Preparing All Students for Success After High School: Understanding Secondary Transition in Massachusetts

CCR Webinar Series
April 15, 2014

Amanda Green,
Special Education Planning and Policy
agreen@doe.mass.edu

Lisa Harney
College and Career Readiness
lharney@doe.mass.edu

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Massachusetts State Goal

To prepare all students for success after high school
Success after high school

Recognizing that academic proficiency is not enough to ensure success after high school, students also need to acquire the knowledge, skills and experiences required to navigate the workplace and function as contributing citizens.

To that end, the following definition of career readiness has been adopted:
Career readiness means an individual has the requisite knowledge, skills and experiences in the academic, workplace readiness and personal/social domains to successfully navigate to completion an economically viable career pathway in a 21st century economy.
Success After High School

★ The ESE goal of success after high school is a goal for ALL students
★ Students with disabilities may require additional supports and interventions to achieve this goal
★ Through transition planning students with disabilities can ensure they access critical supports as they plan for success after high school
What is Secondary Transition?

A coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed to be 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 postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

-- IDEA 2004: 34 CFR 300.43, Transition Services
Agenda

★ Why Secondary Transition?
★ The Role of Families
★ Transition Process Overview
★ Some Key Ideas:
  ★ The student’s vision/postsecondary goals drive the transition process.
  ★ Transition assessments answer fundamental questions that indicate the way forward.
Why Secondary Transition?
Purposes of IDEA

...to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free and appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living....

20 USC §1400(d)(1)(A)
Families: A Powerful Role
Over 40 Years of Research

When families are involved at home and at school...

children do better in school...

AND

...schools are better at educating children.
Parent Involvement

- Random Acts
- Events-driven
- Add-on
- No infrastructure
- Compliance

Family Engagement

- Systemic
- Student outcome-oriented
- Integrated
- Sustainable over time
- Ownership and continuous improvement
A Universal Experience

Everyone experiences transitions from one stage of life to the next; this is part of being alive. Parents want their children to have this normal experience.

With every transition, something is ending and there is excitement and fear about what is beginning.

Even when students and families desire changes, they can still experience stress. This stress is also part of transition.

Students and families need to become knowledgeable about the many factors which contribute to a successful entry and adjustment to adult life.
Transition Process Overview
Massachusetts Student-Driven Secondary Transition Model

Postsecondary Success
- education/training
- competitive employment
- independent living
- community participation

Student self-determination
- family, community & adult services
- whole school, transition assessment, TPF, IEP

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
State Requirement: By Age 14

★ Student is invited to the IEP meeting as a full member of the Team.

★ Beginning at age 14, and continuing annually, the Team considers:
  ★ student’s needs, strengths, preferences, interests
  ★ student’s desired outcomes for post-secondary education/training, employment, and adult living.

www.doe.mass.edu/sped/28MR/28m9.pdf
By age 14 & older: Developmental Suggestions

- Can your student describe:
  - his/her strengths?
  - his/her learning style?
  - how his/her disability affects his/her learning, social experiences, and community participation?
  - his/her vision for the future?

- What can your student do independently? How independent is your student as a learner/with peers in social interactions? How independent is your student at home?

- Has your student received instruction and/or engaged in role play to enable him/her to actively participate in/lead the IEP meeting?
The Transition Planning Form (TPF)

- Flexible brainstorming tool
- Guides and documents the team’s Transition planning discussion.
- Informs IEP development
- Provides an action plan to be implemented by student, family, community members, whole school, adult agencies, etc.

- A state-mandated form that must be maintained with the IEP but is not part of the IEP. *Nothing on the TPF is mandated to occur.*
Individualized Education Program (IEP)

» A roadmap for the student to achieve his/her vision through specially designed instruction, related services.

» A legal document spelling out what the district will do.
In What Order?

★ The Team discusses and completes the TPF **before** completing the IEP form.

★ The **student’s** vision statement/postsecondary goals from the TPF is transferred directly to the Vision statement on the IEP. (The rest of the Team may add their thoughts to the Vision statement when it is on the IEP, if desired.)

★ The student’s disability-related needs from the TPF are used to inform annual goal development on the IEP. An annual IEP goal should focus on building skills that will make the biggest difference to the student during that school year. Each year’s annual goals build skills, year over year, that will lead to the realization of the student’s vision/postsecondary goals.

★ Elements from the Action Plan *may* be included in the IEP, if the school district is responsible for them.
Additional Federal and State Requirements

**AGE 16**
- Depending on the anticipated age at exit, possible Chapter 688 referral, www.doe.mass.edu/sped/688

**AGE 17**
- Discuss/provide written notice:
  - transfer of rights
  - educational decision-making process
    *Administrative Advisory SPED 2011-1: Age of Majority, www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/11_1.html*
By age 16/17 & older: Developmental Suggestions

★ Has disability disclosure been explored? (See The 411 on Disability Disclosure, www.ncwd-youth.info/411-on-disability-disclosure)

★ Can your student:
  ★ describe important laws that protect his/her rights as a person with a disability?
  ★ identify academic/social-emotional needs?
  ★ describe his/her communication style?
  ★ identify preferred accommodations and assistive technology?
  ★ ask for necessary support from familiar/unfamiliar people in his/her environment, e.g., teachers, employers, community members?
  ★ identify medical/daily living requirements and how to access supports, e.g. doctors, medication?
  ★ actively participate in/lead his/her own IEP meetings?
Additional Federal and State Requirements

AGE 18
★ Age of Majority: Transfer of parental rights for most students:
  Administrative Advisory SPED 2011-1: Age of Majority,
  www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/11_1.html

AGES 18-22
★ Chapter 688 referral 2 years prior to exiting school,
  www.doe.mass.edu/sped/688

★ Summary of Performance [34 CFR 300.305(e)(3)]
  www.doe.mass.edu/sped/IDEA2004/spr_meetings/eval_exitsummary.pdf
The student’s vision/postsecondary goals drive the transition process.
Vision is Essential

Experience has taught me that you cannot value dreams according to the odds of their coming true. Their real value is in stirring within us the will to aspire.

-- U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor
**Student Vision = Postsecondary Goals**

- **Postsecondary Goals** = goals that a **student** hopes to achieve after leaving secondary school (i.e., high school).

- A truly individualized process uses postsecondary goals as the foundation for the development of the IEP.

Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2013-1: *Postsecondary Goals and Annual IEP Goals in the Transition Planning Process*, [www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/13_1ta.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/13_1ta.html)
Each student's TPF and IEP vision statement should **explicitly** include at least*:

1. One measurable postsecondary goal in the area of **education/training**;
2. One measurable postsecondary goal in the area of **employment**;
3. If appropriate, one measurable postsecondary goal in the area of **independent living**.

* 34 CFR 300.320(b)(1)
What if my student has no idea what s/he wants to do?

- Young people may not have a clear vision of their future. Start the conversation. Provide experiences over time which can help your student discern what he/she wants.
- Encourage families to have conversations at home and in the community about the student’s dreams, strengths, interests, and challenges.
- You and your family partners can talk with the student about vision in many contexts, over time. Avoid introducing the vision discussion at the IEP table, when students may feel overwhelmed.
- All young people can communicate. Ensure that your student’s expressed preferences and interests are explored and incorporated into the vision.
What if my student knows exactly what s/he wants to do, but I think it’s unrealistic?

- Respect the student’s vision.

- Identify the skills required by the vision and collaborate with families to provide opportunities to develop those skills at school, at home and in the community.

- Brainstorm and collaborate with families and community members to provide related employment opportunities/experiences, including informational interviews, job shadowing, job carving, time-limited internships.
A clear and direct link should exist between the student's annual IEP goals and his/her vision/postsecondary goals as delineated in the Vision section of the TPF and IEP.
Using the Vision to Develop Annual IEP Goals

The team refers to the student's vision/postsecondary goals and asks:

- **What skills, strengths, interests, personal attributes, and accomplishments does the student currently have that will contribute to his/her postsecondary success?**

- **What skills and strengths will the student need to acquire in order to achieve his/her desired postsecondary outcomes?**
But how does the Team answer these questions?

Answer:

Transition Assessments!

(More to come....)
How can families become engaged in helping their students envision postsecondary options?
Begin the Vision Conversation: Portfolio Development

- A 3-ring binder and magazine pictures or lists
- Have student gather information/images/videos/sounds of meaningful things in his/her life:
  - Movies, music
  - Sports/sports figures
  - Places you live or visit
  - Vacations
  - Birthdays and special occasions
  - Hobbies
- Work experiences the student has had, or thinks s/he would want
  - Resumes
  - Awards
  - Certificates
  - Service Projects
  - Extracurricular participation
  - Letters of recommendation, etc.
Vision & Cultural Differences

Each person on the IEP team comes to the table with his/her own cultural background, and this influences each person’s view on how to approach transition planning. A family and student’s culture might be very different from the culture of school professionals.

Cultural differences may cause professionals to have different expectations for their students than families do. These differences might lead to conflict.

To improve communication and understanding, it can be helpful to invite families to share their cultural background and perspective with other members of the IEP team.
Age Appropriate Transition Assessment

★ Discern the student’s vision
★ Illuminate the student’s needs, strengths, preferences, interests
★ Measure progress
What Are Transition Assessments?

An ongoing process of collecting data on the individual's needs, strengths, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living, and personal and social environments. Formal and informal assessment data serve as the common thread in the transition process and form the basis for defining goals and services to be included in the IEP.

-- Adapted from Sitlington, Neubert, & LeConte, 1997; p. 70-71
A Transition Frame of Mind

Any assessment that is conducted when a student on an IEP is aged 14-22 can be viewed as a transition assessment, because it affords information which can be utilized to discern the student’s vision; understand the student’s needs, strengths, preference, and interests; and measure progress towards the acquisition of skills.
An Individualized, Question-Driven Process

The number and type of assessments which are appropriate to conduct for each student is determined by the number and type of questions about the student for which answers are needed.
What Questions Need to be Considered?

★ Who is the student (i.e., what are the student’s needs and strengths)?

★ Who does the student want to be, or what does the student want to do (i.e., what are the student’s preferences and interests)?

★ What is the fit between the student and the requirements of the educational, employment, and living environments into which the student plans to move when he or she exits high school?
Disability exists only in the gap between the individual’s personal competence and the demands of the environment. If we can close that gap, disability becomes irrelevant.

-- Professor Michael Wehmeyer, University of Kansas
Assessment Data Can Be Collected:

- Across multiple settings, e.g.:
  - School (both academic and “life of the school”)
  - Home
  - Community
  - Workplace

- From multiple people who know the student well, e.g.:
  - The student
  - Families
  - Teachers
  - Friends
  - Employers
  - Coaches
  - Agency personnel
  - Etc.

- Over Time, An Ongoing Process
Families: A Key Role in Assessment

★ The more students know, the more they can do. The more they can do, more opportunities are available to them.

★ Students need to learn to anticipate and participate in the rhythms of life.

★ Families know about their children when they’re with them – but not when their children are NOT with them. Educators know about their students when they’re with them – but not when students are NOT with them.

★ Families and educators fill in each other’s blanks.
Not every student will follow the same path after high school. For all students, it is our responsibility to prepare them for success, whatever pathway they choose.

The more students are engaged in planning their own futures, the more promising those futures are likely to be.
Resources

- Resources from the 2013 DESE Secondary Transition Capacity-Building Conference, www.doe.mass.edu/sped/2013/SecondaryTransition
- National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, www.nsttac.org
- U.S. Office for Civil Rights Transition of Students With Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators, www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transitionguide.html
- National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability, http://www.ncwd-youth.info/
Thank you for joining the webinar today!

* If you have a successful practice that promotes student-driven transition planning and would like to share it with us, please send it to:
  
  * Amanda Green, Special Education Planning and Policy, agreen@doe.mass.edu
  * Lisa Harney, College and Career Readiness, lharney@doe.mass.edu

*Have a great vacation week!*