

Transition Contacts Toolkit

I. Indicator 1: Standard Diploma, Waiver and Substitution Guidance

Ensure ESE students are afforded all legal flexibilities (Waivers and Substitutions) to earn a Standard High School Diploma, thereby increasing the district's Indicator 1 Graduation Rate.

[Project 10 Graduation Success Toolbox](#)

Assessment Requirement Waiver

The most frequent waiver used for a Standard Diploma is related to the required state assessments (which includes the ELA Grade 10 Assessment or the required concordant score).

Compliance Requirement	IEP Team Criteria for Granting Waiver (Must meet all)	Documentation Required
Waiver of State Assessment Results (s. 1008.22(3)(d), F.S.)	1. Attempts: The student has taken the required assessment (or EOC where applicable) with appropriate, allowable accommodations at least once.	IEP team signatures, parent approval, and evidence of attempts (assessment history).
	2. Remediation: The student has participated in intensive remediation and/or direct specialized instruction in the areas where passing scores were not earned (Reading/Math).	Documentation of participation in intensive reading/math courses or specific intervention/special education services.
	3. Mastery: The IEP team determines there is sufficient evidence that the student has mastered the applicable course standards and that the assessment results do not accurately measure the student's ability.	Graduation Portfolio (quantifiable evidence of achievement) or other compelling evidence of mastery (e.g., successful performance in postsecondary focused courses).
	4. Parent Approval: The waiver must be approved by the parents.	A separate, signed statement or clear documentation within the IEP affirming parent approval.

Note to ESE Directors: Granting this waiver is an **IEP team decision**. It signifies that the student has *mastered the standards* but has a disability-related barrier to assessment performance.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Course Substitutions

Training Available: *Career and Technical Education and Students with Disabilities: An Overview of Requirements, Substitution Opportunities and Considerations*

Florida Rule 6A-1.09963, F.A.C., permits the substitution of certain CTE courses for academic core course requirements for students with disabilities pursuing the Academic and Employment Competencies and ACCESS Standard Diploma. This substitution directly supports the student's postsecondary goals (Indicator 13 & 14 alignment).

Core Course Eligible for Substitution (One Credit Each)	CTE Course Substitution Criteria
English Language Arts (English 4 only)	The CTE course must be determined by the district to have content related to the academic course for which it is substituting.
One Math Credit (excluding Algebra 1 and Geometry)	The IEP must document the substitution.
One Science Credit (excluding Biology 1)	The substitution must support the student's measurable postsecondary goals as described in the Transition IEP.

Note: See attached sample Crosswalk and [Project 10 CTE Course Substitutions, Addendum](#)

Graduation Pathway Flexibilities (Academic and Employment Competencies and Access)

Training Available: *Graduation Requirements*

The district must ensure IEP teams are fully aware of diploma pathways available *only* to students with disabilities.

Diploma Pathways	
☐ 24-credit programs: - Standard - Standard via Access Courses - Standard via Employment and Academic-Based Courses	☐ 18-credit, Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning (ACCEL) ☐ Career and Technical Education (CTE) Graduation Pathway (min. of 18 credits) ☐ International program options - International Baccalaureate (IB) - Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE)

[Project 10 Graduation Options Chart](#)

The documentation of the student's intent to pursue any of these pathways must be made on the IEP no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the student enters high school or attains age 14.

II. Indicator 2: Dropout Rate (Prevention & Re-Engagement)

This section focuses on equipping ESE leadership with the systems and interventions necessary to prevent students with disabilities from dropping out. This requires a shift from reactive measures to proactive, data-driven strategies.

Early Warning Systems (EWS) Protocols

Trainings Available: *Using School-level Data to Increase Graduation Success of Students with Disabilities, Part 1: An Early Warning System (EWS) and Using School-level Data to Increase Graduation Success of Students with Disabilities, Part 2: Strategies and Interventions*

The most effective prevention strategy is to identify students who are statistically at risk of dropping out before they disengage completely.

- **EWS Definition:** An EWS uses existing student data to identify students who exhibit specific risk factors (flags) that correlate with high dropout rates.

- **The ABCs of Risk:** District monitoring must be structured around the following three critical indicators, disaggregated for the ESE population:

Risk Factor	Definition of Flag (Example Benchmarks)	ESE-Specific Consideration
Attendance (A)	10% or more unexcused absences (chronic absenteeism); 5+ consecutive unexcused absences.	Ensure attendance policies correctly account for disability-related absences documented in the IEP.
Behavior (B)	Two or more office referrals or out-of-school suspensions (OSS) in a grading period.	Review FAPE requirements: Conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and revise the Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) immediately upon triggering a behavioral flag.
Course Performance (C)	Failure in two or more core courses (D or F grade) in a single grading period, or significant drop in GPA.	Check for alignment between the Course of Study and the student's MPGs (Indicator 13); review the fidelity of academic accommodations.

Dropout Retrieval and Re-Engagement

Trainings available: *T.I.M.E. for Dynamic Dropout Prevention: Scaling Up Student Engagement and School Climate for Student Success*

This section addresses students who have already left the system and requires precise coding and outreach.

- **FDOE Withdrawal Code Compliance:** [Appendix A](#)
*It is important to regularly access this document from the FLDOE website to ensure using the latest copy: [FLDOE Database Manual \(Student Information Systems\)](#)
- **Re-Engagement Checklist:**
 - Develop a scripted outreach template for staff (via phone/email) to contact the family of a student who has dropped out.
 - Highlight **Alternative Pathways:** Provide information on linking students to adult education centers, **GED preparation programs** (for students over 16 who qualify for the **GED Exit Option Model**), or other community programs.

Evidence-Based Interventions

- **Mentoring/Advocacy:**
 - **Intervention:** Implement a structured mentoring program pairing at-risk students with a positive adult figure (teacher, staff member, or community volunteer).
 - **Focus:** Use mentors to improve **student self-determination** and **self-advocacy**—key skills needed to manage the IEP process and connect their current actions to their future goals.
- **Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) or Check and Connect:**
 - **Intervention:** A daily monitoring system where students check in with a staff member at the start and end of the day to review goals, assignments, and behavior, increasing accountability and positive adult interaction.

- **Focus:** Directly addresses chronic Attendance (A) and minor Behavior (B) issues by providing immediate, positive reinforcement and feedback.
- **Credit Recovery and Personalized Learning:**
 - **Intervention:** Utilize flexible scheduling and blended learning models for students who are credit-deficient.
 - **Focus:** Ensure that any credit recovery is tied to the student's Measurable Postsecondary Goals and includes the necessary special education support and accommodations to ensure success.

[Project 10 Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement](#)

[Project 10 Dropout Prevention Flowchart](#)

III. Indicator 13: Transition IEP Compliance

Trainings Available: *Beyond the Paperwork: Building Transition Individual Education Plans (TIEP) that Launch Futures, Using Transition Assessment Data to Write Measurable Postsecondary Goals, Transition Basics: Information for Families and Others Who Support Students with Disabilities, The Future Starts Now: Preparing for Secondary Transition in Middle School*

Project 10 [Middle School Secondary Planning Trail Map](#); [Secondary Transition Roadmap](#)

[Project 10 Transition Requirements Checklist](#)

Transition Planning at Age 12, or by 7th Grade (whichever occurs first)

Section 1003.5716 states: To ensure quality planning for a successful transition of a student with a disability to postsecondary education and career opportunities, during the student's seventh grade year or when the student attains the age of 12, whichever occurs first, an IEP team shall begin the process of, and develop an IEP for, identifying the need for transition services before the student with a disability enters high school or attains the age of 14 years, whichever occurs first, in order for his or her postsecondary goals and career goals to be identified. The plan must be operational and in place to begin implementation on the first day of the student's first year in high school. This process must include, but is not limited to:

- (a) Consideration of the student's need for instruction in the area of self-determination and self-advocacy to assist the student's active and effective participation in an IEP meeting;
- (b) Preparation for the student to graduate from high school with a standard high school diploma pursuant to s. 1003.4282 with a Scholar designation unless the parent chooses an Industry Scholar designation;
- (c) Provision of the information to the student and his or her parent of the school district's high school-level transition services, career and technical education, and collegiate programs available to students with disabilities and how to access such programs. Information shall also be provided on school-based transition programs and programs and services available through Florida's Center for Students with Unique Abilities, the Florida Centers for Independent Living, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, and the Division of Blind Services. Referral forms, links, and technical support contacts for these services must be provided to students and parents at IEP meeting.

Transition Planning at age 14, or Prior to the First Day of High School

The following guidance focuses on achieving 100% compliance with Indicator 13, ensuring that every IEP for a student aged 14 and older (or younger if appropriate) includes all required transition components. A compliant Transition IEP is the foundational document that drives post-school success (Indicator 14).

Secondary Transition Planning and Student Participation in IEP Meetings

The student must be invited to the IEP team meeting beginning at age 12 or 7th grade, whichever occurs first, and the meeting notice must clearly state that the purpose includes identifying the student's transition services needs. At age 14, or prior to the first day of high school, the meeting purpose will include identifying the student's transition services and writing postsecondary goals. Documentation of the invitation and purpose must be included in the IEP records.

Compliance Requirement	Suggested Documentation
- Evidence that the student was formally invited to attend the IEP team meeting - Documentation that the invitation was extended regardless of whether the student attended. - A copy of the meeting notice that clearly states the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the student's transition services needs and to begin identifying postsecondary goals.	- A copy of the IEP team meeting notice listing "transition services" and "postsecondary goals" as agenda items. - A signed or dated student invitation letter or email. - IEP team meeting notes confirming the student's attendance or documentation that the invitation was extended.
Annual updates to reflect continued student involvement in transition planning.	Evidence that the student's preferences and interests were considered in the development of the transition plan (transition assessments)

Provision of Transition Services Information

State statute requires school districts to provide information regarding specific agencies and programs/services beginning at age 12, or during the student's 7th grade year. The purpose is to enhance transition planning and educate students and their families about opportunities and eligibility/application procedures.

Component	Suggested Documentation
The student and parent were provided with information about local educational agency high school-level transition services, including career and technical education and collegiate programs, available to students with disabilities.	- A written summary in the IEP or meeting notes confirming that the required information was provided. - A signed acknowledgment form from the parent and/or student confirming receipt of transition services information. - Copies of brochures, flyers or digital resources shared with the family. - Documentation of referrals or follow-up actions taken to connect the student with these programs or agencies.
The IEP team shared how to access these programs and services.	
The student and parent were informed about the following school-based transition programs and services available through the following state and community agencies: Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities (FCSUA), Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living (FACIL), Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) and Division of Blind Services (DBS).	

Measurable Postsecondary Goals (MPGs)

MPGs are statements that are both measurable and describe what the student plans to achieve after leaving high school. They must be directly related to the individual student's transition needs and match that student's responses on completed **transition assessments**.

Project 10 Transition Assessments Chart

MPG Category	Compliance Requirement
Education/Training	A goal related to vocational, career, or postsecondary education.
Employment	A goal related to obtaining or maintaining a job.
Career	A goal related to long-term employment
Independent Living	Required only if determined appropriate by the IEP Team based on assessment data or if student is being instructed on Access Points.

Key Compliance Rule: The IEP must contain at least one MPG for both **Education/Training**, one MPG for **Employment** and one MPG for **Career**. The **Independent Living** goal is only required if the IEP team deems it necessary for the student's successful post-school adjustment, or if the student is being instructed on Access Points.

Coordinated Set of Activities (Transition Services)

The IEP must define a coordinated set of activities—the transition services—that will reasonably enable the student to meet their MPGs. These services help facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities and include the following:

Transition Service Category	Required Documentation/Action	Link to Post-School Success
Instruction	List specific academic or vocational courses/skills training needed (e.g., Financial Literacy, driver's education, CTE Welding course).	Ensures the student has the academic and vocational knowledge to pursue their Education/Training MPG.
Related Services	Any supportive services (e.g., Speech, Transportation, Counseling) needed to specifically achieve the MPGs.	Ensures necessary supports are in place, particularly if services need to bridge to adult providers.
Community Experiences	Experiences in the community outside the school setting (e.g., job shadowing, informational interviews, community-based instruction).	Facilitates real-world application of skills needed for the Employment and Independent Living MPGs.
Employment & Other Post-School Adult Living	Connect the student to adult service agencies, particularly the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).	Mandatory: Document specific Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) activities (e.g., job exploration counseling, workplace readiness training).
Daily Living Skills (if appropriate)	Activities needed for self-management (e.g., cooking, banking, accessing public transit, applying for benefits).	Supports the Independent Living MPG.

Project 10's [Future Focused Planning: A Secondary Transition Services Mini-Guide](#) and [Essential Steps in Secondary Transition Planning for Students with Significant Support Needs](#)

Standard Diploma Options/Designations, Course of Study, and Annual Goals Linkage

- Standard Diploma Options/Designations:** The IEP must include evidence that the IEP team has discussed the student's graduation options, including the requirements for earning a standard high school diploma and the opportunity to pursue a Scholar or Industry Scholar designation. This discussion must reflect the student's postsecondary goals, interests, and strengths, and be reviewed/updated annually to reflect progress and any changes in the student's educational plan. For more information, visit the FLDOE website:
[Academic Advisement – What Students and Parents Need to Know: Students Entering Grade 9 Prior to 2023-2024](#)
[Academic Advisement – What Students and Parents Need to Know: Students Entering Grade 9 in 2023-2024 and Thereafter](#)

Project 10 Graduation Options Chart

- Course of Study:** The IEP must include a **multi-year description** of the courses the student will take to achieve their MPGs and meet graduation requirements. This should be a clear, written plan covering the student's high school career from the current year through their anticipated exit year.
- Annual Goals:** The IEP must include at least one annual IEP goal that **directly relates to or supports** each of the required MPGs.

Diploma Deferral Discussion Requirement

Training Available: *Deferment Foundations: What It Is, Why It Matters, and the Individual Educational Plan Considerations for Students with Disabilities Transitioning to Postsecondary Life*

At the age 14 IEP, or the IEP in effect on the first day of high school, the discussion is not a final decision, but an initial disclosure and documentation of the process and its consequences.

Component	Required Action & Documentation	Rationale
Document Discussion of Process	The IEP must document that the team discussed the process for a student who meets Standard High School Diploma requirements to defer receipt of diploma.	Ensures the family understands that FAPE ends upon accepting the Standard High School Diploma, and deferral is the mechanism to continue transition services until age 22.
Diploma Statement Link	The deferral discussion must be documented within the Statement of Intent to pursue a Standard High School Diploma with the Scholar or Industry Scholar designation or in the appropriate deferral section.	Links the diploma pathway discussion directly to the legal consequence of graduation.
Program Options	The parent/student must be provided with written information describing the specific, local transition programs the student could enroll in if they later choose to defer (e.g., Structured Work-Study, Industry Certification programs).	Provides the student and family with a clear vision of what continued services (FAPE) would entail post-graduation.

Key Toolkit Compliance Note: The signed deferral statement is only required later, in the IEP that is in effect at the beginning of the school year the student is expected to graduate. The age 14 meeting requires documenting the *discussion* of the process.

Self-Determination & Self-Advocacy Instruction

Training Available: *Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy; Standing Up for Me - Plus (SUFM+)*

Florida law requires that the IEP team address the student's need for instruction in self-determination and self-advocacy even earlier (age 12 or by 7th grade). However, the requirement is continuous and critical at age 14 to ensure active IEP participation.

Component	Required Action & Documentation	Rationale
Consideration of Need	The IEP team must document the consideration of the student's need for instruction in the area of self-determination and self-advocacy. <u>Project 10 Self Determination/Self Advocacy Guide</u>	This is an annual compliance check. If the student has low self-advocacy skills, the team must address it.
Active IEP Participation	The purpose of this instruction is to assist the student's active and effective participation in an IEP meeting. <u>Project 10 The Power of Student Engagement</u>	The student needs skills to lead their own IEP meeting, understand their disability, articulate their preferences/interests, and request appropriate accommodations.
Transition Service/Goal Link	If a need is identified, the skill should become part of the Transition Services (under Instruction) and be linked to a Measurable Annual Goal (MAG).	This turns the discussion into an actionable plan. For example, a goal might be: "By the next annual review, [Student] will independently state their three required accommodations and the rationale for their use to a teacher or peer mentor."

Transfer of Rights, Age of Majority/Decision Making Options, and Agency Involvement

Compliance Area	Required Action & Documentation
Age of Majority	Inform the student of the transfer of educational rights at age 18 on the IEP at or before age 17. Document that the student understands these rights.
Age 17 additional requirements	At least 1 year before the student reaches the age of majority, provision of information and instruction to the student and his or her parent on self-determination and the legal rights and responsibilities regarding the educational decisions that transfer to the student upon attaining the age of 18. The information must include the ways in which the student may provide informed consent to allow his or her parent to continue to participate in educational decisions, including: 1. Informed consent to grant permission to access confidential records protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as provided in s. 1002.22. 2. Powers of attorney as provided in chapter 709. 3. Guardian advocacy as provided in s. 393.12. 4. Guardianship as provided in chapter 744. 5. Supported decision-making agreements as provided in s. 709.2209. <u>Project 10 Considering Age of Majority, Transfer of Rights and Decision Making Options</u>
Student Attendance	The student must be invited to their IEP meeting, regardless of age. Document their attendance or why they were absent.
Agency Invitation	If a participating agency (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation, Agency for Persons with Disabilities) is likely to provide or pay for transition services, they must be invited to the IEP meeting.
Parent Consent for Agency Invitation	The IEP must document that parent consent was obtained before inviting a non-school agency representative.

Training Available: *Preparing the Student for Age of Majority: Empowering Self-Determination & Navigating Legal Rights*

IV. Indicator 14: Post-School Outcomes

Indicator 14 is the federally required measure of post-school success for students with disabilities one year after they have exited high school. While this metric is a key indicator of the quality of a school district's transition planning, the data collection process itself is managed at the state level.

Indicator 14 measures the percentage of students who, **one year after leaving high school**, are:

- 14A-Percent of students who exited secondary school and had an IEP in effect at the time they left school, were found enrolled in higher education.
- 14B-Percent of students who exited secondary school and had an IEP in effect at the time they left school, were found enrolled in higher education or were competitively employed.
- 14C-Percent of students who exited secondary school and had an IEP in effect at the time they left school, were found enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or were competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school.

In Florida, the required follow-up surveys are conducted by the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP). FETPIP uses existing state databases and direct surveying methods one year after a student exits the school system to determine their post-school status.

Since districts do not collect the data, their focus must be exclusively on driving positive results. Effective program alignment is the key strategy for improving the Indicator 14 results.

Key Steps for Indicator 14 Success

Strong Measurable Postsecondary Goals: Ensure every MPG is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

Robust Transition Services: Provide meaningful, coordinated services that directly support the MPGs, including work experiences and career education.

Interagency Collaboration: Ensure smooth handoffs to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) for Pre-ETS and Traditional Services, and postsecondary institutions.

Student Preparedness: Equip students with the self-determination skills needed to independently pursue their post-school goals.

V. Annual Compliance and Transition Planning Timeline

This timeline outlines critical compliance, data monitoring, and professional development milestones for ESE Directors, designed to ensure systematic execution of state and federal requirements throughout the academic year.

Fall Semester: Compliance, Monitoring, and Planning

September: Establishing Data and Compliance Focus

FDOE Monitoring List Request: Receive and process the FDOE Desktop Monitoring Student List Request (Indicator 13 Self-Assessment Ages 14 or IEP in effect before entering high school, whichever occurs first).

Data Monitoring: Initiate routine checks and run reports for the Early Warning System (EWS) to identify at-risk students for immediate intervention and any students who may have a dropout code, including DNEs.

Professional Development: Finalize dates and locations for Project 10 district trainings.

October: Desktop Monitoring Execution and Support Planning

Indicator 13 Review: Continue Desktop Monitoring. Review all selected Indicator 13 IEPs for full compliance and initiate any necessary corrective action.

Support Planning: Complete the District Support Summary document with the Project 10 Regional Representative (as requested via email) to review data and solidify TA goals for the year.

Data Monitoring: Run first or second round of Early Warning System (EWS) reports.

November: Final Submission

Compliance Deadline: Finalize and submit the Indicator 13 Self-Assessment and all associated data/IEP files to FDOE.

Support Planning: Complete the District Support Summary document with the Project 10 Regional Representative (as requested via email) to review data and solidify TA goals for the year.

Data Monitoring: Review and address students flagged in the Early Warning System (EWS).

December: Review and Preparation

Reporting: Receive and review the results of the Desktop Monitoring and Indicator 13 Self-Assessment from FDOE, and plan necessary programmatic remediation.

Spring Semester: Training, Outcomes, and Exit Procedures

January – March: Targeted Intervention and Capacity Building

Data Monitoring: Continue running routine reports for the Early Warning System (EWS) to track student progress throughout the semester.

Professional Development: Attend the Project 10 Winter Institute (usually held in February) and the Annual Transition Contacts Meeting for targeted regional training and capacity building.

April: Graduation Coding and Planning

Graduation Status: Ensure all graduation and dropout coding is accurate in the student information system.

Deferral Review: Review all student statements of intent to defer diploma to confirm intent and eligibility documentation.

Data Monitoring: Continue to run comprehensive Early Warning System (EWS) reports for the semester.

Professional Development: Attend and support the Visions Conference (if applicable).

May: Finalizing Student Exit Documents

Final Deferral: Ensure students who intend to defer their diploma have completed their final decision and documentation by May 15th.

Exit Coding: Perform check to ensure all deferment/graduation/dropout coding is accurate prior to end-of-year submission.

Mandatory Exit Documents (Seniors):

Complete the Summary of Performance (SOP) for all exiting seniors. (Project 10 training available)

Complete the Prior Written Notice (change of placement) for all graduating seniors.

Performance Report: Review the State Performance Plan / Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) published by FDOE:

Link: <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/data/>

Year-round: The attainment of Workforce Credential Badges should be monitored and documented throughout the year.