

Chapter 10

Postsecondary Transition Planning: Starting Sooner Than Later

Charles William Kemp
Shawnee State University, USA

ABSTRACT

Understanding one of the major purposes of a student's individual education program (IEP), the postsecondary transition planning section, is key for preservice teachers. Though federal guidelines mandate the transition plan to start by age 16, many states require the development of the plan much earlier. The author believes that for some students, the transition plan is completed too late to have full effect. The chapter will give the preservice teacher the knowledge needed to understand the component of the transition plan and offer some resources and suggestions for assessments to develop the transition plan.

"Tell me, what is it that you plan to do with your one wild and precious life!" -Mary Oliver

"Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now!" -Alan Laken

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INTRODUCTION

Educators often have children who struggle to learn in their classroom, so they will make a referral to see if the student qualifies for special education services. Once the student qualifies, the Individual Education Program (IEP) is viewed as a way to get extra supports and services. Too often, in the younger years, little thought is given to what the child may need to be successful in life once graduating from high school. Transition planning is the component of the IEP that provides a road map for the student and his/her family concerning post-high-school education, employment, and independent living.

Students who have been identified with a disability will often have an Individual Education Program (IEP) that clearly outlines the supports and services the student needs to be successful in school. The IEP has a key component that addresses what will be provided for the student so she/he can be successful after graduation from high school. A wise, thoughtful IEP team will begin developing the transition plan sooner than later so the student will be as prepared as possible for life.

In the world of special education, transition planning often seems complicated, coordinated way too late, and confusing for teachers of general and special education alike (Madaus, 2005). Often, the parents of students with disabilities have the same feelings of frustration with a complicated system, confusion, and the feeling of too little too late for their child. Knowing these potential frustrations and concerns exist, the reader will gain insight into how to better plan for the transition needs of students.

Postsecondary transition planning is required to begin for students identified with a disability by age 16 as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The details of postsecondary transition planning can be found in the federal document entitled, *A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities* (U. S. Department of Education, 2020).

The guidelines of the Individuals with Disabilities for Education Act (IDEA) details for schools and families the requirements for transition planning for students with disabilities. The purpose of transition planning is to facilitate the student's move from school to post-school activities, mainly in three key areas: postsecondary education and training, competitive integrated employment, and independent living skills. IDEA states that transition planning must take place by the time the student reaches sixteen (16) years of age, but can begin as early as necessary to ensure the student is provided with the services and skills necessary to transition to post-school living. Some states like Ohio, Wisconsin, and Colorado, among others, have earlier than 16 years old requirements that include guidelines for transition planning to begin by a certain grade level in high school.

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