

Research Brief

Transitions from High School –SPED Students

Question: What are some ways that students with special needs can be successfully transitioned to life after high school?

Summary of Findings:

In a Nutshell

Helping regular education students transition from high school to the post-secondary world can be a daunting task. Assisting students with special needs do this can be quite intimidating. According to the Harris Poll 2000, 20% of the general population was unemployed, while 71% of adults with disabilities were unemployed (Miller, Lombard, & Corbet, p. 3). The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability stated that 36% of high school dropouts have some type of learning disability, 59% have some type of emotional or behavioral disorder and 75% of those in the juvenile justice system have some form of a disability (*The Workforce Development System and the professional development of youth service practitioners: Why professional development?*). The fastest growing occupations are in technology and include: computer and data management, public relations services, motor vehicles and equipment manufacturing, engineering, manufacturing electronic components and accessories (*National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability*). All of these careers require higher-level thinking and analytical skills.

In order for students to be active participants in their adult lives and increase the chances of them staying in school, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) requires that by age 14, a plan for post-secondary options is in place and by no later than 16 years of age, an active transition plan that is reviewed yearly, is a part of their IEP (Individualized Education Plan). This plan needs to include: goals based on the student's needs, strengths and interests; task-specific activities; opportunities to practice behavior and thinking skills in genuine situations; giving and listening to instructions; applying knowledge across different fields; and participating in work based and work study programs. Some issues to consider and discuss with the IEP team, which should definitely include the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) are: an understanding of the disability, future post-secondary and/or career choices, living situation, transportation considerations, financial reflection, community participation and health issues.

Ideas to support the transition of students with special needs:

- explore occupations, their requirements and necessary skills
- visit businesses
- invite guests to speak to the students
- offer basic occupational skills classes
- provide an annual college/post-secondary fair
- make project based learning more available in their classes
- provide vocational preparation information and courses
- supply work-based and work-study opportunities
- offer direct and indirect consultant teacher services for direct support to the regular classroom teacher
- provide team-teaching opportunities so that the students can receive appropriate support from both the special and regular educators
- develop a career academy
- allow students to serve as tutors to elementary students who are at-risk

A few pedagogical ideas:

- case study-students can research a problem, gather information, learn investigative and analysis skills
- hands-on-students physically manipulate concepts and move from concrete to abstract
- analogies-students learn to make personal connections by comparing and/or contrasting concepts
- role play-students can develop and practice oral presentation skills

Resources:

- Age of majority: Preparing your child for making good choices
This article is directed toward parents and provides suggestions on ways they can help their child make good choices once they have come of age.
<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=318>
- Career planning begins with assessment: A guide for professionals serving youth with educational and career development challenges
This is an extensive manual on numerous aspects of career planning assessment. Although Chapter 2 deals with students with special needs, it provides descriptions of different disabling conditions with minimal suggestions on career planning.
http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/assessment.html
- IEP and transition planning
A brief description of a transition program included in an IEP is provided in this piece.
<http://www.ncset.org/topics/ieptransition/default.asp?topic=28>

- Motivating youth with disabilities to learn in the science classroom: A guide for educators
Several strategies to help students with disabilities to become more knowledgeable about and involved in science are presented in this piece. These ideas can easily be adapted to other content.
<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=1495>
- National collaborative on workforce and disability
This piece provides links to resources in math and science careers and briefly describes why students with disabilities need to have this background.
[http://www.ncwdyouth.info/resources_&Publications/information Briefs/print versions/issue7.html](http://www.ncwdyouth.info/resources_&Publications/informationBriefs/printversions/issue7.html)
- National collaborative on workforce and disability for youth
A list of the types of careers in technology that are in demand is given in this piece.
[http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&Publications/information Briefs/print versions/issue2.html](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&Publications/informationBriefs/printversions/issue2.html)
- NICHCY Connections to Transition 101
A comprehensive annotated list with on-line links to multiple resources on transitioning programs and ideas is presented in this article.
<http://www.nichcy.org/resources/transition101.asp>
- Person-centered planning: A tool for transition
A thorough description of person-centered planning is provided in this article.
<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=1431>
- School based preparatory programs
This is a brief description of appropriate preparatory experiences for students with special needs.
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth/school.htm>
- Secondary transition
This is a brief definition of a transition program.
<http://www.pattan.net/teachlead/SecondaryTransition.aspx>
- The guideposts for success
A brief definition of guideposts for success, along with links is given in this piece.
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth/>
- The right connections: Navigating the Workforce Development system
A description of career one stop centers and how to access them is provided in this article.
[http://www.ncwdyouth.info/resources_&Publications/information Briefs/print versions/issue13.html](http://www.ncwdyouth.info/resources_&Publications/informationBriefs/printversions/issue13.html)

- The role of Special Education in LD adolescents' transition from school to work
This abstract lists the six areas in which training of high school students to make the transition from high school to life afterwards should be included in school programs.
[http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0731-9487\(198822\)11%3A3%3C292%3ATROSEI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-T](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0731-9487(198822)11%3A3%3C292%3ATROSEI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-T)
- Transition services
A thorough description of what transition services, plans and curriculum should look like are presented in this report.
<http://www1.usu.edu/mprrc/infoserv/pubs/transitionservices.pdf>
- The Workforce Development System and the professional development of youth service practitioners: Why professional development?
This piece describes the importance of professional development for those working with students with disabilities and provides a list of concepts that these workers need.
http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&Publications/information_Briefs/issue19.html
- Transition to adult services
This contains a list of different articles and research available on transitioning high school students with special needs.
[http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0731-9487\(198822\)11%3A3%3C292%3ATROSEI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-T](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0731-9487(198822)11%3A3%3C292%3ATROSEI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-T)
- Using the High School/High Tech Design features to meet the needs of youth with disabilities: A supplement to the high school/high tech program manual
Access to download this document.
http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&Publications/hsht_manual.html

Book

Miller, R. J., Lombard, R. C., & Corbey, S. A. (2007). *Transition Assessment*. Pearson Education, Inc.: Boston, MA.

This book covers all aspects of a complete and thorough transition program for students with special needs. It also includes sample forms and assessment instruments.

Schools/Programs

- Altoona, Wisconsin
Philosophy page.
<http://www.altoona.k12.wi.us/schools/high/departments/specialed/philosophy.htm>
- Emerging and promising practices
Several different programs that could be used as transition programs are described in this piece.
<http://www.ncset.org/topics/dropout/practices.asp?topic=36>

- Lakeland Central School District, New York
This provides descriptions of several different types of programs provided to students with special needs.
http://www.lakelandschools.org/SpecEd/high_schools.htm
- Ryse Clinical Day School, Rhode Island
A description of the full services provided by the school.
http://www.chariho.k12.ri.us/RYSE/sped_programs.htm
- Scavo Alternative High School, Iowa
Home site. Flexible classes for students both from regular and special education are offered.
<http://www.dmps.k12.ia.us/programs/4scavo.htm>
- The check and connect model
This is a thorough description of each feature of this program.
<http://ici.umn.edu/checkandconnect/model/default.html>
 - Program impact
Some data regarding the check and connect model are presented in easily understandable charts.
<http://ici.umn.edu/checkandconnect/impact/default.html>

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