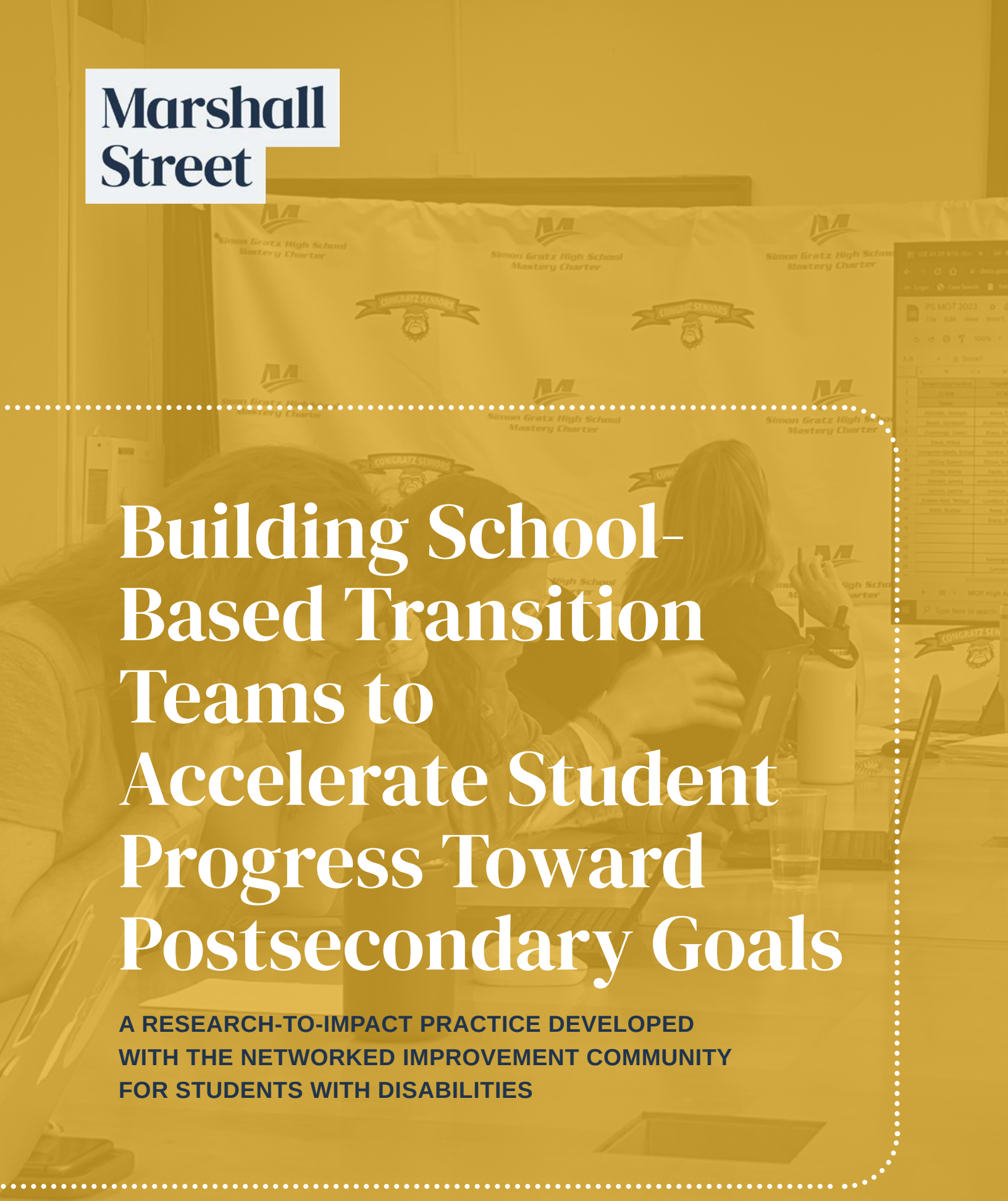
Marshall Street



Building School-Based Transition Teams to Accelerate Student Progress Toward Postsecondary Goals

A RESEARCH-TO-IMPACT PRACTICE DEVELOPED WITH THE NETWORKED IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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Building School-Based Transition Teams to Accelerate Student Progress Toward Postsecondary Goals

Implementation Level

- [x] District/Central Office
- [x] School
- [x] Program/Department
- [ ] Classroom

Who Implements

- [x] Teacher(s)
- [ ] Instructional Coach
- [x] Principal
- [x] Central Office Leadership
- [x] Specialist: Social Worker

Practice Overview

What is the Practice?

A transition team of postsecondary counselors, transition coordinators, and social workers meet biweekly to monitor whether students with disabilities are on track to meet postsecondary milestones and goals and to provide rapid action steps when needed.

Essential Elements of Transition Team Meetings

1. Meetings occur on at least a biweekly basis for reviews of student postsecondary milestone data and consistent, timely support.
2. Transition team includes staff with knowledge about different postsecondary pathways (2- and 4-year college, apprenticeships, community living, workforce development, etc.).
3. The team routinely designs rapid action steps for any student not on track to meet postsecondary milestones and goals.

Why is a School-Based Transition Team Important?

After high school, students with disabilities are less likely to live independently or to enroll in postsecondary education, and they experience poorer employment outcomes than their peers without disabilities.[1] Transition planning combined with rapid support in implementing transition plans can improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities, no matter which postsecondary path they pursue.

Why it Works

TRANSITION PLANNING INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD THAT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES RECEIVE SERVICES IN POSTSECONDARY SETTINGS.

Transition planning, like any other type of academic counseling, can have an outsized impact on a student's ability to meet their long-term goals. Students with disabilities who engaged in postsecondary transition-planning education, including education about what services they need after high school, were highly correlated with students actually receiving postsecondary services in academic and non-academic settings.[2] Despite this, only about 20% of students with disabilities are enrolled in a high school program that provides them with the opportunities and services to meet their transition goals.[3] This low enrollment indicates that, though transition planning and programs can have positive outcomes for students, a significant percentage of students with disabilities are not receiving the transition services that would best support long-term success.

TEAMS THAT USE DATA TO SUPPORT TRANSITIONS HELP STUDENTS MAKE PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS.

After establishing transition goals and plans, students with disabilities also need support in navigating enrollment in programs or other steps required to progress on their transition plans. School teams that provide support in implementation — including tracking student progress towards transition goals and intervening when students are falling off track — increase the number of students who successfully access their postsecondary pathways.[4]

COLLABORATIVE TEAMS BRING TOGETHER DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES.

Notably, systems for tracking student progress will be most successful when there is collaboration between the core stakeholders, including special education case managers, transition coordinators, college counselors, and families. Engaging in inter-agency collaboration (e.g., collaboration between schools and the state department of rehabilitation) has proven to result in improved outcomes for students with disabilities, including increases in both postsecondary employment and enrollment in postsecondary education programs.[5] When teams that support students' postsecondary transition progress are composed of a diverse set of staff members with various knowledge and viewpoints, team members can each give input, keep the team focused on students' interests, and include family preferences, as well as help mitigate potential biases that can unintentionally direct our priority population to less lucrative or lower-status occupations.

TRANSITION PLANNING IS THE LAW

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates transition planning activities for students with disabilities starting at age 16, though many states require it to begin earlier. The act intends for these transition planning services to be a collaborative endeavor that includes all individuals and agencies involved in an individual student's postsecondary plan.

Implementation at a Glance

The information in this section provides a high-level view of what to consider when implementing this practice. Enabling Conditions describes the minimum conditions needed for successful implementation, including resources, mindsets, staffing, and recommended time allocation. Steps to Implement presents a concise checklist of action items, which are explained in detail in How to Implement this Practice, below.

Enabling Conditions

Prerequisites	• Staff understand state policies that affect postsecondary pathways. Requirements for graduation and alternative ways to meet criteria are continuously in flux, and staff need to be abreast of these changes. • Staff believe that meaningful postsecondary pathways can include alternatives to 2- and 4-year colleges, such as workforce entry, vocational training/apprenticeships, the military, occupational certifications, or community living. • Staff value student and family voices as the foundation for transition planning. • Staff that support transition systems and students' milestone progress hold a deep commitment to ongoing problem-solving and take the initiative to connect the student and family to any and all available resources. • All students have transition plans with a goal for each of the following: postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.
Recommended Materials	• Clear meeting protocol or agenda • A tracking tool to use during transition planning meetings to track student progress toward postsecondary goals (See Implementing Routine Data Cycles to Rapidly Address Student Needs.) • Communication systems and templates (where appropriate) for family, student, and staff communication
Staff Commitment	• Dedicated team lead to manage meeting agendas, oversee documentation of meetings, and follow up on action items • Dedicated team of up to 6–8 staff members to sit on the transition team and regularly engage in team meetings

Recommended Time Allocation

Meeting facilitator/lead:

- Time between meetings to evaluate progress, support staff, and support student action steps (up to 10 hours weekly)
- Time between meetings to update programmatic and student information and document completed action items (1 hour biweekly)

Teachers and specialists:

- About an hour biweekly of pre-work for transition team members to:
  - identify any students or external programs that have needs for the team to address, and
  - complete action steps from prior meeting
- Protected time and space for 6–8 team members to meet (1 hour biweekly)
- Staff time to enact action steps and provide individualized support to students and families (30–60 minutes per student for follow-up)

Steps to Implement

AT THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

- ☐ Create a student tracking system
- ☐ Input initial student data
- ☐ Form and launch the transition team
- ☐ Determine meeting cadence and protocols

BEFORE THE MEETING

- ☐ Collect and update data

DURING THE MEETING

- ☐ Review data
- ☐ Plan action steps
- ☐ Assign next steps

AFTER THE MEETING

- ☐ Include families in action steps





Bringing this Practice to Life

USING DATA REGULARLY TO ENSURE SUCCESSFUL POSTSECONDARY TRANSITIONS AT MASTERY SCHOOLS

Mastery Schools' Simon Gratz High School, a college preparatory public charter school in Philadelphia, PA, wanted to do a better job at keeping track of student progress on transition activities. They saw tracking this data as essential for improving postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities at their school. An interdisciplinary team focused on postsecondary transitions began meeting every two weeks to review student progress using a data tracker to help guide student-focused conversations. The case study below describes Gratz's process and the encouraging results of the practice.

Mastery Gratz's Biweekly Transition Milestone Meetings

Every two weeks, the conference room table on the second floor of Simon Gratz High School is surrounded by a team of the school's veteran staff. College counselors, social workers, the transition coordinator, and special education case managers all sit with their laptops open in sight of a large TV screen. The screen displays a spreadsheet with data on every senior with an IEP on a non-college pathway (e.g., workforce development, career, or military). Within the spreadsheet, red, yellow, and green highlighting clearly shows overall student progress.

Keeping Track of Every Student

These transition meetings and their follow-up actions attempt to ensure that students complete the necessary steps — "milestones" is the term Gratz uses — along the pathway to each student's postsecondary goal. The ultimate objective is that every student is engaged in a postsecondary

pathway when they graduate. The tools and protocols used during transition meetings all support these purposes. The team keeps track of every student with an IEP, taking action to support those furthest off track and regularly highlighting students' success in dual enrollment programs.

Sharing Knowledge about Students

The color-coding in the spreadsheet makes it easy for the team to zoom in and focus on individual students. The transition team focuses first on students who are furthest off track, those coded in red. Team members with deeper knowledge about a given student let the team know any pertinent information about barriers that impact the student's ability to stay on track with their postsecondary milestones. Barriers can include challenges at home, attendance issues, or that the student no longer enjoys or is not meeting the expectations of their dual enrollment program. Each type of barrier requires the team to consider the best way to support the student, whether with a phone call home, a tour of a program accepting applications, or some other action to address the obstacle.

The conversation for each student is relatively short and ends when the team agrees upon one or more action items and the team member responsible for executing the action items. The team decides the best member to address the student's needs by considering the type of relationship each member has with the student, as well as their knowledge of the selected action step.

Following the meeting, case managers meet with each student who is off track to discuss the proposed action plan. Case managers contact the student's family with the student present to ensure they are aware of the barrier(s) and can support the action plan.

Gains in Student Postsecondary Success

By using this practice over the last three years, Gratz has increased the number of students with a clearly defined postsecondary goal and ensured that students are making progress toward the goal during senior year. They also found that students remain engaged in the postsecondary pathway after graduation. Gratz's transition program efforts have increased, from 53% to 77%, the percentage of students enrolled and engaged in postsecondary pathways in education, workforce, military, or job training six months after graduation. **One year after graduation, 90% of these recent graduates with disabilities were engaged in their postsecondary pathway.**

USING SUMMER TO ENSURE SUCCESS

Gratz has a summer transition support program for students who graduate without completing their postsecondary milestones. The program, known as C3, also leverages rapid-response team actions based on milestone data. Offering this summer transition support program would not be possible without accurate milestone tracking throughout the school year. See Providing Summer Transition Programming for Postsecondary Success for details.

How to Implement this Practice

This section provides step-by-step guidance along with accompanying resources for building a school-based transition team to accelerate student progress toward postsecondary goals.

At the Start of the School Year

Step 1: Create a Student Tracking System

A postsecondary milestone tracker can be as simple as a spreadsheet that lists each student, their pathway, their current milestones, and any next steps the transition team needs to take to support the students. Color coding the tracker can make it easier to quickly identify which students are on track along their pathways and which need extra support to complete their steps.

The table below is an example of what a tracker can look like.

Student Name	Case Manager	Seminar Period	PS Pathway	Work Completion	Other Classes?	Suggested Next Step
Tegan, Emery	Rivera	T/Th — 3	Workforce Development	Job Corps, Hopeworks	Yes	Rivera will meet with Emery and discuss attendance and impact on grades
Jones, Jaden	Guenther	N/A	Competitive Employment with Support	OVR	N/A	
Quick, Naomi	Guenther	M/F — 5	Workforce Development	Careerlink	Yes	Guenther will schedule a meeting with Naomi & guardian to discuss the need for Naomi to advocate for herself.

Note: Programs listed under "Work Completion" are dual enrollment programs. For more information about how to develop these programs, see Establishing External Partnerships to Strengthen Work-Based Learning Opportunities.

Milestones for Mastery's Pathways

All students at **Mastery Schools** have increasing access to pathway options aside from just college. These pathways each have a set of milestones that students need to complete before graduation. Some of these pathways are outlined below. The pathways and milestones are the foundation for Mastery's transition planning and tracking student progress toward transition goals.

4-Year College	2-Year College	Workforce Development Program	Military
• College Essay • FSA ID • FAFSA • Submit applications • Complete financial aid analyzer	• Submit applications • FSA ID • FAFSA • Complete financial aid analyzer • Activate student portal • Complete placement test • Complete online student orientation • Register for fall semester courses	• Submit interest forms • Final resume • Submit applications • Obtain driver's license • Application documentation • Logistics planning	• Meet with recruiter • ASVAB • Confirm Bootcamp / MEPS date • Interview with recruiter

Step 2: Input Initial Student Data

Create a system so that prior-year case managers, advisors, or seminar teachers can give the new transition team information about students' postsecondary goals to populate the tracker. During the summer, transition teams can use this information in the tracker to map out milestones for the coming year.

Mapping milestones is considerably easier if the school has a clearly developed set of postsecondary pathways outlining the necessary steps that lead to successful engagement after graduation. (See Establishing External Partnerships to Strengthen Work-Based Learning Opportunities.)

The First Meeting of the School Year

At **Gratz**, all students learn about the school's available pathways in their 11th grade seminar classes and identify which pathway they are most interested in by the end of the year. Thus, transition coordinators have the information they need to start tracking seniors' milestones before school begins in the fall. If a school does not have a system like this in place, the transition teams can meet in the summer or early fall to share information about IEP transition plans, discuss milestones, and request information from college counselors about students' postsecondary plans. Teams can also use this opportunity to clarify individualized expectations for seniors with IEPs, confirm necessary modifications for specific students, and identify events or activities that students with disabilities need to attend.

Step 3: Form and Launch the Transition Team

Including a variety of general and special education staff will improve school transition teams' effectiveness. Each team member will have unique information about students, the various pathways they may choose, and the necessary resources to support them as they work toward their goals. It is helpful for the transition team to have a leader, such as the transition coordinator, the school leader, or a postsecondary advisor.

Consider including the following individuals in transition teams:



TRANSITION COORDINATOR

The transition coordinator is the special education team's postsecondary expert and will often possess more information about alternatives to 4-year college. They also often have relationships with external organizations or agencies that can support students during and after their transition out of high school.



SPECIAL EDUCATION CASE MANAGERS

Special education case managers are responsible for ensuring transition plans are updated and easily accessible for the transition team. In addition, case managers are often the primary contact for families.



COLLEGE COUNSELORS

The college counselors — who may also work with general education students in advisory or seminar classes — hold the majority of information around college application deadlines and requirements, and they can communicate that information to the transition team for students with goals to attend college. College counselors may also be responsible for follow-up with graduates to ensure they receive any additional support for their disability after graduation. While not all students will attend college, college counselors have their own contacts, networks, and resources that can also apply to non-college postsecondary education. Having college counselors present at transition team meetings is an easy way to ensure that they are informed about the needs of students with disabilities and can support them in reaching their goals with the same success as their peers.



SOCIAL WORKERS

Social workers are essential to help address student needs outside of academics or employment. At times, social workers may be the only appropriate staff to take a deeper level of support or action steps for students or families. They can add valuable input regarding services, agencies, or other resources students may need in order to reach their postsecondary goals. Social workers can help the transition team develop a plan to address housing and food insecurity, along with mental health and other social services that a student may require to be successful.



SCHOOL LEADER (OPTIONAL)

Including a school leader as part of the transition team can help ensure that the leader is knowledgeable about different types of postsecondary goals and the steps students need to take to reach those goals. School leaders may also be helpful in communicating with families, ensuring that students can leave school if necessary for transition activities, removing any barriers to implementing plans, and considering how the larger school program can support students with goals apart from a 4-year college. However, when transition team members mentioned above have been with the school for many years, they may hold enough capital and sway within the school to make the addition of the school leader less essential to the transition team.

The entire transition team is responsible for reviewing student progress toward postsecondary goals documented in each student's IEP and for identifying additional support students may need to be successful. The transition team delegates tasks to the team member most appropriate to provide support based on their expertise or relationship with the student and family.

Step 4: Determine Meeting Cadence and Protocols

A biweekly meeting cadence is recommended for transition teams. Teams can meet during common prep periods, professional development time, or before or after school.

A clear meeting protocol and agenda for each meeting ensures transition teams discuss the critical updates for each student and establish clear action steps, interventions, and ownership.

Including All Interested Parties

After several years of holding biweekly meetings to review student progress on transition milestones, **Gratz's** transition team realized that social workers were key members missing from their team. Many students needed support with aspects of transitioning out of high school that postsecondary counselors and transition coordinators didn't have the expertise to provide. Social workers added knowledge about housing, insurance, and food assistance that was essential to the transition team and student success.

Starting as Early as Possible

Transition teams will often prioritize the review of progress for seniors, yet it is important to proactively build capacity so the team can work through junior, sophomore, and freshman transition needs. The earlier students identify potential pathways and transition teams start tracking progress, the greater the impact transition planning can have on positive postsecondary outcomes for students.

Before the Meeting

Step 5: Collect and Update Data

Having up-to-date information on student progress and the action steps of students, families, or staff members is essential to the success of the transition team meetings.

There are two ways to ensure data on student progress is up-to-date:

CONTINUOUS UPDATES

Transition teams may consider their tracker to be live and update it whenever they gather new information. When updating in this manner, the transition team needs to establish a deadline for updates before each milestone meeting.

UPDATE AT MEETINGS

All transition team members bring their notes and update the tracker at the biweekly meeting for reviewing student progress. The team needs to be in agreement to spend meeting time in this way rather than using it to discuss students. Updating data at meetings can use valuable time, and teams should agree that this use of time is appropriate.

During the Meeting

Step 6: Review Data

Using the up-to-date data, the transition team reviews each student's progress toward postsecondary goals and determines whether students are on track, somewhat off track, or off track. The review will be most effective if it includes academic (e.g., grades) and non-academic (e.g., attendance and discipline) variables, as well as transition data.

To decide which students to focus on during meetings, creating a set of priority concerns can be particularly helpful. Some areas of concern may be more urgent than others, or in some cases, addressing one concern depends on first addressing another. For example, fixing a student's attendance issue is necessary to improve work completion and grades.

The following table shows how Mastery Gratz prioritized students of concern they focused on during their biweekly meetings:

Category	Who Qualifies?	Data Source
Attendance	Students missing 3+ seminar classes in a 2-week period (consider decreasing to 2+ missed classes)	Student information system
Grades	Students failing seminar and have not handed in missing work in a 2-week period	Gradebook
Work Completion	Students missing key assignments within their intended pathway	Gradebook
Credit Deficient	Students needing more than 1 additional course (in addition to current course load) to graduate this year	Student information system
Pathway Misaligned to Levels/Pathway Concerns	Students whose quantile/Lexile levels are significantly below the recommended levels for their chosen pathway Consider students with low quantile/Lexile levels enrolled in seminar to discuss the support needed	Student information system

Step 7: Plan Action Steps

For students who are not on track to meet their postsecondary milestones, the transition team collaboratively designs action steps to address student needs.

Action steps could include the following:

- The student works with a case manager to complete a resume.
- The student meets 1:1 with the college counselor to complete the FAFSA.
- An educator emails follow-up reminders for students.
- An educator holds meetings with outside agencies.
- A team member contacts the family to discuss progress and problem solve barriers.
- The student changes their dual enrollment program.
- The student changes their pathway.
- The IEP team convenes to discuss the transition plan.
- A team member supports with situation-specific interventions (e.g., community resources, advocates, legal support for families).

Step 8: Assign Next Steps

Finally, the transition team determines which adults will support students with each action step. Action steps are reviewed by the team and documented in the tracker. The transition team lead may send a summary of the meeting discussion and action items to the team following the team meeting to communicate plans to absent team members and supporting leadership. This summary can also serve as a reminder of action items, as well as confirm dates for completion and convey collaboration needs from those not in attendance.

After the Meeting

Step 9: Include Families in Action Steps

After the meeting, case managers follow up with students and families on current data, including attendance, grades, discipline, and transition activities that need to be completed. The case manager also collaborates with families on action steps the transition team recommended so that families can support current action plans.

Whether a student is on track or off track, keeping families informed about student progress toward transition goals is an important part of helping students stay motivated and focused on their long-term goals.

Summary

Ensuring that students with disabilities have a smooth transition into their life after high school is the ultimate goal for most special education programs. To ensure that students with disabilities engage in meaningful activities that help them meet their individualized postsecondary goals, schools need to convene interdisciplinary teams of special and general educators to review data on student transition progress toward transition goals and intervene when students are not on track to meet their goals. These interdisciplinary transition teams are most successful when they meet at a regular cadence and include a diverse set of educators who support students with postsecondary transitions. Students also benefit tremendously from having clear pathways with specific milestones that lead to their identified postsecondary goals. Mastery Gratz has been able to help students successfully graduate and enroll in postsecondary placements by using biweekly transition team meetings to keep students on track along their pathways and intervene during the school year and into the summer after graduation. This data-centered meeting structure is something that any transition team can put into place to help improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities.

FURTHER LEARNING

"Guideposts for Success: What All Youth Need to Successfully Transition into Adulthood"
US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY

"Guideposts for Policy and Practice: Framework for the Future"
THE CENTER FOR ADVANCING POLICY ON EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH

"A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities"
THE US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

BUILDING SCHOOL-BASED TRANSITION TEAMS TO ACCELERATE STUDENT PROGRESS TOWARD POSTSECONDARY GOALS

Appendix

How to Measure

When building a school-based transition team, monitoring how useful, usable, and utilized the practice is by team members and across the school system can accelerate learning to improve outcomes for students. Be aware that improved process measures are usually necessary to ensure a high enough level of fidelity before outcomes will see improvement. At minimum, these measures are most essential:

PRIMARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process	Review of calendars Meeting note review	Are postsecondary milestone meetings occurring biweekly? Yes / No	Percent of scheduled meetings held	Increasing percentage of meetings held until reaching 100%	Use shared digital calendars to help keep track of meetings.
Process	Meeting note review	How often are postsecondary team members implementing action steps by their specified date?	Percent of action steps implemented by team members by their specified date	Increasing percentage of action steps that are completed by the specified date until reaching 100%	Consider analyzing whether some action steps are completed more often than others to determine if specific barriers exist for some action steps.
Outcome (short term)	Postsecondary tracker	What percentage of students are on track toward meeting their milestones?	Percent of students on track	Increasing percentage of students on track until reaching 100%	It can be helpful to disaggregate the percent of students on track by the type of pathway.
Outcome	Postsecondary tracker	What percentage of students have completed the requirements for their pathway?	Percent of students who have completed the requirements for their pathway	Increasing percentage of students who have completed all requirements until reaching 100%	Each postsecondary pathway needs to have a scope and sequence developed with the skills and activities students need to master to meet their goals.

Additional measures can guide a team to know whether the school-based transition team is leading to the desired improvements for students:

SECONDARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process	Audit of plans Postsecondary tracker	What percentage of students with IEPs have postsecondary plans?	Percent of students with a complete plan	Increasing percentage of students with complete plans until reaching 100%	All students must have a transition plan in their IEP by age 16, but IEP teams can start to develop them earlier.
Process	Postsecondary tracker	Which action steps are most effective to get students back on track?	Percent of time each action step is successful in getting students back on track	A list of 3–5 action steps that are successful at least 75% of the time	May also track the frequency that action steps are being implemented.
Outcome	Postsecondary tracker	What percentage of students who were off track are now on track on their pathways?	Percent of students who are moved from off track to on track	Increasing percentage of students who move from off track to on track until reaching 100%	Consider calculating the average number of weeks it takes for a student to move from off to on track.
Process	Postsecondary tracker	How often are students who need interventions for their postsecondary goals receiving them?	Percent of students who were identified as needing intervention and received intervention	Increasing percent of students who need intervention receiving them until reaching 100%	Consider measuring the number of minutes of intervention if frequency of intervention isn't informative enough.

Notes

1 Newman, Madaus, and Javitz, “Effect of Transition Planning”

2 Ibid.

3 Cameto, Levine, and Wagner, *Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities*

4 Frazier, Perryman, and Kucharczyk, “Transition services”

5 Kohler, et al., *Taxonomy*

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