



Suggested Promising Practices for

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

Meg Grigal and Debra Hart

Introduction

The path to postsecondary education has become more frequently traveled by a new group of students, those with intellectual disabilities. These students, who had previously not been offered opportunities or support to access postsecondary education, are now taking part in a variety of options that allow them to experience college first hand. Some options are provided through partnerships between local school systems and two or four-year colleges or universities that provide “transition services” that support students during their final 2-3 years of public school. Most of these experiences end upon the student exiting or aging out of public school. Other options are initiated by institutes of higher education (IHEs) that create services or programs that support students with intellectual disabilities within the existing framework of the institution. These programs and services are often tuition based and address various skill areas and outcomes. There are at least 130 college campuses nationwide that include programs or services for youth with intellectual disabilities. As the range of education services for students with intellectual disabilities continues to broaden and research continues to identify effective practices that better support students as integral members of their school and community, students with intellectual disabilities will be offered increased access and opportunity to participate in a postsecondary education. This growth and expansion of services makes it vital to determine the quality of these services and the resulting student outcomes. The purpose of these promising practices is to suggest evidence-based, objective measures that can be used to define, create, or expand high-quality services to support positive post-school outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities.

Background

These suggested promising practices are comprised of both applied and research-based practices that have been identified in the literature on transition and recognized by The National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition (NASSET) to positively impact the transition of students from secondary school to adult life (National Alliance of Secondary Education and Transition, 2005). NASSET was a national coalition of more than 40 organizations and advocacy groups representing special education, general education, career and technical education, youth development, multicultural perspectives, and parents. Each practice has been aligned with multiple NASSET standards. These suggested promising practices are also the culmination of work conducted by six-model demonstration, outreach, and research and innovation projects funded over the past 10 years by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). These projects conducted outreach, research, training, and technical assistance on developing and improving postsecondary education options for students with intellectual disabilities across multiple states including California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, New Jersey, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Purpose

The promising practices are designed to serve multiple functions including providing a context from which new or existing postsecondary options can be defined, self-assessed, researched and improved. The following are potential uses for the promising practices by various stakeholders. The promising practices provide:

- ❖ A basis upon which to conduct and compare research of effective practices and to measure student outcomes.
- ❖ Guidance for local school systems creating new transition services, supports, or programs to serve students with intellectual disabilities in postsecondary settings.
- ❖ Guidance for institutes of higher education that are creating new or expanding existing services for students with intellectual disabilities.
- ❖ A framework for reviewing, evaluating, and improving existing programs and services.
- ❖ A framework for guiding the creation of policy and legislation that impact postsecondary education options for students with intellectual disabilities.
- ❖ Guidance in determining the quality of available services for students with intellectual disabilities and their families'.

Assumptions

These promising practices are based upon effective practices related to the transition from school to adult life, the inclusion of students with disabilities in K-12 general education and postsecondary education, and the acquisition of self-determination skills. They are not geared toward any specific model of practice (mixed model, inclusive, or substantially separate), nor toward any type of institution (technical or trade school, community college, or four year college or university). The promising practices are also based upon certain assumptions regarding the impetus for and anticipated outcomes of creating access to postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities. These assumptions are:

- a) Students should participate in integrated experiences and not in those specially designed for or limited to individuals with disabilities.
- b) Creating new services in postsecondary education settings requires time and planning to achieve quality student outcomes.
- c) The provision of services for students with intellectual disabilities should be mutually beneficial for both the student and the institution.
- d) One program or service cannot meet the needs of all students.
- e) Innovative practices often require time to take root, to impact policy, and to create sustainable systems change.
- f) Successful student outcomes are dependent upon true collaboration across the systems involved.
- g) Attainment of practices that reflect these promising practices will take time to develop and require ongoing monitoring to maintain and in some instances enhance services.

Instructions: Please indicate the status of your proposed or current postsecondary education services/program implementation of the following promising practices of postsecondary education and employment services by placing an '4', '3', '2', or '1' in the appropriate rating. The following defines each implementation category:

Fully: Promising practice is implemented for 100% of the time for all participating students or relevant stakeholders.

In Process: Full-scale implementation of the promising practice is underway but less than 100% (e.g., professional development, policies established, families and students informed).

Initial: Promising practice has been selected as a priority and included on an action plan.

In Discussion: Promising practice has not been implemented but is under consideration.

© 2008

The Postsecondary Education Research Center (PERC) Project, TransCen Inc.

www.transitiontocollege.net

www.transcen.org

PROMISING PRACTICES	IMPLEMENTATION STATUS			
	Fully	In Process	Initial	To Be Discussed
A. STUDENT OUTCOMES	4	3	2	1
1. Students exit with paid work related to their career goal and are connected with the adult systems and long-term services that sustain their current level of integrated employment.				
2. Students exit with self-determination skills that enable them to articulate their support needs in all major life domains (e.g., work, college, community).				
3. Students exit knowing how to access adult learning opportunities both at college and in the community (e.g., course selection, registration, payment, securing accommodations, scheduling, transportation).				
4. Upon exit, student outcomes are monitored for a minimum of two years.				
B. STUDENT ACTIVITIES	4	3	2	1
1. All instruction, services, and supports are individualized and are provided in integrated college and/or community settings.				
2. Students participate in regular college courses (credit and non-credit) with necessary supports and accommodations (e.g., education coach, assistive technology).				
3. All unpaid employment experiences (e.g., community service, internships, volunteer, job sampling/shadow) have specific short term objectives based upon meeting students' specified career goals, are time-limited, and are similar/equal to internships and service learning experiences of students without disabilities.				
4. Students are provided the opportunity to make meaningful connections with peers, mentors/a caring adult at college or in the community.				
5. Students are supported to seek and sustain paid integrated competitive employment related to their career goal as soon as possible (e.g., within the first year).				
6. Students' schedules include participation in inclusive campus activities such as clubs, use of athletic facilities, student center, community service, fraternities, sororities, and other generic college social activities.				
7. Students are supported in developing and monitoring crucial self-determination skills including problem solving, goal setting, self-initiating, and self-knowledge.				

C. POLICIES AND PRACTICES	4	3	2	1
1. Person centered planning is used to identify and address student goals (e.g., career, courses, social or personal development), and support needs, including natural supports, prior to entering postsecondary education and annually thereafter.				
2. All student goals are measurable and outcome based.				
3. Students adhere to the academic schedule and the code of conduct set forth by the college for all students.				
4. Families are provided with the information, training, and support needed to help their child navigate the postsecondary, employment, and adult community environments to which they are transitioning (e.g. transportation, benefits planning, housing, college requirements, and state agency supports).				
5. Policies exist that support student course access and address requirements such as placement tests (ability to benefit testing) and prerequisites.				
6. Evaluation data (e.g., employment, college course participation, self-determination skill acquisition, exit and follow up data) are compiled and reviewed annually to identify needed changes.				
D. ADMINISTRATION	4	3	2	1
1. An interagency team is established that includes representatives from disability specific agencies and workforce development providers, school personnel, college personnel, families, and students and meets monthly.				
2. An interagency team continually evaluates (at a minimum biannually) both the provision of services and student outcomes, as well as the partnerships that support those experiences.				
3. A formal or informal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is created between the collaborating entities that identifies a liaison who will facilitate communication between all organizations (e.g., institute of higher education, Community Rehabilitation Provider's, local school systems).				
4. An interagency team develops a sustainability plan in order to continue effective transition related postsecondary education and employment activities.				
5. There is dedicated staff or clearly delineated position(s) authorized to coordinate student services, monitor logistics and planning, and implement other administrative duties (e.g., interagency team meetings, person centered planning, data collection, problem solving, outreach to families, evaluation).				
6. College faculty, disability support personnel, and other rehabilitation professionals are provided professional development on Universal Design principles and strategies that they integrate into their courses (e.g., accessible syllabi, varied instructional and assessment strategies).				