



Transition Planning Tips for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Youth with Disabilities

Introduction

Transition planning can be a challenging and complex task. It is important that the steps taken during transition planning lead to positive and well-informed decisions in education, career exploration, and independent living. Current research indicates that students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds don't always fare as well when it comes to major transition outcomes. Their obstacles in achieving better transition outcomes may be more than just disability-related.

Cultural and linguistic issues may increase the complexities and challenges of the transition process. Therefore, it is important that students and their families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have equal access to appropriate information, resources, services, and knowledgeable personnel when transition planning is taking place. Transition research shows that family involvement is a greater predictor of successful outcomes for youth than income or social status. By developing positive relationships with the transition team, families may help ensure their student's success while providing additional information on any unique needs.

Successful transition planning considerations

There are several considerations that often exist when it comes to transition planning for culturally and linguistically diverse youth. These might include:

- Lack of understanding by families and schools of each other's cultures
- Language differences viewed as a liability instead of a strength
- Stereotypical biases on both sides
- Generational differences related to transition outcomes and family values (e.g., conflicts may exist between student and parents about types of jobs, expectations, risk taking, security, and availability or knowledge of training experiences)

Support and extra training that may be required

All families benefit from support and training during the transition process. Educational jargon and transition law needs to be explained in understandable ways. Culturally and linguistically diverse families may benefit from some additional guidance. This may include:

- More support to understand the various steps, phases, and goals of the transition process
- Additional explanation of the various phases of the transition process (e.g., if the goal is job exploration, then what does this mean in practice?)
- Additional explanation of the skills that a student may need when seeking information about a particular career path or type of work
- Access to translated resources about transition and transition planning
- Immigration and safety issues for youth and young adults
- Help to access new opportunities, networks, and resources available through transition planning

Understanding culturally appropriate practices

Research has noted best practices to use when working with students and families from diverse cultures and with linguistic differences. Along with being family-friendly, staff should ensure that their organization uses best practices associated with language access. This might include taking steps to translate materials or put materials in an audio format in the family's first language.

Some additional ideas include:

- Develop a plan for school and agency personnel that encourages and increases knowledge, sensitivity, and skills about culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families.
- Promote cross-cultural awareness, competency, and responsiveness.
- Keep an open mind to potential cultural differences and perceptions when it comes to family, home, school, and community.
- Encourage students and families to share their hopes and dreams for the future and create safe environments to foster this.
- Take the necessary time to build trust, rapport, and credibility with diverse and immigrant families in addressing their fears and concerns.
- Be transparent and authentic about student risk, and help families prepare for and advocate for their son or daughter's safety.
- Identify and take necessary steps to ensure that families have knowledge of school policies, practices, and procedures related to transition, as well as concerns regarding immigration, bias, and student safety.
- Schedule meetings in a place and at a time that is convenient for the families' attendance.
- Publicize success stories, if appropriate, to ensure that positive examples of success are shown throughout diverse communities.

Conclusion

Parent, professional, and community collaborative involvement can be a vital source for growing, fostering, and sustaining diversity and inclusion in transition outcomes. Using culturally appropriate practices in transition planning leads to more successes and celebrations of positive outcomes for all students.

Resources

"Transition Planning for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Youth and Families with Disabilities." Presentation by Dr. Gary Green, Professor Emeritus of Special Education, California State University, Long Beach. 2011 AMCHP National Conference.

"The 2020 Federal Youth Transition Plan: A Federal Interagency Strategy." Federal Partners in Transition (FPT) Workgroup. 2015.

"Successful Transitions: Learning from Diverse Communities." Jody Manning and Sharman Davis Barrett, PACER Center, 2012.

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