Marshall Street



Providing Summer Transition Programming for Postsecondary Success

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

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Providing Summer Transition Programming for Postsecondary Success

Implementation Level

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

Who Implements

- [ ] Teacher(s)
- [ ] Instructional Coach
- [x] Principal
- [x] Central Office Leadership
- [x] Other: Transition Coordinator

Practice Overview

What is the Practice?

A summer program that provides students with targeted, 1:1 transition coaching to support them in completing the final steps needed to meet their transition goals when they have not met them at the time of graduation.

Why is Summer Transition Support Important?

Students with disabilities do not just need to graduate from high school. They also need to successfully complete their transition plans so that they can follow their chosen path after graduation. Recent government statistics showed that within the first eight years after graduation from high school, people with disabilities made a dollar less per hour ($10.40 vs. $11.40), were less likely to both enroll in (60% vs. 67%) and complete (41% vs. 52%) postsecondary education programs, and were less likely to live independently (45% vs. 59%) than people without disabilities.[1] This practice addresses the need to support students, even after graduation, to finish essential steps for postsecondary success in college, careers, and the community. Without this focus on transition plan completion, schools will struggle to close the gap in labor force participation for individuals with disabilities, which is only about 38%, compared to 77% for the general population. These outcome differences have tremendous effects on individual earnings, as well as independence in society.[2]

Why it Works

STUDENTS SEEKING ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS NEED CONTINUED SUPPORT.

Continuing targeted transition planning and programming support beyond graduation — particularly for students with disabilities who are Black, Latinx, and experiencing poverty — ensures that students who are not choosing 4-year college paths have the same support as their peers. Students choosing an alternative non-college pathway are often left out of summer interventions that focus on ensuring students have completed the necessary steps to start college. Students interested in advancing directly into careers also need support in the summer to complete the steps necessary to start their post-high school lives.

SIMILAR MODELS OF SUPPORT SHOW PROMISING RESULTS.

Research on postsecondary coaching programs that were location-specific to support students attending 2- and 4-year colleges found that they have moderate positive effects on college enrollment and persistence.[3] Using this same strategy to support students on career, military, or community living pathways could similarly help ensure that all students are successful after their high school experience.



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	School-level support to ensure that pathway progress is documented for all students, budgets are allocated, and the importance of non-college pathways is understood Coaches who know and care about students and their individual needs, circumstances, interests, and disability-specific needs Data system that allows staff to collect, track, and display students' postsecondary goals and specific milestones Documented postsecondary goals for all students
Recommended Materials	Postsecondary data tracking system Stipend for coaches supporting about 25 students each (Mastery provided coaches $1,500–$2,000 per summer.) Funding for transportation, meetings, food, etc.
Staff Commitment	School or network staff member who oversees the program Postsecondary personnel to work over the summer, about one per every 25 students A postsecondary team that meets regularly
Recommended Time Allocation	**Coaches** 5–10 hours of training before the end of the school year 5 weeks of coaching **Network Program Lead** 5 hours to create caseloads, set up logistics, and design training 2–3 hours of program management weekly

Steps to Implement

BEFORE THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, THE SCHOOL'S *POSTSECONDARY TEAM* WILL*:*

- ☐ Identify students to participate in the program
- ☐ Create caseloads for coaches
- ☐ Onboard coaches

AT THE BEGINNING OF SUMMER, THE *COACHES* WILL*:*

- ☐ Hold orientation with families
- ☐ Hold initial meetings with students and create a plan
- ☐ Develop a coaching schedule

TO EXECUTE THE SUMMER TRANSITION PROGRAM, *COACHES* WILL*:*

- ☐ Review summer plans with students
- ☐ Follow up with students weekly
- ☐ Meet as a team to review data and troubleshoot

AT THE END OF THE SUMMER, THE *POSTSECONDARY TEAM* WILL*:*

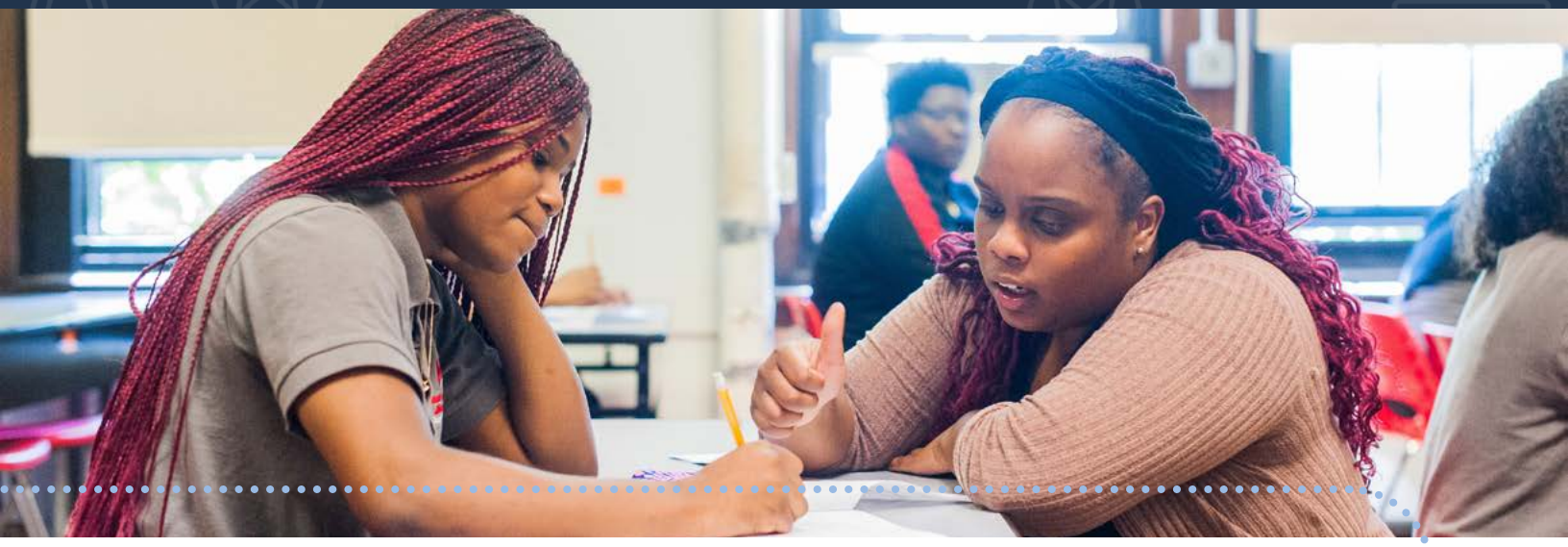
- ☐ Debrief summer with team and plan for next school year

Optional Step: "Summer Boot Camp"

During the 2020–21 school year, a time when students were transitioning between virtual and in-person learning, **Gratz** launched this practice with a different set of steps. The original summer programming included a one-week intensive "boot camp" followed by 1:1 coaching sessions. In this model, Mastery's team frontloaded one week of in-person days for students to complete orientation to the program, receive an overview of the transition pathway options available, complete interest surveys or transition planning assessment tools if needed, and confirm goals and priorities for their summer transition coaching within their existing College and Career Coaches (C3) model. This approach allowed the team to form or strengthen relationships with students who they may not have worked with closely due to the interruptions from COVID, and to establish expectations between students and their coaches for goals, priorities, and routines to successfully complete the program.

The Gratz team has integrated much of the initial orientation and intensive-week content into activities with students in the spring before they graduate from high school. By establishing strong data routines to identify students in need of the C3 program — particularly those not on track to enroll in and begin their non-college pathway — the Gratz team is able to complete training and assessment activities with students while they are still enrolled in their high school classes. This early identification and engagement has resulted in the discontinuation of the boot camp intensive-week model at the start of summer.

For schools that do not have the opportunity to complete activities with students in advance of the summer program, an intensive week of summer transition programming may be a useful addition to this practice.



Bringing this Practice to Life

ENSURING ALL STUDENTS START SUCCESSFUL LIVES AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

The COVID-19 pandemic threw schools across the country into chaos, and many of their students were cast adrift. The postsecondary team at Mastery Schools' Simon Gratz High School could not sit by when, in the spring of 2021, they realized that few of their students were ready for life after high school. Their quick planning that first year to create a summer boot camp for their seniors eventually spread into a network-wide summer program to ensure that all students were ready to start the pathway of their choice when they left high school.

Getting Students Back on Track in a Hurry

In March of 2021, students at Mastery Schools returned to in-person learning for the first time since March of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The postsecondary team at Gratz realized immediately that their seniors were off track in completing postsecondary activities, such as financial aid, college applications, resumes, job applications, and cover letters. By May, the Gratz postsecondary team identified the need to implement more intensive interventions to ensure their senior class — particularly the students with disabilities — reached their postsecondary goals.

The Gratz postsecondary team launched a three-day "boot camp" to provide an intensive learning opportunity for students. All seniors who were off track with postsecondary tasks, including students with disabilities, attended the boot camp on campus to try to quickly complete as many postsecondary tasks as possible. With the help of three of the postsecondary team members, students worked on resumes, searched for jobs, completed enrollment documents for colleges, completed job applications, and practiced for interviews.

Creating Summer Structures for the Success of Students with Disabilities

The boot camp worked well for some, but not all, students. For the students who needed additional support, the Gratz postsecondary and special education teams tried an intervention of individualized coaching. The model for this intervention came from Mastery's College and Career Coaches (C3) program — an existing summer intervention program providing individualized coaching, which was previously available only for Mastery students planning to enroll in 2- or 4-year colleges. C3 attempts to increase matriculation to these postsecondary pathways and to reduce "summer melt."

The Gratz teams adapted the C3 program for the students with disabilities who were pursuing non-college pathways. Over the course of nearly five weeks of summer, after the boot camp, three Gratz postsecondary team members worked as coaches to support about 60 students with disabilities in-person and remotely by phone, text, and email. Individualized coaching included breaking down steps to complete transition goals, setting up regular deadlines with students to meet transition checkpoints, and following up with students to ensure they met those deadlines. The effort was a great success. **By the end of summer 2021, 87% of Gratz students had engaged in summer touchpoints with their coach, and 80% of students had enrolled in their postsecondary pathway.**

WHAT IS SUMMER MELT?

Summer melt is a term used to describe students who were accepted into college and intended to enroll but did not complete the steps necessary to actually attend college in the fall. A host of interventions are used to mitigate this issue and support students through the summer to complete the necessary steps for enrollment. Groups working to reduce summer melt, such as nonprofit organizations, colleges, and high schools, use tools like text messaging, coaching, mentoring, and summer bridge programs to make sure students enroll in college each fall.

Expanding to Support All Students

Using the learnings and success of the first summer, the Gratz team enacted and formalized two structures:

1. They strategically built the content from the boot camp into the existing 12th grade seminar to ensure learning and progress monitoring were in place throughout the school year.
2. The C3 program adaptations were formalized and spread to other schools in the Mastery network. By summer 2022, all Mastery students who were interested in non-college pathways — regardless of whether they were in special education or not — could engage in C3 coaching.

During the 2022–23 school year, Gratz increased their team to include eight coaches — including a social worker to support students and families with needs such as food and housing insecurity — who worked with 184 students. The coaches spent about three days per week doing direct outreach

to students via text messages and phone calls. The outreach focused on topics such as goal setting, resume updates, job searches, and transportation planning for interviews. One day per week, coaches set up postsecondary exposure experiences for students, including postsecondary program visits, hands-on information sessions, job shadowing opportunities, and guest speakers. Coaches also set up weekly small-group sessions for students who were at similar milestones in the same pathway. These sessions were a chance to work on submitting applications, practicing interview skills, and engaging in other interview preparation. Additionally, every Friday, all the coaches met to discuss students' progress and specific challenges and to solve problems together, mirroring the **biweekly transition milestone meetings** the postsecondary team had already conducted.

The summary below describes the various coaching activities and their impacts:

Goal	Activities Supporting Goal	Impact
Direct engagement with 90% of caseload	1:1 meetings via phone, email, text, social media outreach Goal setting Resume updates Transportation planning for interviews	Increases direct enrollment by supporting the completion of necessary activities to reach the next step of securing a job or enrolling in a workforce development program
Host 3–4 small group meetings	Application submission Interviewing skills Interview prep	Increases direct enrollment by ensuring that students have support in completing required tasks for their postsecondary pathway enrollment process
Host 2–3 exposure experiences	Program visits Hands-on info sessions Shadow days Guest speakers	Provides students with practical information about programs/jobs of interest Provides students with mini-celebrations and food during group activities

Lessons Learned for the Future

Within Mastery's expanded coaching staff, not everyone had the original three coaches' depth of knowledge about the different pathways, requirements, and paperwork necessary to support students easily. The addition of coaches taught the postsecondary team that they needed to increase coaches' training in the summer of 2023, leading them to provide additional training for coaches prior to the summer of 2024.

The success of Gratz's C3 program for students in non-college pathways is a result of their adaptation of an existing model and the creation of an inclusive program that focused on helping all students achieve the goals they set for themselves. In addition, Mastery's willingness to use extended school year funding and other financial resources for this program demonstrates the network's commitment to ensuring postsecondary success for every student regardless of pathway.

How to Implement this Practice

This section provides step-by-step guidance for implementation of summer transition supports specific to a school and community context, along with accompanying resources to get started.

Before the End of the School Year

Step 1: Identify Students to Participate in the Program

Determine which students need or will likely need additional summer transition support to complete their transition goals.

Potential factors could include:

- students with disabilities who are not in a self-contained program (as such programs often provide their own transition support),
- students with a non-college postsecondary goal,
- students interested in transitioning into the workforce who are not currently working or who have unstable employment, or
- students with low attendance.

The use of a postsecondary data tracking system during the school year can help inform which students will be a good fit for summer transition support.

Step 2: Create Caseloads for Coaches

Build coaches' caseloads by grouping students by pathway (e.g., workforce development, employment, community living, or military) and then, if possible, by existing relationships between students and coaches. Ideally, each coach can support 10–25 students on their caseload, with the exact number depending on the number of milestones their students still have to complete, the level of support the students need to be successful, and the type of pathway. For example, a workforce pathway can be particularly time-consuming because the coach has to work with a student to find open positions, to complete a number of applications, and to prepare for multiple interviews before the student is hired for a position. Other pathways, such as the military, have a defined process that requires one application, screening, and interview before the student is accepted. All of these factors should be considered when creating a caseload for a coach.

It is especially helpful to both coach and student when the coach already knows the details of the pathways assigned to them, such as the required paperwork, the primary points of contact at related organizations or institutions, and the steps necessary for the student to enroll successfully. If possible, coaches should have the opportunity to specialize in specific pathways and to become experts in what students need to do to be successful when enrolling in those pathways. There can be nuance

in pathway requirements and details that are not always explicit in the information that organizations or institutions provide online. Allowing coaches to build expertise in these pathways will improve efficiency and benefit students in time.

Step 3: Onboard Coaches

The school's postsecondary team — which may include a school counselor and special education case manager, or may include additional individuals like transition coordinators, alumni counselors, and program directors or school leaders — should all meet with coaches to review the process, expectations, schedule, and student needs for the summer. This initial meeting should be an opportunity for coaches to ask questions about specific students, as well as learn about larger program structures. To support conversations about specific students, it is useful to have a system that enables coaches to easily learn about a student and their family situation, their needs, and postsecondary transition goals and milestones still to complete. Such a system may be part of the schoolwide student information system, or it could simply be a summary sheet on each student.

Choosing the Right Coach for Each Student

Often, **Gratz** case managers work as summer coaches for the C3 program because of their long-standing relationships with many students and families. Case managers typically are not as well versed in transition activities as transition staff or college and career advisors. Gratz also has seminar teachers who serve as coaches. Seminar teachers may not know all students as well as case managers, but they are typically very familiar with student pathways. Gratz uses each coach's strengths and weaknesses to determine which students should be on the coach's caseload. In other words, the pairing of a particular student and coach depends on whether the student would benefit from having a coach they have an existing relationship with or the student would be better off with a coach who knows the ins and outs of their pathway.

Training prior to the summer should include opportunities for coaches to learn deeply about the pathways in which they will be supporting students, helping them to develop the specialization mentioned above. Such opportunities may include talking to postsecondary team members who already work with students on a pathway, collecting documents and resources, and visiting program locations to develop relationships with the individuals who will work with students. By providing time and resources for coaches to become experts in a particular pathway, schools improve the effectiveness of their coaches, who can better help students to meet their goals during the summer.

Beginning of the Summer

Step 4: Hold Orientation with Families

Schedule an orientation for families to meet and engage with coaches and learn about the summer program. This is a key opportunity for coaches to get contact information for families while also forming relationships with them so that students and families are more likely to be responsive and supportive of activities throughout the summer.

Step 5: Hold Initial Meetings with Students and Create a Plan

After orienting families to the summer transition supports that will occur, coaches need to meet with students individually. The purpose of individual meetings is to:

- learn the best method of communication for the student,
- gather information needed for scheduling activities,
- make sure the student understands the purpose and activities for the summer, and
- ensure the coach and student are aligned around the student's transition goals.

After these initial meetings with students, coaches should use the pertinent information they gathered to map out student-specific plans for the milestones each student still needs to achieve on the path toward their goal. These plans for the summer will also need to allow for flexibility and anticipate that some activities may be delayed by extenuating circumstances.

Making Orientation Fun

At **Gratz**, the postsecondary team makes the family orientation for C3 an informal social event with refreshments and conversation. The casual atmosphere helps families feel comfortable and welcomes them into the process of helping students achieve their postsecondary goals. Families have the opportunity to meet and talk to coaches informally, which paves the way for smoother communication over the summer. Coaches are also able to gain insight about students and their families that can make it easier for them to relate to the students and support the students in meeting their goals.

Create Clear Steps for Students to Complete

Mastery Schools has developed a set of **pathways with milestones** that guide students toward achieving their individual postsecondary goals over the course of their high school careers. Most milestones can be completed during students' seminar courses each year, but some students may need additional support.

Step 6: Develop a Coaching Schedule

Each coach will have to create their own schedule for the students in their caseload, considering students' needs and progress along their pathways. Even students working on the same pathway will likely start summer coaching at different milestones. However, when a coach's caseload does contain students with similar milestones completed, it can be easier for the coach to schedule group activities with students together, and because of that, as previously mentioned, the coach may be able to support more students within their caseload.

A framework schedule, like the one shown in the template below, provides coaches with some structure to their week but does not dictate the specific activities, which will have to be individualized for each pathway and student.

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	1:1 outreach	1:1 outreach	1:1 outreach	Small group mtg #1	Weekly update to team
2	1:1 outreach	1:1 outreach	1:1 outreach	Exposure experience #1	Weekly update to team
3	1:1 outreach	1:1 outreach	1:1 outreach	Small group mtg #2	Weekly update to team
4	1:1 outreach	Exposure experience #2	1:1 outreach	1:1 outreach	Weekly update to team
5	1:1 outreach	1:1 outreach	1:1 outreach	Small group mtg #3	Weekly update to team
6	Administrative tasks/closeout No student meetings Final update to team				

A sample schedule based on Gratz's template

Execute the Program

Step 7: Review Summer Plans with Students

At the first meeting of the summer, coaches review the final, individualized summer plans with the students on their caseload. The plans should include:

- dates for when milestones should be completed,
- a specific schedule of 1:1 check-ins,
- dates and details of planned exposure experiences, and
- the schedule of small group meetings with other students working on the same pathway.

The review includes discussion of remaining questions, confirmation that students have the necessary materials for the plan, and problem-solving for adjustments that may need to be made to the plan in order to get started. With their plans in place, students can begin working on the steps indicated in their plans.

Step 8: Follow Up with Students Weekly

Using a meeting agenda, coaches conduct 1:1 check-ins with students on their caseload at least weekly. Structured meetings support students' progress towards specific milestones and completion of key activities related to those milestones. These meetings are a regular opportunity to hold students accountable for tasks they said they would do over the past week, reflect on the progress they have made on their plan, adapt the plan if necessary, and set new tasks and deadlines.

Students who execute their plan independently may only need quick check-ins via text, while students who struggle to complete the steps of their plan will likely need regular in-person support. In every instance, it is important that coaches document successes, setbacks, and actions taken with students so that the coach can keep the rest of the team informed.

As students complete milestones, coaches track their progress in a data tool. If the students are off track according to the planned dates, coaches can determine whether students need additional support, such as more time for specific milestones or more frequent check-ins, to achieve the targets. Though sometimes the team will be able to predict before summer where a student will flourish and succeed independently based on past performance or interactions, it may not always be possible to anticipate which of the student's tasks will be easier or harder for them to complete. For this reason, coaching schedules should have flexibility so that the plan and schedules can be adapted at various points throughout the summer in response to each student's progress.

If a coach cannot get in touch with a student weekly, they can try to leverage other staff members who have existing relationships with the student to help facilitate contact. It is best to try other methods for contacting the student before reaching out to the family using the contact information provided at orientation.

Step 9: Meet as a Team to Review Data and Troubleshoot

All coaches and members of the postsecondary and special education teams should meet regularly throughout the summer to review data on student progress along pathways. An optimal cadence is weekly or biweekly so that the team can help coaches problem-solve issues that are occurring for individuals or groups of students in a timely manner (see ***Building School-Based Transition Teams to Accelerate Student Progress Toward Postsecondary Goals***). These meetings are also an opportunity to adapt student plans or determine whether other staff members can be helpful points of contact for students, families, or outside agencies.

The team can consider posing the following questions for discussion:

- What common barriers are students experiencing?
- What types of support seem to be most beneficial to students (e.g., text check-ins, small group meetings, field trips)?
- How can the team meet the needs of students who are experiencing the greatest challenges to make progress?

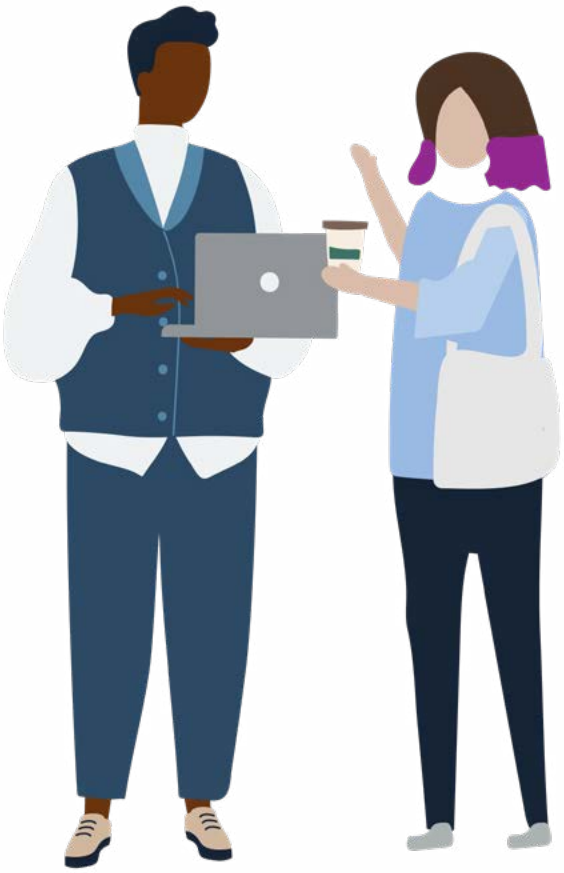
End of the Summer

Step 10: Debrief Summer with Team and Plan for Next School Year

Set aside time at the end of summer to discuss the program's implementation and effectiveness. See **How to Measure** in the Appendix for different ways to measure program implementation and effectiveness. It is important to use the documentation and learnings from coaches, students, and regular summer team meetings to make needed changes for the coming school year and the following summer.

Summary

Individuals with disabilities are half as likely to participate in the workforce as individuals without disabilities. They need additional support to ensure that they have the skills and resources needed to be successful once they leave high school. Schools can and should provide support to all students the summer after graduation to ensure students achieve their postsecondary goals. This support can come in many forms, such as 1:1 coaching, text message reminders, or field trips. Students with disabilities may need more targeted support from 1:1 coaching in order to complete the steps necessary to start their lives successfully after high school. Gratz used their C3 program to ensure that all of their students with disabilities were enrolled in a postsecondary program, in the military, or working. Like Gratz, schools can increase the likelihood that students will participate in the workforce regardless of their disability status by creating similar programs to support the critical transition to life after high school.



FURTHER LEARNING

"Summer Melt Tools"

THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH STRATEGIC DATA PROJECT

"Summer Melt Resources"

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE ATTAINMENT NETWORK

PROVIDING SUMMER TRANSITION PROGRAMMING FOR POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

Appendix

How to Measure

When implementing summer transition supports, 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	Program tracker Postsecondary plans	How many activities do students need to complete over the summer to meet their transition goal?	The average number of activities students need to complete over the summer to meet their transition goal	Decreasing average number of activities that need to be completed over the summer	Look deeper into the types of activities students still need to complete as these may need more support during the school year than they currently receive. Ideally, students complete most of their activities during the school year and need to complete few over the summer.
Process	Program tracker	How many students require support over the summer to complete their postsecondary pathways?	Number of students enrolling in summer program out of total number of students	Reducing the number of students requiring summer support until reaching zero	
Process	Contact logs	What percent of students have weekly contact with their coach?	Percent of students who have weekly contact with their coach	Increasing percent until 100% of students have weekly contact with their coach	Social media, texts, emails, two-way audio messages, and phone calls are all forms of contact. Ensure contact is happening in both directions, not just coach outreach without responses from students.

Outcome	Program tracker	What percent of students are attending their postsecondary placement?	Percent of students who are attending their postsecondary placement	Increasing percent until 100% of students are attending a postsecondary placement	

The table below provides examples of other measures you could use to know whether summer transition supports are leading to the improvements you want to see for students:

SECONDARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process	Contact log	Do students respond after one outreach attempt from coaches? Yes / No	Percent of students who respond after one attempt from their coach	Increasing percent of students who respond to their coach after one attempt until reaching 100%	Analyze the data to determine what is different about students who do and do not respond to determine if certain factors impede responses.
Process	Student survey	Do students feel supported by their summer transition coach? Yes / No	Percent of students who feel supported by their coach	Increasing percent of students who feel supported by their coach until reaching 100%	Include a follow-up question on a survey to understand better what makes students feel supported.
Process	Program tracker	How long does it take students to complete their remaining activities during the summer?	The average number of days into the summer until students complete all their activities and enroll in a program or get hired at a job	Decreasing number of days during the summer until students enroll in a program or get hired at a job	

Notes

1 Newman et al., *The Post-High School Outcomes*

2 US Department of Labor, “Disability Employment Statistics”

3 Avery, Howell, and Page, *A Review of the Role*

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