



## CEC's DCDT FAST FACTS: Parental Involvement

Prepared by the DCDT Publications Committee

The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center has identified evidence-based predictors of post-school success for students with disabilities based on a systematic correlational literature review (Test et al., 2009). Findings indicated that students with disabilities, who had one or more parents who participated in a greater percentage of IEP meetings during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade year, were more likely to be engaged in post-school employment and had greater stability in their employment status (Fourqurean et al., 1991). Recently, Rowe et al. (2013) conducted a Delphi study to add specificity to the existing predictor definitions identified by Test et al. (2009) and operationally defined the predictors so local educators understand the components necessary to develop, implement, and evaluate secondary transition programs based on predictor research.

Parental involvement has been operationally defined as “parents /families/guardian are active and knowledgeable participants in all aspects of transition planning (e.g., decision-making, providing support, attending meetings, and advocating for their child)” (Rowe et al., 2013).

Efforts to increase parental involvement should include the following essential program characteristics as identified by Rowe et al., 2013:

- Provide relevant information about transition planning to parents through a variety of means (e.g., written, face-to-face, community-based trainings such as Autism Society) at each stage of the transition planning process such as transition from middle to high school, age of majority, graduation.
- Link parents with support networks (e.g., networking opportunities with other parents, advocacy groups).
- Provide multiple options for involvement (e.g., pre-IEP planning input, flexible IEP meeting times) and alternate ways to obtain input in the transition planning process. *\*\*Consider parents' perceptions in transition planning that may conflict with mainstream professional ideas. Some parents from CLD backgrounds may not be supportive of transition activities if they feel the plans are contrary to their expectations.*
- Establish a welcoming atmosphere in the school by developing a system of ongoing communication and interaction (e.g., e-mail, notes home, home visits, regularly scheduled meetings in addition to IEP meetings). *\*\*Consider the language and cultural needs of parents from CLD backgrounds.*
- Provide fairs, brochures, or workshops to educate parents about adult services and post-school supports in the community (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, mental health resources, postsecondary education institutions and supports). *\*\*Consider developing material in languages accessible to target communities.*
- Provide staff training on culturally competent transition planning (e.g. recognizing and honoring differences such as ethnic, socioeconomic, and values of the family).
- Actively engage parents in interagency transition councils.
- Collaborate with families to identify how the school and family/guardian can support the student in achieving their desired post-school goals.
- Share transition assessment results with parents so that parents can use the information to provide training for their child in the home and the community and identify natural supports.

## **Application for Teachers**

- Evaluate parent involvement activities and strategies used to ensure essential program characteristics are included.
- Become familiar with resources on developing family-professional partnerships in secondary transition. Resources are available at:
  - [http://www.beachcenter.org/families/partnerships/family-professional\\_partnerships.aspx](http://www.beachcenter.org/families/partnerships/family-professional_partnerships.aspx);
  - <http://www.nsttac.org/content/parent-and-family-involvement-annotated-bibliography-prepared-nsttac-dawn-rowe>;
  - <http://www.nsttac.org/content/evidence-based-practices-secondary-transition>
  - [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)
- Develop materials and organize or identify training to give parents the knowledge they need to actively participate in the transition planning process. Remember, keep materials simple and parent friendly, reduce the use of educational jargon, keep training sessions brief, cover one topic at a time, and divide complex topics into several sessions.
- Provide training and/or instructional materials in the early stages of transition planning (i.e., age 13).
- Encourage parents to attend workshops on transition planning and other transition-related topics offered by the parent training and information center in your state that is funded by the U.S. Department's Office of Special Education Programs. Find your local Center here: <http://www.parentcenternetwork.org>
- Begin reaching out to family members well before the IEP meeting to get to know the vision family members and their child have for the future. Incorporate this into your preparations for the IEP or transition planning meeting.
- Help families understand the importance of having high expectations for their child and reflect on the consequences of making educational program choices that will not lead to a standard high school diploma to ensure that they are making a fully informed decision.
- When considering work-based learning experiences for individual students, engage parents in thinking about how their own personal, professional, and community networks might lead to work opportunities in the community.
- Help parents connect with systems their son or daughter may need after they graduate from high school and follow up on their progress. Parents report leaving the familiar special education system and finding themselves lost and unaware of how to go about accessing Vocational Rehabilitation, Social Security, housing supports, community or county social services.
- Remember that the most involved members of a family may be parents, or they may be extended family members, friends, or others that regard themselves as family.

## **Application for Administrators**

- Use the Predictor Self-Assessment to evaluate parent involvement located here: [http://psocenter.org/content\\_page\\_assets/content\\_page\\_3/Predictor\\_Self-Assessment.final\\_06\\_24\\_13.pdf](http://psocenter.org/content_page_assets/content_page_3/Predictor_Self-Assessment.final_06_24_13.pdf)
- Create a culture supportive of family involvement in your school. Identify ways for parents of all students to be engaged in school activities such as hosting community events, involving parents on formal leadership committees, or sponsoring activities that offer parents basic information about college preparation, entrance exams, and financial aid. Be creative – think of traditional and non-traditional (e.g., technology-based) ways for parents to be engaged.

- Create a culture of high expectations for all students, including students with disabilities. Hold staff accountable for conveying that expectation to families.
- Ensure time is devoted to strategies to create family-professional partnerships and implementing culturally responsive practices during in-service activities.
- Support a comprehensive transition process by allocating resources (substitutes, etc.) so that teachers can devote the time and attention required for positive student outcomes.

### **Application for Families**

- Seek out and ask for resources to help you become actively involved in IEP and transition planning meetings and how to support your child to plan for the future. Explore the Adult section of the Youthhood website: [www.youthhood.org](http://www.youthhood.org) and connect with resources available through Parent Training Centers. Find your local Center here: <http://www.parentcenternetwork.org/parentcenterlisting.html>
- Reach out to your child's teachers early and express your interest in developing a partnership.. Also, introduce yourself to the principal and other school staff.
- Find out the best method for communicating with school staff. Some individuals will prefer phone calls, others will respond best to e-mail or written notes.
- Provide the school with the best times and methods to communicate with you. Update contact information whenever there is a change. Respond as quickly and completely as possible to school contacts.
- Check your child's backpack daily for notes, newsletters, or other communications from the school. Find out how to access the school and school district websites, and check regularly for current information.
- Talk with your son or daughter's teacher to find out how you can reinforce at home what your child is learning at school.
- Listen to your child's dreams for the future, and provide the supports needed to make those come true.

### **Where to Go for Additional Information**

#### **Websites**

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center

- <http://www.nsttac.org/content/resources-families>

Beach Center on Disability

- <http://www.beachcenter.org/>

National Center for Cultural Competence

- <http://nccc.georgetown.edu/foundations/frameworks.html>

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

- <http://www.ncset.org>

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center

- <http://www.nsttac.org/>

Pacer Center

- [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)

Parent Technical Assistance Center Network

- <http://www.parentcenternetwork.org/>

### **Books, Newsletters, and Research Articles**

- Fourqorean, J. M., Meisgeier, C., Swank, P. R., & Williams, R. E. (1991). Correlates of postsecondary employment outcomes for young adults with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 24*, 400-405.
- Greene, G. (2011). *Transition planning for culturally and linguistically diverse youth*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Kalyanpur, M. & Harry, B. (1999). *Culture in special education: Building reciprocal family-professional relationships*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Kreider, H. Caspe, M., Kennedy, S. & Weiss, W. (2007). *Family Involvement in Middle and High School Students' Education* (Family Involvement Makes a Difference No. 3) Retrieved 2/20/12 from <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/publications-series/family-involvement-makes-a-difference/family-involvement-in-middle-and-high-school-students-education>
- PACER Center (2004). *Parent Keys to Success in the Parent-School Partnership* (PACER Center Action Information Series) Retrieved 2/20/12 from <http://www.pacer.org/leadership/handouts/keystosuccess.asp>
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- Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers (2008). *Fostering Parent and Professional Collaboration: Research Brief*. Retrieved 2/10/12 from <http://www.parentcenternetwork.org/assets/files/Parent%20and%20Professional%20Collaboration%20Research%20Brief%20-%20Final.pdf>
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