

# Predictors of Postsecondary Outcomes

Transition from school to adult life requires collaboration and planning by many stakeholders. Students, families, teachers, schools, school districts and community agencies work together to support student success. To assist students in preparing for life after high school, researchers have identified the following predictors that have been shown to support post-school outcomes for students, including the areas of postsecondary education/training, employment and independent living.

For a student with an individual educational plan (IEP), federal law requires planning to begin by age 16 and defines transition as “a coordinated set of activities” that are designed to promote movement from life as a student to life as an adult. By the age of 16, each IEP meeting should include discussion and identification of postsecondary goals related to education, employment and may include independent living skills. As you make choices related to your student’s future and transition from school to adult life, consider and discuss how to use these predictors to support your student throughout the journey.

## Predictor #1 Career Awareness

Career Awareness is learning about opportunities, education and skills needed to choose a career that matches one’s strengths and interests.

### Ideas for Families

- + Discuss skills and qualifications needed for careers in which your student is interested.
- + Discuss connections between academic skills your student is learning with careers that require those skills.

## Predictor #2: Community Experiences

Community experiences are activities that occur outside of the school, supported with in-class teaching, where students apply academic, social and/or general work behaviors and skills.

### Ideas for Families

- + Consider instruction your student may need to catch a bus, taxi or rideshare and how he/she will travel throughout the community independently.

## Predictor #3: Exit Exam Requirements/High School Diploma

Exit exams are standardized state tests that measure skill levels in content areas, such as Algebra or English that students must pass in order to earn a high school diploma. Diploma status is achieved by completing the requirements of the state awarding the diploma, including the completion of courses needed to fulfill the student’s selected graduation pathway, such as the 24-credit, 18-credit and merit or scholar designation.

### Ideas for Families

- + Identify study skills and test-taking strategies your student may need to develop and practice.

## Predictor #4: Goal-Setting

Students who take part in goal-setting are more likely to be found employed after high school. Students who want to attend a college or university are more likely to be engaged in postsecondary education.

### Ideas for Families

- + Consider practicing goal-setting at home by identifying a goal; making a plan or breaking the goal into smaller steps needed to reach the goal; following the plan and reaching the goal. Start with a simple goal and slowly build up to goals that may take more time and determination to achieve.

## Predictor #5: Inclusion in General Education

Inclusion in general education requires students with disabilities to have access to general education curriculum and participate in general education classes with peers without disabilities.

### Ideas for Families

+ Ask if any strategies, including differentiated instruction, learning strategies, study skills, organizational skills, personal management skills and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are being used in your student's general education classrooms.

## Predictor #6: Interagency Collaboration

Interagency collaboration is a clear, purposeful and carefully designed process that promotes collaboration across agencies and programs to support outcomes for youth.

### Ideas for Families

+ Ask about agencies that may be able to provide additional support for your student, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, CareerSource, Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Division of Blind Services (DBS), Family Network on Disabilities (FND) and the Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (FCCDHH).

## Predictor #7: Occupational Courses

Occupational courses are individual courses that support career awareness, allow students to explore different career pathways and develop job skills through experience and teaching focused on their selected employment goals.

### Ideas for Families

+ Ask about occupational courses that are offered to your student.

## Predictor #8: Paid Employment/ Work Experience

Work experience is any activity that places the student in a genuine workplace, and may include: work sampling, job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships and paid employment. Paid employment can include existing standard jobs in a company/organization or customized work assignments negotiated with the employer, but these activities always feature competitive pay (minimum wage or higher) paid directly to the student by the employer.

### Ideas for Families

+ Ask about opportunities for your student to participate in job-shadowing, work-study, apprenticeships or internships.

+ At age 14 - 21 connect with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) for pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) which include work readiness training, work-based learning experiences and more

## Predictor #9: Parent Expectations

There is a positive relationship between parents who hold high expectations for their students and positive post-school outcomes. Students with disabilities whose parents expect them to get a job, go to college and/or be able to support themselves are more likely to be found employed and accessing further education.

### Ideas for Families

+ Believe in your student's ability to achieve and succeed.

+ Advocate for the opportunities and services your student needs to participate in life and achieve his/her very best outcomes.



## Predictor #10: Course of Study

A course of study (CoS) is an individualized set of courses, experiences and curriculum designed to develop a student's academic and functional achievement to support the fulfillment of desired post-school goals.

### Ideas for Families

- + Make sure the CoS creates a pathway for your student to reach his/her postsecondary goals.
- + Review all of the options offered in Florida for your student to earn a standard diploma.



## Predictor #11: Parent/Family Involvement

Parent Involvement means parents/families/guardians are active participants in all aspects of transition planning, supporting and advocating for their student.

### Ideas for Families

- + Ask for information about the transition process.
- + Find support networks with other parent and advocacy groups.
- + Ask for multiple options for involvement and alternate ways to provide input in the transition planning process, such as pre-IEP planning input and flexible IEP meeting times. Be sure to share and discuss your student's strengths and areas of concerns during the IEP.
- + Facilitate a friendly relationship with the school by communicating through email and by regularly attending IEP meetings. Attend other scheduled meetings and participate in school events, such as career fairs and open house.
- + Ask for information about adult services and supports in the community to help in post-school planning such as Vocational Rehabilitation, mental health resources, postsecondary education options and other supports.
- + Share with school staff cultural values that are important to your family.
- + Find out if your school district has an interagency transition council and ask if you can participate.
- + Ask about ways you can support your student in achieving their desired post-school goals.
- + Be certain that you understand transition assessment results so that you can use the information to provide training and find natural supports for your student at home and in the community.



## Predictor #12: Self-Care/Independent Living Skills

Self-care/independent living skills are skills needed to manage one's daily personal needs. Self-care and independent living skills include being able to care for your own health needs, interacting with others, managing money and other financial matters, such as paying bills, and being able to live independently.

### Ideas for Families

- + Find ways to help your student develop and grow in the following independent living skills: (1) financial planning, (2) self-help, (3) cooking, (4) housekeeping, (5) home maintenance, (6) using transportation, (7) clothing care, (8) accessing community services, (9) time/organizational management, (10) self-determination, (11) social roles/citizenship, (12) community/peer relationships, and (13) critical thinking and problem solving.



## Predictor #13: Social Skills

Social skills are behaviors and attitudes that help support the development of positive relationships with others through communication and cooperation. Social skills include problem-solving when engaged in a social interaction, body language, speaking, listening and responding to verbal, written or other forms of communication.

### Ideas for Families

- + Provide opportunities for your student to practice communication in a variety of settings and situations including one-on-one and group conversations, negotiations and conflict resolutions.
- + Assist your student to use problem-solving skills when difficult situations arise.

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## Predictor #14: Self-Determination/Self-Advocacy

Self-Determination is the ability to make choices, solve problems, set goals, evaluate options, take initiative to reach one's goals and accept the consequences of one's actions.

### Ideas for Families

- + Request a student-driven IEP process to allow your student to show self-awareness, goal setting, problem-solving and self-advocacy.
- + Communicate with general education teachers to ensure that chances to make choices are included in daily lessons in order for your student to practice choice-making and self-determination skills.
- + Teach your student to monitor his/her use of self-determination skills and discuss his/her progress regularly.
- + Ensure your student has a way to communicate in order to engage in choice-making, problem-solving, goal-setting and accepting consequences for his/her actions. Request help if assistive technology (AT) is needed to help with communication.
- + Request the use of age-appropriate transition assessments in order for your student to learn about himself/herself, set goals, solve problems, use information, make decisions and identify long-range goals.
- + Help your student to develop self-awareness by having honest and respectful discussions about the self-determination assessment results.
- + Request direct instruction in self-determination for your student.
- + Support the development of your student's leadership skills.
- + Expect and support your student to make many routine choices for himself/herself throughout the day.
- + Work collaboratively with school staff and your student to help your student achieve his/her selected goals.
- + Make sure your student understands the available options and the potential consequences of his/her choices.

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## Predictor #15: Student Support

Student support is the network of people, such as family, friends, teachers and adult service providers, who provide services and resources in multiple settings to help students to transition from student life to adult life. This network of people who provide student support should keep in mind the student's postsecondary goals and be aware of the student's strengths, preferences, interests and needs.

### Ideas for Families

- + Make sure students are provided access to rigorous instruction.
- + Ask who may assist students with the following:
  - Obtaining access to assistive technology (AT) resources and training on how to use the technology to enhance their academic skills (reading, writing, mathematics) and functional skills (motor skills, behavior, communication and study skills, etc.)
  - Finding support to assist with transportation, adult services, accessing the health care system and financial planning.
  - Finding a school or community mentor.
  - Providing ways for the student to participate in the community, such as clubs, advocacy groups, sports, etc.



## Predictor #16: Transition Program

A transition program prepares students to move from high school to adult-life using transition planning and education to create a plan to help students achieve their post-school goals in education/training, employment and independent living as needed.

### Ideas for Families

- + Observe how education and transition services are being provided to your student at school and in the community. Advocate for your student when necessary.
- + Depending on your student's needs, ask for instruction in areas of independent living.
- + Get to know the following **recommendations to schools** for educating students with disabilities who are ages 14 - 21:
  - Provide individualized transition-focused curriculum and instruction based on students' postsecondary goals in postsecondary education/training, employment and independent living.
  - Provide instruction and training in natural environments supported by classroom instruction.
  - Provide individualized transition services that support the achievement of students' postsecondary goals in postsecondary education/training, employment and independent living.
  - Provide opportunities for engagement with peers without disabilities in the school and community.
  - Use interagency collaboration with clearly defined roles and responsibilities to provide coordinated transition services through multiple stakeholders at student-, school-, district-, region- and state-levels to assist students with meeting their postsecondary goals.
  - Monitor and assess students' progress in the areas of academics, daily living, personal and social, and occupational. Use multiple assessments across multiple areas at different points in time to determine student progress and help IEP teams with post-school planning.
  - Provide training and resources to families to involve them in transition planning and connect them to adult agencies and information networks that may be able to provide support for the student and family.
  - Conduct program evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the transition program.



## Predictor #17: Travel Skills

Students with disabilities who were able to travel independently outside the home, such as to school, a local store or a neighbor's house, are more likely to be involved in post-school employment.

### Ideas for Families

- + Consider teaching your student to use public transportation. Ask if the school or a local service provider offers travel training.



## Predictor #18: Work Study

A work study program provides students the opportunity to learn through experiences that are designed to develop students' skills, attitudes and behaviors related to work. Work study programs provide both academic and vocational education.

### Ideas for Families

- + Ask about options for paid and non-paid work experiences both on and off-campus with options for gaining high school credit for completing program requirements.



## Predictor #19: Vocational Education

Vocational education consists of courses that prepare students for a specific job or career.

### Ideas for Families

- + Ask about programs and opportunities to earn certificates in certain career areas (e.g., Certified Nursing Assistant, Welding, Food Handlers Certification).
- + Talk to your student about postsecondary education/training and/or employment options; consider visiting your local career and technical education school.
- + Learn about support services such as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and disability services.



## Predictor #20: Youth Autonomy

Students who show more independence and decision making skills, such as planning weekend activities, volunteering, making decisions and making long-range plans independently, are more likely to be found in post-school education.

### Ideas for Families

- + Give your student opportunities to make their own decisions.
- + Include input from your student in family decision-making whenever possible.
- + Make sure your attitude demonstrates respect for your student's growing independence.

## Resources

Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS): Secondary Transition

<http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/secondary-transition.stml>

Family Network on Disabilities

<https://fndusa.org/>

Making My Way Through College: A Guide for Students with Disabilities

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Making-My-Way-through-College-FINAL.pdf>

PACER Center: Champions for Children with Disabilities

<https://www.pacer.org/>

Project 10: Transition Education Network Website

<http://project10.info/>

Project 10: Transition Education Network Website: Family Involvement

<http://project10.info/DPage.php?ID=322>

Vocational Rehabilitation: Transition Youth

<http://www.rehabworks.org/stw.shtml>

Use these resources to support your student in the move from school to adult life and the achievement of his/her post-school goals.

This document was adapted from the *Predictor Implementation School/District Self-Assessment* which was developed by the National Post-School Outcomes Center and the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSSTAC) in 2013. The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) updated the document in 2015, which is available at <https://www.transitionta.org/postschool>.