

Options for Tomorrow

Transition planning for the future ...
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In This Issue

Controlling Your Own Destiny Through Self-Determination, pg. 1-2

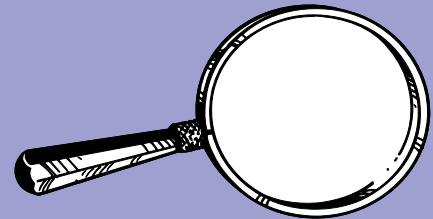
Planning Student Directed Transitions to Adult Life, pg. 2-4

Websites to Assist Students Preparing for Transition, pg. 5

Student Guide to the IEP, pg. 6

Controlling Your Own Destiny Through Self-Determination

Self-determination is believing that you are in control of your own destiny. Self-determination encompasses such concepts as free will, freedom of choice, independence and individual responsibility. Many students on IEP's need to learn to advocate for themselves in the adult world. Self-determination encourages students to become self-aware, assertive, creative, problem solve and to self-advocate. To take charge of ones own life one must be able to set goals, evaluate options, and make choices and work to achieve goals. All people have the right to direct their own lives and people experiencing a disability need to learn the skills to direct their own destiny. Schools are including students over the age of 14 in planning transition goals and directing their own IEP. As parents and educators we have to be willing to let students have a say in their IEP and work towards goals that are determined as a team.



To Order this Free Newsletter!

Any parent, teacher, agency representative or student who wishes to receive this newsletter can email us at step@asdk12.org or call 742-3872. All email addresses will be used for this newsletter subscription only and will be held confidential.

Controlling Your Own Destiny, cont'd

Student should be given the opportunity to generate real life plans with real economic goals. As with all children, children with disabilities need to learn "real world" life skills and need to have the chance to make mistakes and to learn from their mistakes.

We can promote self-determination in students by:

- Encouraging student to adult communication
- Praising student efforts
- Developing opportunities at home and in school for students to practice self-advocacy
- Provide leadership opportunities for students
- Help students practice ways to disclose their disability and accommodation needs.

We need to encourage students to take an active roll in determining their own future. Self-determination promotes student choice and responsibility.

Planning Student-Directed Transitions to Adult Life

ERIC/OSEP Digest #E593

Authors: Cynthia Warger and Jane Burnette

March 2000

Today, transition is seen as more than providing service routes in the individual's movement from high school to employment-it is seen as a comprehensive approach to educational program development consisting of an alignment of student goals with educational experiences and services.

Since the early 1980s, federal law has underscored the need for comprehensive transition planning and broadened its focus. The 1997 Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines transition services as a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that:

- * Is designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.
- * Is based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests.
- * Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

IDEA also states that transition planning must be part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and begin at age 14. By age 16, the IEP should contain a statement of needed transition services for the child, including, when appropriate, a statement of interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. Further, students must be invited to attend their IEP meetings if the purpose of the meeting will be to consider the student's transition service needs.

How can educators facilitate these new requirements- especially those that promote and strengthen the involvement of students with disabilities in decisions regarding their own futures? This digest describes how research is helping to inform practice around that programmatic issue.

Facilitating Student-Centered Transition Planning

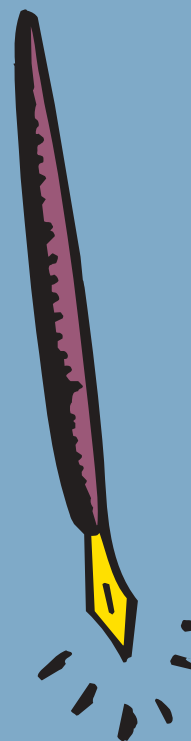
IDEA '97 and its 1999 Regulations reflect a body of research—much of it supported by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP—that describes aspects of quality transition programs for students with disabilities. One of those key aspects is facilitating student-centered transition planning.

With OSEP support, Kohler (1998) organized the research literature, model projects, and exemplary programs on transition into a taxonomy of relevant practices. She found that student-focused planning was a necessary component in facilitating transition. Because the Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the planning vehicle for implementing the transition requirements specified in the IDEA, student participation in this process is essential. Specifically, students should be included in decisions related to post-school goals to ensure they are valued and attainable. As such, self-determination skills are considered to be fundamental to student participation in their own IEPs.

Practitioners should begin early to assist and guide students in developing appropriate education programs based on individual transition goals. With OSEP support, Martin et al. (in press) has studied skills students need to participate actively in their IEPs. These include:

- * How to choose goals. Provide experiences so students identify their interests, skills, and limits across transition areas.
- * How to participate in and lead their IEP meetings. Teach students self-determination, self-advocacy, and meeting skills.
- * How to accomplish goals. Teach students how to develop a plan to attain their goals, take action on the plan, evaluate and adjust their plan of action.

Curricula are available to assist practitioners in helping students direct their IEPs (e.g., Martin et al., 1996).



Helping Students Participate in their IEP

With sufficient preparation and support, students can participate in their IEP process in various ways. The extent of participation will depend on their abilities and interests—for example, some students direct their own meeting, while others take a specific part to direct. Teachers experienced in involving their students in the IEP process have made the following suggestions (ERIC/OSEP Special Project, 2000):

- * Begin instruction as early as possible. Some areas of study, such as self-determination skills, can begin in the elementary school.
- * Be prepared to support students with sensitive issues. Some students may never have seen their IEP and some may not even know what it means. Even if a student knows about IEPs, reading about one's disability can be unsettling. Teachers need to work through all issues and questions with students. It may help to talk individually with students before sharing the IEP.
- * Ensure that students understand what their disability means. It is important that students know about their disability and can talk about it to others. Encourage students to become comfortable stating what they need and what they do not need.
- * Make sure you feel comfortable with the process. Students will know if adults are uncomfortable talking about a topic or allowing the student to lead the IEP.
- * Schedule time for students to develop skills related to IEP participation on a regular basis. It is very easy to let other subjects—particularly academics—take priority. Teachers must believe that self-determination, planning, and self-advocacy skills are priorities.
- * Teach IEP participation skills as a semester course. Students need sufficient time to master the skills. Although students can be taught skills once a week or in a day-long course, if you really want students to take an active role, you must allow sufficient time.
- * Use motivational techniques to interest students. Before you begin training, invite an individual with a disability to talk to students. It helps to have role-alike models as speakers (e.g., an individual who is a college graduate, an individual who has gone to a vocational education center, an individual who works in supported employment, a person who owns a business).
- * Communicate with families. Let parents know your intentions. It helps to invite families to a meeting where you can explain the approach and answer their questions.

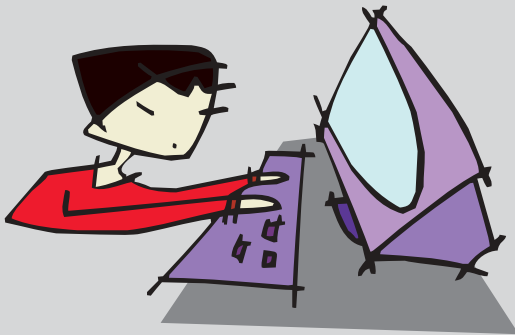
These teachers believe that with sufficient preparation and support, students at all levels can actively participate in the IEP process. Teachers also have found that without preparation, students may not understand the language or the IEP process, and may feel as if other IEP team members have not listened to them. Teachers who have included students successfully note that they feel good about their participation, and they have a sense of accomplishment and empowerment as a result of their participation in the process.

Websites to Assist Students Preparing for Transition

Access Alaska

<http://adapartners.org/access.htm>

Access Alaska provides independent living services to people who experience a disability. They encourage and promote the total integration of people who experience a disability to live independently within the community of their choice.



Center for Self Determination

<http://www.self-determination.com/>

The Center for Self-Determination is not a place. It is a highly interactive working collaborative of individuals and organizations committed to the principles of self-determination. The purpose of the collaborative is to change the nature of the support and service system for individuals with disabilities, using the principles of self-determination to help all persons create the lives they want, connected to and with their communities.

HEATH Resource Center

<http://www.heath.gwu.edu/index.html>

Information exchange about educational support services, policies, and procedures at Post secondary learning institutions.

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET)

<http://www.ncset.org/>

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition seeks to increase the capacity of national, state and local agencies and organizations to improve secondary education and transition results for youth with disabilities and their families.

Office of Public Advocacy

<http://www.state.ak.us/guardianship/>

This state office provides trainings on guardianship and conservatorship.

University of Anchorage-Alaska Center for Human Development

<http://www.alaskachd.org/about.html>

The Center for Human Development (CHD) is one of 61 University Centers located in every state and territory, which attempts to bring together the resources of the university and the community in support of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Western Regional Resource Center – Secondary Transition

<http://interact.uoregon.edu/wrrc/transitiondocument.html>

This information module deals directly with web information on secondary transition.

Student's Guide to the IEP

The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities has published Student Guides. Developed especially for older students with disabilities, these award-winning guides are actually a set of materials: a booklet for students, another for families and professionals, and an audiotape for everybody! Their materials includeL

Students with disabilities can be important participants in developing their own IEPs! The audiotape in Set 1 features several students, all of whom have disabilities, talking about their experiences as active participants in the IEP process. The accompanying student booklet guides students through the process of learning how the IEP is developed, learning about their own disability, listing their strengths and areas of need, identifying what accommodations they need in school, developing a list of goals and objectives for the year, talking with teachers and parents, and preparing for and participating in the IEP meeting. 2002, 12 pages.

The tape and the student guide are intended to be used in combination with the technical assistance guide: Helping Students Develop Their IEPs (described below).

Technical Assistance Guide: Helping Students Develop Their IEPs (TA2B)

This TA guide is meant to be used in combination with A Student's Guide to the IEP.

- * Text only —TA 2B
- * PDF —TA 2B
- * Script of the audiotape (Tape1) —TA 2B

Would you like to help students with disabilities become active participants in their own IEP meeting? This TA Guide will tell you how. It's written expressly for parents, teachers, and school administrators. Detailed suggestions are given for teaching students about the purpose and contents of IEPs, and how to discuss their disability, learning styles, and accommodation needs. An audiotape program accompanies the guide and features teachers, administrators, and parents, who share their experiences with student participation in the IEP process. 2002, 20 pages.

To locate these guides directly, please visit <http://www.nichcy.org/stuguid.asp>.

