



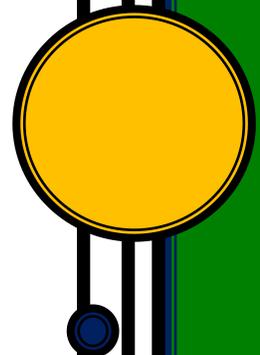
NATIONAL SECONDARY TRANSITION  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

# Transition to College and Careers for Youth with Disabilities: Dreams vs. Reality, Gaps and Challenges, and Strategies to Address Them

*Summary Report of the May 6 – 7, 2012  
Focus Group in Charlotte, North Carolina*

Prepared by  
Paula D. Kohler, Ph.D.  
Jennifer Coyle, MS  
David W. Test, Ph.D.  
Catherine Fowler, Ph.D.

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## **Abstract**

Stakeholders from across the United States, with expertise regarding transition of students with disabilities to college and careers, were invited to participate in a one and one-half day focus group to identify key challenges and solutions to transition issues. Prior to the face-to-face meeting, participants identified their perceptions of both the “perfect state” and “current state” of transition services and outcomes of young people with disabilities. In Charlotte, NC, May 6 and 7, 2012, facilitated by staff of the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC), participants worked in three groups, with support from a facilitator and a note taker, to identify gaps and challenges between their desired and current states and develop strategies to address them. The recommended strategies included a range of policy actions through which agencies at the federal, state, and local levels could change educational practices and support services to better prepare youth with disabilities for transition to college and careers. This summary report briefly describes both the focus group process and results, with a primary focus on the recommended strategies for closing the gaps.

## Introduction

For the past 20 years, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has implemented a range of policy initiatives focused on improving education, services, and outcomes of students with disabilities as they transition from high school to college or careers. These initiatives have included data collection requirements, incentives for program improvement, capacity building resources to improve the quantity and quality of personnel, and systems change to close service gaps. One strategy OSEP has used is to fund national technical assistance and dissemination centers to provide services and resources to support state and local educational agencies’ efforts relevant to the Federal transition initiatives. The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) was funded to assist state and local educational agencies with developing appropriate, measurable, postsecondary goals and implementing transition services that result in improved academic and functional achievement of students with disabilities and a successful transition to college (or other postsecondary education and training) and the workforce. To better inform this work, NSTTAC, in collaboration with OSEP, held a focus group to identify key challenges and solutions to transition issues

The focus group was held in conjunction with the Annual Capacity Building Institute May 6 – 7, 2012 in Charlotte, North Carolina. Working with staff from the institute sponsors – NSTTAC, the National Post-school Outcomes Center (NPSO), the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD), and the IDEA Partnership Project – a group of content experts from across the country were invited to participate in the one and one-half day meeting (see Table 1). The meeting objectives included the following: (a) examine the current state of service delivery and outcomes regarding transition to college and careers for youth with disabilities, (b) identify gaps and challenges to providing services that result in positive transition outcomes, and (c) determine leverage points and strategies to address these gaps and challenges.

*Table 1.* Focus group participants and their roles.

Content Experts		Facilitators	Note Takers	OSEP Personnel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ David Brewer</li> <li>▪ Ellen Condon</li> <li>▪ Larry Dale</li> <li>▪ Lederick Horne</li> <li>▪ Sharon Jackson</li> <li>▪ David Johnson</li> <li>▪ Laura Kaloi</li> <li>▪ Freda Lee</li> <li>▪ Sharon Lewis</li> <li>▪ Sharon Lindsey</li> <li>▪ Richard Luecking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mary Morningstar</li> <li>▪ Katy Neas</li> <li>▪ Charlotte Price</li> <li>▪ Margaret Romer</li> <li>▪ Keita Rone</li> <li>▪ Sean Roy</li> <li>▪ Judy Shanley</li> <li>▪ Michael Stoehr</li> <li>▪ Barb Trader</li> <li>▪ Joan Wills</li> </ul>	<p><i>Group</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Loujeania Bost</li> <li>▪ Teresa Grossi</li> <li>▪ Deanne Unruh</li> </ul> <p><i>Meeting</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Paula Kohler</li> <li>▪ David Test</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Catherine Fowler</li> <li>▪ Shaqwana Freeman</li> <li>▪ Dawn Rowe</li> <li>▪ Sandra Covington – Smith</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Melody Musgrove</li> <li>▪ Christine Pilgrim</li> <li>▪ Ruth Ryder</li> <li>▪ Marlene Simon-Burroughs</li> </ul>

## Focus Group Procedures

The content experts were asked in advance to identify their perfect and current state of transition to college and careers and to bring these lists to the meeting. The meeting began with an overview of the purpose and process of the focus group, and a summary of OSEP transition-focused initiatives. Then, within each of three facilitated small groups, participants shared their thoughts regarding their dream state of transition (e.g., how students would be served, types of outcomes would they experience, the school and community resources available to support students, etc). Subsequently, a spokesperson for each small group provided a summary during the large group report-out. The meeting was adjourned for the evening and, working from the note takers' files, the meeting facilitators combined information across groups to develop and organize a listing of participants' visions of the desired state of transition services and outcomes. As indicated in Appendix A, the concepts were organized into seven thematic categories: (a) outcomes - high expectations for all by all; (b) unified, inclusive education system; (c) self-determination; (d) informed and engaged families; (e) personnel; (f) seamless system of service delivery – across systems; and (g) data-based decision making.

The next morning, participants reviewed the compiled material and verified that it accurately represented their discussions. They began small group work with a discussion of the current state of transition to college and careers for students with disabilities, using information they developed individually prior to the meeting. Each group then compared their concepts of the current state to the information compiled from the previous evening regarding their perceptions of the perfect state. From these discussions, the groups generated information, organized using the seven thematic categories, regarding (a) gaps between the two states and (b) challenges in addressing the gaps. Each group identified their top five challenges and reported this information via large group discussion.

During a break, meeting facilitators and OSEP staff reviewed the prioritized challenges, synthesized the material into 13 focus topics, and displayed the results for a large group discussion that followed. Participants verified that the synthesized material accurately represented their thoughts. Through a voting process, each participant selected his/her top five challenges; that is, they identified the five challenges they thought should be addressed first to close the gap between the desired and current state of transition. After the votes were tallied, nine challenges that received the most votes across participants were targeted for development of strategies to address them. The 13 challenge focus topics are presented in Table 2; the 9 focus topics selected for strategy development are highlighted. Items highlighted with the same color were assigned to one of the three small work groups; all groups were asked to integrate the issue of cultural competence into their recommendations.

## Results

Participants spent the next three hours discussing their assigned challenge focus topics, identified their top three recommendations, and reported them to the large group. Table 3 presents all the strategies developed for each focus topic; if the small group identified their priority strategies, they are highlighted.

Table 2. Challenges to transition to college and careers organized into 13 focus topics.

Focus Topic
1. Funding, incentives, and priorities not compatible across agencies and systems
2. Desired and or defined outcomes not aligned across funded programs (schools, VR, DD, etc.)
3. Monitoring process focuses on compliance rather than effectiveness and outcomes
4. Limited success in informing and engaging families at all levels and stages in the process
5. Lack of time, resources, and leadership to develop a systemic and unified approach to services in schools –policy alignment
6. Current practice of preparing personnel in separate systems and curricula
7. Limited and/or lack of access to general curriculum, work experience: Inclusive curriculum that prepares students for college and career readiness
8. Limited and or lack of cultural competence across systems
9. Implementation gap – EBP not implemented
10. Lack of high expectations
11. Lack of common vision within and across agencies and systems
12. Limited or lack of systematic data use to improve
13. Teachers lack of knowledge of UDL, PBIS, transition, RTI, etc (Instruction)

Note. The nine challenges highlighted in yellow, blue, and purple were subsequently assigned to the small work groups for development of strategies to address them; all groups were instructed to consider item 8.

Table 3. Challenge focus topics and recommendations to address them.

Challenge Focus Topic	Strategies for Addressing Challenge
1. Desired and/or defined outcomes not aligned across funded programs (schools, VR, DD, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Funding should match/align with outcomes (e.g., VR, DD, sheltered workshops)</li> <li>▪ Practices should match outcomes</li> <li>▪ Let people/employers know why it is important to be integrated in employment settings</li> <li>▪ People interpret policy correctly</li> <li>▪ Incentivizing multi-agencies to obtain student outcomes; For example, CMS can write guidance that directs SEA to provide higher DD waivers, rates for integrated, competitive employment, services, outcomes, and supports as a priority and personalized individual living supports (Policy)</li> <li>▪ An approach to support waivers for integrated employment in the community; mental health or whatever the focus is</li> <li>▪ Develop a shared outcome that is consistent, articulated, and implemented across agencies</li> </ul>

Challenge Focus Topic	Strategies for Addressing Challenge
<p>1. Desired and/or defined outcomes not aligned across funded programs (schools, VR, DD, etc.) – cont'd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pass and implement the TEAM Act (eliminates barriers currently in statutes, aligns systems, focuses on outcome reporting) (Policy) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Training at IHE and agencies to provide training in alignment of interagency collaboration</li> <li>› Need relevant statement of its impact to the economy/community</li> <li>› Long-term PD for principals, superintendents, and school board members (persons in leadership roles)</li> <li>› Focus on relevance in society</li> <li>› Incentivize cost-analysis research on sheltered employment; economic and societal implications (Research)</li> <li>› For all competitive federal personnel preparation grants for persons with disabilities at training facilities</li> <li>› Require meaningful role of target stakeholder group</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Multiple agencies would get the same credit for the outcome (VR- Closure; Ed.- PSO)</li> </ul>
<p>2. Monitoring process focuses on compliance rather than effectiveness and outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reasonable minimum numbers for reporting AYP data; evidence of analyzing the data with root-cause analysis for program evaluation and improvement (for smaller numbers)</li> <li>▪ Identify program improvement based on analysis</li> <li>▪ Multiple measures (e.g., communication competencies, experiences [evidence-based] leading to paid employment, student self-determination, risk behavior) to determine student outcomes other than state assessments; beyond solely student achievement</li> <li>▪ Reporting methods they are engaging families</li> <li>▪ Report methods of interagency collaboration</li> <li>▪ Quality of monitoring of services provided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› OSEP funds qualitative research to fund what states can/cannot do</li> <li>› Extent to which evidence-based practices versus research-based practices are being used</li> <li>› Establish quality standards for monitoring (e.g., CARF, JAC H10); identifying lessons learned from these that could be adopted</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Monitoring data must be published and disaggregated by disability; if numbers are too small, must show evidence how that data is being used to evaluate program</li> </ul>
<p>3. Limited success in informing and engaging families at all levels and stages in the process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase capacity of PTIs to do their work with families (e.g., parent training, web resources, outreach to underserved populations, policy work)</li> <li>▪ Begin conversations with parents early on about transition (e.g., early middle school), in parent-friendly ways to help navigate the process better</li> </ul>

Challenge Focus Topic	Strategies for Addressing Challenge
<p>3. Limited success in informing and engaging families at all levels and stages in the process – cont'd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How do we approach parents with key concepts that let them know that transition is something that should be beginning at the middle school level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ How do the skills build as you are transitioning to different aspects (e.g., middle school to high school); the focus shifts for the IEP from MS to HS</li> <li>▸ Awareness of self</li> <li>▸ Career exploration- path to get there</li> <li>▸ Transition discussed in a culturally responsive method</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Working with parents who are currently enforcers to be partners</li> <li>▪ Training parents to be negotiators/mediators; to not have a hands-off approach</li> <li>▪ Encourage the use of education ombudsman</li> <li>▪ Outreach to parents who are not engaged</li> <li>▪ Engage families by engaging students (e.g., talking about goals, issues in school)</li> <li>▪ Transform the culture of schools so that “school” is invitational to both parents and students</li> <li>▪ Create a sense of “community”</li> <li>▪ Ask parents what they need to be able to fully participate in their child’s education</li> <li>▪ High school needs to be more like elementary in their approach to “welcoming” parents and students</li> <li>▪ Including families and interests in career development</li> <li>▪ Explaining to parents the difference between entitlement and eligibility adult services (e.g., VR, DD, mental health); possibly at middle school level</li> <li>▪ Providing parents with resources so that they can begin to make connections with other agencies early on</li> <li>▪ Use families as a voice</li> <li>▪ Training parents in benefit planning, employment (e.g., matching skills to labor market)</li> <li>▪ Training parents on access to postsecondary education</li> <li>▪ Schools need to do outreach to other organizations (e.g., church, clinics, libraries) if parents are not coming to school to figure out where they are</li> </ul>
<p>4. Lack of time, resources, and leadership to develop a systemic and unified approach to services in schools – policy alignment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Professional development for teachers/staff to include youth in meaningful ways in process (listen and value youth perspective) – ‘how to’ guides/resources/modules</li> <li>▪ Aligning transition services with the common core with involvement of youth and family in team membership</li> <li>▪ Resource mapping of systems, programs, and services in schools</li> <li>▪ Provide professional development to leadership to help them understand how to implement an inclusive approach/high expectations and a common vision for all kids</li> </ul>

Challenge Focus Topic	Strategies for Addressing Challenge
<p>4. Lack of time, resources, and leadership to develop a systemic and unified approach to services in schools – policy alignment – cont'd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Looking at content of what is being taught</li> <li>▪ Professional learning communities as part of the school day – data based decision making that is focused on all kids</li> <li>▪ Involving students in the leadership/education/transition process and developing leadership skills</li> <li>▪ High school structures/schedules need to be aligned</li> <li>▪ Gap/conflict policy analysis: Local, State, Federal</li> <li>▪ Invest in youth leadership skill building to build capacity of youth/develop new ideas</li> <li>▪ Youth leaders are mandated partners in school improvement planning, including youth with disabilities</li> </ul>
<p>5. Current practice of preparing personnel in separate systems and curricula</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop 'externships' – agencies swap staff for set period of time to understand how other systems work</li> <li>▪ Do a cross-systems policy analysis that crosswalks the common elements/competencies to be taught</li> <li>▪ Develop electronic coaching options for specific topics – would help serve rural staff, for instance. Could be applied to individual students as PLC – problem solve around transition. Could include a feedback component to the PLC (by Skype, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Preparing teachers to talk about career development.</li> <li>▪ Look at common content/competencies across IHE personnel training programs/ disciplines/agencies services/systems: cross systems credential</li> <li>▪ Using technology to share access to training opportunities: archived sessions, etc. Adult service providers share 'training on demand'. Use technology for cross-agency training</li> <li>▪ Provide incentives to participate in trainings</li> <li>▪ Develop a listserv to start learning about each other's systems</li> <li>▪ Influence state teacher credentialing requirements to include certain content. Could include other disciplines like VR other related professions. Make sure that the second and third bulleted items (shaded above) are requirements.</li> <li>▪ Have TA centers look at models of PS student involvement in advocating for curricular development</li> </ul>
<p>6. Limited and/or lack of access to the general education curriculum, work experiences, inclusive curriculum that prepares students for college and career readiness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Analyze policies related to CTE and access for students with disabilities. Looking at the flexibility of competencies in certain programs to prepare a skilled workforce (i.e. certified auto mechanic vs working at Jiffy Lube). Allow students to achieve varying levels of competencies.</li> <li>▪ Identify models where access to the general curriculum and transition related instruction are occurring simultaneously and have shown to have positive outcomes (e.g., k-12 longitudinal models).</li> </ul>

Challenge Focus Topic	Strategies for Addressing Challenge
<p>6. Limited and/or lack of access to the general education curriculum, work experiences, inclusive curriculum that prepares students for college and career readiness – cont'd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaborate with the WIA funded programs to conduct follow-up with youth to reengage youth out of school and encourage re-entry into secondary or postsecondary education programs that are meaningful to them.</li> <li>▪ Develop credit-bearing coursework for students related to workforce preparation. Summer or after. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Summer or after school work experiences</li> <li>▪ Paid work requirements as part of diploma</li> <li>▪ Teach parents about importance of after school and summer work</li> <li>▪ Professional development around quality co-teaching (UDL, PBIS, DI, etc.).</li> <li>▪ Research evidence base for co-teaching. Does it improve student outcomes?</li> <li>▪ OSEP and NSF work in collaboration around STEM diversity efforts in secondary and PS ed, including youth w/disabilities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>7. Lack of high expectations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What are high expectations? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Across the board for all (e.g., families, individuals, service providers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of exposure of people to individuals with disabilities</li> </ul> </li> <li>› Cultural views that everyone can make a contribution (positive perspective) What do people need to do and know in order to grow and go into their career choice, live independently, be a better citizen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Function in a global world</li> </ul> </li> <li>› Presumption of competency is important <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prenatal all the way through</li> </ul> </li> <li>› IDEA reauthorization gets rid of 13 categories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move away from labels based on disability</li> <li>• Systemic shift towards functional need</li> </ul> </li> <li>› Need systems of support that don't always deal with medical diagnosis</li> <li>› Low achievers may or may not have disabilities</li> <li>› Need supports to address where people are in their development</li> <li>› Where is the path going? End point?</li> <li>› 4 Goals and ADA higher expectations</li> <li>› High expectations = basic rights for all? Or 1 size bigger (e.g., employment—entrepreneur, education—Ph.D.)</li> <li>› High expectations = self determined? Freedom, knowledge, capacity to choose where you are going and get there</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Challenge Focus Topic	Strategies for Addressing Challenge
7. Lack of high expectations – cont'd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Who do we want to have the expectations—target audience?</li> <li>› Expect the exception to the rule</li> <li>› If you get rid of the 13 categories what would you replace it with? How would you define “function”</li> <li>› All have unique strengths and differences</li> <li>▪ We won’t change expectations until we show people success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› What does success look like?</li> <li>› Birth to 5 families training parents to do PCP, transition planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What happens in K matters down the road</li> <li>• financial planning—starting in K</li> <li>• Group in the pacific NW does this</li> </ul> </li> <li>› Take families by the hand one-on-one</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Communicate and frame potential services—family education</li> <li>▪ Asset based learning and assessment systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› We trust those in authority positions when they express limitations</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Help families learn asset based <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Eligibility—assessment model focuses on deficits not assets and want to move away from that to focus on asset</li> <li>› RE: IDEA—civil rights guaranteed</li> <li>› Eligibility is just entry point</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Cultural competence tied to high expectations</li> <li>▪ Measure cultural competence through the use of data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Disaggregating data—measuring cultural competency across groups</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Promote and identify different subgroups</li> <li>▪ Strategies to navigate the system—get them from connecting with other with disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Every group has to come together</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Need training</li> <li>▪ <b>**Having common definitions may not be good for cultural competency**</b></li> <li>▪ Ensure common metrics on culturally competent for everyone</li> <li>▪ What you learn is what you’re exposed to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› DREAMING ONE SIZE LARGER</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Providing opportunities for students—career exploration</li> <li>▪ Job shadows and work experience (criteria to finish school)</li> <li>▪ What has helped other social movements? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› E.g., Black college tours—is there a disability equivalent?</li> <li>› For the purpose of broadening horizons</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Experiences exist—sometimes lack of knowledge</li> <li>▪ Think College <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Programs are growing for students</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Challenge Focus Topic	Strategies for Addressing Challenge
7. Lack of high expectations – cont'd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Haven't supported infrastructure Some investment in TA and infrastructure (empowerment of consumers using cultural competency) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Support for and by people with disabilities (re: self- advocacy)</li> <li>› Service models serving community</li> <li>› Upperclassmen having conversations with freshmen about having a disability</li> <li>› Still a benevolent set of assumptions that practitioners have to be involved</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Interns in State Capital (run by kids—Eastern Seals)</li> <li>▪ Sustained funding for these programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Need to be bottom up model</li> <li>› Put resources in the hands of people with disabilities</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Having people with disabilities in leadership positions affects culture</li> <li>▪ Need to be able to step back <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Sustained effort</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ No social movement to police power imbalances</li> <li>▪ Partners in policy making</li> <li>▪ Empowering as part of curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Disability history as part of curriculum for ALL</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
8. Lack of common vision within and across agencies and systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Common definitions—(transition, secondary and postsecondary employment, etc.)</b></li> <li>▪ Common foundation outcomes that all systems need to address differentiate missions</li> <li>▪ Common ways to promote sharing for information</li> <li>▪ Promote blending money for different purposes (e.g., professional development, dual credit articulation, access to information</li> <li>▪ Do we want to maintain resources---system is built on targeting resources</li> <li>▪ A profession suggesting to a family that one category is better than another.</li> <li>▪ Service based on disability category <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Income</li> <li>› Limited English speaking</li> <li>› Foster care</li> <li>› Juvenile justice</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ If child is target population, eligibility = eligibility across youth and adult programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Take into account holistic factors</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Need to ALL move—all systems move at the same time (e.g., ED, VR,)—everybody moved to ID at same time</li> </ul>

Challenge Focus Topic	Strategies for Addressing Challenge
<p>8. Lack of common vision within and across agencies and systems – cont'd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Doesn't matter where you go—looking at services that may be beneficial</li> <li>▶ How do you get people to the table?</li> <li>▶ OUTRAGE???</li> <li>▶ How do we get people all over the country outraged at the same time?</li> <li>▶ Effort and outreach with target population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate into gen ed</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Leadership development programs for target population/youth (out of OR); support the development of young leaders and family leaders</li> <li>▶ We need to link what happens in school to post school outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrations in k-12—guidance and career prep programs helping you people think this through</li> <li>• LP for everyone, opportunities for career exploration, competencies to manage life</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Sexy idea: IEPs for ALL student driven <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset based discussion</li> <li>• Structures don't have freedom (legislative barriers and money barriers)</li> <li>• Funding attached to every ILP; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Plan linked to high expectations, student choice driven</li> <li>– (Achieve work based on academic achievement)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Current construct is k-12 needs to change to —doesn't matter if it takes you more than 12 years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NH—competency based grad system from time based to competency based</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Transition of students with disabilities at what point is enough? Race to the top across systems? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put all these pieces together rather than having multiple systems chip at it</li> <li>• Build youth development programs</li> <li>• Major demonstration</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>9. Limited or lack of systematic data use to improve</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of metrics (common definitions) across systems with shared data collection systems</li> <li>▪ Some building blocks about data needed at school level to help teachers</li> <li>▪ Longitudinal data systems—need to have integrated systems</li> <li>▪ What are the magic outcomes we need and builds data systems to be based on that?</li> <li>▪ Goal of LDS is to link work systems</li> <li>▪ Collaborative efforts to collect data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Complementary day systems</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Challenge Focus Topic	Strategies for Addressing Challenge
9. Limited or lack of systematic data use to improve – cont’d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Capacity issue (technological) and training at provider issue if not used at the local level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “strategic data”</li> <li>• Data quality issues</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Multiple <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Common data collection systems across agencies based on common outcome matrices</li> <li>▪ Build budgets based on that system—State and legislative budgets developed and monitored on specific set of data points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Built into way people get money from state and feds</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ What do we do with dropout data?</li> <li>▪ Providing equal access to data down to the local level</li> <li>▪ Use data to make it available at local level and make decisions based on that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Example from SC—keeping children in school; community efforts—businesses part of getting kids in school</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Access made available at the community level</li> <li>▪ Get out of data silos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Baltimore City example—check in / checkout, using data to make decisions</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Under reform efforts—are we ensuring that we pay attention to data efforts</li> <li>▪ Children’s Cabinets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Developed data points (age and stage appropriate)</li> <li>▶ Don’t include SPED data</li> <li>▶ SPED needs to become part of the system more</li> <li>▶ SPED not at the table</li> <li>▶ Re: ILP states on a few were sped and gen ed together</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Note. If strategies were prioritized by the work group, they are highlighted.

### Recommendations

As indicated in Table 3, participants developed a rich list of recommendations to address the challenges they identified in closing the gap between their dream state and current status of college and career transition for youth with disabilities. These recommendations include the use of a range of policy instruments, including mandates, incentives, capacity building, and systems change (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987) and examples of where such strategies are in place today. In addition, the theme of having and using valid and reliable data to build accountability and judge program quality runs across all the suggestions for the nine focus challenge topics.

First, the recommendations include several suggestions of *mandates* that would change the rules and regulations that influence education and adult services at the federal, state, and local levels. Suggested mandates include the requirement for common definitions of disabilities as well as the

elimination of disability designation. They also suggest that teacher credential requirements be changed to better align with competencies relevant to preparation for college and careers; and that the Federal monitoring focus shift from compliance with regulations to effectiveness and outcomes.

Second, participants recommended federal agencies provide *incentives* to develop and expand innovative curricula and approaches that provide students experiences relevant for career exploration and development. They also suggested such strategies as OSEP working closely with the National Science Foundation (NSF) to help inform these innovations. Incentives were also suggested as a strategy to support the identification and replication of models where access to the general curriculum and transition-related instruction are occurring successfully. Providing incentives for further research on effective employment models, program development that better integrates transition resources and services within educational systems, and expansion of community-based opportunities for students was also a theme across several of the focus challenge topics.

*Capacity building* strategies also emerged as a theme for addressing a majority of the challenges in the nine focus topic areas. Recommendations included professional development for families, K-12 and postsecondary educators – including leadership, and service providers. Professional development topics ranged from a focus on pedagogy, to values and vision, to cultural competence and understanding, to understanding evidence-based practices. Participants also recommended different approaches for capacity building such as “externships,” identification of cross-disciplinary competencies to be infused into disciplinary preparation programs, and the use of technology to provide real-time coaching and training on demand. Importantly, a variety of the capacity building suggestions focused on improving ways to inform and engage families, such as increasing the resources for parent training institutes. Participants also recommended improving outreach that fosters family engagement in policy and decision-making, and increases their knowledge of services, benefits, and resources.

Participants also suggested a variety of *systems change* recommendations to fundamentally transform personnel preparation, funding models, accountability systems, and service delivery. These strategies included aligning agency funding based on outcomes, with expected outcomes defined consistently across agencies. Participants re-iterated many times the importance of consistently defining outcomes across agencies – including education. To support this notion, they suggested that educational and service agencies could share credit for common outcomes, which should foster collaboration and accountability. Relevant to this recommendation, participants also emphasized the importance of aligning definitions across agencies. Systems change strategies also focused on data-collection systems and the importance of transforming them to reach across agencies and disciplines and to reach down, and back up, from the federal to the local levels. “Get out of data silos” they recommended.

Systems change suggestions also included using federal and state policies to allow flexibility in defining program completion outcomes, such as those in career and technical education so that targeted outcomes could range across levels, thus increasing opportunities for students with disabilities to access training in important career areas. They also emphasized the importance of aligning high school structures and schedules as educators and their leaders work to develop a systematic and unified approach to services in schools.

Finally, over and over, participants stressed that high expectations for all students provides the foundation for every recommendation to address the challenges we face preparing our young people for transition to college and careers. They emphasized that this perspective must drive policy development and implementation at all levels, from the federal to the local, and be applied when evaluating the impact of such policies. This perspective is fundamental to the expectation that we can create an ideal system that builds and fosters self-determination; engages families; is accountable, unified, inclusive, and seamless; depends on valid and reliable data, and is driven by caring and competent personnel. Without high expectations for all students, this dream state of transition to college and careers for young people with disabilities will not be achieved.

## **Appendix A**

Focus Group on Transition to College and Careers  
**Summary of Participants' Perceptions of an Ideal Future**  
**May 6 and 7, 2012**

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### **High Expectations For All By All – Outcomes**

- Change CULTURE as well as MINDS!!! Whole life perspective (adult life engagement –(e.g., home ownership, asset development) quality of life; multi-dimensional focus; build upon linear and rudimentary concepts and views
- Transition is not an option – “it is expected” – it’s an expectation, it’s a mind set (e.g., higher expectations)
- Expand and build upon the narrow view of independent living
- There needs to be training for high and higher expectations for supports for families/adults and students and as students transition beyond secondary; however, transition begins at birth and transition is based on need; as transition services and supports are needed – not based on a set scale or schedule
- Every student would experience high expectations
- Empower families to have high expectations from the moment their child is diagnosed with a disability
- “dream one size larger” (students, parents, teachers, service providers)
- Focus on strengths – a strength-based system – for all – not just students with disabilities
- Core of philosophy of inclusion in all opportunities
- Every student completes high school with a diploma, as competent and confident citizen
- Everyone can contribute and can be contributing members of society.

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### **Unified, Inclusive Education System**

- All students need to have a requirement of paid/competitive employment and building administration needs to be held accountable
- Students transition from secondary ed as competent communicators (i.e., with the skills) to post-secondary and during/after transition they are to/need to remain competent communicators (i.e., to maintain those skills)
- Variety of post-secondary options for ALL students and not just for SWD
- Having a unified system for secondary students within HS that focuses on career preparation and college readiness and not just college prep.
- Alignment with general education (common core and career readiness)
- At the high school Level, transition specialists are available at all HS (point of contact and initiative of services and advocating for a seamless system of supports

- Paid/competitive employment in integrated settings
- Meaningful “exit” credential from high school
- All students participate in a variety of internships and career mentorships to explore likes/ dislikes, interests
- All students are in classes with universally designed instruction and assessments –
- Career pathways – all students
- Peer to peer mentoring opportunities for students, families and teachers
- All youth can pass competency tests and assessments – establish some agreement – standards of practice
- Everyone has the opportunity to explore careers
- Every student completes high school with a meaningful relationship with at least one person in that next step (career, college)
- No stigma attached to the supports required to get to these outcomes –
- Inclusion is a core construct across all systems – all opportunities
- Why are kids with disabilities meeting with guidance counselors? Guidance Counselors should serve all students.
- Merge of general education and special education for transition. An inclusive transition service model for all students.
- Start planning sooner than 16. Youth are entering high school not prepared to meet the requirements for a standard requirement.
- Start planning prior to middle school or at least at the beginning of middle school (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, grade) to ensure the appropriate course of study.
- Educate Administrators about the unified system.
- Need a leadership that shares the philosophy and belief of an unified system.
- What skills do we need to build to help youth feel prepared to move into postsecondary education environment? There is a gap between students accessing PSE services and having skills to complete PSE.
- All youth should have paid employment experiences prior to leaving HS.
- Youth should be liver, learn, and earn prior to exiting HS.
- Personalized education/ transition services
- All students would have mentors.
- Paid work must be a component of the education process.
- All youth would have some level of a transition plan or services/ interventions.
- A kick ass resume prior to leaving high school showing the work experiences they have had prior to leaving HS.
- Career Development should start at early childhood just as it does for other kids.
- All youth get access to all career awareness and development activities.
- All kids would get quality instruction incorporating universal design for learning and differentiated instruction.
- Age appropriate transition assessment will provide information about how youth will succeed, what supports they need, what accommodations they need (not deficit based). Not used to screen kids

out.

- Matching assessment information to youth and environments.
- Standards based IEPs will be important to move youth in a direction where they have opportunity to meet their goals.
- All youth would have IEPs or Individuals Learning Plans for all.
- Transition assessment should accumulate over time and build upon each other via portfolio. Starting early and passing from year to year.
- Students have exposure to a variety of experiences to help decide about a career.
- Transition should be STUDENT CENTERED!!!
- Student and families voice is evident in the IEPs.
- Collaborate with Career Tech Ed and general education because the standards for CTE start in elementary. Unified System of Career Tech Pathways that includes all youth.
- PBIS and RTI should be systematically implemented to catch the at risk youth before they fall.

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### **Self-Determination**

- Self-advocacy
- Youth should be experienced self-advocates
- Well-versed in requesting accommodations in a variety of settings
- Good at self-disclosure
- Students have knowledge and skills to manage themselves and their own careers – they're empowered
- Every student completes high school knowing who they are – strengths, interests, skill set
- Place yourself without stigma within a community of people with disabilities
- The perfect state starts with person-centered planning process. Students and families are the center of planning. As a result of this process services are designed and then budgets and capacity building strategies are developed.
- Students need to be prepared to self-advocate and be independent and success in achieving/ completing PSE programs.
- Students need an understanding of PINS. Can state these skills and communicate needs to others.
- A kick ass resume prior to leaving high school showing the work experiences they have had prior to leaving HS.
- Students need to be prepared to self-advocate and be independent and success in achieving/ completing PSE programs.
- Students need an understanding of PINS. Can state these skills and communicate needs to others.
- Families and youth from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds also have equal access where they can communicate and share values without judgment.
- All students are able to comfortably self-advocate (i.e., especially in post-secondary settings) – to include self-determination – very self-determined (i.e., the perfect state would include that all students have the skills and knowledge to be comfortable with themselves)
- All SWD encouraged and supported to be empowered regarding guardianship; guardianship should

be rare; use other alternatives; preparation and advisement for self advocates/advisors – who should be well-trained

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### **Informed and Engaged Families**

- Families have access to good information
- All parents would understand the transition process and will have high expectations for life after high school.
- Effectively and appropriately “informed and engaged” families - beginning before high schools – beginning early in middle schools – creating seamless systems
- Inviting families
- Community connections based on family and student and preferences
- Early provision of supports services for students and families – based on the needs of the individual students –
- Informing parents early – as early as possible and engaging services providers and educators in this process

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### **Personnel**

- Teachers need career development knowledge
- Service providers need knowledge of academics
- Balance between teaching academics and soft-skills
- Cultural competence
- High expectations
- Communication skills
- Personnel preparation to include communication competency
- Disability awareness education.
- Academic content should be taught by the content expert and learning and processing and accommodation (even assimilation) of skills is facilitated by the instruction facilitator (e.g., the transition lead, SpEd Teacher, etc...) Learning process must be facilitated and this can be done so by the SpEd Teacher
- HS need someone to facilitate integrated competitive employment
- HS need an individual to facilitate integrated competitive employment
- Quality personnel preparatory at the IHEs (student centered planning, transition assessment; secondary curriculum and instruction; family and student involvement; inter-agency collaboration; systems leadership; and culturally responsive teaching
- Teachers (Gen Ed and SpEd) need to have an inclusive way of thinking
- Expertise in evidence-based practices
- Secure special education teachers who have expertise and their expertise is value by all in the high school (UDL, valuable resource)
- Expert in benefits counseling available to all students and families
- SpEd teachers need to also perform as counselors and provide related counseling services – having

the discussion regarding to prepare them for post-secondary outcomes

- SpEd teachers need to know how to counsel or guide students through the transition process

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### **Seamless System Of Service Delivery – Across Systems**

- Year round services – not just school-based – high-school is focused on career preparation
- Partnerships between schools and local businesses
- Collaborative systems – the variety of systems, particularly those in which students with disabilities are likely to interact – will know more about each other and work well together
- Multiple systems need to be life span based
- There are no gaps due to system collaboration
- Every student leaves high school with social capital and social network
- Every student completes high school with a plan – a transition plan
- Incentivize working across systems
- Students need to be prepared to self-advocate and be independent and success in achieving/ completing PSE programs.
- Students need an understanding of PINS. Can state these skills and communicate needs to others.
- Families and youth from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds also have equal access where they can communicate and share values without judgment.
- Interagency collaboration (e.g., to include blended funding at federal, state, and local level)
- Dissipate unnecessary eligibility differences
- System culture and accountability
- Cross-agency collaboration (states, federal, local)

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### **Data-Based Decision Making**

- Same operational definitions of outcomes (e.g., graduation rates, outcomes) to inform discussion and justify funding and help systems talk to one another – this drives the conversation and the possibility of multiple systems “owning” students and young adults with disabilities
- Agreed upon transition services – defined – agreed upon standards of practice
- Use data to make decisions regarding instruction, programming, and policy etc.
- Data-based decision making is imperative. Don’t collect data for the sake of collecting data.
- Measurable postsecondary goals are actually measured at the student level.
- Don’t plan to plan.
- We need a group to compare our outcomes to.
- Track post-school outcomes for ALL students and publics report and disaggregate the data and use the data; conduct data analysis (i.e., data-based and driven decisions – simply use the data) Use the data to develop policies and practices as well
- Disaggregate data out of the AYP data!!!!