers and, if the child is 16+, with the child
 - ▶ Written plan documenting the special education services the child needs based on current strengths and learning needs
 - ▶ Accommodations or modifications required for the child to achieve his learning expectations that vary from the expected age-appropriate expectations
 - ▶ The specific knowledge and skills to be assessed
 - ▶ <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/resource/iepresguid.pdf>

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

- ▶ An IEP typically includes the following components: Assessment of the child's current level of educational performance
- ▶ Impact of the illness on learning, thinking, energy/fatigue
- ▶ Medical precautions and special needs (if any), for example: central venous access device, extra bathroom breaks, drinking water during class, snacks, limited sun exposure, modified physical education, etc.
- ▶ Statement of goals to be achieved under the IEP
- ▶ Statement of educational services that the child needs
- ▶ Date the educational services will begin
- ▶ Description of the extent to which the child will participate in regular education programs
- ▶ Justification for the type of educational placement the child will have
- ▶ List of individuals responsible for the implementation of the IEP
- ▶ Objective criteria and evaluation procedures

01

Being prepared to deal with emotional and educational issues

02

Knowledge of your child's cancer

03

Preparing the class for your child's return: Sharing relevant and permitted information through multimedia

04

For siblings: Speaking with the class re #3

05

Communication book: Medical appointments or other absences, updates

School Contribution: Teacher's Role

Adjusting How Your Child Learns

ACCOMMODATIONS - PHYSICAL

- ▶ Sitting close to the front
- ▶ Access to a water bottle for dehydration
- ▶ Extra nutrition breaks
- ▶ Bathroom use permission
- ▶ Rest breaks (permission to go to the office) or shorter days
- ▶ Permission to wear a hat

ACCOMMODATIONS - COGNITIVE

- ▶ Use of manipulatives, e.g, calculator
- ▶ Use of computer and software, e.g, speech to text or text to speech
- ▶ Reducing the amount of work
- ▶ Access to audio books
- ▶ Extra time for tests & assignments
- ▶ Oral vs written tests
- ▶ Having an extra textbook at home

Once There: Preparing Your Child(ren) for Return

- ▶ Focus on controlling the worries in order to make school life OK (rather than trying to control what is unpredictable or unknown)
- ▶ Working with your children re providing information & the safety plan: Go-to school personnel, who will do what
- ▶ Handling curiosity/fear: Questions such as, “What’s wrong with you?” “Will I catch it?” “Can you still play tag?” “Why do you need X?”
 - ▶ Answer question - prepare short 2-3 sentence summary
 - ▶ State you’re not comfortable answering that question, “it’s hard to talk about”
 - ▶ Indicate that teacher or nurse will be better able to answer that question

Modelling Adaptive Behaviour

- ▶ Offering empathy for classmates' questions/fear
- ▶ Meditation, relaxation exercises
- ▶ Limiting exposure to graphic medical images on TV/Internet
- ▶ Conveying an appropriate balance between encouraging appropriate risks and protecting
- ▶ Seeking support from friends, e.g., asking if child's friends can walk to school with your children

And Afterwards

- ▶ Importance of team approach and sharing of information
- ▶ Continuing to empower educators and parents regarding information
- ▶ Sustaining communication between parents, school, and health care providers
- ▶ Remembering that progress is often not linear or straightforward
- ▶ Impact on learning may be seen months after treatment is completed
- ▶ Necessity to have ongoing monitoring of cognitive, academic, social and emotional functioning
- ▶ Access to additional educational or health care supports, as required

Thank You For Your Attention

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