

Putting Youth In the Driver's Seat: Navigating a Path from School to Career

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This Session Will Cover:

- ▶ Overview of Transition and Career Development
- ▶ How to be an adult ally
- ▶ Soft Skills
- ▶ Work Skills
- ▶ What a quality Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) is
- ▶ Strategies for families to support youth career development
- ▶ Resources for families

Who We Are

- ▶ National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth, a national technical assistance center
- ▶ Focus on needs of ALL youth, including youth with disabilities and other disconnected youth
 - Improve state and local policy
 - Strengthen workforce development service delivery
 - Improve competencies of youth service professionals
 - Engage youth and families
- ▶ Supported by Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor



Focus on Transition

- ▶ What do we mean by “transition” or “transition years?”
 - What do you think?
- ▶ No agreement in national policy
 - Disconnected or conflicting Federal laws
 - No common definitions
 - No “transition system”
- ▶ Mostly a “disability” term:
 - Special Education
 - Vocational Rehabilitation

Transition Means...

- ▶ The period of time when adolescents are moving into adulthood
- ▶ Often concerned with planning for postsecondary education and/or careers and/or independent living
- ▶ Typically covers age ranges of 12-14 to 25-30—middle school through college years
 - Big range of AGE and STAGE development

Guideposts for Success

- ▶ School-based Preparatory Experiences
- ▶ Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Activities
- ▶ Youth Development & Leadership
- ▶ Connecting Activities
- ▶ Family Involvement & Engagement

Being an Adult Ally

- The difficult balance
 - Being involved while trying not to give orders or coddle
- Begin by:
 - Actually listening
 - Involving them and asking their opinion
 - Learning more about their perspective
- Aim for:
 - Removing the fear of failure (for you and your youth)
 - Using your own unique strengths as guidance
 - Creating opportunities for the youth to make decisions

Disclosure

- ▶ Intentionally releasing personal information about yourself for a specific purpose
 - How your disability affects your capacity to learn and perform effectively
 - The environment, supports, and services you'll need in order to access, participate, and excel at work, school, and social.
- ▶ Critical for both youth with visible AND hidden disabilities
- ▶ Most of all, a PERSONAL decision

High Expectations

Parents and family members need to hold and convey high expectations that their youth can be and will be employed to the greatest extent they are able.

Career Development

An iterative process of developing skills in three domains:

1. Self-exploration
2. Career Exploration
3. Career Planning & Management



Quality Career Development

An iterative process of developing skills in three domains:

- 1. Self-exploration** - Ability to identify personal interests, skills, and values to better understand oneself and inform decisions
- 2. Career Exploration** – Ability to identify and analyze various career options in terms of what education, training, experience, and competencies are required for success
- 3. Career Planning & Management** – Various skills needed to maintain employability and navigate career changes throughout the lifespan (Includes soft skills, career-specific skills, job search skills, financial literacy skills, youth development and leadership competencies)

Career Development Activity

What was your first job?

What skills did you need to be successful?

Students Who Actively Engaged in Career Development Can:

- Identify one or more careers of interest
- Clearly describe plans to pursue the careers of interest
- Connect career plans to personal interests, skills & values
- Identify how current courses relate to career plan
- Articulate skill & entry requirements for careers
- Engage in additional learning opportunities
- Describe their needed skills & future development plan
- Exercise these skills throughout life – Ready to engage in lifelong career planning & management

Putting Youth in the Driver's Seat: What Families Can Do

- ▶ **Encourage Work-Based Learning Experiences**
 - Schools and community-based organizations may offer internships, job-shadowing, and mentoring
 - While postsecondary education is important, it is not the only gateway to well-paying jobs. Voc. education classes can provide an alternate pathway

Putting Youth in the Driver's Seat: What Families Can Do

▶ **Create Leadership Opportunities**

- Encourage child to connect with mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with other adults and peers.
- Encourage child to become a mentor to younger youth.
- Participating in sports, student government, chorus, or volunteer groups can also build leadership skills.

Putting Youth in the Driver's Seat: What Families Can Do

- ▶ **Start Early**
- ▶ **Promote Education**
- ▶ **Set Goals**
- ▶ **Develop Social Skills**

Soft Skills

Traits, work habits, and attitudes that all workers across all occupations must have in order to obtain, maintain, and progress in employment

Including:

- Communication
- Networking
- Enthusiasm and Attitude
- Teamwork
- Problem Solving and Critical Thinking
- Professionalism

Helping Families Understand Soft Skills

- Society has certain expectations for a person's behavior, as do employers
- Relate to the “lessons” their parents tried to teach them
- Encourage them to see things from employer's viewpoint
- Stay positive....soft skills can be improved
- Some parents have negative reaction (“My child's disability is social....”)

Building Soft Skills at Home

- Have conversations
- Teach phone skills
- Teach turn-taking in conversation
- Model listening skills
- Give opportunities for work
- Have young person host guests
- Consider the accommodations
- Encourage Volunteering
- Play games—encourage team work
- Encourage team sports
- Seek out diversity
- Support conversations about differences
- Discuss experiences of discrimination
- Role play areas of social difficulty
- Connect with social skills classes
- Give opportunities for independence
- Explain the unspoken expectations
- Find opportunities to visit familiar workplaces
- Participate in youth mentoring opportunities

Work Skills

Work skills are the basic abilities and habits employers are looking for in their employees. These skills can be acquired through work-based learning, including internships. Some can also be practiced at home.

Including:

- Communication Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Decision Making Skills
- Lifelong Learning Skills

Helping Families Understand Work Skills

- ▶ Stress importance of skills development at all ages
- ▶ Encourage skill building activities in the home
- ▶ Add soft skills as a goal in IEP and include in SOP
- ▶ Promote work experiences
- ▶ Use everyday activities in the home to build skills
- ▶ **Maintain High Expectations!**

Building Work Skills at Home

- ▶ Observe Critically
- ▶ Convey Ideas in Writing
- ▶ Read with Understanding
- ▶ Use Math to Solve Problems and Communicate
- ▶ Solve Problems and Make Decisions
- ▶ Plan
- ▶ Advocate and Influence
- ▶ Guide Others
- ▶ Use Information and Communications Technology
- ▶ Learn Through Research

What is an Individualized Learning Plan?

- ▶ States use different names – Student Success Plan in CT, Individual Career & Academic Plan in CO, many more
- ▶ 42 states & DC require or encourage ILPs for ALL students
- ▶ ILPs typically begin in middle school
- ▶ Purposes:
 - To personalize learning
 - To develop college and career readiness
 - To prepare early to meet graduation requirements
- ▶ Long history of individualized plans in Special Education
- ▶ Not the same as an Individualized Education Program (IEP)

What is a Quality ILP?

Quality ILP Activities

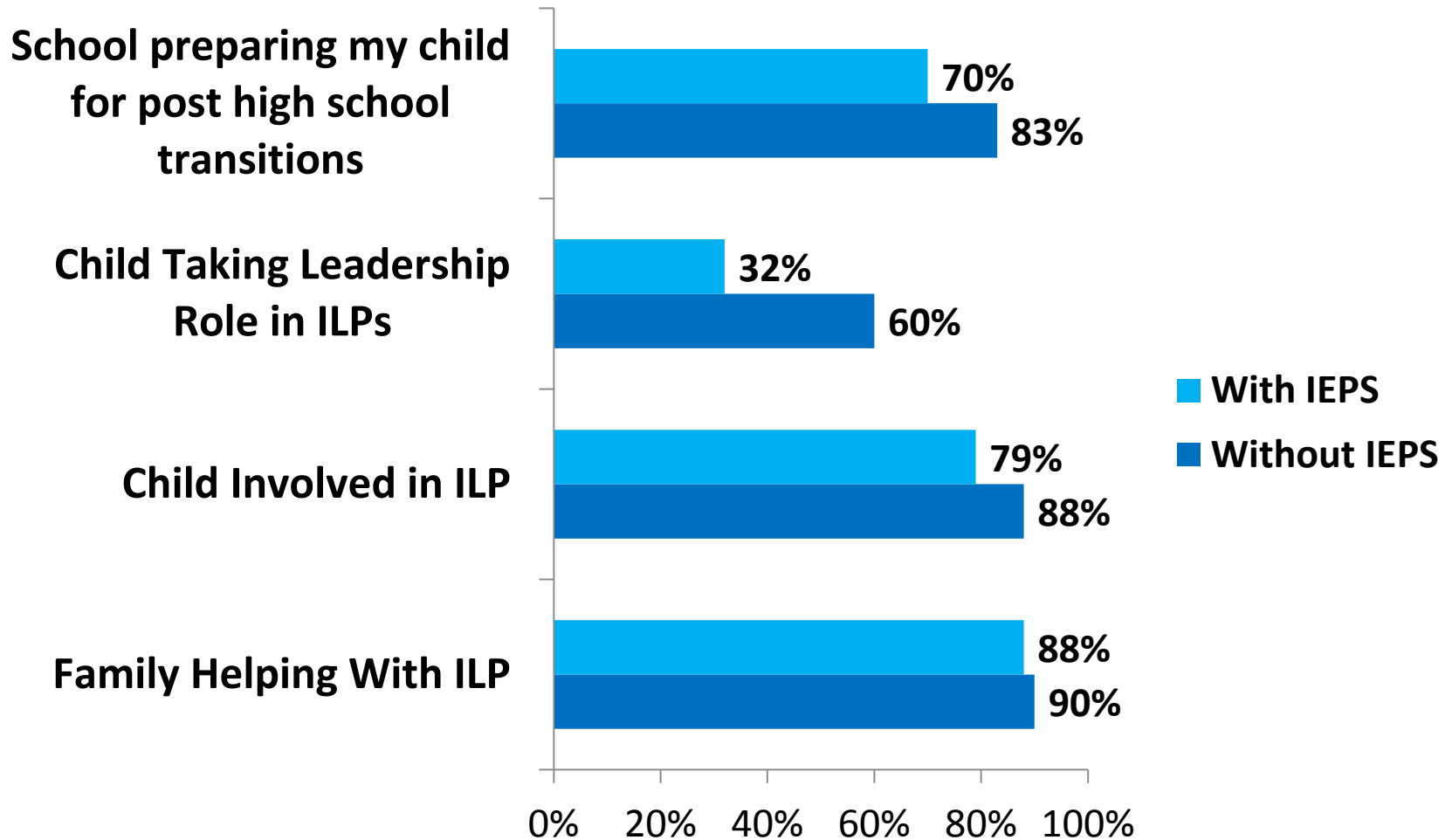
- ▶ A document consisting of:
 - (a) course taking and post-secondary plans aligned to career goals; and
 - (b) documentation of the range of college and career readiness skills that the student has developed.
- ▶ A process that enhances the relevance of school and out-of-school learning opportunities, and provides the student access to career development opportunities that involve building skills in self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management.



Other Findings on Value of ILPs

- ▶ Breaks down silos between special education and school counseling
- ▶ Increased engagement of general educators in transition readiness activities
- ▶ Annual student-led parent-teacher conferences using ILPs results in strong student self-advocacy
- ▶ Officials perceive it has increased students with disabilities graduating with a general education diploma
- ▶ Increased access to transition assessments
- ▶ Access to ePortfolio/Career Info System makes career & education plans portable, accessible outside school

Family Perceptions of ILPs



Altarum (2011). Parent and educator perspectives on ILPs: Final recommendations
From a four state report. Report available from Altarum.

Family ILP Experiences

Families in ILP study reported feeling more positive about the school and developing stronger relationship with son or daughter.

- ▶ “[This school] really seems focused on launching adults as opposed to getting through a curriculum...”
- ▶ “It gave [my daughters] a sense that they had chosen [these courses], that they had decided this, that they had set goals around this...”

Altarum (2011). Parent and educator perspectives on ILPs: Final recommendations from a four state report. Report available from Altarum.

Family Engagement in Career Development

Families play a critical role by:

- Beginning the discussion about choosing a career long before high school graduation
- Setting high expectations for youth's future related to employment and postsecondary education
- Advocating for and facilitating opportunities for youth to:
 - identify their strengths, interests, & values (self-exploration),
 - learn about various career options and what they need to do to pursue them (career exploration), and
 - develop employability and decision-making skills and the ability to navigate within the world of work throughout their lives (career planning & management skills)
- Assisting youth in making informed decisions about their future

Career Development—Self-Exploration

“Who Am I?”

Definition:

Ability to identify personal interests, skills, and values to better understand oneself and inform decisions

Associated Activities:

- Career Interest Inventories
- Personal Interest Inventories
- Understanding your learning style
- Finding your strengths
- Family activities such as travel or community events

Self-Exploration—Role for Families

- ▶ Activities at school and home include:
 - taking assessments about personal interests, career interests, personality, work values and preferences
 - identifying one's learning style and communication style
 - identifying own skills and personal strengths
 - exploring how others perceive you (what strengths and skills others see)
 - learning about the goal-setting process
 - engaging in extracurricular activities and special interest clubs related to personal interests
 - visiting places related to interests - museums, theatres, community landmarks

Career Development—Career Exploration

“Based on who I am, what are some good career options to consider?”

Definition:

Ability to identify and analyze various career options in terms of what education, training, experience, and competencies are required for success

Activities:

- Informational interviews
- Workplace visits and tours
- Job shadowing
- Career fairs
- Career camps
- Hands-on career projects
- Career-focused mentoring

Career Exploration—Role for Families

Career Exploration – Actions for Families:

- Learn about career prep activities offered in school, how student progress is evaluated, and how information is shared with families
- Support exploring a wide range of career options by visiting businesses, job shadowing, speaking to family and friends, or bringing youth to visit own place of employment
- Investigate quality websites that offer a range of tools that help youth learn about jobs
- Encourage youth to learn about the education and skills required for careers of interest
- Use connections from social and professional networks to help identify real world opportunities for youth to explore careers
- Help youth create a long-term goal for employment in a particular field or to pursue postsecondary education related to their chosen career (include in IEP transition plan and/or ILP)

Career Development—Career Planning & Management Skills

“What do I need to do now to make my goal a reality?”

Definition:

Various skills needed to maintain employability and navigate career changes throughout the lifespan

Activities:

Opportunities to learn and practice:

1. Soft Skills
2. Career-Specific Skills
3. Job Search Skills
4. Youth Leadership and Development competencies
5. Financial Literacy

Career Planning & Management—Role for Families

Career Planning & Management – Actions for Families

- Investigate community and school activities that provide hands-on work experience and soft skills training
- Help youth create a resume and electronic portfolio documenting youth career readiness activities, skills, accomplishments, experiences (may be part of ILP or used free online tools such as LinkedIn)
- Use common activities in the home, like making dinner, grocery shopping, or doing chores to build work skills and soft skills
- Discuss work ethic and on-the-job expectations and reinforce expectations at home
- **For youth with disabilities:** explore employment supports, learn how employment will impact disability benefits, participate in developing Summary of Performance (SOP)

Resources for Families

- **Tapping into the Power of Families: How Families of Youth with Disabilities Can assist in Job Search & Retention**, <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/infobrief/tapping-into-the-power-of-families>
- **Helping Youth Develop Soft Skills for Job Success: Tips for Parents and Families**, <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/information-brief-28>
- **Helping Youth Develop Work Skills for Job Success: Tips for Parents and Families**, <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/information-brief-34>
- **Understanding the New Vision for Career Development: The Role for Family**, <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/understanding-the-new-vision-for-career-development-the-role-of-family>
- **Families and College and Career Readiness: What Schools Can Do to Engage Families in the Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) Process**, <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/sites/default/files/infobrief-40-families-and-college-and-career-readiness-ilp.pdf>

Organizational Resources for Families



<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/>



*Statewide Parent
Advocacy Network*

<http://www.spanadvocacy.org/>



<http://www.pacer.org/transition/>

Resources on Career Development & ILPs

- **How-to Guide:** “Promoting Quality Individualized Learning Plans: A How to Guide Focused on the High School Years” www.ncwd-youth.info/ilp/how-to-guide
- **Using Career Interest Inventories,** <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/innovative-strategies/practice-briefs/using-career-interest-inventories-to-inform-career-planning>
- **Career Exploration in Action,** <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/innovative-strategies/practice-briefs/career-exploration-in-action>
- **Engaging Youth in Work Experiences,** <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/innovative-strategies/practice-briefs/engaging-youth-in-work-experiences>
- **Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success,** <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>
- **ILPs by State:** <https://www.dol.gov/odep/ilp/map/>

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