



Engaging Families in the Transition Process (with an emphasis on high school and thereafter) to Increase Family-School Partnerships in Special Education

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Feedback Brief - Share & Learn Transition Strategies

❑ What is one strategy that engages families during transitions?

- Speak with families - early and often, especially around guardianship and finances
- Start talking to parents in eighth grade - students take over at 18 years of age
- Talk with families and students - past experiences, past skills developed, to begin the process
- Coordination of information between divorce families and extended families
- Have conversations with parents who are protective and understand their concerns
- Training for parents - it's okay for students to show independence and interest
 - Ways schools can address this:
 - ◆ Have a "sit and chat" include guidance counselor
 - ◆ Give examples of success stories - success story of student-led interest - Popcorn: team built curriculum around the student's love of popcorn (taste, feel, and smell of it) - learned math and money skills, business aspects - selling, communication skills, social interactions; the result, bought a popcorn machine and sells popcorn at fairs etc.
- Consider/expect emotional triggers - grief - roller coaster of emotions
- Some parents are concerned about students attending their IEP meeting -
 - Teachable moment for parents understand the importance of it
 - Parents concerned this may lower child's self-esteem
- Unrealistic expectations - one to one conversations are best with an explanation and opportunities
 - Extended learning opportunities
 - Earning of credits
 - Keep an open mind, look outside the box, open to creativity - not rigid expectations
 - ◆ Examples - for students with some matter of fact personality, not fazed by emotions: bill collector, telemarketer
- Switching perspectives - from a student deficit model to what they can do
- Talk with parents about SAT scores (some colleges don't require SAT scores) that it isn't the end-all, be-all; use ACT instead - offers extra time
 - There is a learning opportunity for parents to understand the difference
- High school does not have to be a four-year program-it can be five year have a conversation with parents (much like college can take longer)
- Learning opportunity to have a conversation with parents over the difference between a diploma versus certificate of attendance

❑ What do you think is key to having a smooth or successful transition?

- Most important - listen to the parents, let them tell their stories, check in with them - ask them how things are going?
- Time, planning, try things
- Follow through
- Marriage of all perspectives - parents, child, school, community
- Creativity
- Guidance counselors on the same page with all
 - In some school districts - guidance counselors and special educators work in silos
 - Guidance counselors drive transition plan
- AV ID - is a program for students who normally wouldn't go to college-it's an intervention program with additional supports - how to study, organize, college is an option
- Advantage for some districts is that special educators have students for four years
 - This helps with planning, knowing the child, developing a relationship
 - The guidance counselors are split by alphabet so parents know who the guidance counselors is and also stays with that child
- Guidance counselors - guide the students through their courses, their choices, college selections, they establish a foundation
- Guidance counselors help students junior and senior year through course selections which special education teachers are not part affect conversations; guidance counselors bring this is the foundation at the IEP meeting and then ask, how do we support this.

❑ What is done to inform and educate students with disabilities around the transition process?

- Helping freshman to learn:
 - What an IEP (Individual Education Program) is
 - Learn more about their disability
 - What accommodations they need
 - Learn to self advocate
 - Attend and participate in their IEP meeting
 - ◆ Start early with student participation for short amount of time and an IEP meeting

❑ From your perspective- why is it important to have parents involved early in the transition process, as needs and services are discussed and determined?

- A collaboration between family, schools and community - families may have access to resource that is school may not
- Parents and students looking for a sense of community, of belonging
- Some parents are in denial and may have low expectations for their child or unrealistic high expectations for their child
- Reality of job market - few or lack of - competition in this economy for the same jobs

❑ From your perspective, why is it important to have community service providers at the table for transition planning?

- In the ideal world - an area agency is a liaison between the parents and school and the student
- Finding the middle ground
- Offering something after high school, post-graduate and college for support and as a safety net
 - Example - a transition program targeted at students 18 to 21 years of age: Chapel Haven of Connecticut offers - an apartment-style setting with the opportunity to learn and practice household maintenance skills such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, menu planning, and grocery shopping and money management; infusing Social Communicative Competency lessons and teachable moments into every aspect of REACH, their founding program. Classes on banking and budgeting, reading directions, and utilizing public transportation are taught by the teachers and supplemented by the Residential Life Skills Instructor. Classes on career exploration resume writing, and workplace social skills complement the Employment Program.
- Area agency - helping parents in the process
- Coordination in locating resources
- How do we address mental health as part of the transition process? Reach out to area agency - example lakes region community services - high concerns, most difficult finding supports needed, very difficult stage of life for the child, important to invite mental health service provider to meetings, resources could be NH NAMI, lack of service providers in New Hampshire especially the farther of north you travel
- Sometimes parents have mental health issues themselves that may influence the process

❑ What can families do to help prepare students?

- Conversations about the future
- Become more independent
- Teach organization skills
- Time management
- Look at the accommodations and teach strategies - determine what accommodations can be deleted, so they can learn to be successful
- Important - are we accommodating an issue that we should be teaching a strategy for
- Teach living skills
- To communicate with adults
- Learn to advocate for themselves - self advocacy skills and collaboration
- Talk with student about their strengths and weakness (give students time to absorb it and the impact, keeping conversation open)
- Listen to the child and come up with realistic, attainable goals
- Don't limit our thinking; don't get caught up in - what's not available but what we can do together
- Person centered planning as an option to do with an area agency to be incorporated into the IEP