

Evidence-Based Practices & Predictors in Transition

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A student's school years are often viewed as a series of transitions. There is the transition from pre-school to elementary, from elementary to middle school, from middle school to high school, and from high school to adult life. While each of these transitions is important, none are quite as momentous or anxiety-inducing as the transition to adult life. This transition can prove to be especially challenging for young adults with disabilities. In response to these challenges and the poor post school outcomes experienced by young adults with disabilities, public schools are providing young adults with disabilities with transition services. The goal of transition services is to prepare students for success in their post school lives. Guided by each student's desired post school goals, transition services address each area of adult life, including education, employment, and independent living.

Over the past decade, researchers have made numerous efforts to identify and promote evidence-based practices in general and special education. More recently, these efforts have been undertaken in the field of transition. Evidence-based practices are those that "have been shown to be effective by credible research," meaning studies of sufficiently high quality (Cook, Tankersely, Cook, & Landrum, 2008, p. 70). These practices are used to inform and address the gap between research and practice. Beginning in 2009, the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) has taken the effort to identify transition evidence-based practices and predictors of post school success. Currently identified practices and predictors are organized on their website (www.transitiononta.org) according to level of evidence: (1) evidence-based practices, (2) research-based practices, (3) promising practices, and (4) unestablished practices. The strongest practices and predictors are those that are evidence and research-based. These practices have demonstrated a record of success.

The evidence-based practices established by NTACT aim to improve varied transition skills including (a) education, (b) employment, and (c) independent living. Focusing on employment, there are three identified practices. First, practitioners can teach youth with disabilities social skills to enhance communication in the workplace. Social skills include how to obtain and convey ideas and information,

converse with clients and co-workers, and interpret verbal/non-verbal cues. A second practice, response prompting, can be used to interpret given information presented in diverse media and format to complete a task. Response prompting can be defined as using visual, auditory, textual, or symbolic stimuli to function as extra cues and reminders for desired behavior. Finally, practitioners can teach self-management of job specific skills. Self-management strategies include self-delivered reinforcement and self-monitoring. For example, self-management strategy has been used to teach employees to write realistic performance goals, monitor and adjust goals as necessary, and recognize goal achievement using appropriate rewards in the workplace.

The evidence-based predictors are strategies that, when implemented, lead to improved post school outcomes for youth with disabilities. Predictors have been identified in the areas of (a) education, (b) employment, and (c) independent living. Focusing on employment, there are several predictors that can be implemented in the school setting. These include access to occupational courses and vocational education, use of student-focused planning strategies (i.e. Self-Advocacy Strategy and Self-Directed IEP), participation in work study and paid employment, and inclusion in the general education classroom. Employment predictors to be implemented in the work setting include the use of response prompting and self-management strategies to teach employment skills, social skills, and self-determination skills. Finally, employment predictors to be implemented in the community include collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation.

By implementing the evidence-based practices and predictors described above, practitioners can support students to achieve their adult-life goals. More resources to improve students' transition skills through evidence-based practices and predictors are provided by following organizations: National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (www.ncwd-youth.info), I'm Determined (www.imdetermined.org), Zarrow Center (<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow.html>), and NTACT (transitionta.org).

References

Cook, B. G., Tankersley, M., Cook, L., & Landrum, T. J. (2008). Evidence-based practices in special education: Some practical considerations. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 44*(2), 69-75.