

Domain ⑦: Policy, Leadership & Administration

Providing access to evidence-based practice resources and training in transition is important, but there are many other ways that school and district leaders can support seamless transitions to adult life for students with disabilities. Effective transitions from school to adult-life for students with disabilities require more than just a commitment from dedicated teachers. The policies and procedures adopted by a school district or an individual school can influence every aspect of a program. School/district leaders are in a position to emphasize standards and results regarding secondary transition and can implement various transition initiatives as well as design and influence programmatic elements.

A recent Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) Fast Facts publication on Transition Programs highlights eleven essential program characteristics of comprehensive and quality transition programs. Specifically, the information shared comes from a 2014 delphi study conducted by Rowe and colleagues. As defined by Rowe et al. (2014), transition programs have been operationally defined as programs that “prepare students to move from secondary settings (e.g., middle school/high school) to adult-life, utilizing comprehensive transition planning and education that creates individualized opportunities, services, and supports to help students achieve their post-school goals in education/training, employment, and independent living (p.13).”

As such, the following eleven characteristics should be included in comprehensive and quality transition programs (Rowe, et al., 2014 cited in DCDT, 2014):

1. Systems level infrastructure (e.g., highly qualified staff and administrators with defined roles and responsibilities, sufficient budget) to monitor and guide students to obtain post-school goals.
2. Integrated instruction in all areas of independent living (e.g., community living, transportation, recreation leisure, self-advocacy, goal setting, decision making) for all students with disabilities.
3. Individualized transition focused curriculum and instruction based on students’ postsecondary goals in postsecondary education, employment, and independent living (e.g., self-determination, financial planning).
4. Instruction and training in natural environments supported by classroom instruction.
5. Individualized transition services based on students’ postsecondary goals in postsecondary education, employment, and independent living (e.g., self-determination and financial planning).
6. Provide opportunities for engagement with peers without disabilities in the school and community.
7. Use interagency collaboration with clearly defined roles and responsibilities to provide coordinated transition services (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation, Mental Health) at multiple levels (i.e., student, school, districts, region, state) to assist students in meeting their postsecondary goals.
8. Monitor and assess students’ progress in the domains of academics, daily living, personal and social, and occupational.
9. Use multiple strength-based assessments across multiple domains at different points in time to assist student and IEP teams in post-school planning.
10. Provide training and resources to families to involve them in transition planning and connect them to adult agencies and support the development of information networks.
11. Conduct program evaluation to assess effectiveness of transition program.