



## How Schools Can Involve, Engage and Enlist Parents in Secondary Transition for Youth

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# + Objectives



1. In DC, many parents of students with disabilities are completely unaware of what secondary transition planning is and how important it is to preparing for life after school.
2. Transition planning is a crucial time for students with disabilities and schools that involve parents have significantly better results in guiding students toward well-rounded and high-achieving adult lives.
3. This session will help educators and administrators develop parent-friendly language and provide accessible resources to ensure a true partnership with parents.
4. This session will also assist with helping educators to enhance every student's transition plan to be a real, attainable and powerful tool to ensure a student's transition to a productive and meaningful adult life.

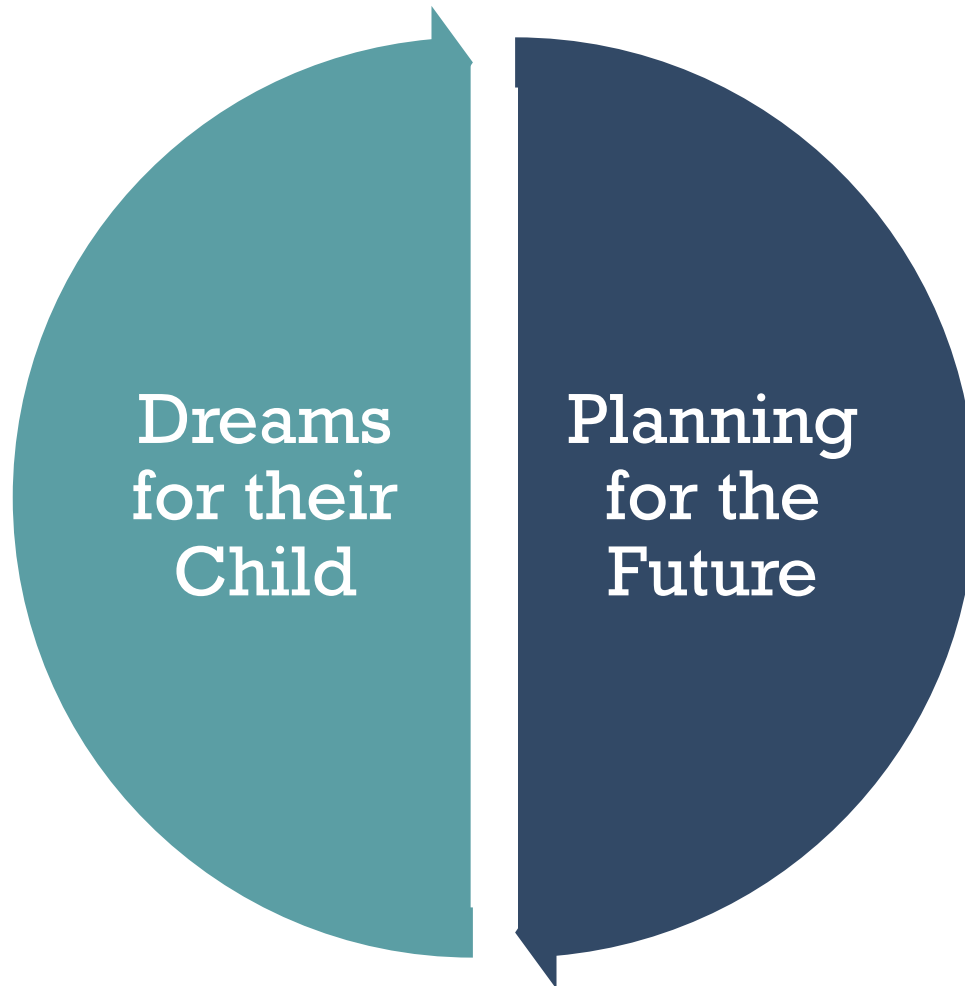
# + What is the purpose of Special Education?



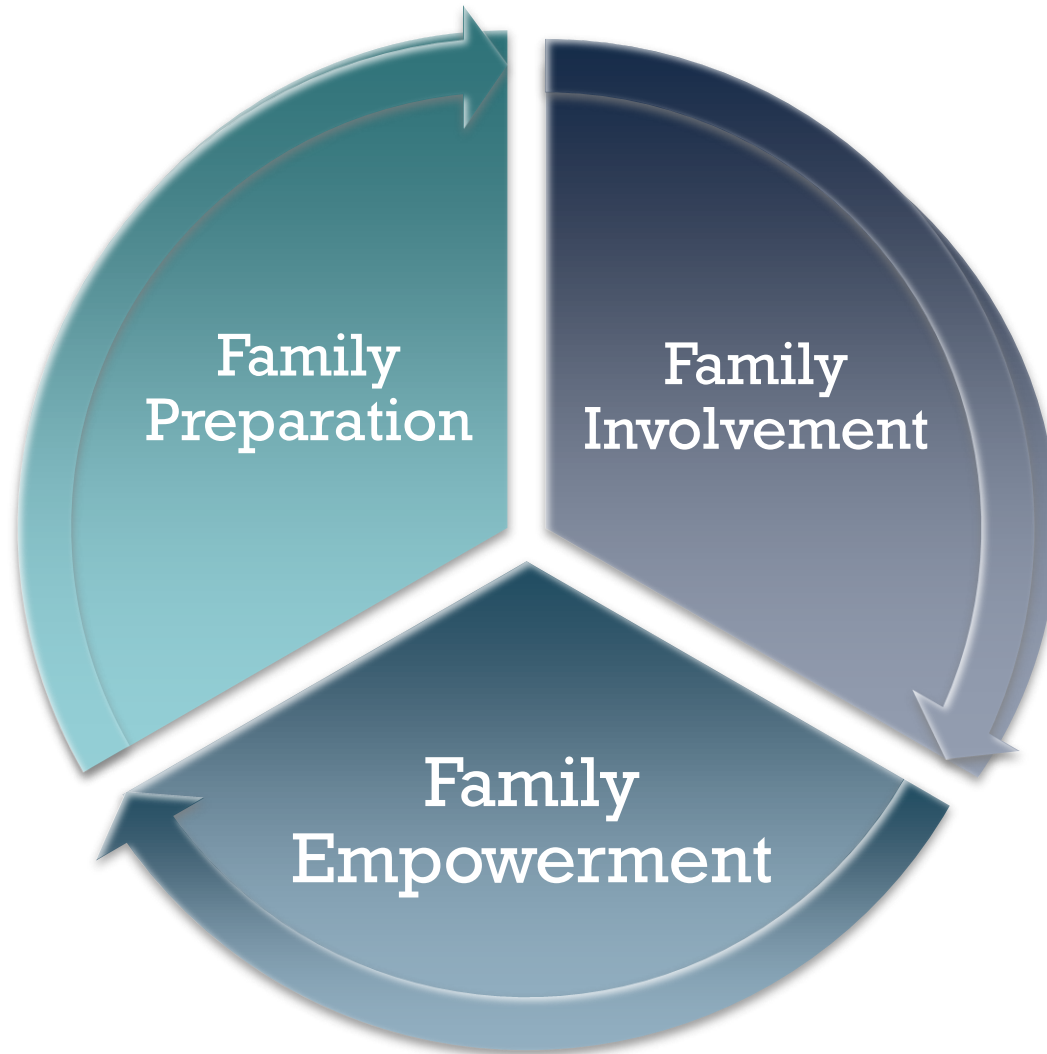
... a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet students' unique needs and to

Prepare students for further education, employment, and independent living.

+ Parents need to know that  
Transition planning is about...



# + What is Family Engagement?



# + Family Engagement:



Family Involvement	Family Empowerment	Family Preparation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Families' cultural background and intimate knowledge of and experience with their child informs the IEP</li> <li>▸ Families provide information about their child either orally or in writing</li> <li>▸ Families participate in the entire transition planning process including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- student assessment</li> <li>- evaluation of student's program</li> <li>- IEP and other individual program planning meeting</li> <li>- decision making</li> </ul> </li> <li>▸ Families participate in service delivery</li> <li>▸ Families participate in natural support network as trainers, mentors, peer advocates, or community liaisons</li> <li>▸ Families participate in program policy development</li> <li>▸ Families concerns and needs are represented in school governance</li> <li>▸ Non-family member interpreters provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Transition information provided prior to student's age 14</li> <li>▸ Information provided in their ordinary language and shared in culturally responsive and respectful manner</li> <li>▸ Structured method to identify family needs</li> <li>▸ Pre-IEP planning activities specific to families</li> <li>▸ Child care and respite care provided for transition-related meetings</li> <li>▸ Supports provided for families to engage youth in community experiences</li> <li>▸ Students and families linked with adult service providers during transition planning</li> <li>▸ Students and families are assisted to apply for college</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Family learning and preparation provided for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- transition-related planning process (e.g., IEP, ITP, IPE)</li> <li>- empowerment strategies</li> <li>- setting high expectation</li> <li>- promoting child's self-determination, with respect for cultural views and values</li> <li>- advocacy</li> <li>- natural supports</li> <li>- agencies and services</li> <li>- facilitating community experiences for youth with disabilities (e.g., safety, transportation, social skills, mobility)</li> <li>- legal issues</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# + The Family Role



We tend not to look at family involvement in terms of specific roles and responsibilities:

- Setting expectations
- Help youth set goals for themselves
- Responsible for specific tasks
- Active participation on IEP team

# + The Youth Role



**This tends to be the forgotten component:**

- Active participation on IEP team
- High expectations for themselves
- Responsibility to set a vision and communicate it
- What is my disabilities and how does it impact me?



# + Barriers to Family Engagement in Transition Planning



**What are the main barriers to building capacity for family engagement**

**What can you do at your school to create positive family engagement**

# + The Family Perspective

## Do you know my child?

- Do you want what I want?
- Communication issues around transition
- They tell me I'm part of the team, but....
- The professionals don't seem to know
- I'm busy, is this important?
- Tell me something good (10/90)
  - Keep focused on going forward

# + Do you know my child?

- Charting the Life Course Tools
- Integration Services and Supports (Star)
- Life Trajectory
- Experiences and Questions



# + Share One Good Idea



How do we engage families so they can be meaningful partners in the transition process?

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How can we involve youth so they can take ownership of their own transition?

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# + What Does it Take?

- Communication is the Key – Think about HOW you say it, *“It doesn’t matter what you say, it matters what they hear”*
- Establishing and maintaining an effective line of communication between professionals and families/youth continues to be a challenge
- Building Trust
- Student Led Planning
- Paid work experience/organized volunteer experience while in high school
- Administrative support and buy-in
- Understanding of joint and individual roles and responsibilities
- Effective formal and informal communication structure
- Use of data decision making. This includes feedback from youth and families
- Ah Ha’s from parent experiences

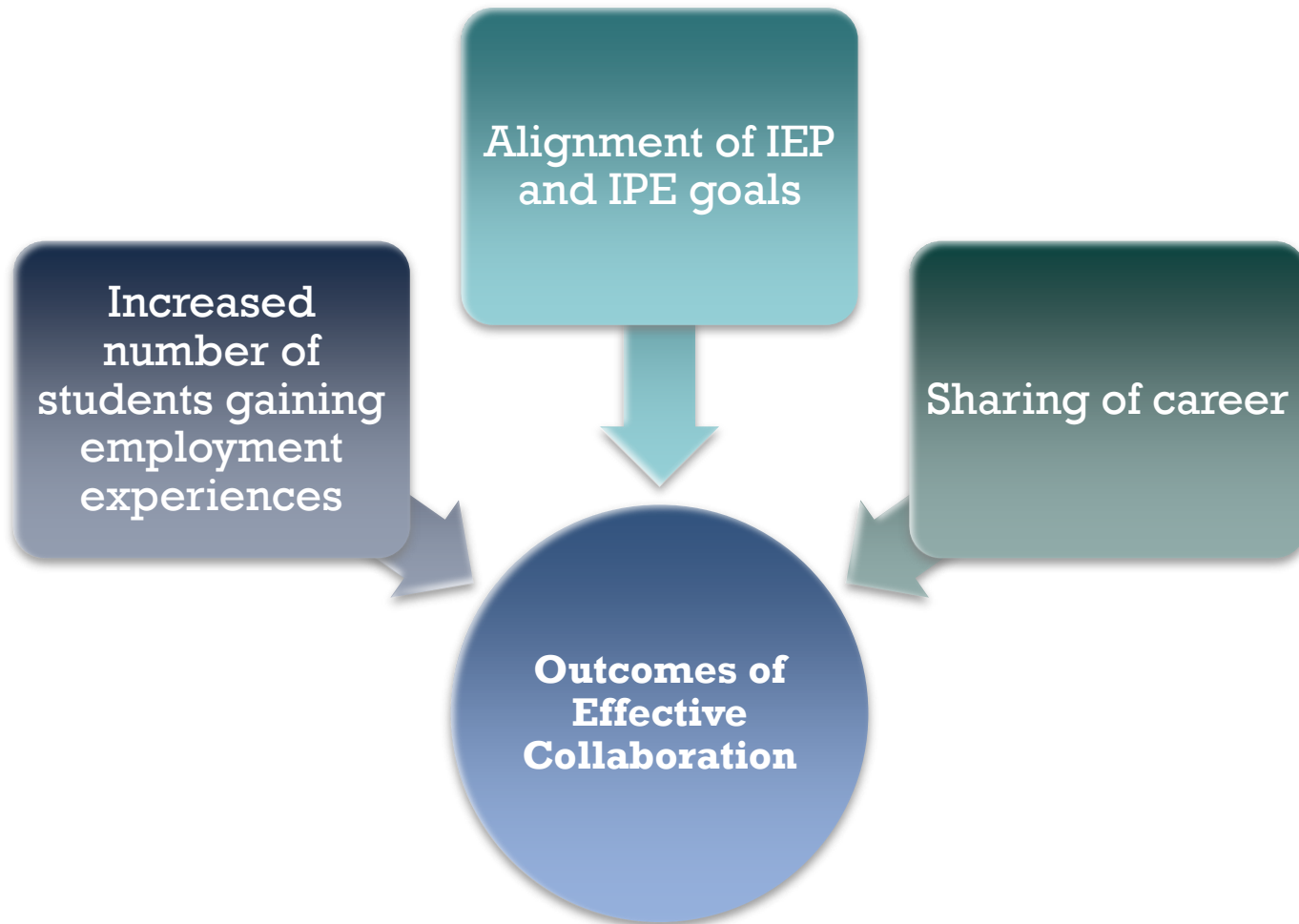


# + Special Populations

- Immigrant Families/Non-English Speaking Families
  - Schools must use the language line
  - Caveat – the lack of experience of interpreters
  - Special education “language”
- Parents with their own disabilities
  - Be cognizant on the level “understanding”
  - Sensitivity with the student and family dynamics



# + WHY engage families?



# + WHY Engage Families?

- Partnering with families can improve outcomes
- Partnering with families should be a core ethic of how a school does business
- Staff need training on how to effectively partner with families
- Staff should be held accountable to this expectation
- High expectations is a great common ground to start
- Families also need guidance on how best to fulfill their role as partners
- All of this should be focused on the youth identifying and reaching their goals







# Transition planning tips for parents



## Talk to your child about

- ✓ Awareness of their disability and self-advocacy for help/support.
- ✓ Keep the focus on your child – what do they want their life to look like
- ✓ Put supports in place for things you know they struggle with (i.e., cooking, METRO, shopping).
- ✓ Talk to your school for ideas or to share what is successful

## Find Supports

- ✓ Mentors, internships, afterschool programs, summer clubs, summer employment, etc.
- ✓ Connect with other parents, create a network,

**Start NOW!**

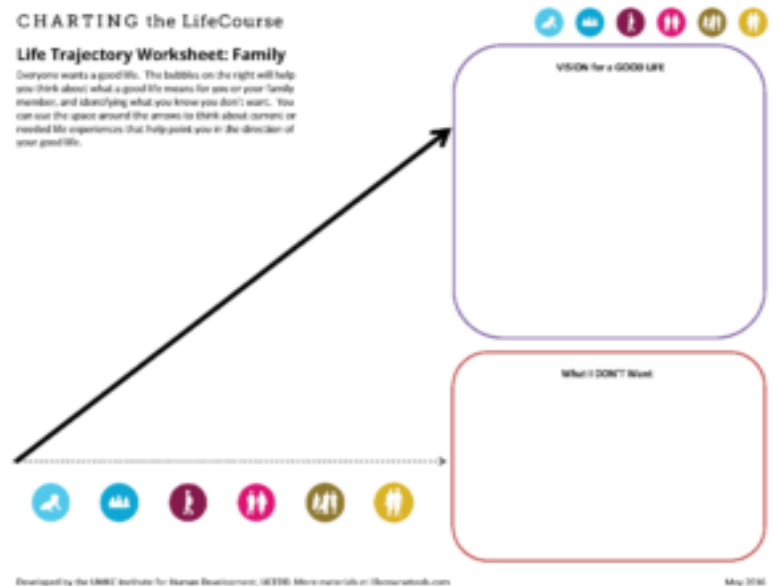
# + Impact of Family Engagement:

- Students with one or more parents who participated in the IEP meetings during the 11th and 12th grades are **SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO BE ENGAGED IN POST-SCHOOL EMPLOYMENT.**
- Students with parents who had **HIGH EXPECTATIONS** were more likely to be engaged in post-school employment and employment.

## CHARTING the LifeCourse

### Life Trajectory Worksheet: Family

Everyone wants a good life. The bubbles on the right will help you think about what a good life means for you or your family member, and identify what you know you don't want. You can use the space around the arrows to think about current or needed life experiences that help point you in the direction of your good life.



# + Resources:



- PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment  
[www.pacer.org/transition](http://www.pacer.org/transition)
- National Technical Assistance Center on Transition:  
[www.transitionta.org](http://www.transitionta.org)
- LifeCourse Toolkit: [www.lifecoursetools.com](http://www.lifecoursetools.com)
- National Resource Center for Supported Decision Making:  
[www.supporteddecisionmaking.org](http://www.supporteddecisionmaking.org)
- Locally:
  - Advocates for Justice and Education (DC Parent Training Center)  
[www.aje-dc.org](http://www.aje-dc.org)
  - Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities [www.qualitytrust.org](http://www.qualitytrust.org)
  - DC Association for Special Education [www.dcase.org](http://www.dcase.org)