
Tips for Navigating Through Post-High School Life

— Karla Estrada, Ed.D., BCBA —
Marisa McCarthy, Ed.D.
Boston Public Schools

Agenda

- Quality of Life (QoL) Activity
- Research on Post-High School Life for Individuals with Disabilities
- Review Key Tips for Navigating through Post-High School Life
- Tools to Achieve Highest QoL
- Call for Action
- Questions



What Factors create a High Quality of Life?

Five dimensions of Quality of Life



Post-High School Research

Work

- Unemployment Rate
 - People with Disabilities: 8.7%

Education

- 24% of young adults with learning disabilities (LD) inform post secondary schools about their needs
- 17% of young adults with LD get accommodations and support at the postsecondary level

Health

- The US obesity rate for people with disabilities was 41.1% in 2014

Prosperity

- 28.1% of US adults with disabilities of working-age in 2014 were living in poverty

Social

- Nearly 40% of young adults with autism never see friends after leaving high school
- Almost 50% of young adults with autism do not receive phone call or invitation to activities after leaving high school

he State of Learning Disabilities 3rd Edition, Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 2015 Annual Report: A Publication of the Disability Statistics & Demographics Rehabilitation Research & Training Center

Ways to Improve Your Overall Quality of Life

1. Accept challenge as a natural part of life
2. Self -reliant
3. See life as full of opportunity
4. Rid yourself of “seriousity”
5. Help others
6. Have a purpose
7. Choose your attitude
8. Choose good company
9. Work hard
10. No more victim mentality

Tips for Navigating through Post-High School Life that Lead to a High Quality of Life

Tip 1

Increase Self-Determination by
Following Your Student's Vision



People with disabilities must be able to live the lives they choose.

- Vision = Post-Secondary Goals
- Student-Focused Planning
 - Involve Student in the IEP Process at 14 or younger
 - Increase Self-Determination
- Continuum of Student Involvement
 - Student identifies and invites an additional team member
 - Student introduces everyone at the table and their role
 - Student reviews and evaluates their own accomplishments over the past year
 - Student asks IEP team members for feedback/Exit Ticket

Student-Led Conferences

A Step by Step Guide for Students

(Introduce your parents to me.)

1. Mrs. Gilkison, I would like for you to meet my parents:



2. I would like to start the conference with some of my strengths.

_____ and _____

Mom/Dad can you add anything about my strengths?



3. Nobody is perfect, therefore we all have weaknesses. A couple of weaknesses I have are:

_____ and _____

Mom/Dad can you add anything about my weaknesses?



Credited: Helen Gilkison



Student-Led Conferences

Welcome to my student-led conference! I would like to introduce everybody. This is my teacher _____. My family guests are _____. I am glad we could all be here!

Today we will be talking about how I am a leader, my scores, and my goals. Please feel free to ask any questions along the way.

Please let me show you my "My Personal Best Data". (Make sure to show scores, goals, and steps to reach your goals!).

Do you have any questions or comments about My Personal Best Data?

Some ways that I can get help to reach my goals at school are

Some ways that I can get help at home are

Do you have any questions for my teacher or for me?

Thank you for coming to my conference!

Dear Parent,

Please use this as a tool to help you prepare for your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting. As you look at each area, think about your student as a whole—academic, social, personal, speech-language, extra-curricular, etc. Please feel free to take notes on this paper and bring it to the meeting, which will be scheduled on or before _____.

What are my student's **strengths**?

What are my **concerns** about my student's academic, social, personal development?

IEP

What **progress** have I seen in my student over the last year?

What are my **goals** for my student?
(academic, personal, speech, social)

What **questions** do I have about my child's special education (speech-language) program?

slpity.blogspot.com



Transition Planning Profile

My Dreams... My Goals

Work: (1")

(2")

Living:

Fun:

My Strengths

•
•
•
•
•

•
•
•
•
•

My Challenges

•
•
•
•
•

Chores I Do at home...

•
•
•
•

My Learning Styles

☐ Seeing
☐ Hearing
☐ Hands-on

Interests

•
•

What School can help me...

•
•
•

In the Community, I can...

•
•
•

I can learn about Employment by...

•
•
•

Developed by Curtis & DiCicco - DCS (1999); modified by Harrell - DCN (2001)

Tip II

Connect ALL Team Members:
High School, Family,
Community, Post-Secondary
School, Etc.



The difference between success and failure is a great team and planning.

- Eligibility v. Entitlement
- Request that your school file a 688 referral to the Bureau of Transitional Services 2 years before graduation and invite state agency to be a member on the IEP Team
- Meet with college support staff and invite to attend IEP Team Meeting
- Complete Age of Majority with your student
- Review Guardianship options
- Have student identify a team of post-high school advocates (Education/Social/Health & Wellness/Career)

Success Story: Choosing the Provider that Feels Right for You

At 24, Marissa enjoys her part-time job at Starbucks, for which she receives competitive wages and benefits. Marissa also works part-time at a Social Security office where she does filing, bookkeeping and data entry. She receives supports through an employment service provider in the Worcester area, which include transportation and a job coach. To augment Marissa's work schedule, she spends one day a week on community outings with other individuals who also receive services from this provider. Before Marissa got started with this particular service, her mother took a look at a few employment service provider programs. One didn't offer the kinds of services and activities she thought were important for Marissa. Another didn't feel family-friendly. She settled on a provider which had a particular expertise in serving individuals with behavioral and communication issues, which is exactly what Marissa needed



Success Story: A Seamless Transition from School to Work

Even before he had graduated from high school in Pittsfield, BRIAN started a job he loved, thanks to thoughtful and thorough pre-planning at his high school and collaboration with a local employment provider and the DDS area office. Brian became a gardener at Hancock Shaker Village. How did the transition from school to work go so smoothly? It started when the high school and DDS developed an Individual Transition Plan for Brian at age 19. Brian had not enjoyed the culinary arts and clerical courses he had taken at school and was anxious to find a career that suited him. The high school and DDS arranged a full vocational evaluation for Brian, which was conducted by a local employment service provider. When horticulture emerged as an area of great interest from the evaluation, arrangements were made for Brian to take double classes in the subject. The fit was right! From there, the provider used its established relationship with Hancock Shaker Village to arrange a position for Brian in its garden department. Furthermore, Brian's team worked it out so that he could start his job before graduation, and the transition was seamless. Central to Brian's success was having an employment provider who started working with him while he was still in school. Gone were Brian's anxieties about working, replaced by a genuine satisfaction with his gardening position.



Tip III

Transition Assessments should be ongoing, individualized, and used to inform decisions

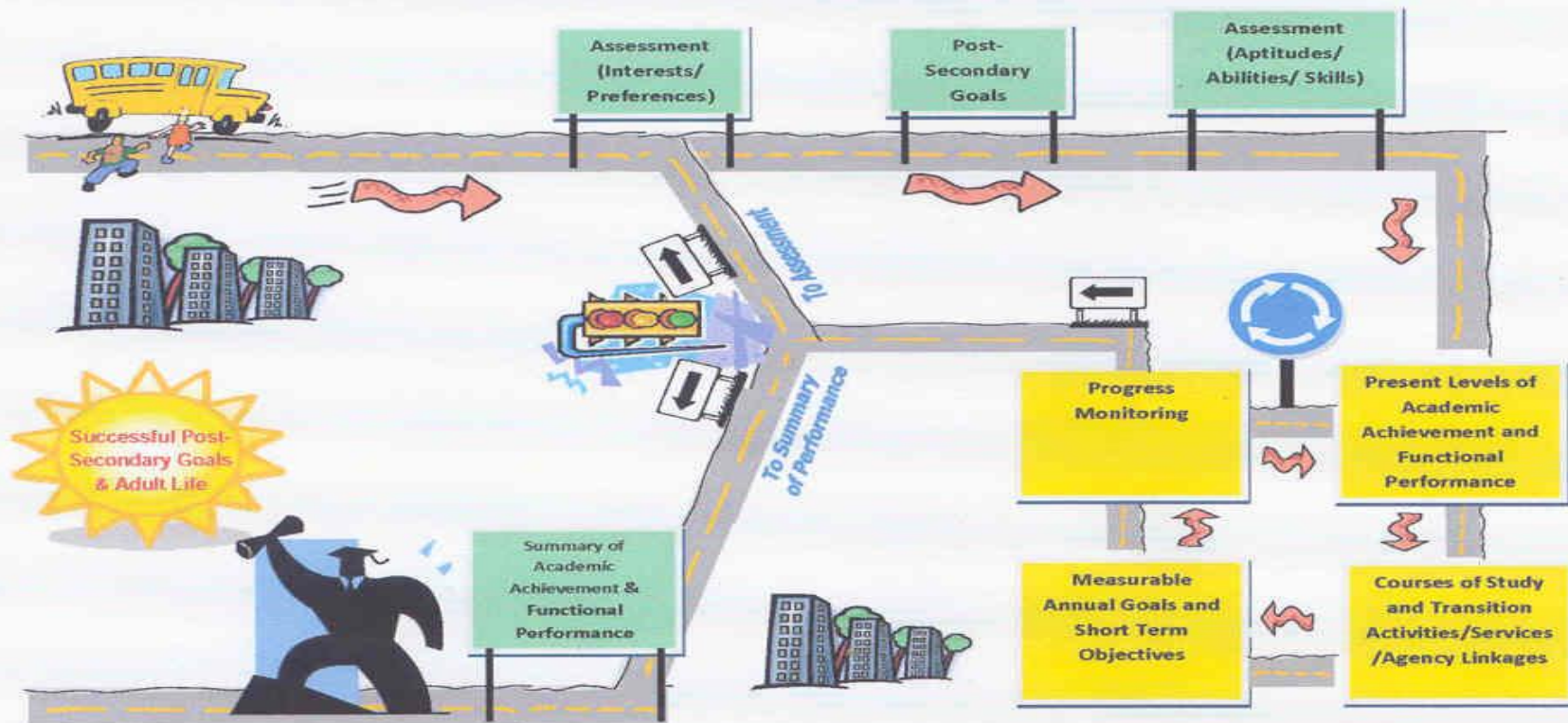


What will my future look like?

Transition Assessments can help!

- Formal and Informal
- Conducted yearly to address Barriers and Assets we need to be addressing (even before 14 years old!)
- Focus Areas: Vocational, Daily Living, Personal Life, and Community
 - Aligned with students vision in mind
- Everyone's input is important - Student, Parent/Guardian, Employers, Community-Based Partners, Etc.

Secondary Transition in a Standards Aligned System: Roadmap



Let's Determine which Transition Assessments to Conduct?

Sandy's Postsecondary Goal:

- I want to go to a four-year college, become a videogame designer, and live with friends computer literacy skills?

Questions that Transition Assessment Could Answer:

- Will Sandy pass MCAS?
- How are her computer literacy skills?
- Is she able to focus for long periods of time?
- How will she access the community and Disability Support Services at college?

Possible Assessments:

- MCAS Exam, Computer/Technology Assessment, Career Employability Test, Travel and Mobility Assessment

Robert's Postsecondary Goal:

- I want to earn a certificate from a community college to work with animals, get a job at the zoo or on a farm, and live on my own.

Questions that Transition Assessment Could Answer:

- How does Robert interact with animals?
- What does he like about working with animals?
- Can Robert wake up in time to get to work independently?
- Can he shower and groom himself independently?

Possible Assessments:

- Functional Vocational Assessment, Student Interview, Adaptive Behavior Skills Assessment, Life Skills Inventory

I like a job that is...

☐ **with many people**



or

☐ **with few people**



or

☐ **alone**



I like a job with...

☐ **lifting**



or

☐ **no lifting**



I like a job that is...

☐ **sitting**



or

☐ **standing**



I like a job that is...

☐ **staying in one place**



or

☐ **moving around**



I like a job that is...

☐ **same work**



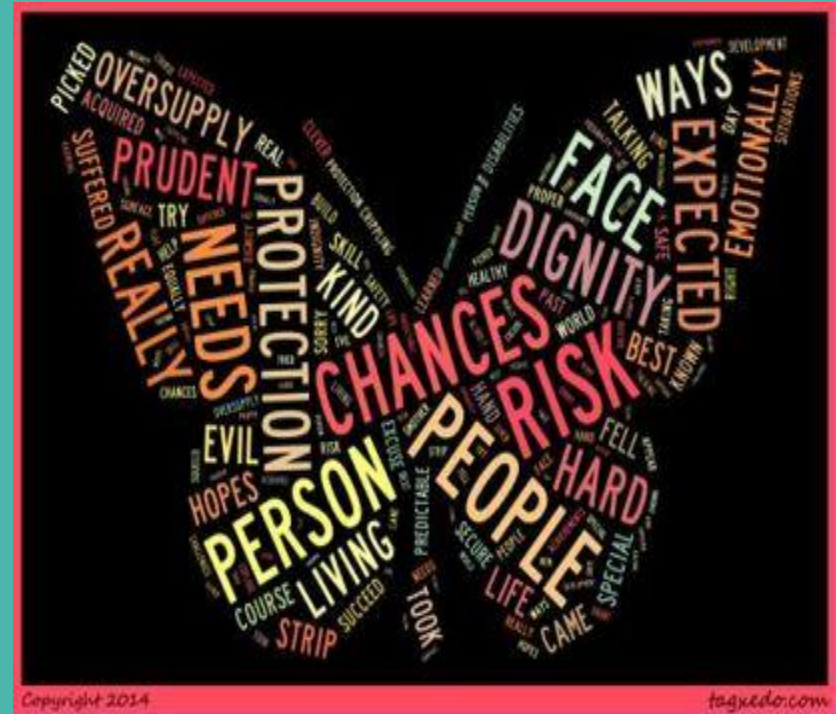
or

☐ **different work**



Tip IV

Provide your Student the Dignity of Risk



Questions to think about....

- What if you never got to make a mistake?
- What if your money was always kept in an envelope where you couldn't get it?
- What if you were never given a chance to do well at something?
- What if your only chance to be with people different from you was with your own family?
- What if the job you did was not useful?
- What if you never got to make a decision?
- What if the only risky thing you could do was act out?
- What if you couldn't go outside because the last time you went it rained?
- What if you took the wrong bus once and now you can't take another one?
- What if you got into trouble and were sent away and you couldn't come back because they always remember you're trouble?
- What if you worked and got paid \$0.46 an hour?
- What if you had to wear your winter coat when it rained because it was all you had?
- What if you had no privacy?
- What if you could do part of the grocery shopping but weren't allowed because you couldn't do all of the shopping?
- What if you spent three hours every day just waiting?
- What if you grew old and never knew adulthood?
- ***What if you never got a chance?***

-Linda Stengle, Laying Community Foundations for Your Child with a Disability

More risks means more opportunity for success!

- Risk taking and failures can lead to growth and learning
- Human Rights
 - Self-Advocacy
 - Self-Determination
 - Self-Defense
- Emphasis on personal choice
- Respect your student's individual autonomy



Brian

Michael

BELIEVE!

No one can know the limits of another

Tip V

Parents and Family Members
Need Support, too!



FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL



FIRST DAY OF COLLEGE



©2004 ADAM ZEGLI
CAGLE CARTOONS.COM
THE BUFFALO NEWS

Tip V

- **Respite**

- Respite supports through the Department of Developmental Services can provide short term out of home care for the individual with intellectual disability. It allows parents and other primary caregivers to handle personal matters, emergencies, or take a break.

- **Housing**

- The Mass Accessible Housing Registry is a free program that helps people with disabilities find rental housing in Massachusetts, primarily accessible and barrier-free housing.

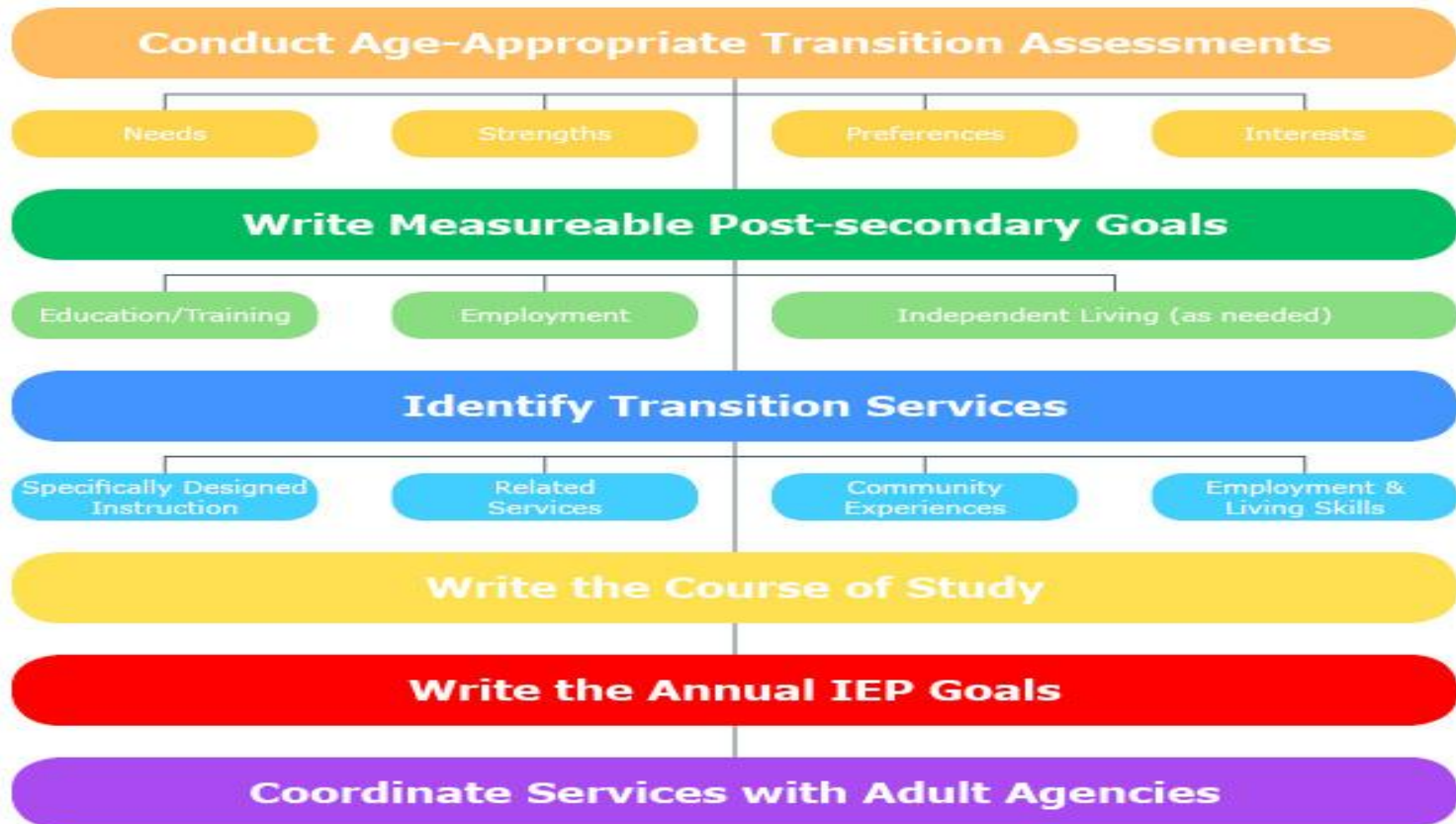
- **Transportation/Travel**

- Commonwealth of Massachusetts offers multiple options for transportation and travel training in Massachusetts.
- MassMobility is an initiative to increase mobility for seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, low-income commuters, and others who lack transportation access in Massachusetts.

- **Parent Council**

- The Federation for Children with Special Needs provides information, support, and assistance to parents of children with disabilities, their professional partners, and their communities. We are committed to listening to and learning from families, and encouraging full participation in community life by all people, especially those with disabilities.

Summary....



Tools

Tip I

- [I'm Determined](#)
- [DESE Brochure - Self-Determination](#)

Tip II

- [Guide to 688 Referral Process](#)
- [DDS Eligibility Checklist for Adult Autism Spectrum Disorders](#)
- [Guardianship Resource Site](#)

Tip III

- [A Family Guide to Transition Services in Massachusetts](#)
- [QuickBook of Transition Assessments](#)
- [DESE Brochure - Transition Assessment](#)

Tip IV

- [Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong](#)
- [IMPACT:ability](#)

Tip V

- [The Ride Eligibility Brochure](#)
- [MassMobility](#)
- [Respite and Housing Options](#)
- [MassPAC](#)

Call to Action

Think about your unanswered transition questions and/or concerns. What word best describes these concerns? It's time for a [Call to Action!](#)

Questions?

My disability exists not because I use a wheelchair, but because the broader environment isn't accessible.

--Stella Young