

Getting Ready for Educational Opportunities After High School: Families Supporting Students for Success

Families can help their students prepare for postsecondary education (PSE) opportunities while they are in middle and high school. Are you ready?

Families can help their students with disabilities prepare for postsecondary educational opportunities through collaborative transition planning. Secondary transition, the stage that includes students from age 14 through 21, is a crucial time of planning and preparation for students' lives after high school. Studies have shown that family involvement in this planning and preparation period will increase the likelihood of success of the student. See the [Predictors of Post-School Outcomes](#) handout to read about family activities that support positive post-school outcomes for their youth.

Student engagement in school is important for post-school success. The table below shows that students with disabilities who complete high school are more highly engaged in postsecondary education, job training and employment than students with disabilities who did not complete high school. Parents can provide support that helps their students to remain engaged and complete high school. Transition planning is a key strategy that helps students, families, educators, agencies and communities to help students move from high school to post-school life. Transition planning "provides the basic structure for preparing an individual to live, work and play in the community as fully and independently as possible" (Parent Tips for Transition Planning, 2007).

Levels of Student Engagement - Information Source (NLTS2, 2011)	High School Completers with No Engagement in PSE, Training or Employment	High School Non-Completers with No Engagement in PSE, Training or Employment
Percentage of Students with Disabilities	12.6%	35.5%

Postsecondary education prepares students for employment. Students in middle and high school can also develop job skills at home. Students, are you ready for some tips?

[Transition Innovations](#) published tips on practicing job skills at home. Some of their suggestions are adapted as follows:

- Show initiative: You don't have to wait to be told to do something. When you see something that needs to be done, take action.
- Set goals: Create a goal, plan how you will reach it and follow through.
- Improve communication skills: Practice conversations in which you may need to advocate for yourself, such as with a teacher, a co-worker, or a supervisor. Practice with your family.



Self-Determination Skills Help Students in All Phases of Life.

Core components of self-determination include:

- Choice-Making
- Decision-Making
- Problem-Solving
- Goal-Setting & Attainment
- Self-Regulation
- Self-Instruction
- Self-Advocacy
- Internal Locus of Control
- Self-Efficacy
- Efficacy Expectations
- Self-Awareness
- Self-Knowledge



Check it out!

Self-Determination Parent Checklist, Appendix O in the [Family Guide to Secondary Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities Comprehensive Toolkit](#)



1. Have you and your student researched potential PSE programs?

Strategic planning for postsecondary education begins in middle and high school with the IEP and measurable postsecondary goals. All of the elements of the IEP will prepare your student for moving into life after high school. The postsecondary goals will reflect your student's preferences and will indicate what type of post-school activities your student wants to pursue. Whether choosing a training program, CTE center, college or university, there is much to learn in order to select the best option for your student. In addition to identifying the career focus for postsecondary education, students and families will need to consider the following:

Which options are available to your student?

- Review the chart under question 3 for information about postsecondary institution entrance requirements.
- Refer to [FairTest, the National Center for Fair and Open Testing](#), to find colleges and universities that limit the use of exam scores, such as ACT/SAT scores, for college admissions.
- Refer to the *Florida Postsecondary Education Guide* and/or the [Florida Consortium on Inclusive Higher Education website](#) for information on inclusive higher education opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities

Which options will help your student achieve his/her postsecondary education goal?

- Vocational training program
- Certificate program at a CTE center or college
- Two-year degree program at a CTE center or college
- Four-year degree program at a college or university
- Inclusive postsecondary programs for students with an intellectual disability which lead to meaningful credentials

Will your student live at home, with other family or friends, on campus or in an apartment?

- Identify the available postsecondary education options that accommodate this preference or need.
- Identify availability of needed community resources, such as transportation and health services.

Which options will best accommodate your student's learning needs?

- Identify the services and supports available to all students.
- Meet with the Disability Services Office to learn about available accommodations and disability documentation requirements.

What are some opportunities for social integration?

- Identify available activities that interest your student and provide opportunities for social connection.
- Some PSE institutions are primarily attended by commuters which can affect the social activity options.

Financial Planning for Postsecondary Education

How will PSE be funded for your student?

- Research [financial aid and scholarships](#) on the Department of Education website
- Research [scholarships](#) on the Project 10 website
- Refer to the [PAY FOR COLLEGE](#) webpage at FloridaShines

Key Resource for Career and Postsecondary Education Planning

FloridaShines works with Florida's K-20 educational community to provide services to Florida residents. FloridaShines helps students to accomplish the following:

- Go to College
- Succeed in College
- Find a Career

* These questions and answers are adapted from PACER's [Transition to Postsecondary Education or Training: What Parents Can Do Now](#)



2. Is your student taking an appropriate course of study?

All students planning to attend college, university or a career and technical education (CTE) program, including students with disabilities, need to take a high school curriculum or course of study that will prepare them to meet the standards expected by those institutions. In Florida, all students, including students with disabilities, are expected to graduate with a standard diploma. Use the [Graduation Options Chart](#) on the Project 10 website to review graduation options for students with disabilities. Also check out the [Academic Advisement Flyer](#) from the Florida Department of Education for information about diploma designations, as well as, the State University System, the Florida College System and Career and Technical Colleges. If students with disabilities plan to attend a postsecondary institution that has high expectations, students will need to make high school curriculum choices that support that goal. The requirements of postsecondary education institutions vary and it is important for students to understand those differences. The table below provides some general information.

Factors to Compare	Florida University System	Florida College System	Florida Postsecondary CTE Programs	Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs (IPSEs)
Admissions	Very competitive for all high school graduates	Open to everyone	Open to everyone	Open to students with cognitive disabilities
GPA	Grade point average (GPA) influences acceptance	Requires HS diploma; no minimum GPA requirement; entry into specific programs may be more competitive	Requires HS completion; No minimum GPA requirement; entry into specific programs may be more competitive	No minimum GPA is required
Test Requirements	College entrance exams influence acceptance	Assessments may be required for specific programs	Assessments may be required for specific programs	Program requirements vary from program to program
Course of Study	College prep course of study may be required	College prep course of study may be helpful to the student, but is not required.	College prep course of study is not required, but may be helpful to the student	College prep course of study is not required

Age-appropriate assessments determine the accommodations and modifications that may be necessary for your student to be successful and form a clear picture of your student’s strengths, needs, interests and preferences. With the information gathered from transition assessments, the student, with the assistance of the IEP team, will begin to set goals for life after high school. These goals are called measurable postsecondary goals and they must be in place by the student's 16th birthday.

Measurable Postsecondary Goals

Measurable postsecondary goals describe what your student wants to do after graduating from high school. These goals are important because they provide a vision and a framework for IEP teams to plan transition services that support your student as he/she makes a successful move into adult life after high school.

Measurable postsecondary goals (MPGs) are written in the areas of education, training, employment and independent living, when appropriate.

*Important Information about the TABE Tests

The Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) are commonly given to students who are entering a Florida College or postsecondary CTE program as a means to identify areas in which students may need extra help. However, a minimum TABE score may not be used as an entrance requirement.

✓ 3. Does your student understand his/her disability?

Students with disabilities benefit from understanding the nature of their disability and how their disabilities impact learning and living. The development of self-awareness and self-knowledge is a core component of self-determination and can be learned throughout the student's K-12 experience. When a student describes his or her disability, including strengths and needs, the IEP team is given direction about how to best nurture the student's interests and abilities while also providing needed supports. These skills help students to advocate for themselves as they transition to life after high school.

✓ 4. Has your student developed effective communication and social skills with adults and peers?

The first year of college can be very challenging, especially if your student will be living far from home. New student or freshman orientations are a great place to begin learning about the campus, making friends and finding activities of interest.

According to the [Do2Learn website](#), "Communication is key to human interaction. Children and adults with communication issues often lack the information and/or skills to communicate effectively which can lead to a variety of social and behavioral difficulties." Prepare your student early for making the most out of his/her postsecondary education experience by helping him/her to communicate well with adults and peers in a variety of settings.

✓ 5. Does your student have computer skills or use other assistive technologies to complete computer-based tasks?

Many postsecondary tasks are expected to be completed using a computer. It is beneficial for students with disabilities to strengthen their computer skills during high school. Assistive technology and/or accommodations can promote accessibility for students who have visual, hearing, physical or other disabilities. Developing computer skills and/or assistive technologies during the K-12 experience will help prepare students for postsecondary education and assist them to advocate with the a college's Disability Services Office, as well as with computer lab and library staff, to coordinate technology tools that facilitate learning and academic success.

You can assist your student to develop computer skills in the following areas:

- Keyboarding
- Email
- Accessing Internet Browsers and Internet Safety
- Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint

If your student needs assistance performing these skills, find support through the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technologies (FAAST) or Florida Diagnostic Learning Resources System (FDLRS) Centers. These organizations are supported through the Florida Department of Education (FDOE), Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES). The school district's ESE office can also help with assistive technology.

Developing Communication Skills for Life

- Appropriate Topics of Conversation
- Tone of Voice and Volume Control
- Starting a Conversation
- Participating in Reciprocal Conversation
- Paying Attention and Listening to Others
- Responding to Questions
- Waiting Your Turn to Speak
- Staying on Topic
- Ending a Conversation





6. Has your student learned skills to assist with organizing, planning and prioritizing?

Students with disabilities typically receive guidance and direction during high school about how to follow schedules; how to behave in a classroom setting; how to plan for homework and class project completion; where and when to go to classes; and what to bring to class. These skills fall into the category of executive functioning (EF). **EF can be described as the set of skills that enable individuals to remember details, organize tasks, manage time and solve problems. These skills are necessary for setting and achieving goals.**

This level of monitoring and support for EF is not usually provided in the postsecondary setting. Students will be responsible for managing their own time, schedules and assignments. It is essential for students with disabilities to be prepared to act as independently as possible. Families, school personnel and others who support students with disabilities can prepare students to take on these responsibilities by assisting them to assemble resources that will help them perform the tasks necessary to be successful in life after high school.

The three dimensions of EF include the following:

- **Working Memory** - The ability to hold information in our minds for the purpose of using in everyday life. For example - Remember a phone number long enough to dial it.
- **Inhibitory Control** - The ability to manage thoughts and impulses in a way that provides time to think before acting. For example - Refrain from making rude remarks to a teacher or to a fellow student.
- **Cognitive/Mental Flexibility** - The ability to respond to changing demands in a variety of settings with agility. For example - Use appropriate tone of voice and physical actions in the classroom and at a soccer game.

Executive function skills are sort of like a 911 dispatch system. The 911 dispatcher determines which services are needed and alerts emergency medical technicians, firemen and policemen according to the needs of each call. In the same way, executive functioning accesses the various skills and abilities a person needs to perform tasks and solve problems. [How Children and Adults Can Build Core Capabilities for Life](#) is a video from Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child that explains how children, youth and adults develop and improve EF.

In addition to developing and strengthening their EF skills, students can also seek assistance from individuals in their circle of support and access tools, including smartphone apps that can help students assume responsibility for self-management. By using these tools, students can strengthen their executive functioning skills and efficiently accomplish the tasks needed on the pathway to education after high school. See the menu on the right for information on apps in the [Executive Functioning App Matrix](#).

Top Executive Functioning Tips for Parents and Students

Top Tip for Parents:

Avoid directive prompting language, such as "Go upstairs and get your backpack." Instead use a 'visualization' question, "If you were standing at the door, ready to go to school, what items would you have with you?" This helps engage students in planning and taking responsible action.

Top Tip for Students:

Help students to see life-management tools in a positive light. These tools can be a key to freedom. When tasks are completed efficiently, more time is free for activities of the student's choice.

[Executive Functioning App Matrix](#)

This matrix highlights more than 40 apps that can be used to address a variety of needs that fall under the umbrella of executive function.



7. Does your student accept responsibility for his/her success?

The IEP meeting is an important place for students to practice and demonstrate their ability to assume responsibility for their progress towards achieving their goals. Families can support students in this process through regular IEP meeting attendance and participation. It is imperative that students with disabilities learn responsibility for their success because the need for self-direction and self-advocacy becomes much greater at the postsecondary education level and in all of life after high school.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Subpart D of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 Plan) are federal laws that govern the education of students with disabilities ages 3-21 (or until receipt of a standard high school diploma). Federal laws that govern individuals with disabilities beyond high school include Subpart E of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 Plan) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. See the table below for a comparison of how services are accessed.

Students with disabilities who want to get further education after high school will move from a school system in which the emphasis is on **success** and adults advocated for and directed their learning (IDEA) to a postsecondary education system in which the emphasis is on **access** and they will be required to advocate for themselves (504 Plan and ADA). These are the central differences between the educational experiences before and after high school. It is also important to remember that accommodations may be provided at the postsecondary education level in order to ensure equity in access to learning and the campus experience, but curriculum or course requirements cannot be modified.

IDEA	504 Subpart E and ADA
Secondary Education (Middle School and High School)	Postsecondary Education (Universities, Colleges and Career and Technical Colleges)
Services are provided through Exceptional Student Education (ESE), School District	Advocate for services through the Disability Services Office/campus administration and with professors/instructors
Emphasis on success: Modifying standards is a possibility for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.	Emphasis on equal access: Standards, course objectives and the curriculum cannot be modified; however, accommodations may be accessed.
Appropriate accommodations, as indicated on the student's IEP, can be provided. Schools arrange evaluations.	Appropriate accommodations may be accessed through disability disclosure and documentation of the disability.

Disability Disclosure in Postsecondary Education

At the postsecondary level, services for students with disabilities begin with a visit to the Office of Disability Services. A student may consider disclosing a disability when accommodations/supports are needed to be successful.

Disclosure of a disability provides advantages such as access to accommodations and legal protection against discrimination. However, disclosure may not always produce positive results.

Refer to [*The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities*](#) for more details.



Resources by Question

Question 1:

Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities

<https://fcsua.org/>

Florida Consortium on Inclusive Higher Education

<https://fcihe.com/>

Florida Department of Education: Scholarships webpage

<http://www.fldoe.org/contact-us/search.stml?q=Scholarships>

Florida Developmental Disabilities Council: Florida Postsecondary Education Guide

<https://www.fddc.org/publications>

FloridaShines

<https://www.floridashines.org/>

Transition to Postsecondary Education or Training: What Parents Can Do Now

<https://www.pacer.org/transition/resource-library/publications/NPC-15.pdf>

Question 2:

Academic Advisement Flyer - FDOE

<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7764/urlt/StandardDiplomaRequirements.pdf>

Florida College System Admissions

<http://www.fldoe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system/academic-student-affairs/admissions.stml>

Graduation Options Chart

http://project10.info/Documents/24-Credit_and_18-Credit_Grad_Options_Chart_03.30.2020.FINAL.pdf

Transition Services Checklist, Appendix N in the Family Guide to Secondary Transition Planning Comprehensive Toolkit

<https://padlet.com/aschoenb/cbxve4zdy1e4>

Question 3:

Core Components of Self-Determination from I'm Determined, Virginia Department of Education's Self-Determination Project

http://www.imdetermined.org/files_resources/131/core_components_of_self-determination.pdf

Parent Tips for Transition Planning

<https://www.pacer.org/publications/pdfs/ALL14.pdf>

Self-Determination Parent Checklist, Appendix O in the Family Guide to Secondary Transition Planning Comprehensive Toolkit

<https://padlet.com/aschoenb/cbxve4zdy1e4>

Post-High School Outcomes of Young Adults with Disabilities Up to 6 Years After High School: Key Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/pubs/20113004/>

Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transitionguide.html>

Question 4:

8 Tips to Teach Effective Communication Skills

<https://stanfield.com/8-tips-teach-effective-communication-skills/>



Question 4: (Continued)

10 Ways to Improve Your High-Schooler's Communication Skills

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/communication-disorders/10-ways-to-improve-your-high-schoolers-communication-skills?view=slideview>

Do2Learn Social Skills Toolbox

<http://do2learn.com/organizationtools/SocialSkillsToolbox/AppropriateTopicsOfConversion.htm>

Practicing Social Skills: How to Teach Your Student Social Interactions

<http://www.ldonline.org/article/21025/>

Question 5:

Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System (FDLRS) Centers

<http://www.fdlrs.org/departments/technology>

Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) - Apps as Assistive Technology - Affordable, available and Accessible

<https://faast.org/apps-as-assistive-technology-affordable-available-and-accessible/>

Speech to Text in Google Docs

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8ike1_wXGk

Ways to Help Your HS Student with Executive Functioning

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/executive-functioning-issues/executive-functioning-issues-and-learning-6-ways-to-help-your-high-schooler>

Question 6:

Executive Functioning App Matrix

<http://online.anyflip.com/xbjb/eppj/mobile/index.html#p=3>

Executive Functioning Description

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/executive%20function>

Family Network on Disabilities - The Insider's Guide to Apps for Organizations

<https://fndusa.org/apps/>

FairTEST: The National Center for Fair and Open Testing

<https://www.fairtest.org/>

How Children and Adults Can Build Core Capabilities for Life - Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/innovation-application/key-concepts/adult-capabilities/>

Question 7:

At a Glance: Which Laws Do What

<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/your-childs-rights/basics-about-childs-rights/at-a-glance-which-laws-do-what>

Family Guide to Secondary Transition Planning, p. 74

<http://project10.info/DPage.php?ID=322#NS142>

The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities

http://www.ncwd-youth.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/411_Disability_Disclosure_complete.pdf

