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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

April 2024

Transition Planning



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"The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today."

- H. Jackson Brown Jr.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Happy Spring! As the snow melts and the warmer weather begins to stick around, teachers and school staff frequently begin to think about all the things that didn't get accomplished during the school year. There's so much to do, so much that's been done, and so many things that continue to pop up. The end of the year can also bring about changes for students, especially those who are graduating or aging out of school. Transition preparation and training can often feel like one of those things that's never-ending and keeps on popping up, but then all of a sudden, the student has graduated, and they are on their own.

For transition-aged students and their teams, planning for that time after school is certainly overwhelming. This newsletter will focus on all the different parts of transition preparation; it looks different for every student and team, so hopefully, these articles will give you a chance to think about what your student(s) need. If you have questions or would like more information on transition services, contact your SESA specialist. [The Anne Freitag Library](#) is a great resource for Alaskan educators, families, and individuals.

Please complete the survey attached to this newsletter for a chance to win a SESA water bottle. This information is used to establish the topics for next school year and we want to hear from you!

Have a wonderful end of the school year and an even more wonderful summer,

[Kristina Bower](#)

Multiple Disabilities Specialist/Newsletter Editor

Paraprofessional Spotlight



April's paraprofessional spotlight is **Eva**. She is an amazing paraprofessional because she:

- Keeps things simple and provides additional wait time for students to process directions
- Encourages participation and on-task behavior during instruction
- Promotes independence
- Brings a calming nature to any learning environment
- Addresses students' sensory needs
- Very interested in learning new information about the students she works with
- Is ready to put new strategies in place for the students

Keep up the great work, Eva!

Using Student Skills to Guide the Transition Planning Process

by Alison Adkins, Autism Education Specialist

The purpose of transition planning is to better prepare students to gain access to the supports necessary to reach their desired outcomes and to live as independently as possible. Overall, the transition planning process should be a collaborative effort between the student, teacher, family, and anyone else involved in the student's education in order to make the move from school to adult life as smooth as possible. In the end, this may look like training, college, employment, independent living, and playing an active role in their community based on the student's interests, abilities, and needs.

Transition planning is a plan with the end result as the focus. So, how do we reach the end result?

First, instruction should be taken into consideration. Skills necessary to successfully hold a job or to live independently should be taught formally and informally in the classroom. A few examples of these skills would be following a schedule, using an alarm or timer to move through activities, navigating the space that they are working in, and maintaining a clean work area.

Acquisition of daily living skills may also fall under the first category of instruction and play a critical role in the level of independence a student will have as they grow older. These skills would include housekeeping, hygiene, and self-advocacy. If a student regularly takes medication, can they administer this dose to themselves safely, or do they require support? Does the student recognize when they are sick and that they may need to go to the doctor? These are all skills that are teachable in the classroom and should be taken into consideration when planning for the student's future.

Communication and social skills are two other major components when looking at what path may be the right fit for a student. How does the student communicate? Do they only communicate wants and needs, or do they communicate more abstract feelings and can problem-solve in the moment with another person? Does the student enjoy being around other people? Does the student work better alone? Does the student greet others when they are approached? All of these questions, and more, can help paint a clearer picture of the environment the student would be more likely to thrive in when they are in a professional setting. For example, a student who does not tolerate a lot of noise around them would struggle to work somewhere with loud machinery or many people moving around the room across the day. On the flip side, a student who tends to make more noise would likely not thrive in an environment such as a library or quiet office space. Does the student recognize the social cues around them, that it is okay to be a little louder, or that everyone else is quiet, so they should also use a lower volume when speaking?

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Vocational Preparation and Training

by Jennifer Schroeder, Multiple Disabilities Specialist

Prevocational and vocational skills are critical for preparing individuals with disabilities for employment. It is important to understand the different categories for these foundational skills in order to create appropriate goals for our students. Categories for pre-vocational and vocational skills include:



Work Behavior/Habits: For students with multiple disabilities, this may be working on following a routine, following a schedule, and responding to directions.

Social Skills: This includes communicating with peers and adults as well as working on a team and accepting feedback or redirection.

Task Management: For students with multiple disabilities, this includes following one-step and multi-step directions and completing a task in a certain amount of time.

Problem-Solving Skills: It is important to teach students how to ask for help when it is needed and use different strategies to complete tasks or communicate with a variety of people.

Motor Skills: Many prevocational activities target hand-eye coordination and manual dexterity skills.

Basic Academic Skills: Basic academic skills include measuring, counting, basic reading skills, choice-making, and basic writing skills.

Time Management/Organizational Skills: Time management skills include estimating how long it will take to complete a task, staying focused and on-task to complete it on time, and using calendars or a schedule to keep track of different tasks that need to be done.

Self-Help Skills: Students with multiple disabilities should be taught about the importance of personal hygiene and given an opportunity to practice self-care/grooming skills daily.

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Vocational Preparation for Visually Impaired Students

by Angel Black, M.S.Ed., TSVI, COMS, Vision and O&M Specialist

Vocational preparation for students who are blind or visually impaired involves a combination of specialized education, training, and support services aimed at helping them acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue meaningful employment and careers. Here are some key components of vocational preparation for the blind and visually impaired:

- 1. Specialized Education:** Some students who are blind or visually impaired receive education through specialized schools or programs that cater to their unique needs. Others attend public school and are educated in general education and special education programs. These programs should focus on developing academic skills, such as braille literacy (when needed), as well as teaching adaptive techniques for navigating the world independently through Orientation and Mobility, and also by introducing the Expanded Core Curriculum to all students with visual impairments of any kind.
- 2. Career Counseling and Guidance:** Vocational counselors who specialize in working with students who are blind or visually impaired can provide guidance on career exploration, goal setting, and decision-making. They can help individuals identify their strengths, interests, and aptitudes and explore potential career paths.
- 3. Skills Training:** Vocational preparation often includes training in a variety of skills relevant to employment, such as computer proficiency, adaptive technology use, job-specific skills, mobility training, and activities of daily living. These skills may be taught in specialized settings or through community-based programs.
- 4. Assistive Technology:** Access to assistive technology is crucial for students who are blind or visually impaired to perform job tasks effectively. Vocational preparation may include training in the use of screen readers, magnification software, braille displays, and other assistive devices that enhance accessibility in the workplace.

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Vocational Training: Work Still Requires Access to Print

by Meriah Cory, Alaska Center for Accessible Materials (AKCAM) Coordinator

Getting ready for life after school is hard. With the transition comes a change in routines and a change of people with whom interactions occur. For students who have a print disability, this can be

exceptionally challenging as supports that have been put in place and become second nature while in school can easily be forgotten about. We think about print needs in the academic setting but not about how much we use that in adult life. When in reality, access to print goes hand-in-hand with most activities, so don't let the access to print and the tools needed get lost. Just because they will not have textbooks does not mean that students will not need the same tools they have learned to use when reading manuals, following written schedules, or responding to emails.

Transition plans can help when thinking about vocational skills and the tools that will be needed to allow for success. They can help when thinking about what skills are needed to complete jobs and if those skills are going to need support.

Here are some examples of plans used for assistive technology during transition. It would be very easy to add print access to these. Assistive technology can be communication devices, mobility devices, graphic organizers, etc. But it can also be a device used to access print, so remember to include them.

Checklists for transition (getting ready for vocational training)

1. [Transition Planning Worksheet for AT Users](#)
2. [National Resource Center for Health Care Transitions](#)
3. [NYC Guide to Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities](#)
4. [Assistive Technology Consideration Guide, including reading and AEM](#)
5. [Family Information Guide to Assistive Technology and Transition Planning](#)

But even with the best plans and all the checklists filled out, things still get lost in the transition process. The best way to prevent this from happening is to help students become their own self-advocates for what they need and when. This can take all different forms depending on the student's needs, wants, and skills, but the important thing is not to undervalue giving a student/child a voice to help them meet their needs.

The first step starts by explaining to them why they use a device or the name of the materials they are using. They are no longer dependent on a parent/teacher/friend to explain what they need and why. This could include placement in a room as well as the adapted materials needed to be successful.

Here are some resources about self-advocacy that can be helpful, but do not be afraid to adapt them as needed.

- [Find tools and support to help you set goals, be heard, and reach for the stars](#)
- [Advocacy: Making Equity Possible](#)
- [Student Self-Evaluation Matrix](#)
- [Student Resource Guide on Transition](#)

Remember that CAST and the National Center for Accessible Materials have many resources and videos to help with identifying the needs of Accessible Educational Materials, but also how to navigate change and keep consistency.

- [Accessible Learning Across the Lifespan](#)
- [Quality Indicators for the Provision of Accessible Educational Materials & Technologies](#)
- [AEM Center Resources](#)

Life changes are hard, and there is no way to plan out everything that needs to happen. That is why building self-advocacy skills can be so important. Giving a person their own voice to help them meet their access needs can be better than even the best-laid plan.

Preparing Students for Secondary Transition

by Jessica Williams, Emotional Disabilities Specialist

Preparing students for employment and assisting in life skill development is crucial for students with emotional disabilities as they transition out of high school. Life skill development focuses on skills such as communication, problem-solving, financial management, etc., and plays an important role for young people as they get ready to leave high school. Because students with emotional disabilities often have obstacles to overcome, such as social, emotional, and environmental challenges, providing opportunities to develop these skills and gain knowledge of what is offered will help them make informed decisions about their future.

One way to do this is by including them in the transition process. Help students understand their IEP and set goals for their future. When students are given the opportunity to explore options, they begin to feel more equipped to take control of that process. If possible, provide experiences for students to participate in Career and Technical Education (CTE). This could include courses that are hands-on (i.e., shop, native arts classes, culinary, etc.) and focus on specific skills. If there are opportunities to partner with a local business, find ways to make those connections for students.

Whether students plan to attend college, or enter the workforce, providing guidance is important in helping with the next step. The links attached below provide valuable information and resources to help connect students and educators across Alaska with that process.

Additional Resources:


[DVR's Pre - Employment Transition Service](#)
[Alaska Vocational Technical Center](#)



The Alaska Traditional Transition Skills

The Alaska Traditional Transition Skills is a project intended to improve the quality of life, connection to local community, and increase work-related skills for teens and young adults with disabilities who live in rural Alaska. It provides tools teachers can use to incorporate traditional values and knowledge into Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Transition Plans.

For more information, go to: [Alaska Traditional Transition Skills](#)



Win a Water Bottle!

Want a chance to win a SESA water bottle? Please complete the quick survey below for a chance to win (one entry per person). One winner will be drawn.

Surveys must be completed by May 3rd to be entered.

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