Secondary Transition from School to Work Promising Practice Domains Guide:
Considerations for Local Stakeholders

(2016, December)

[1]The Transition Alliance of South Carolina is a collaborative initiative to increase successful post-secondary transition outcomes for youth with disabilities through active interagency

collaboration. Housed at the Center for Disability Resources at the University of SC School of Medicine, the effort is funded by the SC Department of Education, the SC Developmental Disabilities Council and the SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs.

Domain Guide Overview

The transition out of high school is a major life event that must be carefully planned for and carried out. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), secondary transition is defined as: "a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; and Is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences and interests, " (IDEA 2004).

The purpose of this guide is to provide practitioners, families, and other stakeholders with a practical overview of eight transition domains, which have been tied to improved employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities.

A better understanding of the general factors that can influence employment outcomes is critical in light of the fact that in 2011, the employment rate in South Carolina for individuals with cognitive disabilities was 19% as compared to 73.3% for individuals who did not report having a disability (Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader, 2012).

The transition domains covered in this guide include:

1. Transition Planning and Assessment
2. Career Curricula
3. Student Engagement
4. Family Engagement
5. Community Based Work Experiences
6. Interagency Collaboration
7. Policy Leadership and Administration
8. Professional Development

Did You Know?

There are 6 evidence-based practices in the area of student development and employment skills (Test et al., 2009). They include:

- Teaching a student how to complete a job application.
- Teaching employment skills using community-based instruction.
- Teaching job-specific employment skills.
- Teaching job-specific employment skills using computer-assisted instruction.
- Teaching self-management for employment skills.
- Teaching job-related social communication skills.

Domain ①: Transition Planning and Assessment

Students, parents and practitioners should work as a team to assist students in preparing for life after high school. As part of that process, it is necessary to know a student's present level of functioning, including their skills, abilities, needs, preferences and interests. This information can be obtained through multiple formal and informal assessments. Proper planning will result in a systematic plan, which includes the needed goals, activities and resources to help a student successfully transition from school to adult life.

A number of considerations should be taken into account in an effort to build competence and ultimately prepare youth for life after school.

> **SC Fast Fact**
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> Many of SC's schools utilize a district-approved occupational or alternative credential program to guide students through a rigorous course of study and occupational experiences to prepare them for the world of work.

✓   Planning for life after high school should be looked at as an ongoing and continuous process starting as early as elementary school.

✓   The ultimate goal of the transition planning process, specific to the transition from school to work, is to make sure that all the stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, school staff, adult service staff) are proactively working to provide the appropriate academic, social and occupational experiences that will help the individual to thrive in the workplace during and after school.

✓   Consider using a person-centered planning approach (e.g., PATH, MAPS, GAP) to assist the student in taking control over his/her own life.

✓   "Helping all youth to make informed choices and achieve desired outcomes requires a structured, well-defined assessment process. To collect all needed data, assessment activities should include observations, interviews, record reviews and testing/performance activities" (Timmons et al., 2005).

Domain ②: Career Curricula

The central goal of career curricula is to help students build academic and occupational competencies that will allow them to participate meaningfully in the workforce. The ultimate goal for all students is to become gainfully employed in the community in a job that matches their skills, abilities and interests. Career curricula and vocational experiences can be a powerful gateway to that reality.

A rigorous career curriculum should help students:

- Develop an awareness of their individual interests and aptitudes,
- Better understand the job market and the requirements of certain industries or jobs and how that might fit with their interest and abilities,
- Build work habits, behaviors, attitudes, and skills through school-based and community-based experiences that will increase the likelihood of employment, and
- Gain exposure to a variety of work tasks and environments.

Did You Know?

Students who participated in school-based programs that included a career major, cooperative education, school-sponsored enterprise and technical preparation *were 1.2 times more likely to be engaged in post-school employment* (i.e., employment defined as (a) stability with benefits, insurance, paid sick days and (b) full-time employment) (NSTTAC, 2013).

Career curricula can be delivered in many ways. A school can offer career development elective classes for students in a more traditional academic

course of study, or they can embed the curriculum throughout an alternatively structured course of study or alternate diploma program (i.e., Occupational Diploma).

Domain ③: Student Engagement

All students should be given the opportunity to lead their own transition planning process. ***After all, it is the student's life we are talking about!*** Students must be afforded the opportunity to provide information regarding their needs, interests and preferences. Training, education and support should be provided to empower transition aged youth to be active decision-makers and participants in their daily school and community environments and in any processes that could shape their future (i.e., IEP Meetings).

Involvement & Leadership
A student who is actively engaged in the transition process should:

❖ Understand and be able to express their strengths, weaknesses, preferences and needs;
❖ Contribute to the development of annual and post-school goals and the plans constructed to achieve those goals;
❖ Be aware of the resources that are available in the local community that can aid in the transition from school to adult life; and
❖ Actively serve as an IEP team member.

Did You Know?

Providing high quality self-advocacy and self-determination training is a predictor of post-school employment (Test et al., 2009).

Self-determination training includes:
- choice-making skills;
- decision-making skills;
- problem-solving skills;
- goal-setting and attainment skills;
- independence, risk-taking, and safety skills;
- self-observation, evaluation, and reinforcement skills;
- self-instruction skills;
- self-advocacy and leadership skills;
- internal locus of control;
- positive attributions of efficacy and outcome expectancy;
- self-awareness; and
- self-knowledge

(Landmark et al., 2010).

Domain ④: Family Engagement

Parental involvement is an evidence-based predictor of post-school employment (Test et al., 2009). The school system will fade out of the picture at the age of 21, if not before. Depending on the services available, eligibility requirements and waiting lists, adult service agencies may or may not be able to fill the role that the school once played.

"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating.
Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family."
-Kofi Annan

Did You Know?

Adults with moderate to severe disabilities worked more hours, earned higher wages, and lived more independently when their parents were moderately to highly involved in their transition planning process (Landmark et al., 2010).

Points of

Connection

- Begin the transition discussion early with parents. Conversations beginning in elementary school are ideal, and when continued through middle school, promote a district-wide climate that values parent engagement in the education process.

- Provide parents with a timeline of the transition process, highlighting when certain events will take place, who will be involved in the process and contacts for community service providers.

- Help families to identify the ways in which they can be involved and invite them to contribute to the process. These might include student assessment and goal development, supporting self-advocacy outside the school and interagency team participation.

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- Help your teachers and other service providers understand the importance of parent engagement and provide support for increasing capacity in this area. Strategies might include in-service training, dissemination of tip sheets and district-level led pilot programs.

Domain ⑤: Community-Based Work Experiences

Having paid employment/community-based work experience is an evidence-based predictor of post-school employment (Test et al., 2009). In other words, if a student gets real world work experience during high school, they are more likely to find community-based competitive work as an adult.

Did You Know?

- Students employed at the time of high school exit were 5.1 times more likely to be engaged in post-school employment (NSTTAC, 2011).

- Students with prior work experience were significantly more likely to get a job than those that did not. In fact, those with paid vocational experience were 35% more likely to secure jobs (Fabian, 2007).

Competitive Work means work in the labor market that is performed:

✓ on a full-time or part-time basis
✓ in an integrated setting – meaning a setting that is typically found in the community where people with and without disabilities interact
✓ for which the individual is compensated at or above minimum wage (but not less than the customary and usual wage paid by an employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled) (NDRN, 2011).

Domain ⑥: Interagency Collaboration

Adult services are a critical component to the success of students with disabilities and a necessity for successful transitions. Public schools hold the key to long-term success for the students they serve, as they can help build the relationships with appropriate partners prior to students exiting high school. Developing a collaborative team to drive capacity building is an important step toward improved outcomes for youth.

Potential Collaborative Team Members*

- Student Representative
- Family Representative
- LEA Representative
- Local DSN Board or Provider Agency
- Local Vocational Rehabilitation Office
- Community Rehabilitation Providers
- ABLE SC, AccessAbility and/or Walton Options
- Community Transportation Agency
- Community Employers

* Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of potential community partners.

SC Fast Fact

The Transition Alliance of SC will help your community establish an interagency transition team and develop a strategic plan for collaborative program improvement. Building a strong interagency team can help foster a seamless transition for youth moving from school to adult life.

Did You Know?

Students who received assistance from 3 to 6 community-based agencies (as compared to students with assistance from 0 to 2 agencies) were more likely to be engaged in post-school employment or education (NSTTAC, 2011).

It is vital that professionals collaborate with each other to ensure the "coordinated set of activities" required by law (IDEA 2004; Rehabilitation Act 1998 and its amendments).

Recognizing that multiple agencies can contribute to the transition planning process, share resources, and partner in preparing students for adult community life can lead to more effective and efficient planning and improved outcomes for all students with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Domain ⑦: Policy, Leadership & Administration

Providing access to evidence-based practice resources and training in transition is important, but there are many other ways school leaders can support seamless transitions to adult life for students with I/DD. School/district leaders are in a position to emphasize standards and results regarding secondary transition and can implement various transition initiatives.

Overarching Considerations

✓ Policies & Procedures
How is the school or school district aligning its mission, resources, goals and activities to support the transition from school to work for students with disabilities?

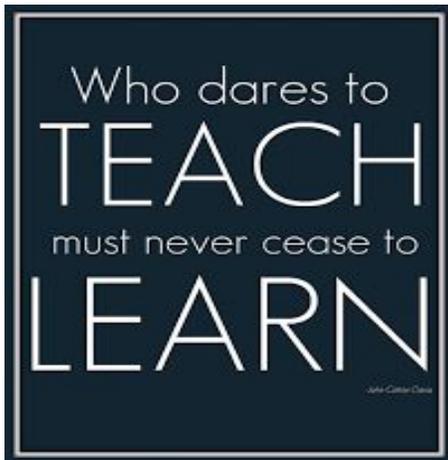✓ Staff Knowledge, Experience & Access to Resources
How well are the administrators, teachers and support staff (e.g., transition specialist, job coach, etc.) equipped (e.g., knowledge base, access to training and technical assistance, access to community resources, dedicated time, etc.) to tackle the tasks set forth under the school's transition program?

Effective transitions from school to work for students with I/DD 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. Policies and administrative practices have the potential to:

- Support and promote early planning efforts
- Recruit individuals with specific responsibilities for transition to promote improved post-school outcomes for students with disabilities
- Affect curriculum offerings and specify what types of classes/experiences can be pursued for credit
- Create opportunities for valuable student community work activities
- Develop incentives and methods needed to implement evidence-based models, practices, and strategies
- Bring collaborative partners into the transition planning process
- Build partnerships with universities to conduct research to demonstrate and validate new transition support strategies as well as monitor longitudinal outcomes.

A number of South Carolina high schools have implemented strategies to begin the active transition planning process for 8th graders, coordinating with middle schools to ease the

As defined by the Minnesota Department of Education (2013), "High-quality professional development is designed to improve the quality of classroom instruction; enable individuals to grow professionally; introduce practitioners to the practical applications of research-based strategies; and help teachers [and transition personnel] implement new technology and teaching strategies."

Morningstar and Clark (2003) suggest that transition service providers should have knowledge in the following areas:

Did You Know?

Findings from a national survey of special education personnel preparation programs in the United States revealed that less than 50% of the training that teachers receive in higher education addresses transition standards (NCSET, 2005).

1. Basic transition principals and concepts;
2. Transition Curriculum and Training Models,
3. Planning, Implementation and Progress Monitoring strategies,
4. Interagency collaboration, and
5. Strategies for addressing service barriers.

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For additional information and resources, visit the Transition Alliance of SC website at

www.transitionalliancesc.org.