THE RISING STAR

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Feature Article

Planning Student-Directed Transitions to Adult Life

Today, transition is seen as more than providing service routes in the individual's movement from high school to employment-it is seen as a comprehensive approach to educational program development consisting of an alignment of student goals with educational experiences and services.

Since the early 1980s, federal law has underscored the need for comprehensive transition planning and broadened its focus. The 1997 Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines transition services as a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that:

- Is designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

- Is based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests.

- Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

IDEA also states that transition planning must be part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and begin at age 14. By age 16, the IEP should contain a statement of needed transition services for the child, including, when appropriate, a statement of interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. Further, students must be invited to attend their IEP meetings if the purpose of the meeting will be to consider the student's transition service needs.

How can educators facilitate these new requirements- especially those that promote and strengthen the involvement of students with disabilities in decisions regarding their own futures? This digest describes how research is helping to inform practice around that programmatic issue.

Facilitating Student-Centered Transition Planning

IDEA '97 and its 1999 Regulations reflect a body of research-much of it supported by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP-that describes aspects of quality transition programs for students with disabilities. One of those key aspects is facilitating student-centered transition planning.

With OSEP support, Kohler (1998) organized the research literature, model projects, and exemplary programs on transition into a taxonomy of relevant practices. She found that student-focused planning was a necessary component in facilitating transition. Because the Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the planning vehicle for implementing the transition requirements specified in the IDEA, student participation in this process is essential. Specifically, students should be included in decisions related to post-school goals to ensure they are valued and attainable. As such, self-determination skills are considered to be fundamental to student participation in their own IEPs.

Practitioners should begin early to assist and guide students in developing appropriate education programs based on individual transition goals. With OSEP support, Martin et al. (in press) has studied skills students need to participate actively in their IEPs. These include:

How to choose goals. Provide experiences so students identify their interests, skills, and limits across transition areas.

How to participate in and lead their IEP meetings. Teach students self-determination, self-advocacy, and meeting skills.

How to accomplish goals. Teach students how to develop a plan to attain their goals, take action on the plan, evaluate

New Years Resolutions

As the New Year is approaching, now is a great time to help our youth focus on setting goals by using New Year's resolutions.

Ten Ways to Accomplish Your New Years Resolutions

Successfully completing your New Year's resolutions can be difficult, but with a little planning and determination you can greatly improve your chances for success. The ideas below should help you stay focused, positive and motivated.

Ten ways to improve chances for success:

1. **Be realistic** – Make sure that the resolution(s) is realistic. For example, losing thirty pounds by the end of February is not safe or realistic. Set yourself up for success by setting one or two reasonable and attainable goals that stretch your capabilities.

2. **Write down your goal and action steps** – Breakdown the goal into achievable parts called action steps. With the completion of each action step you are moving closer to accomplishing your goal.

3. **Set a time table** – Without a specific completion date your resolution is only a wish.

4. **Read the resolution(s) each night** before bed and again when you wake up.

5. **Determine what you will sacrifice** – Accomplishing your resolution will take time and effort on your part. What habits and behaviors are you willing to change in order to reach your goal?

6. **Be determined and minimize excuses.** You will face some hurdles as you strive to be successful. Avoid making an excuse a roadblock that

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and adjust their plan of action.

Curricula are available to assist practitioners in helping students direct their IEPs (e.g., Martin et al., 1996).

Helping Students Participate in their IEP

With sufficient preparation and support, students can participate in their IEP process in various ways. The extent of participation will depend on their abilities and interests-for example, some students direct their own meeting, while others take a specific part to direct. Teachers experienced in involving their students in the IEP process have made the following suggestions (ERIC/OSEP Special Project, 2000):

Begin instruction as early as possible. Some areas of study, such as self-determination skills, can begin in the elementary school.

Be prepared to support students with sensitive issues. Some students may never have seen their IEP and some may not even know what it means. Even if a student knows about IEPs, reading about one's disability can be unsettling. Teachers need to work through all issues and questions with students. It may help to talk individually with students before sharing the IEP.

Ensure that students understand what their disability means. It is important that students know about their disability and can talk about it to others. Encourage students to become comfortable stating what they need and what they do not need.

Make sure you feel comfortable with the process. Students will know if adults are uncomfortable talking about a topic or allowing the student to lead the IEP.

Schedule time for students to develop skills related to IEP participation on a

regular basis. It is very easy to let other subjects-particularly academics-take priority. Teachers must believe that self-determination, planning, and self-advocacy skills are priorities.

Teach IEP participation skills as a semester course. Students need sufficient time to master the skills. Although students can be taught skills once a week or in a day-long course, if you really want students to take an active role, you must allow sufficient time.

Use motivational techniques to interest students. Before you begin training, invite an individual with a disability to talk to students. It helps to have role-alike models as speakers (e.g., an individual who is a college graduate, an individual who has gone to a vocational education center, an individual who works in supported employment, a person who owns a business).

Communicate with families. Let parents know your intentions. It helps to invite families to a meeting where you can explain the approach and answer their questions.

These teachers believe that with sufficient preparation and support, students at all levels can actively participate in the IEP process. Teachers also have found that without preparation, students may not understand the language or the IEP process, and may feel as if other IEP team members have not listened to them.

Teachers who have included students successfully note that they feel good about their participation, and they have a sense of accomplishment and empowerment as a result of their participation in the process. ■

Resources

Developing Your Career With Smart Goals

Article from en.wikipedia.org

Many colleges require students to choose a major upon applying, and many students who plan on working after high school will do so immediately following graduation - because of this, it is important for every student to begin thinking about their career goals. High school is a great time to do this, and this article offers suggestions for students deciding on a career, as well as how to use the Smart Goals system.

There are so many career possibilities that deciding the right career path can be scary. This is also an exciting process, and is one that will ultimately lead you to a career that is stimulating, and right for you. Studies show the average job-seeker will change careers at least five times, and some will change their minds up to ten times, www.aie.org. Your initial decision will not bind you for life, but it will give you some direction and help you start deciding what is right for you.

When you begin thinking about your career goals, it is important to explore your skills and interests. Find out what it is you love - are you interested in

math? Do you like to paint? Once you have an idea of what makes you happy, research occupations that fit your personality and abilities. If you love working outside, perhaps accounting is not the right job for you. After you decide what it is you are interested in, you must figure out how to accomplish your goals. Spend some time mapping out a plan for your educational path. Take challenging courses in high school to help you get ahead, especially if you want to go to a university.

It may help you to set goals if you use the SMART Goals theory. According to Paul J. Meyer, Smart Goals are: * *Specific * Measurable * Attainable * Realistic * Tangible*

List generated by www.topachievement.com.

A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished. When you come up with a goal, ask yourself, who is involved, and what you want to accomplish. Also, you should establish a time frame for your goal, so you can have a deadline to achieve it by.

A measurable goal helps you monitor your progress and stay on track. Ask yourself if your goal is something attainable.

Attainable goals are goals that are reasonable enough for you to develop the abilities, skills, and resources necessary to reach them. Mapping out a game plan helps you find opportunities you may have overlooked.

Realistic Goals represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. You can have a high goal which is realistic, but goals are usually only realistic if you truly believe that they can be accomplished. Tangible goals are ones you can experience it with one of the senses.

Using Smart Goals, you can narrow down your career objectives, and find a way to make your dreams reality. This is especially useful for important goals, such as a dream college or dream career. ∎

New Years Resolutions

stops you from reaching your goal. Measure your progress toward reaching your goal. Your action steps and the completion date are two valuable tools to check your progress.

7. **Use positive affirmations** like "yes, I can and I will."

8. **Minimize the Bummer Words** – "no, can't, won't, never, maybe, and if."

9. **Ask yourself each day "Did I give my best effort today's activities?"** An honest answer will help you stay focused and move you closer the successful completion of your New Years Resolutions.

10. **Don't be afraid to ask for help.**

Good luck! This is your life! Your goals! Your success!

You are a WINNER! ∎

Developing Performance Character and Moral Character in Youth

The Fourth and Fifth Rs: Respect and Responsibility, Volume 10, Issue 2, Winter 2004.

A person of character embodies both performance AND moral character. Performance character refers to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dispositions needed to achieve human excellence in performance environments—in school, extracurricular activities, and work.

Performance character is built on "willing values" such as perseverance, diligence, and self-discipline. Moral character refers to the dispositions needed for ethical functioning and includes qualities such as justice, caring,

respect, and honesty. Here are 12 strategies for developing performance character and moral character for success in school and beyond.

1. Help students make character the core of their identity by challenging them to define who they are in a way that transcends their possessions and achievements.

2. Have students regularly grapple with existential questions such as: "What is the meaning of life?" "What is happiness?" "What gives my life a positive sense of purpose?"

Developing Performance Character and Moral Character in Youth

3. Have students create a personal mission statement defining their life goals and the person they hope to become. Have them consider performance character, such as goals they want to achieve, and moral character, including how they will make ethical decisions and how they will treat others.

4. Help students create self-monitoring tools to gauge their progress toward their goals (e.g., keeping a record of their effort to improve in a particular skill or area). Help them analyze their progress and revise their plans as needed.

5. Take a stand for academic integrity. Help students understand how all forms of cheating and plagiarism detract from their education and the education of their peers. Give them a leadership role in creating a school culture where academic integrity is the norm.

6. Give students a sense of their school's history and their place in it. Investigate the school's origins and defining traditions. Help them consider "What does it mean to be a graduate of our school?"

7. Help students develop critical viewing skills for discerning the moral messages in TV, music, and the internet. Consider questions such as : "What is the underlying message?" and "What values are being promoted?"

8. In discussions of controversial material, ensure that all sides of the issue are investigated and adequately represented. Don't have students merely "clarify" their values; challenge them to develop more informed and principled ways of thinking.

9. In history and literature classes, discuss moral and performance character as shown by historical or literary figures (e.g., "What made them great leaders?" "Was there a disparity between their performance character and their moral character?") In math and science classes, study and discuss inventors and entrepreneurs, considering aspects of their performance and moral character (e.g., "What character traits helped them become great?" "What character flaws limited their contributions?").

10. Invite people of exemplary work ethic from a variety of work settings (carpenters, factory technicians, lawyers, business people) to come in to discuss their work (for example, "What do you find satisfying?"), and their work ethic (for example, "How do you approach difficult tasks?").

11. Cultivate in students a "conscience of craft" regarding the importance of high-quality work and what it looks like. Develop performance character values such as initiative, effort, creativity, punctuality, neatness, and thoroughness. Help students see the difference between performance (the outcome) and performance character (the persistent quest to do your personal best).

12. Provide students with many and varied opportunities to engage in service. Whenever possible, include academic investigation related to the service (for example, if students are working in a homeless shelter, study the political and economical dimensions of affordable housing).■

ABOUT RISING STARS

The Rising Stars Program is an innovative and unique inside-out development program that focuses on three critical elements that promote personal leadership, healthy behaviors, and the skills employers identify as essential. These elements are: developing attitudes, developing interpersonal skills, and developing goal-achievement skills. The development process typically begins by developing positive attitudes among the participants about themselves and about the possibilities that exist for them. Attitudes will directly determine in many cases whether a student turns a problem into an opportunity or succumbs to it; whether they behave in healthy ways that benefit from the educational process. Goal achieving and interpersonal skills then enhance their ability to assess the impact of their present behavior on their present and future success.

The program has been field tested in an urban comprehensive high school, a middle school, a non-public special education program, a church youth club, and a community based program for adjudicated youth. Through trial and error, since spring of 1996, invaluable information was gained on how to structure a Youth Leadership Program and what essential ingredients were needed to make it a measurable success.■

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