



**Fostering soft skills in students with high-incidence disabilities.**

DC Secondary Transition Institute

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Maria Blaeuer, Esq.

Advocates for Justice & Education



# Learning outcomes

- Attendees will know the current outcomes for students with high-incidence disabilities.
- Attendees will understand what soft skills are and the role they play in achieving long term positive transition outcomes, especially for students with high-incidence disabilities.
- Attendees will identify transition activities that develop transition age students' soft skills.

A large, vibrant red heart with a soft white glow around its edges is centered on the slide. Inside the heart, the word "Transition!" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**Transition!**



Who are we talking  
about today?



# What are High-incidence Disabilities?

- Students with high-incidence disabilities make up between 80-85% of the SPED eligible population and include students with -
  - Speech and Language Impairment
  - Specific Learning Disabilities (about 40% of eligible population)
  - Other Health Impairment (generally ADD/ADHD)
  - Serious Emotional Disturbance are generally NOT included in high-incidence disabilities population, but much of this conversation applies to them, and therefore they are sometimes also included.
- Cognitive impairment is not a factor in high incidence disabilities.
- Generally speaking, high incidence disabilities involve some discretion and judgment in eligibility determination.
- **With proper instruction there is no reason why these children can not achieve at or above grade level, yet many do not, and they are at higher risk of experiencing school exclusion and dropping out.**



# Distribution of Disability w/in IDEA

**Percentage distribution of children and youth ages 3 to 21 served under the IDEA, Part B  
by disability type, school year 2014-15**

|                               |    |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Specific learning disability  | 35 |
| Speech or language impairment | 20 |
| Other health impairment       | 13 |
| Autism                        | 9  |
| Intellectual disability       | 6  |
| Developmental delay           | 6  |
| Emotional disturbance         | 5  |
| Multiple disabilities         | 2  |
| Hearing impairment            | 1  |
| Orthopedic impairment         | 1  |

National Center on Education Statistics, [\*Condition of Education 2017\*](#)



# A few DC Data points

Disproportionality remains an issue in this context.

## **Emotional Disturbance**

In 2011 DC had 2.65% of total enrollment classified as ED, compared to .82% nationwide.

## **Specific Learning Disability**

In 2011 DC had 8.11% of total enrollment classified as SLD, compared to 5.23% nationwide.

## **Over-representation**

African-Americans make up 79.2% of DC's total enrollment, but 95.5% of ED students, and 85.9% of OHI & SLD students.

## **Over-representation**

African-Americans make up 79.2% of DC's total enrollment, but 86.6% of students with disabilities

From <https://www2.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partbspap/2013/dc-acc-stateprofile-11-12.pdf>



# In-school & Post- Secondary Outcomes





# Outcomes while still in school

- More likely to drop out – this was true across disability classifications. In fact, which high-incidence disability the student had was not predictive, but if they had a disability at all was predictive.
- Having been excluded from school, retained or having lower than average grades were all associated with a higher risk of dropping out.
- And not unexpectedly - been excluded from school, retained or having lower than average grades are also highly correlated with having a disability.



# Outcomes post school separation

- The findings from numerous longitudinal investigations have indicated that students with learning disabilities (LD) have lower rates of employment, lower earnings, lower rates of postsecondary school attendance (and graduation), and lower rates of independent living status than do young adults without disabilities.
- Students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) have high rates of school dropout, high incarceration rates, lower rates of employment, and lower rates of postsecondary school attendance following high school.



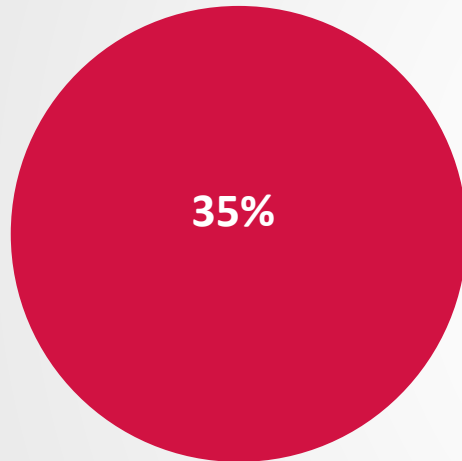
# Disability classification not determinative

- For students with LD, their difficulties often reach beyond the academic domain, including social isolation, emotional strains, and behavioral difficulties
- Students with ED have been found to be at increased risk for various negative outcomes including social isolation and withdrawal, low self-esteem, social maladjustment, and poor academic performance.
- Research indicates that the presence of any disability at all may also be related to long-term negative outcomes such as high school dropout, under-employment, juvenile delinquency, mental health issues, and general feelings of dissatisfaction with their lives.

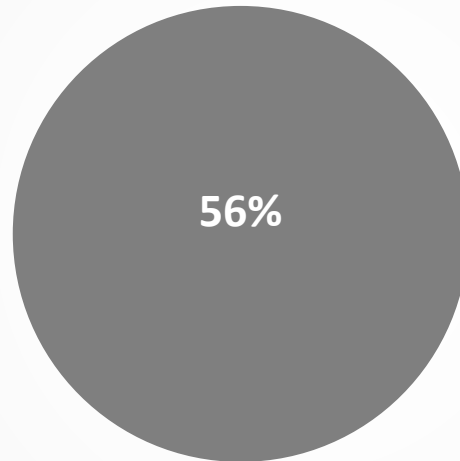


# Indicator 14 values

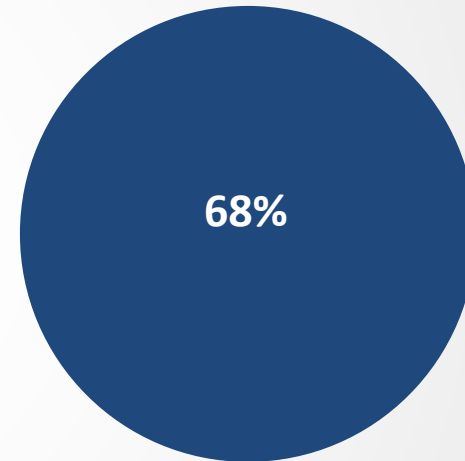
Percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school and had IEPs in effect at the time they left school and were:



Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school



Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed (21%) within one year of leaving high school



Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within 1 year of leaving high school

<https://www2.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partbspap/2013/dc-acc-stateprofile-11-12.pdf>

These poor outcomes are happening despite the fact that everyone of these kids has a transition plan that should target these exact outcomes!



What do we need to  
differently?



# Better, deeper transition planning

A student's transition plan should be based on identified interests & needs, and must include activities that **BUILD SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE** about those interests & needs.

**Are we making transition plans for EVERY student with a disability?**

This includes our college bound students, and our student who think will be “just fine” after graduation.

**Are those plans APPROPRIATE and address known areas of need?**

How do we determine areas of need?  
Is an interview enough?  
What do need to know about the student?

**Are we IMPLEMENTING those plans meaningfully?**

What activities are we doing? What does (and should) “research jobs” mean in a transition plan?



# Better, deeper transition planning

IDEA's purpose is encourage individuals with disabilities to achieve as much economic self sufficiency and independent living as is possible for them

- In other words, our goal in transition planning, is to create students who are good at -

**Adulthood!**





# The big three areas for “Adulting”

IDEA’s purpose is encourage individuals with disabilities to achieve as much economic self sufficiency and independent living as is possible for them, and we do that via transition plans that prepare them for employment, further education, and/or job training



Schedule keeping, estimating time needed for activities, understanding how to be on time, and what on time is.



Work skills, Budgeting, cost of higher education, money management, how to complete FAFSA and apply for scholarships



How to read social cues, dress appropriately, how to talk to employers and supervisors, affect, word choice, emotional self care.



# Soft skills - needed for success in all areas!

Soft skills are habits & behaviors that enable someone to interact **effectively** and **harmoniously** with other people – they are NOT a “nice to have” they are fundamental, core competencies for adulthood!





# So what are Soft Skills exactly?

The Department of Labor lists the following as soft skills:

1. Communication
2. Enthusiasm & attitude
3. Teamwork
4. Networking
5. Problem solving & critical thinking
6. Professional (really the integration of above)

Think about how these skills are needed for “adulting” / success in our 3 big areas.



Activities!



# Soft Skill building exercise

## Group goals

Complete one activity on your sheet discuss how that soft skill is related to post the secondary outcomes we talked about and “adulthood.”

Take one other activity and discuss how that activity could be completed in a GENERAL EDUCATION setting and be aligned to learning objectives of class.

The activities we did today are from – “Skills to Pay the Bills” a curriculum published by the Departments of Labor and available at <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>



| Q&A



## CONTACT US

### NAME

[Maria.Blaeuer@aje-dc.org](mailto:Maria.Blaeuer@aje-dc.org)

Advocates for Justice & Education

25 E Street NW 3<sup>rd</sup> floor

Washington, DC NW

[www.aje-dc.org](http://www.aje-dc.org)

Phone - 202-678-8060

[Maria.Blaeuer@aje-dc.org](mailto:Maria.Blaeuer@aje-dc.org)

@AJEInc

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| Thank you!