

UNM CDD/NMPED Educator Voices Podcast **Classroom Essentials – Planning for Transition**

“Transition planning is a process mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) for all students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in K-12 education. The purpose is to facilitate the student’s move from school to post-school activities.” <https://ldaamerica.org/info/transition-planning-requirements-of-idea-2004/>

The above website is full of helpful information regarding transition including what must be taught prior to the transition planning meeting. To the extent possible, the student should know:

- The purpose and benefits of an IEP;
- The procedures of an IEP meeting, including who is there and why;
- The purpose of the transition planning part of the IEP meeting;
- The importance of the student’s input;
- How to describe their own strengths and challenges (academic and non-academic);
- How to put their vision for their own future into words;
- How to participate in setting their own goals; and
- How to self-advocate for the kinds of supports they will need to meet their goals.

Teaching regarding these issues should begin well before it is time for students to participate in their own transition planning. School staff and families will need to carefully consider which of the above questions are most meaningful and relevant to individual students and what kind of support that student will need. Individuals with ASD who may have difficulty understanding abstract language, concepts and age appropriate social skills will need well planned support

It is very important to keep in mind that transition planning (including planning for transition services) is person centered. “Person Centered Planning is an **ongoing problem-solving process** used to help people with disabilities plan for their future. [The] focus is on an individual and that person’s vision of what they would like to do in the future.” <https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/independent-community-living/person-centered.asp> It is also intended to be strength based. “A strengths-based approach to care, support and inclusion says let’s look first at what people can do with their skills and their resources and what can the people around them do in their relationships and their communities. People need to be seen as more than just their care needs – they need to be experts and in charge of their own lives.” Alex Fox <https://www.scie.org.uk/strengths-based-approaches/guidance>

It is hard to overstate the importance of careful individualized transition planning. It is easy for busy educators and families to “tick off the boxes” in order to move on in the IEP – especially given that this planning happens when students still have years left in school (IDEA mandates that planning begin at age 14). However, it is essential to remember that the individual’s ability to be as independent as possible and their quality of life is at stake. For many individuals with autism, uneven development of skills may leave surprising gaps in their repertoire of skills. For example, a person who graduates with a standard academic diploma may lack the social skills to interact in typical community activities including job interviews. There may be challenges in crossing the street or using transportation independently. Without careful consideration such issues may not receive the warranted attention in the transition process.

Autism Speaks offers an excellent Transition Tool Kit that is very helpful in the transition planning process. <https://www.autismspeaks.org/tool-kit/transition-tool-kit>

IEP teams depend on the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) Checklist to guide them through the transition process. https://transitionta.org/sites/default/files/transitionplanning/NSTTAC_ChecklistFormA.pdf