

More Successful Transition Planning



20 Top Questions and Ways to Answer Them

Using

Choices[®]

PLANNER

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1

I am thinking about a career in _____. What do workers actually do; what are the requirements and benefits?

To the student: It is important to be sure the career you are considering is actually what you think it is. What day-to-day tasks would you perform? What abilities and skills are required? Will you be satisfied with the salary and working conditions? Completing activities to be sure you know the details of careers you are considering will prevent being disappointed later on. If you know the major you want to pursue after high school, you can use it to find possible careers.

To the teacher: Students often have too little or inaccurate information about careers they are considering. Activities that help verify or reject these ideas by providing accurate and thorough information are critical. And letting them gather the information is much preferable to other approaches, such as looking it up for them or correcting their misperceptions.

30-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click Work to access the career zones.
3. Locate a career zone of interest.
4. Select a career from the list.
5. Print the Skills You Need, What to Learn and Money and Outlook sections.
6. Put a "+" next to the sections of the description that seem to be just what you thought and a "0" next to descriptions that are different from what you thought.
7. Repeat with other occupations you are considering.
8. Discuss the results with a teacher or family member.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- "(Name) will demonstrate ability to locate information about the requirements and rewards of preferred occupations."
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities: Ask students to identify post-secondary education programs related to the course being taught. Examine the classified section of the local newspaper to identify occupations related to the course being taught.

2

If I major in _____, what careers will that prepare me for?

To the student: Before picking a program, it is a good idea to know the careers that are most likely to result. Some programs, such as business, prepare people for many different careers. People with other majors, such as chemistry, are apt to enter a smaller number of careers. But it is also smart to think about the high school subjects you like and are good at. By looking at what comes both before and after a program, you'll make a better career decision.

To the teacher: Choosing a program is often – but not always – an important step in career planning. Students need to know that preparation for some careers requires a specific pattern of education. Several paths may be taken for other careers. Finally, like careers, programs are best selected when students consider what they like and are good at doing.

30-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click Learn to access programs and majors.
3. Select a category of interest under the Programs and Majors heading.
4. Select a program or major from the list.
5. Read the program description, then click on the careers listed below Related Careers.
6. Read the profiles of the chosen careers (i.e. What They Do, Is This For You?). More occupations can be viewed by clicking on Related Careers in Choices Planner.
7. Print the careers that go with the major you selected and discuss them with a teacher, parent or someone working in the careers.

The above activity is useful for learning the contents of a major. More highly focused majors may signal job placements in a more concentrated group of occupations.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will learn about college majors and how preparation in one program may lead to career opportunities.”
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities: Describe two post-secondary majors that students who like and do well in this course might consider.

3

**Everyone keeps asking, “What are you going to be?”
I just don’t know. What should I do?**

To the student: It’s OK to be unsure about your career. When people who know you ask, tell them you are working on it. You may want to ask them what they think are the best careers. Or maybe they know someone you could interview about a career you are considering. Remember that you need to learn about both careers and yourself. Actually, the more you learn about careers, the easier it will be to decide which are right for you.

To the teacher: Career planning is made easier when built on a good understanding of the world of work – clusters of occupations, industry structures, tasks, requirements and rewards. As they learn about careers, students will also be learning about themselves, particularly their preferences, strengths and needs. Helping them learn how to find career information quickly and easily is a major contribution that will serve them throughout their lives.

30-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click Work, then click the Alphabetical List under the Find Careers By heading.
3. Select two careers of interest and print the descriptions of each.
4. Click Work, then select Compare Careers.
5. Input the names of the two chosen careers and add them to your comparison list.
6. Click Compare.
7. Locate the educational and training requirements for both careers (click on What to Learn).
8. Using the printed career descriptions, discuss the two careers with a teacher or parent.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will demonstrate the ability to locate and discuss information about occupations.”
- “Given two occupational titles, (name) will identify, compare and discuss the tasks and educational requirements.”
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- List five or more careers where the content of this course is used in performing tasks.
- Using a comparison of two occupations, have students identify all the relationships to class content.
- Examine the classified section of the local newspaper to identify occupations related to the course being taught.

4

If I want to go to college or university, what courses do I need to take in high school?

To the student: You are wise to make the connection between courses in high school and getting into university. Most universities expect that you will have taken certain courses. If you want to major in a certain subject, you will probably need to take additional courses. Most university courses will be more difficult than anything you take in high school. So, it is a good idea to take upper level courses in English, math and science. They are more challenging, but also more like university courses. Pick up a course catalogue from your teacher or guidance counsellor. It usually has a list of courses most universities require.

To the teacher: Many students need help understanding the importance of course selection in high school. They also need encouragement to take more challenging sections of courses and explanations why this is important. Taking courses required by most universities keeps options open. Such courses also result in more salable skills for the job market.

30-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click on High School Planning under the Learn heading.
3. Select a career pathway of interest.
4. Read and review the suggested Grade 9 courses.
5. Click on the All Grades tab on the left for an overview of all suggested courses from Grades 9 to 12. Print this page and discuss it with a teacher or parent.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will identify and plan high school courses that match post-secondary and/or career requirements.”
- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to develop a college planning timeline for discussion with a teacher or parent.”
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Identify college entrance requirements satisfied by this course.
- Discuss the requirements and activities of this course in relation to content of courses at the post-secondary level.

5

If I don't want to go to university, what careers are still open to me?

To the student: There are a whole lot of careers available to high school graduates. Many careers are entered through apprenticeships, short courses at trade schools or by correspondence. Employers also offer training to their workers.

To the teacher: Many students need help identifying careers that don't require four-year degrees. Help them identify local resources for post-secondary education. Provide information about financial aid. Discuss the relationships between earnings and education. Discuss the pros and cons of postponing further education.

30-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click on Career Finder under the Work heading.
3. Click on the Education Level link on the left of the screen.
4. Click on the box next to "High school not completed (but preferred)" as well as on the box next to "High school completed (GED)."
5. Now click on See Your Matching Careers.
6. Print the list. Underline five interesting occupations.
7. Go back to step four and move the check from "High school..." to "One to two years post-secondary..." and click See Your Matching Careers again.
8. Print the list. Underline five interesting occupations.
9. Discuss the two lists with a teacher or parent.

30-Minute Activity

6. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
7. Click on Career Finder under the Work heading.
8. If you've already completed a search using Career Finder, click on the "clear your choices" link to start a new search.
9. Click on the Apprenticeships link on the left of the screen. Select the box next to "I want to find all careers that offer apprenticeships."
10. Now click on See Your Matching Careers. You are looking at a list of careers that allow you to learn and earn at the same time.
11. Print the list. Underline five interesting occupations.
12. Discuss the list with a teacher or parent.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- "(Name) will identify careers available with only a high school diploma."
- "(Name) will identify careers for which they can train through an apprenticeship."
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Interview a variety of people about their educational experiences since high school.
- Develop a career ladder in a career area, showing education and earnings for each "rung."

6

I know what I like. How do I find careers that match my interests and values?

To the student: Knowing what you like is important. You can use that information in several ways. What work tasks do you like? What school subjects do you enjoy? What work values do you want from working? When you try any of these activities, the result will be lists of careers (occupations) you might like.

To the teacher: Helping students with these activities can be a useful way to begin the transition planning process. These activities can help students see the relevance between school activities and what they want to do later on. By asking them questions about the results of those activities, you point out some very important connections between school and life. Combining two or more activities typically yields shorter, more lasting indications of career preferences.

45-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click on Interest Profiler under the Work heading.
3. Start answering the questions (there are 180 in all). It should take approximately 20 minutes. After answering the questions, Choices Planner will use the information to create an individual interest profile for you.
4. Review your top results. Click on “Check out careers matching your interests.”
5. Pick at least two occupations that interest you and read about them. Print results and discuss with a parent or teacher.

90-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click on Work Values Sorter under the Work heading. Click “Start ranking your values.”
3. Place all the statements so they show the ones you value most on the left side of the screen. Click on Continue to Work Values Profile.
4. To see the occupations that match, click View Careers Matching Your Work Values.
5. Pick at least two occupations that interest you and read about them. Print your results and show them to a teacher.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will learn about different types of interests and how to use resources to identify matching occupations.”
- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to relate preferences and interests to a wide range of occupations.”
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Describe the differences in two of the occupations you read about. (Written work, class presentation, etc.)
- What arithmetic/math/reading/writing/listening/teamwork is required of workers in those occupations?

7

How do I figure out what I would be good at doing?

To the student: What you are good at doing is just as important as what you like to do. It helps to look at both things separately. Actually, there are two kinds of ability. The basic skills you learn in school – reading, writing, math, etc. – make up the first kind. Then there is the special knowledge and skill required by the careers you are thinking about.

To the teacher: Helping students balance skills and interests may require considerable tact. One approach is to begin by asking students to look at the requirements of careers they are considering. Then, ask them to self-rate on the most important skills, followed by standardized assessments of the same skills. Search for occupations based on assessment results. When self-ratings and assessment results differ markedly, situational assessment may be required. You and the student first need to agree that the selected activity will allow them to demonstrate the skill in question.

90-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click on Transferable Skills Checklist under the Work heading.
3. Click “Start choosing your skills.”
4. Check the skills you have in the 25 skill areas. Print out the resulting profile.
5. Click “Review careers matching all your skills.”
6. If these careers interest you, select two and discuss them with a teacher or parent. If these careers don’t interest you, ask yourself these three questions:
 - a. Do I want to put in the time and hard work to improve my skills?
 - b. Would that time and hard work pay off in better skills?
 - c. Would I best learn the skills in school or on the job?

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will learn about different skills required in careers and use resources to identify matching occupations.”
- Printouts are “products” that demonstrate competencies and completion of IEP activities.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- What school subjects and post-secondary programs address the skills students want/need to learn?
- Write a paper discussing the skills needed in two careers you are considering and ways you can learn those skills.

8

I know there are some things that I am not very good at. What changes do I have to make? What things can I avoid or work around in my career planning?

To the student: It is good to be able to see both strengths and weaknesses; everyone has them! Sometimes you can plan a career to avoid things you don't do well. Other times, it is better to improve a skill because it is the only thing that will make a plan work. Good career planning means looking at both strengths and weaknesses.

To the teacher: Helping students recognize their strengths and weaknesses is important in getting them on a path that leads to enjoyment and not frustration. Help students see their strengths and encourage them to continue working on their weaknesses. Early discoveries and realizations in career planning can keep students focused on their efforts in school. Remind students that gaps can be addressed in several ways: change goal, change self, accommodation.

30-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click on Career Finder under the Work heading.
3. Click the Aptitudes link on the left menu. Rate yourself as either Low or Below Average in any area that you know you have difficulty with. (Ask your teacher if you need assistance.)
4. Click on See Your Matching Careers.
5. Print the list of occupations.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will research career opportunities that do not emphasize recognized weaknesses.”
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Assist students with understanding that everyone has weaknesses. Show students how many more opportunities present themselves when they have better skills.
- Examine occupational reports and help students understand skills and aptitudes and how important they are in choosing a career in which they can be successful.

9

How do my work behaviours match up with those required of most workers?

To the student: Poor behaviours cause more problems for workers than do poor skills. So it is smart to think about what employers expect. Work behaviours are what people do on the job. They can be seen and observed. One set of behaviours relate to what you do to get a job. Another set of behaviours include those needed to keep the job. You show work behaviours on a job. You also show them at school, and at home.

To the teacher: Helping students improve and expand their repertoire of skills is a valuable part of career planning. Bridges products focus on job-getting behaviours with some attention to “soft” skills needed to keep jobs, such as managing bosses. The self-rating activity focuses on job-keeping behaviours. Remember: behaviours are not always consistent between settings. In general, the more severe the disability, the less transferable the behaviour.

Self-Rating Activity

Rate your job-keeping behaviours. Use this scale:

Not like me Somewhat like me Just like me

1. Attends work/school regularly (misses a day or less, a month)	1	2	3	4	5
2. Is punctual (late less than once a month)	1	2	3	4	5
3. Behaves toward workers/students in ways that:					
a. do not irritate, anger, distract	1	2	3	4	5
b. do not attract abuse/victimization	1	2	3	4	5
4. Behaves toward supervisors/teachers in ways that:					
a. show acceptance of worker/student role	1	2	3	4	5
b. do not require special attention	1	2	3	4	5
5. Produces enough work:					
a. remains at workstation as appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
b. maintains adequate production speed – neither too slow nor too fast	1	2	3	4	5
c. sustains effort and shows adequate stamina and willingness to continue exertion against work demands	1	2	3	4	5
6. Meets appropriate quality standards:					
a. recognizes and accepts quality standards as reasonable demands	1	2	3	4	5
b. maintains quality standards					
c. recognizes “good enough” and doesn’t sacrifice speed to needless perfection	1	2	3	4	5

Also ask a teacher and parent to rate you. Discuss any differences in the ratings.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will research and practise steps in preparation for job seeking.”
- “(Name) will self-rate critical work behaviours and discuss areas that need improvement with a teacher or parent.”
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Help students understand the relationships between work behaviours, school and work.

10

What skills do I need to live independently?

To the student: Success in working and living independently are related. It is difficult to live on your own without a job. And it is difficult to keep a job if you don't take care of the other parts of your life. Independent living doesn't mean living by yourself. Instead, it means taking care of things outside work that can interfere with job success. It is like being sure to get enough sleep and having your clothes ready so you get to school on time and ready to learn.

To the teacher: Students, families and staff can use these activities to compare views of student readiness for independent living. The *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA)* featured on the next page of this guide is an evaluation of youth independent living skills. Instructional materials are included. All assessments, scored reports and instructional materials are free of charge. Staff should visit the site and read "Important Information for Agencies and Organizations" and "Data and Reports" before using the programs with students.

Self-Rating Activity

Rate your independent living behaviours. Use this scale:

Not like me Somewhat like me Just like me

Social Living Competencies:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Uses leisure time so that they are: | |
| a. Appropriately engaged and not at loose ends | 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5 |
| b. Satisfied and reasonably content with leisure time activity | 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5 |
| 2. Manages money so that spending does not exceed income | 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5 |
| 3. Demonstrates acceptable grooming and appearance consistent with setting | 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5 |
| 4. Manages legal problems to avoid wage attachments or adverse publicity as representative of employer | 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5 |

Community Living Competencies:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Finds and maintains housing | 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5 |
| 2. Secures medical services: | |
| a. Has a personal physician or has links to public health service | 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5 |
| b. Takes reasonable care of health, exercise and dietary needs | 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5 |
| 3. Is mobile in community, using personal or public transportation for work, personal or recreational travel | 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5 |

General or Personal Living Competencies:

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Copes with family/marital relationships so that they do not interfere with employment | 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5 |
| 2. Demonstrates personal adjustment and stability to ensure employability | 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5 |

Also ask a teacher and parent to rate you. Discuss any differences in the ratings.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- "(Name) will self-rate independent living skills and discuss areas that need improvement with a teacher or parent."
- "(Name) will demonstrate knowledge of social, personal and community living skill areas."
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Help students understand the relationships between independent living skills, school, school subjects and work.

ALSCA Activity

1. Log on to: **<https://www.caseyliveskills.org/ACLSA/default.htm>**
2. Click the tab marked Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment. Scroll down and click “proceed to assessments.”
3. Select the assessment you and your teacher have chosen, then click Begin. You will be asked for two more pieces of information. Your teacher will tell you what to enter.
4. Follow the instructions and answer all the questions.
5. When you are finished, your teacher will give you feedback about how you answered the questions. You will also learn how your answers compare with those other people who know you well gave.

11

What information do I need about careers and myself before choosing an occupation or job?

To the student: Choosing an occupation or job should indeed be based on good information. Actually, two sets of information are needed. First, you need information about at least two occupations. For each, you need to know the requirements made of workers in each occupation. You also need to know the rewards that generally come from working in the occupations. The second type of information you need is about yourself. It also includes the skills and abilities that an employer will expect of you.

To the teacher: Age, transition date and disability influence career goal selection. Broader career clusters (e.g. business, health services) are appropriate for younger students. When transition is imminent, occupational decisions (e.g. receptionist, health aide) may be needed. For students with very severe limitations, decisions may involve positions with specific employers, job modifications, etc. In the activities below, the term “occupation” is used to describe all levels. Check student work to be sure they have corresponding information about careers and themselves.

30-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click on the Work tab. Look through the career zones that interest you.
3. Select the two occupations that are most interesting to you and note their titles.
4. Click on the Work tab at the top of the page, then on Compare Careers. Type the names of the two careers you selected and add them to your comparison list.
5. Click Compare.
6. Look at each of the sections of the report. Print out each section.
7. These are the major types of information needed about occupations to make good occupational decisions. Discuss the printouts with a teacher or parent.

60-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Print the results for any of the following you have completed: Interest Profiler, Work Values Sorter and Transferable Skills Checklist. If you have not completed all of these options, take the time to do so before moving on. (You can print your results by going to those assessments and choosing to view your results.)
3. You may also rate other things about yourself as a worker that are important to you. To do this, click on Work and select a career zone. Choose a career. Within the profile of the career, select any of the following: What They Do, Is This For You, Skills You Need, What to Learn, Money and Outlook and Connections. Construct a sheet of pros and cons. While reviewing the career profile, make a list of pros and cons. Do this for each career of interest. Keep the list.
4. This is the type of information needed about yourself to make good career decisions. Using the printouts and the pros/cons list, discuss your work with a teacher or parent.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to contrast two occupations of interest.”
- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to gather and organize information about career-related preferences and abilities.”
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- What school subjects and post-secondary programs address the skills students want/need to learn?
- Write a paper discussing the skills needed in two careers you are considering and ways you can learn those skills.

12

After learning about careers and myself, how can I organize the information to help me decide between my options?

To the student: You have gathered the information about yourself and careers that interest you. Next, you need a way to organize information to help you make some decisions. That means comparing each career you are interested in with your abilities and interests. There are always some gaps. We can only do something about gaps or problems after we figure out what they are. And the whole purpose of transition planning is to identify and address gaps.

To the teacher: Students need lots of help understanding three things about career/person matching. First, although both employees and employers have to be reasonably happy, perfect matches are rare indeed. Second, gaps can be addressed in several ways. Finally, both people and occupations change; therefore, matching and gap analysis are constants. These truths about career decision making are not easily learned. They require practice – and support from others such as you.

90-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click Work, then choose a career zone.
3. Select a career you are considering.
4. Now get the information you have collected about yourself. That includes assessments such as your work values and interests. (If you have not completed the Work Values Sorter, click on it on the Work page and complete it before moving on.)
5. Make a worksheet with three columns. Label the columns Occupation, What I Want/Need, and Gaps.
6. Make sections in column one for (at least) this information: Name, Tasks, Education, Skills, Abilities, Work Values, Interests, Outlook, Earnings and Courses. Copy information about the career into each section.
7. Now copy the information about yourself into column two. If there is information in column one that you haven't considered about yourself, do it now. (Ask a parent or teacher for help if you need it.)
8. For each section, go back and look at the information in both columns. Are there gaps (differences) between what is in them? Put "yes" in column three when you think those gaps are important. Otherwise, put "no." Remember, a gap only means it is something you would want to work on if you pick that career.
9. Repeat steps three to seven for other careers of interest.
10. It is very important that you discuss your worksheets with a teacher, counsellor or family member.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- "(Name) will demonstrate ability to identify specific gaps that can be addressed in their IEP before transition."
- "(Name) will demonstrate ability to search for accommodations for gaps that cannot be overcome."
- Saved session files or printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Give students examples of how other people address gaps – both by overcoming and working around them.
- Meet with students several times over the course of several weeks/months to help them with these activities.

13

What information do I need about schools and myself before deciding on college or training?

To the student: The best place to start is with you and your career goals. Will they require more skills and training than you will have after transition? How long are you willing to continue your education? How do you learn best? The answers to these questions will help you choose between the many types of educational programs.

To the teacher: Students may need help seeing university as a step along the way, not an end in itself. It helps to know about programs and careers that typically result. Changing programs is less likely and costly if the student knows these connections. Note, however, that using the word “college” to describe post-secondary education may put off students. Instead, help them understand the many types of educational programs. They may begin with a different type of program that better meets their goals and abilities. Make sure they know about trade schools, apprenticeships, OJT, etc.

30-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click on School Finder under the Learn heading.
3. On the left side there is a list of characteristics. Starting with Key Facts, select your preferences for each characteristic (location, tuition cost, etc.) Once you finish the last characteristics (Career Connect), click on See Your List of Schools at the bottom of the page.
4. Print the resulting list of schools.
5. Discuss the list with a teacher or parent.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to identify a range of post-secondary education opportunities related to career goals.”
- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to organize and present information about training options to staff and family.”
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Show students the range of training options (e.g. college, apprenticeship) for the subject matter being taught.
- Show how subject matter of high school courses serves as a foundation for more specialized training.

14

After learning about schools and myself, how can I organize the information to help me decide between my options?

To the student: OK, you've gathered information about training opportunities and yourself. Now you need a way to lay out the information to help you make some decisions. That means comparing what you want for training with what is available. The match between those two things is not going to be perfect. But you can't do anything about gaps until you find out what they are. And the whole purpose of transition planning is to identify and address gaps.

To the teacher: Students need help with their plans for post-secondary education. First, they need to understand that education after high school is likely to be more focused on a subject or major. Second, many students assume that the help provided through special education in high school will continue. Finally, students need specific suggestions about areas they can strengthen and focus on to improve their chances for success. Students first need to agree that the selected activity will allow them to demonstrate the skill in question.

90-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Take the printed list of schools you created in activity 13. Type the name of the first school into the Search box in Choices Planner.
3. Make a worksheet with three columns. Label the columns: School, What I Want/Need, and Gaps.
4. Make sections in column one for (at least) this information: Name, Location, Programs and Entrance Difficulty Level. Add other sections that are important to you in picking a school. Copy information about the school into each section.
5. Now write your preferences for a school into column two. If there is information in column one that you haven't considered about yourself, do it now. (Ask a parent or teacher for help if you need it.)
6. For each section, go back and look at the information in both columns. Are there gaps (differences) between what is in them? Put "yes" in column three when you think those gaps are important. Otherwise, put "no." Remember that a gap only means it is something you would want to work on if you pick that school.
7. Repeat steps four to six for other schools on your printout.
8. It is very important that you discuss your worksheets with a teacher, counsellor or family member.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- "(Name) will demonstrate ability to search for post-secondary education opportunities of various lengths and types."
- "(Name) will demonstrate ability to identify problems that might arise in selecting educational goals after transition."
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Show students relationships between current subjects and those being considered as post-transition majors.
- Meet with students several times over the course of several weeks/months to help them with these activities.

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If I decide to get a job right out of high school, how can I pick one that will help me with long-range goals?

To the student: Starting out at the bottom of your career ladder is fine. Just be sure it is the right ladder! Nearly any job can help you get ahead. A steady, successful job history is valuable for anyone. But you do better if your first job experiences are related to your long-range goals.

To the teacher: Be sure students understand the idea of a career ladder. There are many jobs where previous experience is nearly as important as formal training. Other careers require both formal training and experience. Encourage students to learn about the steps required for their long-range goals. In addition, stress the value of having demonstrated the ability to hold jobs with good work behaviours.

30-Minute Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click on Work, then on Shortcut Career Finder.
3. Select your preferences for Earnings, Education Level (in this case, select high school completed) and Field of Work. Click on Get Results.
4. Review the list of careers. This list includes careers that only require high school completion.
5. Select the entry-level occupations that will help you with your long-range goals. View the accompanying QuickTime video (if available) for each career you have chosen. This will help give you a better overview of the career.
6. Print the list of careers.
7. Ask a teacher, counsellor or parent to help you identify employers in your area who may hire for these jobs.
8. Try to arrange a job shadow or interview to be sure the job has the requirements as shown in your printout. Also, ask questions about room for career growth. For example: if you start out as a food service worker, can you later become a restaurant manager? This will help you pick a job that can meet your long-range goals.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to identify entry-level jobs consistent with long-range goals.”
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Show students career ladders related to the subject being taught. Emphasize how skills and experience relate.
- When you arrange for outside speakers in a specialty, encourage them to discuss various pathways that can be taken.

16

How can I show students the relationships between the subjects I teach and their career goals?

To the student: It helps to see how a subject you are taking is related to what you want to do. Sometimes that is easy but sometimes it isn't. Since carpenters measure, it is easy to see how fractions are related. It may be harder to see how other courses are connected to what you want to do. These activities will help.

To the teacher: "Relevance" is important to many students. If they can make a connection to the subject being taught, they tend to work harder and perform better. Those relationships are easier to establish for some subjects than others. However, all subjects develop basic skills in reading, writing, thinking and/or math. First, look for the obvious relationships between subject and career. Next, examine the relationships between high school courses and post-secondary requirements. Finally, relate basic skills to student career plans. All courses will appear on at least one list.

Staff Activity

1. Go to the Choices Planner home page.
2. Click on High School Planning under the Learn heading.
3. Choose one of the Career Pathways.
4. Click on the All Grades tab on the left to see a table with an overview of all the courses needed in high school for the pathway chosen.
5. Click on the Work tab at the top of the screen, then click on Career Finder.
6. If you've already completed a search with Career Finder, click on the "clear your choices" link to begin a new search.
7. Click on the Career Pathways link on the left menu.
8. Select the same pathway you looked at earlier and click on See Your Matching Careers.
9. Print off the list of occupations associated with the chosen pathway.
10. Repeat for the other pathways.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- "(Name) will compare courses/subjects and occupations being considered."
- "(Name) will show the required courses and career pathways for occupations being considered."
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Ask students to identify post-secondary education programs related to the course being taught.
- Examine the classified section of the local newspaper to identify occupations related to the course being taught.

17

**Many of my students have difficulty reading.
How can I use Choices Planner with them?**

To the teacher: This is a very good question that applies to most career exploration and assessment tools used in special education. Unfortunately, it also applies to most jobs and post-secondary training options.

Chances are good that if reading is a problem, it is already a major component in IEPs for your students. Therefore, our focus here will be on helping you anticipate when a student is likely to encounter reading-related difficulty using Bridges products and what you can do about it.

We all need to keep in mind that no single exploration or assessment approach is sufficiently valid and reliable to be used exclusively as the basis for career decision making. So combine career exploration in the classroom with job shadows, interviews, etc. And cross-check computerized and paper-based assessment techniques with work samples and work-based learning experiences. Your students need that protection.

General Comments

Let's begin with some general comments on reading levels:

1. Content written for students in Choices Planner is aimed at a reading level of just under 11th grade. Occupational names themselves sometimes exceed this goal. Other Bridges products are designed for lower reading requirements.
2. Frequently, the tested reading level of a student won't predict their ability to comprehend material shown to be at the same – or even lower – grade level. The degree of familiarity with the subject matter is one reason. The abstract concepts involved in even short words is another, for instance: “value” and “ability.”

Accommodation Ideas

Accommodation suggestions when students can't read assigned activities:

1. Observe the student as they begin. If they seem to be having difficulty, decide whether it is using the computer or understanding the text. If the problem is related to reading, see the suggestions below.
2. Ask the student to make a list of all the words or sentences they don't understand. By using copy and paste, they can create the list in a word processor and then use the thesaurus to look them up. (This makes a good activity assignment, too.)
3. Have the student work with someone else on the assignment and share the reading.
4. Kinesthetic learners will benefit from having the Work Values Sorter presented as a board game in which they physically sort the values printed on cards or slips of paper.

For many students, accommodation needs to be learned and practised. Encouraging them to think about ways around problems is very valuable. (But we'll also keep working on accessibility!)

Is it a computer-use problem, or a reading issue?

Teachers need to distinguish between the two. See *Questions Teachers Ask – Question 18* for details and suggestions about the computer skills needed to use Bridges products.

18

Some students have difficulty using a computer. How can I use Choices Planner with them?

To the teacher: Fortunately, this is a problem for fewer and fewer students of all ability levels. Widespread availability of computer literacy courses in middle and high schools generally include students with special needs. If they have completed such courses, they are likely to be able to use all Bridges products without difficulty.

If problems do arise, the first step is to categorize them into one of three broad problem groups:

- A. Physical ability to enter and extract information
- B. Knowledge and skill in use of hardware and software
- C. Problems in cognition that impair following instructions or using output

Each of these problems is addressed in the next section. In each category, the most desirable approach is instruction to increase proficiency. Next comes adaptive equipment or rehabilitation technology. Assistance from another person should be a last resort.

Strategies

A. Physical ability to enter and extract data. Major operating systems (e.g. Macintosh, Microsoft) pay increasing attention to accommodation issues. For example, the latest versions of Windows come with alternatives for data entry (on-screen keyboard), screen enlarger and screen reader. A number of vendors address the same functions with a wide range of approaches that meet the needs of most students. Using a search engine will locate resources in your area. However, with just the three Windows tools mentioned above, users can have total access to Choices Planner.

B. Knowledge and skill in use of hardware and software. Computer usage at most schools is via networks where hardware support (on/off, printer maintenance, Internet access, etc.) is not expected of students. Therefore knowledge and skill primarily relates to software. Bridges products minimize the need for complicated commands by making extensive use of icons and auto-save functions. Being able to use copy, paste, save, find and search functions nearly completes user requirements. See *Questions Teachers Ask – Question 17* for a discussion of reading issues.

C. Cognition problems. Most such problems occur when students try to read information such as on-screen instructions or output. See below for suggestions.

Additional Resources

No-cost suggestions for addressing computer usage issues:

A. Physical abilities: When students have difficulty using a standard keyboard but can use a mouse or other pointing device, try the on-screen keyboard (Windows). It allows typing by just pointing and clicking. Results appear wherever the cursor is located. This works particularly well when text, including username and password, must be entered. Students with limited vision can use the screen enlarger to expand the size of everything underneath the cursor. When a person's learning style is primarily aural, the screen reader will speak highlighted text. (Speech quality can be enhanced using www.readplease.com).

B. Knowledge and skill in computer usage: Some students will benefit from knowing a few simple shortcut commands. Skill in using Find is universally helpful. Here are two websites that have a range of commands and useful lessons:

http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/windows_XP_shortcuts.htm

<http://www.nald.ca/nald-nb/english/innosucc/facilit/Computer/Title.htm>

C. Cognition problems. While learning ability may be the source of problems students have during career exploration, learning style may also be an issue. Even with accommodations and instruction as suggested above, students may not gain a full understanding of career information from materials that are primarily visual in nature. Assessment of learning styles can be addressed at many Internet sites. Here is one:

<http://www2.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/ILSpa.html>

For many students, both accommodation and remediation need focus.

Is it a reading problem, or a computer-use issue?

Teachers need to distinguish between the two. See *Questions Teachers Ask – Question 17* for details and suggestions about the reading skills needed to use Bridges products.

19

How can I get families appropriately involved in transition planning?

To the teacher: Involving families is not only helpful, it is required. Families have perspectives not available to school staff. They also have resources and opportunities that enrich the transition planning process. The first step in family involvement is to keep them informed about transition planning and career related activities. Each of the activities in this booklet contains suggestions for sharing results of activities with parents.

Some parents will be well versed about careers and occupational requirements. Others will have only limited career information. Sending home results of student activities updates their knowledge of the world of work and their student's preferences and needs. Sometimes parents worry that career planning results in narrowing career options. Actually, transition planning broadens career options and provides information needed for informed decision making. Better informed parents will be more appropriately involved parents!

Parent Activity

Your student may be considering different occupations than the ones you are thinking of. This activity will provide basic information about each option. Use the activity as the basis for discussion. Either of you can gather the information or do it jointly.

1. Go to the home page of Choices Planner.
2. Click on Work, then on Compare Careers.
3. Type the names of two occupations your student is considering and add them to your comparison list.
4. Click Compare.
5. Print the report.
6. Read the report together. Put a check next to each section if you both agree that the information presented is correct. Put an X where you do not agree on the accuracy of the information.
7. Go to another source to check out accuracy. Ask a teacher or guidance counsellor for sources as needed.
8. Once you both agree on the accuracy of all the information about both occupations, discuss the differences between them in light of your student's preferences and needs. Make a note of the areas where there are still differences about how the occupations match the student.
9. Be sure the results of the activity are included in the student's transition records at school.

The above activity is designed to increase parental involvement in transition planning:

- It involves sharing information between parent and student.
- It is likely to clarify differences in viewpoint between student and family – a first step to resolving those differences.
- It is also likely to clarify differences in viewpoint between IEP team members – a first step in transition planning.

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Can transition activities be part of lesson plans for my courses?

To the teacher: Of course. And transition activities are appropriate for all students. Most are thinking about what they will do after high school. Those who deny it often feel unable to come up with a career plan and will (silently? reluctantly?) welcome the connection between course work and what they will do after graduation.

Choices Planner contains many lesson plans. They can be found in the Professional Tools section. The lesson plans are organized into nine categories:

Careers Class
Special Education
Math
English and ESL
Family and Consumer Sciences
Business
Physical Education
Social Studies
Theater, Art, Music
World Languages
Science and Technology

Each lesson plan contains an overview, list of required materials, suggested strategies and examples. Most lesson plans can be completed in one or two class periods. Some require field trips. All incorporate aspects of career planning.

Student Worksheets

Many of the questions addressed in this booklet have at least one printable student worksheet and can be used in an IEP or in a paper-based portfolio. Download these supplementary worksheets from the web at www.bridges.com/worksheets.



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