Interagency Collaboration

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OSSE Division of Specialized Education Secondary Transition Webinar Series

Objectives

- 1. Define interagency collaboration
- 2. Describe the purposes of interagency collaboration
- 3. Identify potential barriers and ideas for eliminating them
- 4. Identify characteristics of effective collaboration
- 5. Identify how interagency collaboration functions at national, state, and local (including school) levels

Guiding Questions

- 1. What is interagency collaboration (and how will we know it if we see it)?
- 2. What are our purposes for collaboration?
- 3. How will we see and eliminate barriers?
- 4. What are characteristics of effective collaboration for improved transition outcomes?
- 5. How do interagency teams function at the state, local, and school levels? How do we build them?

Guiding Question 1

What is interagency collaboration (and how will we know it if we see it)?



No Consensus for a Definition



No commonly used definition of interagency collaboration found across multiple research studies between 1982 and 2009

Kester, J. (2012); Test, Mazzotti, Fowler, Kortering, & Kohler.(2009)

How will we know it when we see it?

What does collaboration mean, based upon the ecology and environment of transitioning youth?

This leads us to explore the definition of interagency collaboration...

Defining Interagency Collaboration

"Collaboration is generally defined as a <u>process</u> of <u>participation</u> through which people, groups, and organizations <u>form</u> <u>relationships</u> and <u>work together</u> to <u>achieve a set of agreed-upon results</u>."

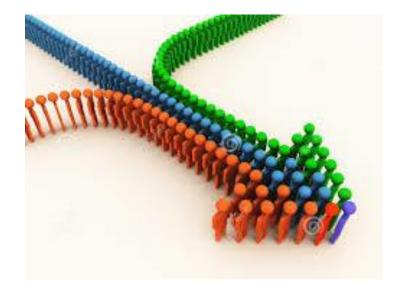
Kochhar-Bryant, 2008, p. 7

Defining Interagency Collaboration

- Interagency collaboration involves relationships among people in different roles and disciplines in schools, among schools, with human service agencies, and in communities.
- Collaboration is the "people part," which goes hand in hand with the organizational level of system coordination.

Defining Collaboration

- Collaboration: process of discovery where <u>relationships and new</u> <u>knowledge are constructed</u> through a synthesis of ideas
- These are outcomes of social learning that are built upon the trust and cooperation of the group of collaborators



(Kochhar-Bryant, 2008)

Definition of Collaboration

Processes, activities and relationships of a group that results in the exchange of information, sharing, and pooling of resources for mutual benefit to achieve a common purpose.



Guiding Question 2

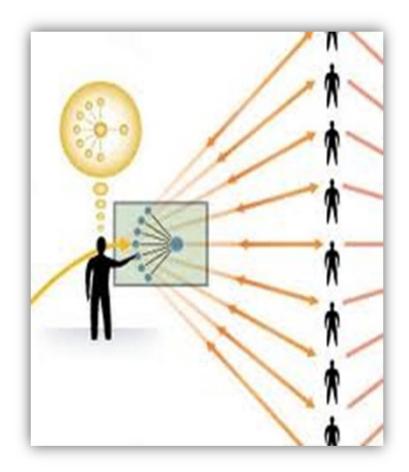
What are our purposes for collaboration?



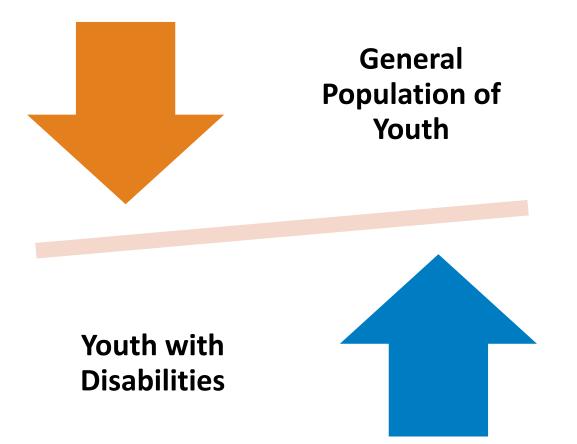
Failing at Interagency Collaboration

Despite legislation and multiple agency mandates, we continue to have systems fragmentation

National Council on Disability (2008)



Lower Post-School Outcomes



(NLTS-2, 2010; Test, Aspel & Everson, 2006)

Purposes for Engaging in Interagency Collaboration

- 1. To improve the academic, postsecondary, and lifelong success of students.
- To try new ways of working together to accomplish #1.
- 3. To be rejuvenated and use our creativity to accomplish #1.
- 4. To expand the number of people who can help us accomplish #1.
- 5. To eliminate our feelings of being a lone advocate.

Guiding Question 3

What are challenges or barriers to effective collaboration for improved transition outcomes?



Review of Challenges or Barriers

Organizational or System Barriers

- No cooperative processes or agreements
- Incongruent policies
- Separate funding streams with different purposes
- Changes in priorities & legislative shifts
- Inadequate data collection & reporting

Attitudinal Barriers

- Political pressures
- Territorialism
- Staff turnover

Knowledge Barriers

- Lack of understanding of own disciplines, agencies, etc.
- No knowledge of new models for collaboration

Ecological or Environmental Factors



- Complexity of transition system of agencies
- Agency cultural differences
- Different languages
- Change processes
- Legal mandates

The Collaboration Puzzle



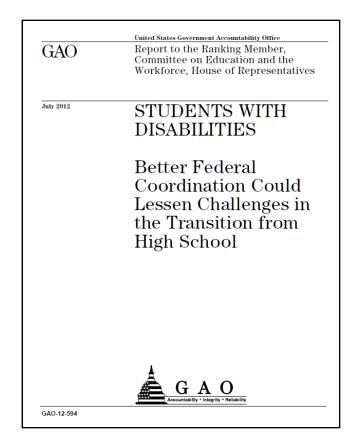
Agency

- Mission
- Funding and resources
- Accountability
- Professionals' job descriptions and roles
- Linkages and formal agreements
- Already formed relationships

What Happens to Supports for Employment of Youth After High School?

Let's take a look at a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled Better Federal Coordination Could Lessen Challenges in the Transition from High School GAO-12-594, Jul 12, 2012.

Available at http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-12-594



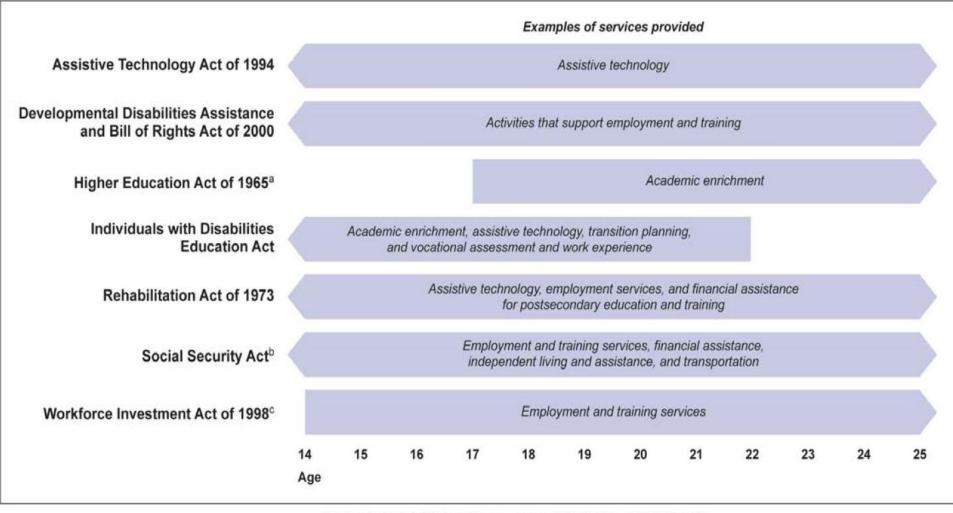
Supports After High School?

Challenges in accessing federally funded programs:

- Difficulty **navigating multiple programs** that are not always coordinated;
- Possible delays in service as they wait to be served by adult programs;
- Limited access to transition services;
- A lack of adequate information or awareness of available programs that may provide transition services after high school;
- Lack of preparedness for postsecondary education or employment.

Key Federal Legislation Providing Services to Transitioning Youth

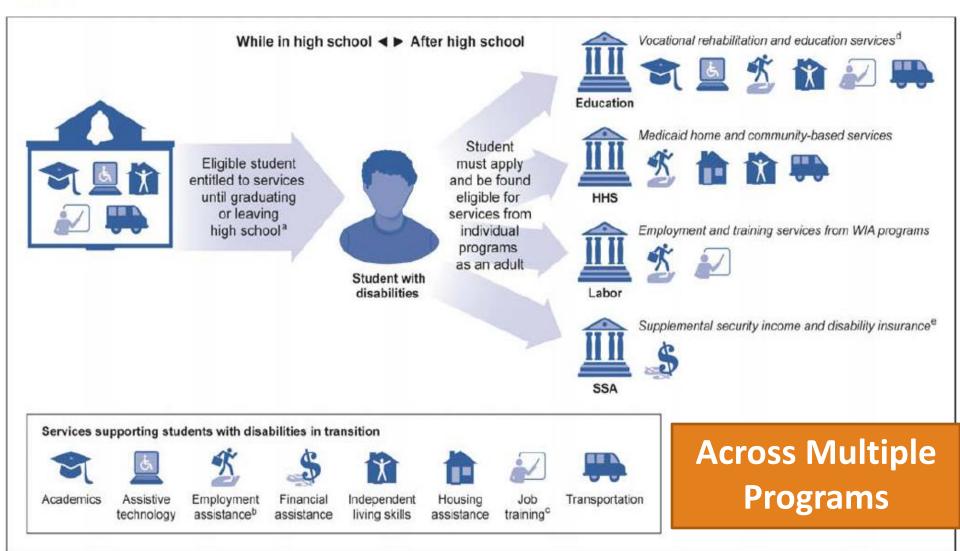
Figure 1: Key Federal Legislation Providing for Services to Transition-Age Students with Disabilities



Source: GAO review of agency documentation, including postings and publications.

Obtaining Services after High School

Figure 2: Students Move from Services Provided through Their High Schools to Services Delivered through Multiple Programs



Source: GAO analysis of agency documentation, including postings and publications.

Potential Partnerships: Transition Collaboration

- Student and their families
- School personnel
 - Administrators
 - Special Education Teachers
 - General Education Teachers
 - Career & Tech. Educators
 - Counselors
 - Related Services
- Post-secondary education & training
 - Trade & technical schools
 - Community college
 - Universities

- Adult Government Services
 - RSA
 - DDA
 - Mental Health
- Community Services
 providers
 - ARC
 - Goodwill
 - Advocacy Groups
 - Attorney Advocates
- Businesses (including Chamber of Commerce)
- Other community partners

Call for Enhanced Coordination and Collaboration

 To improve supports for transitioning youth, the report calls for improved coordination not only at the federal level, but at the state, regional, and local levels, including schools!

This leads us to Guiding Question 4...

Guiding Question 4

What are the characteristics of effective collaboration for improved transition outcomes?



Models of Effective Interagency Collaboration



Renewed Optimism for Effective Collaboration

- Researchers are showing renewed interest (e.g., Kester, Noonan, Wenger)
- Outcomes of research targeting collaboration for transitioning youth:
 - Communities of Practice (often called Transition Councils at School Levels)
 - Circles (being piloted by OSSE in the District)
- Collaboration does not happen in a vacuum we need to create a context and deliberate opportunities to develop collaboration to benefit transitioning students

Optimism for Improving Collaboration

Communities of Practice (CoP)

- CoPs are being implemented at local, district, state and national levels around the issue/topic and problems of transition for students with disabilities.
- OSSE and School Talk facilitate the District's CoP on Transition

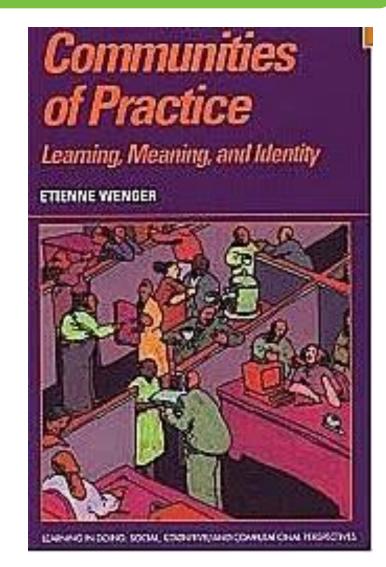
Optimism for Improving Collaboration

There is hope that the challenges of interagency collaboration in secondary transition can be overcome, as reflected by one interviewee in Kester's research:

"It's very seldom that you have a group of individuals from so many different backgrounds and perspectives, and yet in my time there I haven't seen individual agendas. I've seen the main agenda of how are we going to help these students be successful." (Participant 18, interview, January 30, 2012)

Communities of Practice

- Communities of Practice are "vehicles" for social learning (Wenger, 1998)
- They are defined as groups of people who share expertise and passion about a topic and interact on an ongoing basis to further their learning in their domain (Wenger, 2002)



A Context to Grow Transition Practices

No one agency can do it alone...it takes a community!



Communities of practice create an environment where there are strengths in numbers and practices can be developed and implemented through shared work.

Formation of a CoP

- Share a common domain of interest
- Develop a community
- Share practice and resources



What do Communities of Practice Look Like?



Not "owned" by any one organization:

- -Agenda set by the group,
- -Based upon needs of students,
- Members take on various leadership roles;
- Meets once a month in person (may have smaller meetings virtually or telephonically)
- Some who attended with reluctance are now energized and actively participating
- -The process is working

DC Secondary Transition Community of Practice Highlights

- Subcommittees change each year with new priorities (youth engagement, family engagement, etc.)
- Recent Outcomes:
 - White Paper on Self Determination—led to Student-led IEP initiative
 - Transition Process Toolkit
 - Transition Assessment toolkit
 - Secondary Transition Website
 - State Capacity Building Institute
 - Annual Moving Forward with Transition Forum (SchoolTalk)
 - CIRCLES

DC Secondary Transition Community of Practice Highlights



Guiding Question 5

How do interagency teams function at the state, local, and school levels and how do we build them?



Common Themes of Successful Collaboration

- 1. Forming new relationships with people
- 2. Sharing human and other resources
- 3. Building trust among people working as equals (non-hierarchical) relationships
- 4. Requiring joint responsibilities for outcomes
- 5. Involving joint decision-making and actions
- 6. Aiming for specific, agreed upon results and change

Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010

Levels of Collaborative Teams

- National Level
 - National Transition Community of Practice (sponsored by the IDEA Partnership, www.sharedwork.org)
- DC level
 - DC Transition Community of Practice
- Need to develop collaborative teams at the school level
 - Transition Councils or CoPs
- IEP Teams

Let's take a look at the CIRCLES model of collaboration...

Rejuvenating and Energizing

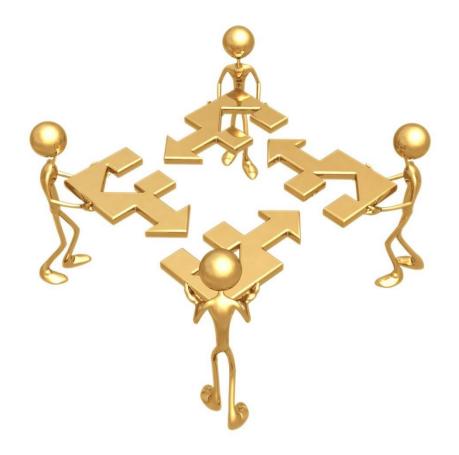
- We change the way we work
- We continue to work positive postsecondary outcomes for our students
- We become re-energized and enthusiastic
- We are not alone!

Interagency Transition Teams

Who - Comprised of representatives of key stakeholders (including the decision makers)

How – Work strategically to develop and implement policy

What – Improve adult life outcomes



CIRCLES: Multi-Level Approach to Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities

Community-Level Team

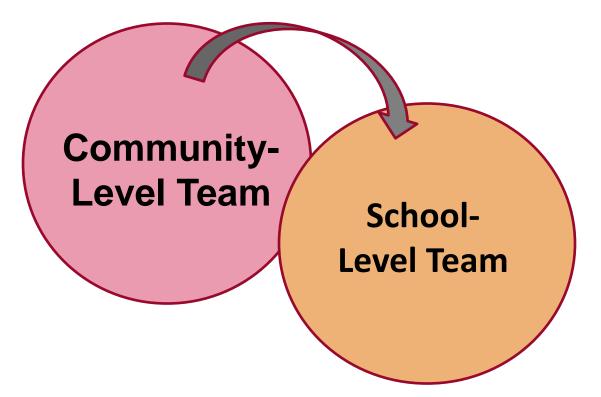
Student-Level Team School-Level Team

Community-Level Team

- Discuss policy
- Collaborate for service delivery
- Do NOT work directly with students
- Meet 2-4 times/year
- MOST IMPORTANTLY...





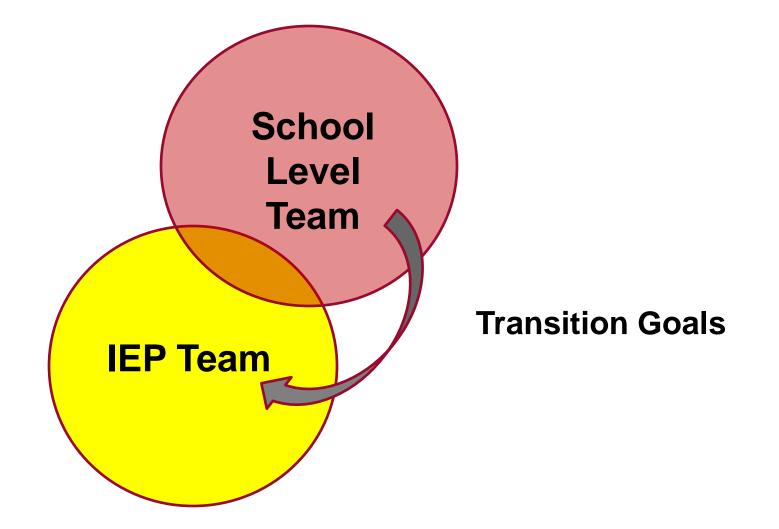


School-Level Team



- Work DIRECTLY with students/families
- Collaborate to provide services to INDIVIDUAL students
- See students from multiple schools for transition planning
- Meet monthly
- AND...

Submit Pre-planned Transition Goals to IEP Team

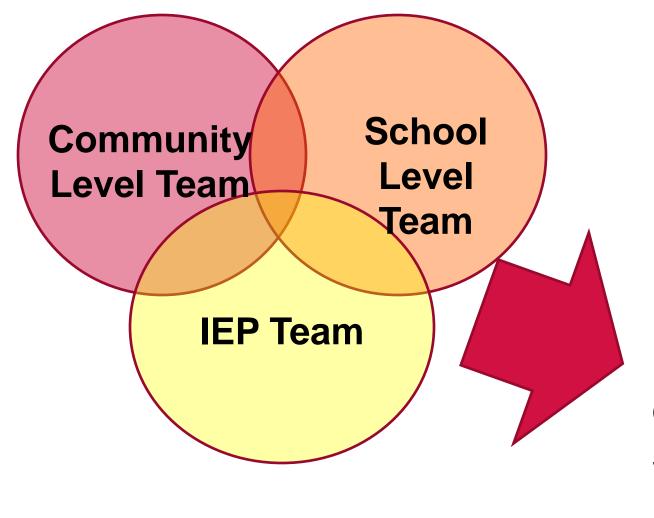


Student- Level (IEP) Team



- Prepare students to present at the School-Level Team meeting
- Bring pre-planning from School-Level Team back to the IEP meeting to
- Write transition plan

Interagency Collaboration = Improved Post School Outcomes



Improved Post-School Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

CIRCLES in DC Highlights

 Opportunity to develop opportunities for increased self-determination and interagency collaboration

- During it's first year:
 - 4 schools participated
 - 20 students were served



"We build the road and the road builds us."

Wrap Up

Guiding Questions:

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- 3. What are characteristics of effective collaboration for improved transition outcomes?
- 4. How will we see and eliminate barriers?
- 5. How do interagency teams function at the state, local, and school levels?

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