Chapter 92
Inclusive Transition:
A Bridge Over Troubled Waters

Jacqueline Hawkins

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9117-2315
University of Houston, USA

Elizabeth P. McDaniel
Crosby Independent School District, USA

ABSTRACT

Increasing trends in the number of students with disabilities who transition from high school to college and career have been evidenced in the past 30 years. Transition support for students who have been included in secondary school classrooms is necessary to ensure successful outcomes. The purpose of this chapter is to present the evolution of transition support and two evidence-based transition planning approaches. The chapter also presents the laws that support transition at various points in the educational pipeline and suggests training and outcomes that might be provided for students and their families and educators. Inclusive education has done much to spur the need for change in the transition process. The approaches are available. They need to be implemented to support students to persist and succeed in post-secondary education and in the world of work.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive schools mean that students with disabilities who have studied and interacted with their peers want to continue those interactions throughout their life. Essentially, they want to transition to inclusive post high school contexts at work, in community college, and in university. Successful transition requires careful planning, support, and on-going contributions from a variety of individuals – most especially from students who have been included in today's schools. Transition can focus on movement through grade levels, graduating from elementary to secondary school, and then graduation from high school. The focus of this chapter is on the transition of students from high school to college and/or career. Graduation

from high school is a milestone in any student's life. Graduation from high school for a student with a disability is both one of life's great milestone and also a shift from a system of support that has its basis in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to systems that rely on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act. In the early decades of the 21st Century, students with disabilities are more likely to seek out postsecondary education now than ever before. Likely a result of inclusive schools, enrollment for all students in a postsecondary effort rose between 1990 and 2005, (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey & Shaver, 2010, p. 22). The overall percentage increase for students in the general population was 8.6% while the increase for students with disabilities was 19.3%. Enrollment for students with disabilities increased across the postsecondary spectrum, including in vocational schools/technical colleges. Specifically, enrollment of students with disabilities rose 18.8% for two-year community or junior colleges, 9.1% for 4-year colleges and 12.8% for vocational, business, or technical schools (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey, & Shaver, 2010, p. 23). Increasingly more students have experienced inclusive classrooms, have engaged with their general education peers, and want to continue to be included in both life and work opportunities after they graduate high school. Transition support, when done well, can foster the inclusive future that students want.

The confluence of legislation, full inclusion, reporting requirements, and increasing numbers of students with disabilities who graduate from high school have all contributed to this increase in postsecondary interest (Shaw & Dukes III, 2016). At the same time, the need for transition support for a broad spectrum of students who have completed high school with a variety of educational experiences is increasingly evident. As students transition from high school, each may require different types of support. For example, students who require greater levels of support may transition to a job or a vocational school; other students who require more limited support may transition to community college or university; all students can access support that helps them to get and maintain a job, be supported to live in a college environment, or benefit from academic accommodations that can support their success in coursework. The transition process is the integral link that bridges various components that support the post-secondary success outcomes of students with disabilities. The transition process has been described and delivered differently over time and is highly dependent upon understanding the needs and wants of students, families, and the community. Supporting students through that process is key.

Transition from high school to a postsecondary endeavor is an important and often trying time for students with disabilities who want to pursue their education (Cleary, Walter, & Jackson, 2011; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013) or a job. A common theme that runs throughout the current research is the benefit to students of learning and becoming comfortable with their own knowledge, self-advocacy and independence as those relate to their eligibility for supports, accommodations or assistive technology when they pursue a postsecondary pathway.

The objectives of this chapter include the presentation of the background and evolution of transition planning for students with disabilities from employment to post-secondary and career success, the presentation of two evidence-based transition planning approaches for students with disabilities, a discussion of the legal requirements and students responsibilities to obtain transition support post high school, and an outline of how various stakeholders can prepare for transition.

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