

***TOOLS FOR PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS
AND REDUCING DELINQUENCY***

STEP 5.

**Transition from School to
Post-School Activities**

- Introduction
- Bridges from School to Work (*a promising practice*)
- Community Transition Program (C-Tran) (*a promising practice*)
- High School/High Tech (HS/HT) (*a promising practice*)
- Transition Toolkit for Systems Improvement (*a best practice*)

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Step 5. Transition from School to Post-School Activities

Introduction*

The purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)¹ is to ensure children with disabilities have a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that prepares them for further education, employment and independent living. The proper transition of youth from high school to the adult world is critical to ensure youth are ready for the next phase of their lives. The IDEA has recognized this importance and specifically requires school districts to provide transition services for students with disabilities².

In 2004 Congress reauthorized IDEA and strengthened the transition requirements of the law by requiring a focus on both the academic *and* functional needs of eligible youth. The transition services for a particular student are determined by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. It is important for students to be present, and their preferences and interests considered and discussed, during IEP team meetings to determine what transition services to include in their IEPs.

Specifically, transition services must include a "coordinated set of activities" that facilitates a student's movement from school to post-school activities. Post-school activities include, but are not limited to: employment, vocational training, post-secondary education, supported employment, and independent living. The services provided to transitioning students should be based not only on the students' needs, but also on their interests for post-school life. A school can be and should be creative when determining what services to provide a student; however, the basic types of services include:

- instruction;
- related services;

* * A *Reference List* for each of the nine Steps, including this Step, can be found in Appendix E.

¹ 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq. See: <http://idea.ed.gov> for in-depth information about the law and regulations (searchable site for IDEA statutory and regulatory cites).

² To be eligible for special education services, a student must be identified as having one or more of the 12 qualifying disabilities (i.e., mental retardation, hearing impairments, speech and language impairments, etc.) and by reason of the disability require special education and related services. 20 U.S.C. § 1401(3).

- living objectives;
- daily living skills; and
- a functional vocational evaluation (20 U.S.C. §1401(34)(C)).

The planning for transition services must begin during the IEP meeting held for the IEP that will be in place when the student turns 16. However, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) encourages schools to begin transition services earlier than age 16 “if determined appropriate by the IEP Team” (34 C.F.R. § 300.320(b)). There is nothing in the federal law that prohibits an IEP team from beginning transition services as early an age as is needed. Therefore, students could begin transition services when they are 14 or younger, if appropriate. A student’s transition goals must be updated every year and the services provided must be geared to help the student achieve those goals.

One important element of transition is coordination with other local agencies. Because students will be moving out of the school environment into other areas of their life, connections with agencies that can assist them in that move is essential. Typically, students should be linked with the vocational rehabilitation agency in their region and assigned a vocational rehabilitation counselor. More information is available on the website of the U.S. Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/index.html>. Links to vocational rehabilitation offices in every state also are available online at <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/SBSES/VOCREHAB.HTM>.

The input and services of other agencies is so important that the IDEA requires school districts, to the extent appropriate, to invite to IEP meetings representatives of other agencies that are likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. Schools must have the consent of the parents (or the student if of the age of majority) before inviting the other agency personnel (34 C.F.R. § 300.321(b)).

In order for schools to meet the needs and interests of transition students, creativity often is needed. There are countless programs and models of successful transition services available. One place to research transition service models is the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability Pro-Bank, http://www.ncwd-youth.info/promising_Practices/index.html. Several models are highlighted in this Step.

- The ***Bridges from School to Work Program (Bridges)*** is sponsored by the Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities, a not-for-profit organization. Bridges places youth who are in school or recently exited school in jobs, and assists youth in advancing in their jobs. There are *Bridges* programs in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. However, other communities may use the program as a model to work with companies to develop a similar program. The Marriot Foundation is available for consultation and assistance if a community wishes to model the program.

- The ***Community Transition Program (C-Tran)*** provides a step-by-step manual on how to implement program. It focuses on students who have met their IEP requirements but are still in need of transition services. Although students attend classes, the services are provided completely outside of the school setting, and combine work with social skill development, and life skill training. This model is geared for students with mild-to-moderate disabilities and requires students to have a baseline of skills before entering the program.
- **The High School/High Tech (HS/HT) program** began approximately 20 years ago with the concern that not enough students, especially students with disabilities, were entering the technology fields. In 1986 the program was adopted by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. When the President's Committee was dissolved in 2001, the U.S. Department of Labor developed the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), and High School/High Tech (HS/HT) became one of the Department's initiatives. The program is based on four core design features that assist students in gaining leadership and employment skills in the technology fields. There is a comprehensive manual that will help schools and local communities and states develop a HS/HT program.
- More than 40 national organizations and individuals joined the National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition (NASSET) to develop a national set of standards for transition. NASSET developed a "Toolkit" that describes the standards and the quality indicators: the ***National Standards & Quality Indicators: Transition Toolkit for Systems Improvement (Toolkit)***. This *Toolkit* includes guidance, instructions and forms for use by states and local agencies to develop programs based on the national standards.

Overall, transition is a critical component of education for students eligible for special education under the IDEA. With proper transition services, students can move into the adult world without gaps in services needed to prepare them for successful employment and independent living. The more time and energy devoted to providing meaningful and successful transition for students, the more likely they will have productive lives after school.

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Step 5. Transition from School to Post-School Activities

Bridges from School to Work (a promising practice)

BRIEF OVERVIEW

The *Bridges from School to Work (Bridges)* program is sponsored by the Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities, a not-for-profit organization. The goal of *Bridges* is to foster employment of people with disabilities by placing young people who are in school or recently exited school in jobs, and to assist youth in advancing in their jobs. There are *Bridges* programs in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. The program focuses on developing competitive employment as a step towards longer-term opportunities.

The program is designed to assist youth with disabilities, both in and out of school; youth who are pregnant or have a child; youth in foster care (or aging out); and urban and minority youth. *Bridges* focuses on training and supporting the youth who are hired while also assisting employers with communication, supervision, and discipline issues.

The process begins with a one-day pre-placement training called Youth/Parent Orientations (YPO). During this training, students and parents are introduced to the benefits of the program, informed of the expectations of employers, and provided information about appropriate communication with employers. A *Career Development Plan* is created for each youth, and updated quarterly while the youth is in the program. The plan identifies the individual's interests, long-term career goals, and needs and obstacles. It develops specific plans to address these challenges with objectives and benchmarks. Each individual is provided with supports depending on needs, for example: travel; training; job coaching; and modified job training processes.

With the assistance of *Bridges* staff, participants take part in assessments. The staff also meets one-on-one with participants to develop the individual's job readiness. After an individual is placed in a job, staff maintains continuous contact to ensure supports are in place for success.

After 18 -24 months in the program, participants will advance if they have met three of five criteria (exceptions apply for individuals with severe or profound disabilities). The five areas are:

1. increase in hourly wage;
2. increase in hours worked per week;
3. quantifiable increase in job responsibilities or transfer to a position with such an increase;
4. pursuit of postsecondary education or training; and
5. continuous employment for twelve months.

The criteria are presented as a method to measure progress, and individuals are not penalized if they do not meet the criteria.

The Marriott Foundation oversees the *Bridges* program. Employer representatives on its staff identify potential jobs for participants. A database includes information about services provided, outcomes, and indicators that identify project strengths and weaknesses. The employer representatives are continually trained both formally and informally on how to assist individuals and employers.

IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

The program is operated by the Marriott Foundation and has five core staff members that assist with the program. Currently, there are 75 site-based staff in seven cities. Logistical support is also provided to the city programs, including human resources, accounting and risk management. Intensive formal and informal training of staff includes a basic introduction into the program as well as learning the schools the staff serves and employers in the region. New staff shadows current staff to model best practices. Collaboration is needed with employers, public schools, and social service agencies as they provide some funding.

According to the Marriott Foundation website, finite resources limit the number of *Bridges* programs it can be operating at any time. In establishing *Bridges* programs, its priority is in communities that have a significant Marriott presence. However, the primary philosophies and processes upon which *Bridges* is based can be duplicated anywhere. Foundation staff are available to assist those who would like to include their philosophies or processes in local efforts.

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND AVAILABLE EVIDENCE

The program was evaluated from 1990 to 2005. More than 11,400 youth were enrolled in the program during that time and more than 8,400 youth entered competitive employment. Of the youth who participated in the program, 6,594 were black, 2,538 Hispanic, 1,417 white and 890 "other." The average hourly wage was \$6.37 with the

youth working an average of 21.65 hours a week. Six months after entering the program, the average hourly wage was \$7.06 with average hours per week at 26.44 hours.

The Office of School-to-Work, School-to-Work Intermediary Project recognized *Bridges* as an "effective" practice in 2000. In 2004, the U.S. Secretary of Labor honored *Bridges* as one of five businesses to receive the annual New Freedom Initiative Award.

RESOURCES

- Contact for more information:

Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities

<https://marriottfoundation.org/foundation/contact.mi>

- FAQs about *Bridges*. <http://marriottfoundation.org/foundation/question.mi>
- Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities website. <http://marriottfoundation.org/foundation/default.mi>
- San Francisco Chronicle Article. <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2006/05/04/BUG7KIKBMV1.DTL>

BACKGROUND READING

- Education Resources Information Center. http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?nfpb=true&pageLabel=RecordDetails&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ567064&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_accno&objectId=0900000b80010900
- National Collaboration on Workforce and Disability. http://www.ncwd-youth.info/promising_Practices/display_pro-bank.php?selection=199
- Social Security Online. (2006). *A Summary Guide to Employment Support for Individuals With Disabilities Under the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SDI) Programs*. <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/redbook/eng/main.htm>

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Step 5. Transition from School to Post-School Activities

Community Transition Program (C-Tran) (a promising practice)

Community-based transition programs are alternative special education opportunities, developed by public school systems, in age-appropriate settings. They are located around the United States at four-year or community colleges and in other community settings such as vocational-technical schools, homes, offices, and businesses. *C-Tran* is an example of a school-supported program.

BRIEF OVERVIEW

The ***Community Transition Program (C-Tran)*** is a transition program for students who have mild-to-moderate disabilities and, although otherwise eligible for graduation, are in need of transition services. The program is community-based and provides daily skills-building activities beyond the student's job.

The program starts each year with a two-week orientation where students meet the other participants and the staff. During this time students also participate in a variety of activities. Later, students will be asked to choose their activity preferences. Staff members assess the students' skills and strengths during this time as well focusing on issues such as money handling, telling time, and telephone etiquette. The program is housed in an apartment where students cook, clean and eat together at times.

At the end of the first two weeks, an individualized schedule is developed for each student. In addition, every student participates in core program elements. Every Monday students plan a budget for the week, plan menus and shop for groceries. In the afternoon, students attend an arts and crafts class. During the arts and crafts class, the co-teachers meet to discuss the programs and work together on issues. On Fridays, students participate in a social activity in the morning and have lunch together at a voted-on restaurant. In the afternoon, they participate in an activity that was voted-upon earlier. The Friday activities range from museum visits to putt-putt golf. Every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning, there is a one-hour teaching time. These

teaching times are used to discuss issues significant to transition and often involve guest speakers. For example, a school resource officer might talk about safety issues, the American Red Cross about first aid, and the Housing Authority about Section VIII and other housing issues. Students have daily chores and use the public transportation system to get around town when feasible (e.g., there are no time constraints).

Students are expected to join the program with some basic skills. However, no particular set of skills is necessary to join the program. Students will carry a planner, a purse or wallet, and a notebook that contains their IEP objectives as well as a notebook with personal information such as medical information, clothing sizes, and community contacts.

IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

C-Tran is located in a duplex in Lawrence, Kansas that is accessible to public transportation. One teacher, a social worker, and three paraprofessionals support 13 students. Participation in the program is determined by the IEP team, and goals are created through a person-centered planning process. Students create their own schedules incorporating work, instructional time, and recreation/leisure activities. The teacher and para-educators assist students in becoming as independent as possible.

There are many details to adhere to in order for this program to work, such as repair issues for the apartment, doctor appointments to attend, and transportation issues. Overall, what is needed is a commitment from the special education director, the superintendent of schools, or both, and some key resource staff.

The special education director or other key personnel also will need to provide some basic resources and involvement with the program. In the *C-Tran* program, the special education director provided staff, utilities, a computer, a washer and dryer, a cell phone, pagers, and an allowance of purchase orders for grocery stores and Wal-Mart or Target as well as supplies from the school. Other necessary funding had to come from fundraising activities.

A site in the community will be needed to house the program as well as furniture, appliances and other household items. A van or other vehicle might be necessary.

In addition to the basic set-up needs of the program, there needs to be a process for determining which children are appropriate for the program. Information about the program needs to be disseminated to schools, teachers, and families. A skills inventory form is needed to assist in determining if the program will meet a student's needs. The IEP team needs to meet to make the ultimate determination of placement into the program, and an IEP that addresses the student's transition needs to be developed. It is helpful if *C-Tran* personnel can attend the IEP meeting. When a student is accepted

into and enters the program, the staff will need to track the student's progress with IEP objectives and provide report cards.

Because the program focuses on life skills such as work and independent living, collaboration with adult service providers also is required. It is beneficial to develop the program from the beginning with in-put and collaboration with these service providers.

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND AVAILABLE EVIDENCE

The *C-Tran* program in Lawrence, KS bases its goals and outcomes on the transition guidelines and student interests, and it is regularly evaluated to consider program improvements. The program keeps progress data on all students served throughout the year. A graduate student has done an outcomes research project on the program. Other districts and states have come to visit and observe the program. Although a specific program evaluation has not been done, based on the progress students make, coupled with feedback from parents, young adults and community agencies, *C-Tran* is an emerging practice at a minimum.

The Transition Coalition has designated C-Tran as a "model of success."
<http://www.transitioncoalition.org/cgiwrap/tcacs/new/collaboration/mos/index.php?page=ctran>

In a follow-up study of the students who were reached, 100% were employed at that time.
<http://www.transitioncoalition.org/cgiwrap/tcacs/new/collaboration/mos/index.php?page=ctran>

RESOURCES

- Contact for more information:

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E-mail dmpatton@usd497.org

- Baska, L., Kaufman, A., Gaumer, Morningstar, A., Lattin, M., & Peterson, D. (2003). *The Community Transition Program: Experiences Starting a Community-Based Program for Students Ages 18-21*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, Department of Special Education.
http://www.transitioncoalition.org/~tcacs/new/files/47365_FINAL_WEB.pdf

- Keetle, S. (1997). *C-Tran functional analysis of behavior*. Lawrence, KS. Lawrence Public Schools.

BACKGROUND READING

Websites

- Kansas Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) for Students with Disabilities (a recipient of the Models of Success Award given by the KU Transition Coalition). <http://www.ksylf.org/sponsor.shtml>
- The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) (resources for youth with disabilities to create successful futures). <http://www.ncset.org/>
- The Transition Coalition. www.transitioncoalition.org
- The Transition Coalition. Mini-Modules. <http://www.transitioncoalition.org/cgiwrap/tcacs/new/resources/resources/index.php>
- The Youthhood.org (a website to assist teens plan for the future after high school). www.youthhood.org
- Transition Planning for Youths with Disabilities. <http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/sped/tri/transindex.html>
- Transition Research Institute at Illinois (TRI) (an information resource for teachers and others to promote the successful transition of youth with disabilities from school to adult life). <http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/SPED/tri/institute.html>

Articles and reports

- Cambridge, P. and Carnaby, S. 2005. *Person Centred Planning and Care Management with People with Learning Disabilities*. Jessica Kingsley Publishing, London. <http://www.jkp.com/catalogue/book.php/contents/9781843101314>
- Chadsey, J., Leach, L., & Shelden, D. (2001). *Including Youth With Disabilities In Educational Reform: Lessons Learned From School-To-Work States*. Transition Research Institute, University of Illinois. <http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/SPED/tri/statestories.htm>
- Falvey, M.A., Forest, M., Pearpoint, J. & Rosenberg, R.L. (1997). *All my life's a circle. Using the tools: Circles, MAPS & PATHS*. Toronto, Canada: Inclusion Press. Available from the Inclusion.com website. www.inclusion.com
- Family Life & Sexual Health (FLASH). (2005). *Audio-Visual & Other Special Educators' Resources*. Seattle & King County, Washington. <http://www.metrokc.gov/health/famplan/flash/special-education/SE-AppendixI.pdf>
- Hart, D. (2006). Postsecondary Education Options for Students with Intellectual Disabilities. Institute for Community Inclusion. http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=178

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Step 5. Transition from School to Post-School Activities

High School/High Tech (HS/HT) (a promising practice)

High School/High Tech (HS/HT) is a transition and career development program for transition-age high-school youth with disabilities. It provides them an opportunity to explore careers or gain further education that may lead to careers in science, technology, engineering and math (the STEM careers). The purpose of the *HS/HT* grants is to assist states, working in partnership with the state Workforce Investment Board, the state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency, and others to implement a statewide HS/HT program, integrate the HS/HT program into youth services funded under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and ensure sustainability of the HS/HT program through state-level management and coordination.

The program began approximately 20 years ago with the concern that not enough students, especially students with disabilities, were entering the technology fields. In 1986 the program was adopted by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. When the President's Committee was dissolved in 2001, Congress created the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) within the U.S. Department of Labor, and High School/High Tech (HS/HT) became one of the Department's initiatives.

BRIEF OVERVIEW

HS/HT is a community-based program that operates in various settings, including schools and other educational settings, VR agencies, and a variety of community-based organizations. The program incorporates activities and innovative curriculum to address all aspects of the framework for a comprehensive program of transition services outline in the *Guideposts for Success*, a publication by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth). These five categories of activities and services are:

- preparatory experiences;
- career preparation and work-based learning experiences;
- youth development and leadership;

- connecting activities; and
- family involvement and support.

Preparatory experiences are those services provided at the site or educational setting and typically consist of using curriculum and program options based on universal design of school and work, and receiving support from and by highly qualified staff.

Work-based experiences include industry site visits, job shadowing, internships, paid employment, and other on-the-job training that help prepare the student for what is expected in the working world. **Youth development** and leadership activities assist students in becoming self-sufficient and developing independent thinking skills.

Connecting activities involve connecting students to those services needed from other agencies to assist with the move into the work world, as well as addressing assistive technology and transportation needs. **Family involvement and support** refers to ensuring that the student has family members and other caring adults involved in helping with the transition to adult life.

A manual that describes how to implement a *HS/HT* program further explains the different aspects of the *Guideposts for Success*, which are based on research about what all youth, including youth with disabilities, need to succeed in the adult world. NCWD/Youth provides technical assistance to HS/HT programs nationwide.

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>

HS/HT programs promote evidenced-based best practice. Through the *Guideposts to Success*, *HS/HT* has provided youth with disabilities with the opportunity to receive comprehensive transition services, including school-based preparation experiences, career exploration and work-based learning experiences, youth development and youth leadership and family involvement.

IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

To create a sustainable program, building a *HS/HT* program must be done at the state and local levels. A sustainable program requires state governmental agencies to allocate essential resources (human and fiscal) needed to establish and run a *HS/HT* program. In order to become a *HS/HT* affiliate site, a program must meet a certain set of criteria. There are four stages of affiliate status: pre-operational site, developing site, fully developed site and reorganizing site.

In order to be recognized as a fully developed site, a program must meet all standards within three years of affiliation. The standards vary depending on whether the site is a local site or a state site. These requirements include: ensuring that a student is not denied eligibility solely based on type or severity of disability, providing data, and for state systems developing a technical assistance program. In order to use the *HS/HT* logo the program must: provide year-round opportunities for two years in all four design features listed above; agree to document and report progress on a yearly basis;

and develop partnerships with stakeholders such as educational agencies and the vocational rehabilitation agency. Persons with a disability between the ages of 14 and 21 are eligible to participate in the program.

In order to develop a program, coalitions will need to be formed. Initially, meetings with schools and local business will be needed to gain their support. Next, a meeting with interested parties will need to be held. This meeting should begin to develop the structure of the program, determining who will be the administrative entity for the program, whether the program will have an advisory counsel (information is provided in the manual in Chapter 4 on how to develop an advisory counsel), and designing a plan that includes local business partners and schools. The plan should ensure that all five aspects of the *Guideposts* are being addressed. Then the coalition submits a request to become an affiliate and holds a kick-off event. Assistance is available at a variety of levels including the national level.

Gaining the support and collaboration of key players is critical to make the *HS/HT* program work. The *HS/HT* Manual describes Mattessich and Monsey's six essentials to successful collaboration:

- environment;
- membership;
- process/structure;
- communication;
- vision; and
- resources.

The manual also provides a chart of steps to create and sustain collaborations. In addition, a new program will need to be marketed to gain support. Chapter 11 of the manual provides principles and ideas for strategies to successfully market the program in the community.

Finally, annual program evaluations are required for each *HS/HT* program site. Annual reports on specific requirements are required. The Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award Criteria system has been adopted to evaluate the *HS/HT* program. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine outcome results and for a self-assessment to determine areas in need of improvement. Sound data will also help gain support for the program. Chapter 10 of the Manual provides in-depth information on how to evaluate a program, and information on how to access the data collection forms needed for evaluation.

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND AVAILABLE EVIDENCE.

Each year each *HS/HT* site reports information on customers, activities, resources and outcomes of the program. A data collection form is available for use. All of the

individual reports are aggregated into one yearly report for the *HS/HT* program as a whole.

According to recent reports, the number of students being served, the number of local sites in operation, and the number of schools participating in *HS/HT* continues to increase. At the conclusion of the 2005-2006 school year, *HS/HT* was operating with a state infrastructure in nine states (CO, DE, FL, GA, MD, MI, OH, OK and SC) and being implemented locally at a minimum of 12 sites in nine additional states (CA, CT, NJ, PA, SD, TX, VA, WA and WI). There are also efforts to establish additional sites in WI and TX, and to develop a new program in NM. At least two states, FL and MI, have *HS/HT* sites dealing with youth involved in the juvenile justice (JJ) system or youth at risk of entering the JJ system.

In the nine states with state *HS/HT* infrastructures, there were 135 sites in 351 schools. Cumulative data on the outcome for students in those states show *HS/HT* reduces the dropout rate for youth with disabilities and decrease the likelihood that such youth will be involved with the JJ system. *HS/HT* has also demonstrated its effectiveness in increasing the participation of youth with disabilities in postsecondary education and employment thus enhancing student's prospects for economic self-sufficiency. Of the 3,500 students served as of August 2006, only 12 dropped out of school. Of the 789 students who exited the program, 752 graduated from high school. A few youth left the program for other reasons (e.g., their families moved), and many of the 3,500 are still participating. Of those who graduated from high school, 540 went on to further education. Additionally, 897 of the students participating in *HS/HT* were involved in some type of "formal" work-based experience (e.g., internships-paid and unpaid, part-time employment and full-time employment).

RESOURCES

- Contact for more information:

Sallie Rhodes

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD/Youth)

4455 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310,

Washington, DC 20008

Phone: 202-822-8405, ext. 169

E-mail: collaborative@iel.org

- HS/HT Program Manual. http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&Publications/hsht_manual.html
- High School/High Tech website. <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/HSHT/about.php>
- High School/High Tech. U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. <http://www.dol.gov/odep/programs/high.htm>

- HS/HT Bulletin (2003). *Annual Data from High School/High Tech Sites*. Washington, DC: National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD/Youth). http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/hsht/bulletins/2004_6.pdf
- Using the High School/High Tech Design Features to Meet the Needs of Youth with Disabilities: A Supplement to the High School/High Tech Manual. http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/hsht/supplement1_design_features.doc

Funding Resources

- HS/HT funding resources organized by organization and state. <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/HSHT/resources.php>

BACKGROUND READING

- Americans with Disabilities Act: Overview. http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&Publications/disability_Legislation/ada_overview.html
- Information Brief (Dec. 2003). *Math, Science, and Technology: Essential Skills for Career Success in the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD/Youth). http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/info_briefs/infobrief_issue7.pdf
- Information Brief (Sept. 2002). *Labor Market Trends for Technology-Focused Occupations and Career Fields: Implications for High School/ High Tech Program Operators*. Washington, DC: National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD/Youth). http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/info_briefs/infobrief_issue2.pdf
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN). A free consulting service designed to increase the employability of people with disabilities provided by the U.S. Department of Labor. <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>

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Step 5. Transition from School to Post-School Activities

Transition Toolkit for Systems Improvement (a best practice)

BRIEF OVERVIEW

Transition services are important in meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities, and assisting their successful move to postsecondary education, careers, and other adult activities. Successful transition requires the coordinated effort of all stakeholders including schools, families, communities, service agencies, and employers.

In November 2003, the ***National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition (NASET)*** was created.² Over 40 national organizations and individuals joined the NASET mission to develop a national set of standards for transition that ensures the perspectives of stakeholders is paramount, specifically, NASET was created to:

- identify the needs of students to be successful in postsecondary education and training, community life, employment and adult life; and
- determine and prioritize issues of significant national importance that impact successful transition services and policies for all youth.⁴

From a multi-organizational perspective, NASET identified benchmarks that reflect quality secondary education and transition services for *all* students. In 2005, it published ***National Standards & Quality Indicators: Transition Toolkit for Systems Improvement ("Toolkit")***. According to the Foreword, the *Toolkit's* purpose is "to provide a common and shared framework for school systems and

³ The work of NASET was facilitated by the *National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET)*, www.ncset.org, is a national technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) through 2006. NCSET website continues to provide information related to secondary education and transition for youth with disabilities in order to create opportunities for youth to achieve successful futures.

⁴ NASET ceased to exist after this successful collaboration.

communities to identify what youth need in order to successfully participate in postsecondary education and training, civic engagement, meaningful employment, and adult life.”

Why National Standards?

As explained in the *Toolkit*, NASET identified five reasons why national standards are needed to improve results for all students.

1. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) support the goal of youth making successful transitions to adult life. In order to accomplish this goal, partnerships with students, families, schools, communities and the government are needed.
2. A shared mission and collaboration with community entities is critical to the success of many youth with disabilities.
3. National groups and organizations, including the White House and Congress, have found that high schools are failing our students, and therefore reform is needed to improve opportunities and results for students.
4. Research shows that outcomes for students improve when transition ensures a varied learning experience including: academic, career, technical education, work-based and development activities. In order to create these learning opportunities, collaboration among various entities and the student and family are required.
5. Because families are typically central to the relationship between children and their school career as well as the child’s life planning, it is critical to include the perspectives and interests of families in national standards.

NASET members identified five key areas as the focus for developing national standards: schooling; career preparatory experiences; youth development and youth leadership; family involvement; and connecting activities. Focus groups, consisting of representatives from national organizations and subject-matter experts, were established to address each area. These workgroups also represented the perspectives of youth with and without disabilities, family members, educators, administrators, researchers, service providers, and employers.

To ensure high-quality transition services and systems are created for students, the workgroups adopted criteria to guide the development of standards and quality indicators. It was determined that the standards and quality indicators should:

- reflect all youth;
- be general enough to serve various audiences;
- reflect research-based and best practices in the field;
- identify what youth need in order to successfully participate in postsecondary education, training, and other meaningful adult activities; and

- focus on effective practices within secondary programs and transition services to children with disabilities.

There are 20 standards (at least three for each of the five focus areas), and each standard has 2-7 indicators. For example, with regard to the *Youth Development and Youth Leadership* area, there are four standards. The fourth standard has two indicators:

3.4	Youth demonstrate the ability to make informed decisions about themselves.
3.4.1	Youth practice self-management and responsible decision-making that reflects healthy choices.
3.4.1	Youth demonstrate independent living skills.

Overall, the purpose of the national standards is to assist those who are responsible for planning and implementing transition systems for youth, including state and local administrators, and practitioners. The ultimate goal is for the work based on these standards and indicators to serve as a springboard for change in transition planning, implementation, and policies nationally.

IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

What each school or school district needs to effectively implement a transition program consistent with the national standards will be specific to each school or school district. The *Toolkit* provides a process for making those determinations.

The first step in determining what is needed is to engage in a self-assessment using the ***Self-Assessment Tool*** provided in the *Toolkit*. The school or school district identifies key community partners needed to implement an effective transition program. The key partners review the national standards and determine whether each indicator exists in their community (local or state), and to what extent the indicator exists. Each key partner separately rates each indicator on a scale of 0-3 (not evident, seldom evident, usually evident, and always evident). Next, the key partners meet to discuss their ratings with a goal of reaching agreement on the rating for each indicator.

Each standard is then rated for importance (high, mid, or low) using the ***Priority Setting Tool*** provided in the *Toolkit*. The Self-Assessment score combined with the Importance ratings produce a “Priority for Improvement” rating (high, mid, or low) for each standard and indicator.

For each priority issue identified using this process, an ***Action Plan*** is adopted using a worksheet provided in the *Toolkit*. The worksheet is used to identify goals and for each

goal, action steps and technical assistance needs. A second worksheet provided in the *Toolkit* is used to identify the following for each action step in the Action Plan: the lead agency, a timetable for completion; technical assistance needed, partners and resources, and expected outcomes.

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND AVAILABLE EVIDENCE

According to the *Toolkit*, evidence and research support each of the five issue areas as well as each standard and indicator. The *Toolkit* identifies the research and studies used to develop the standards. The four strategies used to identify the research and studies to used were: literature searches; recommendations by NASET staff members; recommendations from members of the workgroups; and consultations with experts.

The *Toolkit* was used as the basis for a 2003 National Leadership Summit for Improving Results for Youth. Representation from 46 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands attended the summit.

As of October 2006, at least 13 States have asked for additional information or technical assistance regarding the *Toolkit*.

RESOURCES

- Contact for more information:

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- National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition. (2005). ***The National Standards and Quality Indicators: Transition Toolkit for Systems Improvement***. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, National Center for Secondary Education and Transition. <http://www.nasetalliance.org/toolkit/>
- **National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition** website. <http://www.ncset.org/websites/naset.asp>
- National Leadership Summit for Improving Results for Youth. (2003). ***Findings & Outcomes: State Priorities and Need for Assistance***. Washington, DC. <http://www.ncset.org/summit03/findings.htm>

BACKGROUND READING

- Johnson, D.R., & Emanuel, E.J. Eds. (Nov. 2000). *Issues Influencing the Future of Transition Programs and Services in the United States*. Minneapolis, MN: National Transition Network Institute on Community Integration (UAP), University of Minnesota. [A collection of articles by leading researchers in secondary special education and transition services for students with disabilities.]
http://www.ncset.org/publications/related/NTN_Transition_Issues.pdf
- National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET). (Dec. 2004). *A National Study on Graduation Requirements and Diploma Options for Students with Disabilities*. <http://www.ncset.org/publications/related/NCSETgradreport.pdf>
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