

Excerpt from National PTA's *Special Education Toolkit*

From Pre-K to Graduation

Transitioning your student throughout his or her school career and preparing them for college or the workforce after graduation.

How do I help my child transition from preschool to kindergarten?

This can be the most difficult transition of all because parents and infants have an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). This plan is completely about the child and the family. The IFSP is a family model where all learning is natural and services come into the home. Once they enter preschool, all services now happen at the school not in the home.

What questions should I ask as my child transitions from preschool to kindergarten?

- What type of school is the best setting to meet my child's needs?
- Can I visit the school campus? Visit the classroom? Talk with the teacher?
- How many hours each day will my child attend?
- How many children will be in the classroom?
- What services will my child receive? How will the services differ from what we are receiving now?
- How will my child get to school if it is not your neighborhood school?
- If my child is to receive transportation services what do I need to know about it?
- Where is your child going after school? Do you need daycare? Does the school have an afterschool daycare?
- Is my child ready for kindergarten?
- How can I join the PTA?

How can I help my child transition from elementary to middle school?

If at all possible a child should go to their neighborhood school as they have connections with friends and neighbors. Hear what the school is recommending for your child. Visit the school and classrooms being recommended and if concerned talk about your concerns with the teacher.

What questions should I ask as my child transitions from elementary to middle school?

- How will services change on the IEP from elementary to middle school?
- How will the teacher touch base with me?
- When do I get progress reports?
- Will there be lockers?
- How will my child get to P.E.?
- Does my child qualify for transportation? If so, what do I need to do?
- Is there summer school?
- Is there a school orientation?
- Does the school have counselors? When can I meet the counselor?
- My child is on medication. What are the procedures?

- Are there any school functions my child and I can attend to make him/her feel more comfortable?
- Are there after school homework clubs?
- How can I join the PTA?

How can I help my child transition from middle to high school?

Visit the school campus that is being recommended and meet with the school counselor as well as the teachers. Be sure to inquire as to the opportunities for your child while in high school.

What questions should I ask as my child transitions from middle to high school?

- What are requirements for graduation?
- How will services change on my child's IEP from middle to high school?
- Is there workability or vocational education at the school? How does my child get involved in this?
- How will my child be graded?
- How will we discuss my child's transition plan that is put in place when he/she is 16 years old?
- What is the homework policy?
- What will my child need to succeed at the school?
- Do you provide a daily planner for my child to keep his/her schedule and due dates or is that something I will need to get and to teach him/her how to use?
- What happens during finals?
- When can I obtain my child's schedule so I can show him/her around the campus in order to make an easy transition?
- How does my child make up credits if he/she should get behind?
- How can I join the PTA?
- What can I do over the summer to prepare my child?

How can I help my child prepare for college?

Special education students should be preparing for transition beginning in middle school. Each student should begin to see what the requirements are in their perspective state. A transition plan should include plans for completion of school, graduation and their future for college and/or career. To prepare for college, students need to make sure that they have fulfilled all requirements for their graduation. This should include taking all courses in the school district, achieving all credits toward graduation, taking all assessments and exit exams required for graduation and preparing to transition to college and/or career.

Applying to take the SAT and ACT exams may need to include an updated profile to have extended time to take the tests. Students and/or their parents should check on the requirements including other psychological assessments for qualification. Once the tests are taken, then make a special education file to use only for the applications to all potential colleges. It should include the most current psychological assessment and a clear diagnosis of any disability that would help a student to qualify for the "reasonable accommodations" for school. Make a list of the various colleges and what their student with disabilities office may offer, the contact in each office and what the requirements might be to apply to the program. Remember, once a student leaves the IDEA

program and especially when the student turns 18 years old, the student must be the one to ask for the services at the college, take responsibility to declare to the disabilities office and apply for services.

Is there a transition “check list” for my high school student that will assist with his/her transition to college or career?

The following is a checklist of transition activities that students and parents should consider when preparing transition plans with the IEP team. The student's skills and interests will determine which items on the checklist are relevant. This checklist is used to determine whether or not these transition issues should be addressed at IEP transition meetings. The checklist can also help identify who should be part of the IEP transition team. Responsibility for carrying out the specific transition activities should be determined at the IEP transition meetings.

Four to five years before leaving the K-12 school district:

- Identify personal learning styles and the necessary accommodations for an IEP student to be a successful learner and worker.
- Identify career interests and skills, complete interest and career inventories and identify additional education or training requirements.
- Explore options for postsecondary education and admission criteria.
- Identify interests and options for future living arrangements, including supports. Learn to communicate effectively your interests, preferences and needs.
- Be able to explain your disability and the accommodations.
- Learn and practice informed decision making skills.
- Investigate assistive technology tools that can increase community involvement and employment opportunities.
- Broaden experiences with community activities and expand friendships. Pursue and use local transportation options outside of family.
- Investigate money management and identify necessary skills.
- Acquire identification card and the ability to communicate personal information.
- Identify and begin learning skills necessary for independent living.
- Learn and practice personal health care.

Two to three years before leaving the K-12 school district:

- Identify community support services and programs (Vocational Rehabilitation, County Services, Centers for Independent Living, Regional Centers etc.).
- Invite adult service providers, peers and others to the IEP transition meeting. Match career interests and skills with vocational course work and community work experience.
- Gather more information on postsecondary programs and the support services offered. Make arrangements for accommodations to take college entrance exams.
- Identify health care providers and become informed about sexuality and family planning issues.
- Determine the need for financial support (Supplemental Security Income, state financial supplemental programs, Medicare).
- Learn and practice appropriate interpersonal, communication and social skills for different settings (employment, school, recreation, etc.).
- Explore legal status with regards to decision making prior to the age of majority. Begin a resume and update it as needed.

- Practice independent living skills, e.g. budgeting, shopping, cooking and housekeeping.
- Identify needed personal assistant services, and if appropriate, learn to direct and manage these services.

Twelve months before leaving the K-12 school district:

- Apply for financial support programs. (Supplemental Security Income, Independent Living Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Personal Assistant Services.)
- Identify the post-secondary school you plan to attend and arrange for accommodations.
- Practice effective communication by developing interview skills, asking for help and identifying necessary accommodations at post-secondary and work environments.
- Specify desired job and obtain paid employment with support as needed. Take responsibility for arriving on time to work, appointments and social activities.
- Assume responsibility for health care needs (making appointments, filling and taking prescriptions, etc.).
- Register to vote and selective service.

What is Vocation Education in relation to Special Education?

Vocational Education is based on an age appropriate Individual Transition Plan (ITP) which is documented in the IEP beginning on the student's 15th birthday. The goals that are written in the ITP include appropriate measurable post-secondary goals that cover the education or training, employment, community experiences and if needed, independent living. These goals are to be updated annually. The transition services should reasonably enable the student to meet his or her post-secondary goals.

Workability is a program that all individuals with disabilities will successfully participate in in preparation for the workplace and independent living and falls under the Vocational Education piece of the IEP. The mission of Workability is to promote the involvement of key stakeholders (students, families, educators, workforce agencies and business partners) in planning and implementing an array of services that will culminate in successful student transition to employment, life-long learning and quality adult life.

Higher Education: Assistance for Parents and Young People with Special Needs

The National Association of School Psychologists has prepared a helpful tip sheet for transitioning students with special needs into higher education. The article, *Transitioning High School Students with Learning Disabilities into Post-secondary Education: Assessment and Accommodations*, provides parents with information and resources on helping their student begin a college career.

How do I establish guardianship for my child with special needs?

A conservatorship and/or guardianship allows someone to act for someone else. A conservatorship/guardianship cannot be created voluntarily. It is granted by a judge. A guardianship is similar to a parent/child relationship, except that a guardian is not held legally responsible for the acts of the other person and guardians do not have to use his or her own money to provide for the other. They are generally given when someone can no longer take care of

themselves. For instance, if a person becomes mentally incapacitated and is no longer able to make knowledgeable decisions about his or her own welfare, a conservatorship or guardianship will need to be obtained. This involves obtaining a judgment from the court and the appointment of a caretaker by the court.

How do I create a power of attorney for my child with special needs?

A power of attorney is a document that voluntarily creates a relationship with another and gives them the right to act as if they were you. You may limit a power of attorney to a very specific transaction or you may grant full power to someone over all of your affairs. For example, a limited power might be to allow your agent to sell your car and deposit the sale proceeds to your bank account or to write checks on your bank account to pay your utility bills. A "full" power would allow your agent to transact all your financial affairs for you.