

# Middle School Transition Trail Map for Families

project10 transition education network

## Trail Marker 1

### Preparing for the Journey: Transition Activities from Elementary School to Middle School

This short guide is designed to help families and their students with disabilities from 5th to 9th grade. Middle School (MS) grades differ from school district to school district and the MS experience will differ depending on the types of programming and resources available. For example, school districts may identify MS as 6th-8th, 7th-9th and some may identify 5th grade as a part of MS. Students may also be attending a school with students in grades K through eight (8) or a center school. Students enter MS from elementary school and exit middle school to high school.

Middle School is where most students become teenagers.

Meet Ethan, Mia, Zoey and Levi. These students will be our guides on the MS trail and help us to clearly see the challenges they face and potential solutions they may access as they transition through the MS experience. The students' MS stories will be told throughout the trail map and will be shaded in light blue. Their stories shine a light on MS transition planning for your youth.

Ethan (5th grade)



Mia (6th grade)



Zoey (7th grade)



Levi (8th grade)



### Transitioning from Elementary School into the Middle School: Transition Activities and Responsibilities

Students with disabilities, including students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, will be supported during their transition into MS. Transition activities and responsibilities for school personnel, families and students are included in this section. The upper elementary and middle schools are responsible for providing students and families with the information and support they need for a smooth transition. Families of students with disabilities and the students themselves also have responsibilities to ensure a successful transition to MS. Review the recommendations for transition activities and responsibilities in the table that follows. For families of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, the transition activities are an especially critical time to work with school personnel to ensure your student's needs will be met ("[Making the Move from Elementary to Middle or Junior High School: Transition Tips for Parents of Students with Disabilities](#)").

Activities and Responsibilities to Support the Transition from Elementary School to Middle School	Activities and Responsibilities to Support the Transition from Elementary School to Middle School
For Elementary School (ES) and Middle School (MS) Personnel	For Families and Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ES will share student files to help middle school personnel to understand the student's strengths and needs in the areas of academics, behavior and social-emotional development.</li> </ul>	Participate in transition events sponsored by the ES.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MS personnel will make sure accommodations that have been provided in elementary school will be considered for the move to middle school.</li> <li>The ES Individual Educational Plan (IEP) team may invite a middle school representative to participate in the student's final meeting.</li> </ul>	Attend the final IEP meeting in ES.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ES will provide information to families that will help them begin to prepare their students for middle school. The information packets could include details about the middle school the student will be attending, brochures related to middle school transition and suggestions for activities that can be completed in the summer to support a smooth transition.</li> </ul>	Schedule a visit to the new MS to walk through the facilities and identify class locations during after school or summer hours.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MS may host a Transition event to familiarize families with school personnel, schedules, policies, facilities, extra-curricular activities and more.</li> <li>MS may host a Family Panel event in which a panel of MS families speak to the families of rising students and answer questions.</li> </ul>	After the student is enrolled in MS, attend school-sponsored orientation activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MS will extend an invitation to parents to participate in the initial IEP meeting.</li> </ul>	Attend the first IEP team meeting for MS. Ensure that you understand the educational setting in which the student is being placed.

If you have ever been hiking through a long trail, you know how important it is to get ready for the hike. A successful hike depends on planning and preparation. Your backpack should be filled with all the necessary items, such as a raincoat, water bottle, map, compass, food and a flashlight with extra batteries. There are many items to put into your virtual transition backpack, too.



## Transition into Middle School: Ethan's Backpack Checklist

- Attend final IEP meeting for 5th grade with a family member.

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- Choose summer learning activities that I like, such as reading, playing word games and physical activities.

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- Visit my new middle school or junior high school on 6th Grade Transition Night.

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- Visit the website of my new middle school or junior high school to learn more about the school.

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- Attend my first IEP meeting for 6th grade with a family member.

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- Talk with my family or teachers about any concerns or questions I have about going to a new grade and a new school.

Ethan, our 5th grade trail guide, and his family talked about the student responsibilities during the transition from 5th to 6th grade and now he is getting his backpack ready.



He has a checklist for things he can do to make his journey a successful one. Take a look at Ethan's checklist and add some of your own ideas. You will see that Ethan added summer learning to his list of preparations. Great idea, Ethan! Take a look at these [Six Great Ideas for Summer Learning](#) published by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE).

## Trail Marker 2

# Every Day on the Trail: Social Skills



Ethan felt overwhelmed by all of the social interaction at school in his early elementary years. His IEP team identified his support needs and developed goals and opportunities which increased his social skills in various settings. Ethan recognized that social skills helped him to be more confident and do his best at school. Social skills also help people to be more successful at work and in the community.

Direct instruction in social skills training helps students with disabilities cope with social difficulties, such as self-awareness; social awareness/interpreting social cues; self-management and impulse control; and setting priorities and goals (Learning Disabilities Association of America, n.d.).

- **Self-awareness** - Refers to knowing about oneself, including emotions and thought processes; strengths and abilities; needs and limitations; as well as disabilities. Self-awareness can also encompass self-determination skills, such as confidence in oneself and self-advocacy skills, such as speaking up for one's ideas and opinions.
- **Self-management** - Refers to managing one's emotions and behaviors in a variety of situations, including times of stress, sadness and anger. Self-management also includes the ability to overcome obstacles.
- **Social awareness** - Refers to respecting the opinions and feelings of others.
- **Relationship skills** - Refers to building healthy relationships at home, school and in the community. There are many settings in which students can build relationships, including athletic teams; faith-based organizations; creative arts groups; humanitarian and civic organizations; and recreation and leisure groups (Choicemaker Self-Determination Curriculum, 2008; Tennessee Department of Education, 2017; Walker & Barry, 2018).



**Identifying the Need for Social Skills Instruction:** Social skills instruction generally includes direct teaching, modeling and coaching. Those who teach social skills need a plan for assessing the student's need for social skills instruction and teaching the skills. The steps below are adapted from researchers, [Walker and Barry \(2018\)](#) and suggest a pattern for assessing and remediating a particular social skill.

### 1. Can the student correctly tell you the steps of the social skill? (Acquisition)

- Yes?** Go to the next question.
- No?** Directly teach the social skill steps making sure the student understands what each step looks and sounds like, give an explanation of when to use the skill, practice role-playing the skill, provide the student with opportunities for practice.

### 2. Is the student motivated to perform the skill? (Performance)

- Yes?** Go to the next question.
- No?** Set up a system to reinforce the use of the skill. Schedule opportunities for practice and reinforcement. Discuss the value of using the social skill. Fade reinforcement over time.

### 3. Does the student understand the context in which to perform the skill? (Performance)

- Yes?** Go to the next question.
- No?** Teach the student when the skill should be used by providing examples. Have the student provide real-life situations where the skill would be used. Provide varied opportunities to practice the skill in different settings, contexts, and people. Explain principles of generalization and how a skill can be used in the same and different ways in multiple settings and situations.

### 4. Does the student seem comfortable performing the skill, leading to successful skill execution? (Fluency)

- Yes?** If the student knows the skill, is motivated to perform the skill, understands the context of the skill, and is polished in performing the skill, then the student should be able to perform this skill in a variety of settings. This skill is in the student's repertoire.
- No?** Provide the student with extensive practice in role-play situations and in controlled generalized settings. Provide the student with positive feedback and reinforcement. Allow the student to practice until the student is able to perform each step of the skill fluidly across settings and individuals without support, leading to successful skill execution outcomes. Look for skill automaticity. Over time, continue checking in with the student, offering opportunities for refreshers or corrections, as needed.

## Trail Marker 3

# Self-Determination: An Internal Compass for Life



Mia, our 6th grade trail guide, has an intellectual disability and has a passion for taking photos, and a huge heart for people and all living creatures. One of Mia's neighbors recently asked her if she would be interested in taking his dog outside for some exercise every day after school, and he offered to pay her \$10 a day. Mia loved the idea but right after school she was used to working on her homework assignments. Mia and her dad decided to create an afternoon and evening schedule to make sure

she would have enough time to complete her homework assignments and take care of the neighbor's dog. Mia enjoys the respect she has earned for the work she does and with the extra money she is earning she has set a goal of buying a new camera. Through this experience Mia has tapped into multiple self-determination skills, including: decision-making, problem-solving, goal-setting and self-efficacy. Self-determination skills assist the student to participate to the greatest extent possible in IEP meetings and in other settings. Please see the chart below for a description of the elements of self-determination.

## Elements of Self-Determination

<b>Choice Making</b> The skill of selecting a path forward between two known options <b>Cm</b>	<b>Decision Making</b> The skill of selecting a path forward based on various solutions that have each been thoughtfully considered <b>Dm</b>	<b>Problem Solving</b> The skill of finding solutions to difficult or complex issues <b>Ps</b>
<b>Goal Setting &amp; Attainment</b> The ability to develop a goal, plan for implementation and measure success <b>Gs</b>	<b>Self-Regulation</b> The ability to monitor and control one's own behaviors, actions and skills in various situations <b>Re</b>	<b>Self-Advocacy</b> The skills necessary to speak up for and/or defend a cause or person <b>Ad</b>
<b>Internal Locus of Control</b> The belief that one has control over outcomes that are important to one's life <b>Lc</b>	<b>Self-Efficacy</b> Belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish specific tasks <b>Ef</b>	<b>Self-Awareness</b> The basic understanding of one's own strengths, needs and abilities <b>Aw</b>

### Self-Determination

What do we mean by self-determination? In the "How Self-Determined Are You? A Toolbox of Resources to Help Build Self-Determination Skills", self-determination is defined as follows:

- **Knowing and believing in yourself.**
- **Knowing what you want your future to be and how to make plans to achieve this future.**
- **Knowing what supports you need to take control of your life** (How Self-Determined Are You?, 2016, p. 1).

Mia turned 12 in the 6th grade. ESE personnel assessed her need for instruction in the area of self-determination and self-advocacy and determined that she would benefit. Mia is currently enrolled in a Learning Strategies course and lessons on building self-determination skills are embedded.

Students with disabilities who exercise self-determination reap the following benefits:

- Higher degree of academic engagement.
- Active involvement in transition planning.
- Higher degree of postsecondary activity involvement.
- Higher quality of life in adulthood.

Project 10 has a "[Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy Guide](#)" that provides additional information, resources and instructional ideas.

Families also help their youth to develop self-determination skills. Some recommendations for families about how to promote self-determination at home include the following:

- Help your student to understand his/her disability and the strategies needed to achieve positive outcomes. "Give your youth opportunities to have a wide variety of experiences so he/she can discover likes and dislikes, and strengths and challenges" (How Self-Determined Are You?, 2016, p. 9).
- Teach choice-making by giving your youth the opportunity to make choices at home such as, clothing, hair style, music and more.
- Explain to your youth the self-determination skills that you use regularly. For example, if you are saving money to take the family on a special outing, explain the steps you are taking to reach that goal.
- Help your youth set goals to work toward. Help your youth to practice respectfully speaking up for his/her point of view at home.

## Trail Marker 4

# Middle School Course Requirements and Options

Zoey, our 7th grade trail guide, and her family have been reviewing the middle school promotion requirements. In order for Zoey to be promoted to high school from the middle grades, she must successfully meet the following requirements:



1. Physical education is required one semester each year for students in grades six through eight. There are circumstances under which the physical education requirement can be waived.
2. One course in Career and Education Planning that results in an academic and career plan (to be completed in grade six, seven or eight). More information on this course will be discussed in Trail Marker 7.
3. Three middle school or higher\* courses in English language arts.
4. Three middle school or higher\* courses in mathematics.
5. Three middle school or higher\* courses in science.
6. Three middle school or higher\* courses in social studies. (One of the social studies courses must be civics. There is a statewide, standardized end-of-course (EOC) exam for civics that must be taken and factored in as 30% of a student's course grade. When the individual education plan (IEP) team determines that the statewide, standardized assessments under this section cannot accurately measure the student's abilities, the assessment results can be waived for the purpose of receiving a course grade.) Because of Mia's intellectual disability, the IEP team has determined that her EOC exam results can be waived. See Section 1003.4156, Florida Statutes (F.S.) for more information on middle school requirements.

*\*May include high school courses for credit.*

### Taking High School Courses in Middle Grades

Did you notice that middle grades course requirements allow students to take high school level courses that not only satisfy middle grades promotion requirements, but also count as high school credit?

Levi, our 8th grade trail guide, and his family have been considering this opportunity. His family heard that there can be pros and cons to students taking high school courses in middle school.

First, let's think about the advantages for Levi when he successfully completes high school courses during middle grades.

They include the following:

- When Levi receives credit for a high school course in middle school, that's one less class he has to take to graduate from high school. Even if he only takes one course early, the result is that he could have a shorter school day during the senior year, which allows him to be involved in more extracurricular activities or get a part-time job.
- When Levi takes high school courses in middle grades, he gets some of the basic high school classes out of the way immediately. This leaves room for dual enrollment, which is where students take college-level courses during high school. The result is that Levi could graduate from college early, saving time and money, or have space in his college schedule to take additional courses of interest.



Studies show that taking challenging classes at a young age can improve the odds of getting into college. More specifically, students who take algebra in eighth grade and geometry in ninth grade are more likely to attend college than those who don't take those courses at that time.

On the other hand, Levi's family learned there are some possible disadvantages of taking high school courses during middle grades.

Potential disadvantages are as follows:

- Levi may not be prepared for above grade-level work.
- Time demands of above grade-level courses could be challenging for Levi.
- High school courses require increased levels of maturity and critical thinking. Is Levi ready for this?
- High school courses that are not successfully completed at the middle school level can negatively affect Levi's grade point average (GPA), which has implications for graduation and post-school options. In addition, this negative experience could affect Levi's confidence.

**Both the advantages and disadvantages of taking high school courses during middle school should be carefully considered before making the final decision for your youth. This decision should be individualized to students and their unique situation, goals and abilities.**

**Black Diamond Trail Tip:** Check prerequisite courses for specific high school programs to ensure the middle school courses prepare your student for his/her educational and career goals.

## Trail Marker 5

## Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Information

Zoey, our 7th grade trail guide, has many academic interests. Science is her favorite subject and she is specifically interested in oceans and the marine animals that live there. She can tell you anything you want to know about cephalopods like squid and octopus. However, sometimes Zoey loses track of time when she is doing science homework and doesn't get to the rest of her homework. She also has trouble remembering to take her homework and projects to school after



she has completed them. When Zoey went to middle school, her problems with organization increased. Zoey was identified for an evaluation which revealed a need in the area of executive function. Executive function skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, organize and juggle multiple tasks successfully. In 6th grade, Zoey received IEP services to improve her executive functioning and provide the support she needs from her teachers and family that help her to be successful in her classes. Sometimes Zoey gets overwhelmed; however, with supports included in her IEP, she is able to get back on-track.

IEPs are guiding documents for academic planning that support students with disabilities in kindergarten through high school who require specialized instruction. Each IEP is unique and is based on each student's needs. The IEP describes the exceptional student education (ESE) services and supports a student with a disability will receive to assist him/her to be successful in school and life. The development of the IEP is completed by a team that includes the student, parents, school district representatives and other service providers who work together to design an effective plan that builds on the student's strengths, interests and preferences. Transition-related requirements are added to the IEP to assist students with disabilities to get ready for high school and begin planning for their post-school activities such as college, career and technical education (CTE), employment, community participation and independent living. Some of the relevant transition activities that possibly begin during middle school are included in the table below.

<b>Beginning at age 12 or during 7th grade, whichever occurs first</b>	<b>Beginning at age 14 or is in place and operational on the student's first day of high school, whichever occurs first</b>
Families and students will receive detailed information about transition services and educational programs from the school, district and outside agencies.	This continues through age 18 and possibly to age 22.
Parents must be notified that the purpose of the IEP meeting will include the identification of the student's need for transition services.	This continues through age 18 and possibly to age 22.
The student must be invited to the IEP meeting.	This continues through age 18 and possibly to age 22.
Use age-appropriate transition assessments to identify student strengths, preferences and interests (foundation for measurable postsecondary goals) and identify the student's need for self-determination and self-advocacy instruction.	This continues through age 18 and possibly to age 22.
Begin identifying transition services needs of students.	Provision of transition services continues from age 14 or when the student enters high school through age 18 and possibly to age 22.
Discuss measurable postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessment in the areas of education, training, employment, including career goals and independent living (where appropriate).	Develop appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training/education, employment, career and independent living skills (if appropriate). Develop measurable annual goals and identify transition services (including pre-employment transition services) and courses of study that support the student to achieve the measurable postsecondary goals.
Discuss the graduation pathways and diploma designations (scholar and/or industry scholar) in the IEP meeting.	Document the graduation pathway decision, the student's course of study and whether or not the student will work toward a diploma designation.
	Document the discussion of the process for a student with a disability who meets the requirements for a standard high school diploma to defer the receipt of such diploma pursuant to section 1003.4282 (10)(c), F.S.

## Trail Marker 6

# Early Warning Systems (EWS) - The ABCs of Student Data

School districts use some type of system to monitor student data that will signal when students may be at risk for academic problems and need support. Families can support these efforts by keeping track of their students' **Attendance, Behavior and Course performance (ABC)**, too.

### Attendance

Students with disabilities are among the student populations most significantly affected by chronic absence. Students with physical disabilities may incur absences due to health concerns. Another reason for chronic absences may be school aversion, perhaps related to school bullying or other school environment issues (Mapping the Early Attendance Gap, 2015).

### Behavior

Florida supports the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) on its school districts, but PBIS can be used everywhere.

Through PBIS, families can do the following: establish routines; set home expectations; and teach, remind and reward expected behaviors.

Through PBIS, students learn to manage their behavior by developing positive coping strategies to manage their feelings and handle challenging situations that trigger inappropriate behaviors.

### Course Performance

Middle school students who fail courses in math or English/language arts or attend school less than 80% of the time have only a 10% - 20% chance of graduating on time. Students fail 9th grade more than any other grade. Middle school is preparing students to make a successful transition into high school, so catching and addressing problems early is critical.

PBIS helps schools to create productive classroom environments that support student learning and provide security for all members of the educational community.

Did you know signs indicating risk of high school dropout can appear during middle school or earlier? Students who demonstrated these signs in sixth grade have shown worse post-school outcomes than students demonstrating these signs later on (Balfanz, 2009).

## Tips for Families: Helping Students Succeed in School



01. Let your youth know that you value education as important to his/her future.



02. Set aside time every day to assist with homework. Find out if the school has homework assignments posted online.



03. Limit the amount of time your youth watches television and plays video games.



04. Talk to your youth about school successes and difficulties.



05. Help your youth use problem-solving skills in difficult situations at home and at school and affirm his/her efforts.



06. Know your youth's friends and their families.



07. Let teachers know that you want to be contacted immediately if your youth has difficulties with attendance, behavior or course work.



08. If your youth is struggling, seek help. Parents and other adults can reduce the likelihood of dropout if they take steps to help youth cope with difficulties they encounter.

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition  
<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=3135>

Suggestions from the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) assist families to help students succeed in school and are listed in the graphic, Tips for Families: Helping Students Succeed in Schools.

## Trail Marker 7

# Career Education and Planning

A Career and Education Planning course during grade six, seven or eight is a requirement for promotion to high school. The course includes the development of a personalized academic and career plan that may be updated as the student progresses through middle school and high school. The career plan will emphasize the importance of employability skills and will inform students of high school graduation requirements. Four phases of career development have been defined by the Linked Learning Alliance's Work-Based Learning Subcommittee as follows:

- **Career Awareness** - "Learning about opportunities, education and skills needed in various occupational pathways to choose a career that matches one's strengths and interests" (NTACT, 2015).
- **Career Exploration** - "Students explore career options to provide motivation and inform decision-making" (Linked Learning, 2012).
- **Career Preparation** - "Students apply learning through practical experience and interaction with professionals from industry and the community in order to extend and deepen classroom work and support the development of college- and career-readiness knowledge and skills (e.g., higher-order thinking, academic skills, technical skills and applied workplace skills)" (Linked Learning, 2012).
- **Career Education and Training** - Students pursue postsecondary education and train for employment in a specific field or range of occupations (Work-Based Learning in Linked Learning, 2012).

See how career experiences connect to grade levels in the Career Experience Timeline.

## Career Experience Timeline

A Progressive Plan for Career-Related Experiences



### Elementary School

#### Career Awareness

Learning **ABOUT** Work

- Self-Awareness
- Career-Awareness
- Career Interests
- Field Trips
- Community-Based Instruction



### High School

#### Career Preparation

Learning **ABOUT and THROUGH** Work

- Career Planning
- Job Shadowing
- Service Learning
- School-Based Enterprises
- Apprenticeships
- Internships
- Paid Employment



### Middle School

#### Career Exploration

Learning **ABOUT and THROUGH** Work

- Career Planning
- Career Exploration
- Job Shadowing
- Workplace Tours
- Community-Based Instruction



### Post-School

#### Career Education/Training

Learning **THROUGH and FOR** Work

- Postsecondary Education Practicums
- Apprenticeships
- Internships
- Paid Employment



\*Adapted from NTACT's *Timeline of Work Experiences*, FDOE's *Career and Education Planning Course Standards*, *Work-Based Learning in Linked Learning*, and ACTE's *Career Exploration in Middle School*

### Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Levi, our 8th grade trail guide, will be eligible to receive Pre-ETS when he turns 14. Pre-ETS provide trainings that help students with disabilities explore, prepare for and make informed career-based decisions. Students ages 14 through age 21 with an IEP or 504 plan are eligible to receive Pre-ETS at no cost through Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). Students with a documented disability can be referred for Pre-ETS by school personnel through VR's online STAR Portal. There is also a [VR form that can be filled out by another adult in the student's life with permission from the student](#). This form can be downloaded from VR's website. Levi is especially interested in the work-based learning experiences (WBLEs). The following list includes all five of the Pre-ETS options:

- Job Exploration Counseling
- Work Readiness Training
- Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLEs)
- Self-Advocacy Training and Peer Mentoring
- Postsecondary Educational Counseling

Learn more about Pre-ETS and STAR Portal on VR's website.

<https://www.rehabworks.org/student-youth/student-youth.html>

**Black Diamond Trail Tips:** "Work-based learning experiences (WBLEs) have been shown to be one of the strongest predictors of adult employment success for students and youth with disabilities" (Federal Partners in Transition, 2015, p. 1). The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has a College and Career Planning website

(<https://www.fldoe.org/academics/college-career-planning/>) that contains a variety of resources to support students' career exploration and postsecondary planning, including Florida's Online Career Planning and Work-Based Learning Coordinating System.



## Trail Marker 8

# Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Middle School and Beyond

During middle school, students can significantly benefit from the process of career exploration which includes:

- Building self-awareness,
- Learning about potential careers and
- Developing a plan for reaching future goals.



Career exploration engages middle school students at a time when they are at a higher risk for disengaging from learning due to challenges in forming identity, coping with puberty and navigating new environments. Middle School provides an excellent opportunity to teach students skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and teamwork through career exploration activities.

### Did you know that approximately half of the 50 fastest-growing occupations require a postsecondary career certificate or associate degree?

Measuring the Economic Success of Florida's Graduates: Economic Security Report 2018 analyzed data collected from 2011-2015 and showed that an associate in science degree (a two-year degree) stacks up favorably to a bachelor's degree (four-year degree) in regard to first-year wages and percentage of graduates employed.

#### CTE Options

There are many programs available in Florida's Career and Technical Colleges. There are 17 career clusters that range from Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources to Transportation, Distribution and Logistics. Within each career cluster, there are a multitude of courses, programs, certificate programs and degree programs that are available. There are also career exploratory courses and career planning courses. **Be sure to investigate some of these courses in MS.**

#### CAPE Digital Tool Certificates

The Florida Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act was created to expand and retain high-value industries and sustain a healthy state economy by preparing students for employment in such. The student IEP must identify the CAPE Digital Tool Certificate and CAPE industry certification the student seeks to attain before high school graduation. More information about CAPE Digital Tools Certificates and CAPE Industry certifications is provided in the Resources section.

#### Looking Ahead to High School Graduation Pathways

There are five (5) graduation pathways described in the [Graduation Pathways Chart](#), three (3) of which are open to all students, one (1) that is available only to students with disabilities and one (1) that is only available to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The graduation pathway decision must be documented in the IEP beginning no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the student enters high school, attains the age of 14, whichever occurs first.

## CTE Clusters

1. Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources
2. Architecture & Construction
3. Arts, A/V Technology & Communication
4. Business Management & Administration
5. Education & Training
6. Energy
7. Engineering & Technology Education
8. Finance
9. Government & Public Administration
10. Health Science
11. Hospitality & Tourism
12. Human Services
13. Information Technology
14. Law, Public Safety & Security
15. Manufacturing
16. Marketing, Sales, & Service
17. Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics

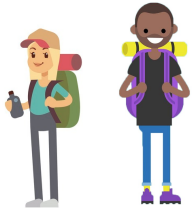


Levi is considering the 24-Credit Standard Diploma Option with Academic and Employment which is available only to students with disabilities. Levi took a CTE course, Architecture & Construction, in 7th grade and wants to get some on-the-job experience in high school to see if it might be a good career direction for him.

## Trail Marker 9

### Transition from Middle School to High School

There are many changes to manage in middle school. First there is the transition from elementary school into middle school and then, before you know it, it's time to start planning for the transition to high school. The transition from middle school to high school focuses on the goals and vision you and your student have for the future. The purpose of transition planning during high school is to provide your student with the services and support he/she needs to make a successful move into adult life.



#### Planning for and Making the Transition to High School

Mia, our sixth-grade trail guide, has just moved into middle school and has three years to get ready for the transition to high school.

Levi, our eighth-grade trail guide, is in his third year of middle school and has taken a course of study that will help him reach his goals for high school.

Review the recommendations below for navigating the transition from middle school to high school. Refer to Project 10's "[Secondary Transition Road Map for Families](#)" to find pertinent information on navigating through high school, preparing for graduation and transitioning to post-school activities (employment, postsecondary education and/or training and independent living). The "[Transition Requirements Checklist](#)" is a helpful tool to determine at which age or grade transition services are to be initiated.

### Transition from Middle School to High School

Ensure your middle school IEP team leader invites a high school staff person. It will be helpful to both the parents and students to meet someone from the high school exceptional student education (ESE) staff in the context of the middle grades IEP team meeting.

Attend any events the middle school provides to prepare students and families to transition to high school. Events may include informational meetings, opportunities to meet high school representatives, etc.

Learn more about the new high school through the website.  
Explore curricular and extracurricular opportunities and/or activities.

During middle school, schedule a visit to the high school.  
Take a campus tour during after school hours or summer hours.

Attend any events the upcoming high school provides to prepare students and families to transition to high school. Events may include orientation, school tours, meetings with teachers, etc.

Identify a point of contact for your student to turn to if help is needed.  
The point of contact may be a school counselor, a mentor, a teacher, or an older student.

Students and families should actively participate in all Transition IEP team and planning meetings.

◆ **Black Diamond Trail Tip:** Find opportunities for students to exercise self-determination and self-advocacy during IEP meetings. Student participation and leadership is a valuable experience that helps to prepare students for a lifetime of self-direction.

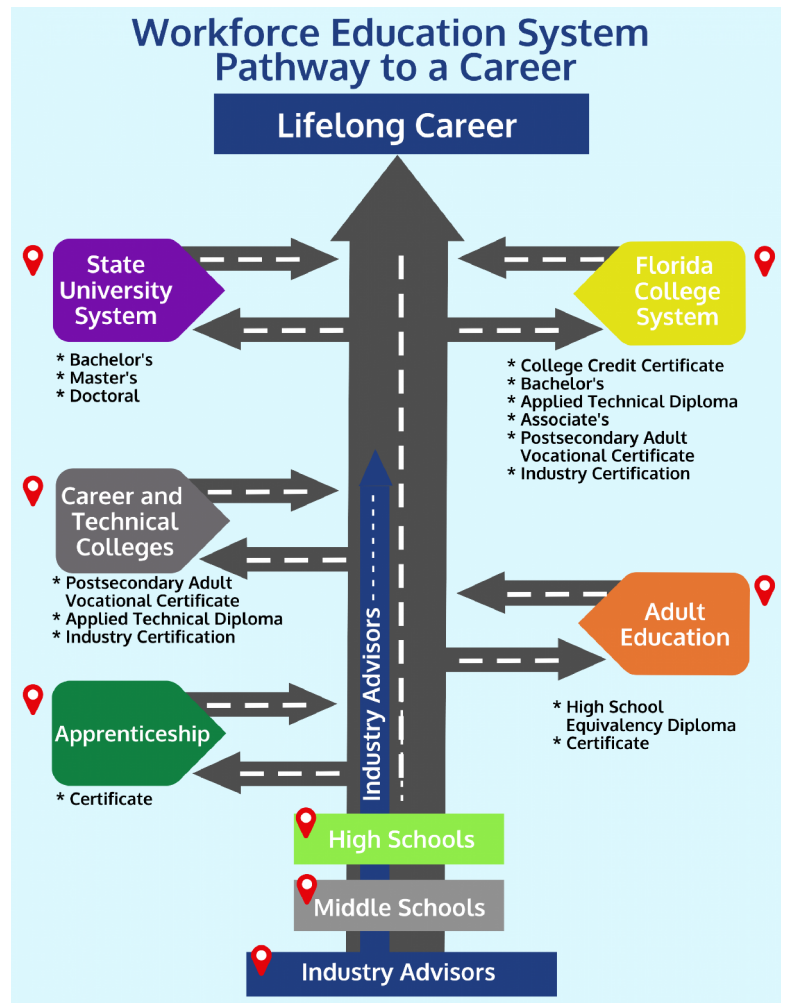


## Trail Marker 10

# Planning for College, Career and Life Readiness in Middle School

Although choosing a postsecondary education option is a few years away, it is now required to identify the student's postsecondary goals by age 14 or before transitioning into high school.

Research consistently shows that parent/family involvement is an influential factor in student participation in postsecondary education. In a national study on transition outcomes, the students of parents who held high expectations for their youth to graduate from high school, attend postsecondary education or training and find employment, were more likely to achieve those goals than students whose parents who did not hold high expectations for their youth (Mazzotti et al., 2016). The purpose of secondary transition for students with disabilities is to prepare them for the future they want. It's about preparing them to participate in adult life, make positive contributions to their communities, develop a career, maintain a job and live as independently as possible. To the right is a map of career pathways. Note that there are no dead ends on the map. There is always room to pursue new career options.



Below is a breakdown of a variety of postsecondary education options along with the credentials or outcomes that may be expected through each type of postsecondary education experience.

Postsecondary Education Options	Potential Outcomes/Credentials
Training Opportunities and Apprenticeships	Career Certificates and Industry Certifications
Career and Technical Education - College/Center	Career Certificates, Industry Certifications and Associate of Science degrees (AS)
State College	Non-credit courses, Career Certificates, Industry Certifications, Associate of Arts degrees (AA) Associate of Science degrees (AS) and Bachelor's degrees
University	Associate of Arts degrees (AA), Bachelor's degrees, Master's degrees, Doctoral programs (Ph.D.)
Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE)	Inclusive college programs for students with the most significant intellectual disabilities vary in the types of credentials earned and can be accessed at participating technical colleges, colleges and universities

**Black Diamond Trail Tip:** "[Getting Ready for Educational Opportunities After High School: Families Supporting Students for Success](#)" and "[Project 10's Postsecondary Options At-a-Glance](#)" are helpful resources that provide information for families about the various postschool options, including how to prepare their youth for postsecondary education (PSE) options.

## Trail Marker 11

## A Journey Worth Every Step

When you are on a long journey, it can be a challenge to navigate the difficult parts of the path. Supporting youth, with or without a disability, to complete middle school, move to high school and transition to life after high school may seem like an arduous process. Take the journey one step at a time and remember these five things that every parent of a student with a disability needs to hear:

1. "Make time to enjoy your kids."
2. "You aren't perfect – and that's okay."
3. "Being a parent is hard. Being a parent to a child with extra needs is extra hard."
4. "Celebrate the little things."
5. "You are a superhero" (Clayton, n.d.).

Speaking of a journey, check out your local [Florida Association of Centers For Independent Living](#) to find out about their available services. Some of the centers provide independent living skills training opportunities. Middle school is a great time to build those skills.



### Parenting is Like Skateboarding: It Requires a Good Sense of Balance

<b>Do More Listening</b>	➔	<b>Than Talking</b>
<b>Set Appropriate Boundaries</b>	➔	<b>But Allow Youth to Make Mistakes and Learn from Them</b>
<b>Remain Involved</b>	➔	<b>While Encouraging Independence</b>
<b>Remain in Charge</b>	➔	<b>But Share the Power</b>
<b>Be a Parent First</b>	➔	<b>Be a Friend Second</b>
<b>Protect</b>	➔	<b>Without Taking Away Freedom</b>

**It is a balancing act between holding on  
and letting go.**

**Parenting Advice and Regrets from Empty Nesters, 2018**

### Packing Your Parent Backpack: Resources and References

Find transition-related resources and references to support you and your youth during the transition to and from Middle School on the Project 10 website at the following: <http://project10.info/DPage.php?ID=77#NS138>. The "Resources and References" document can be found within the description of the "Middle School Trail Map for Families".

