National Standards & Quality Indicators:

transition toolkit for systems improvement

2005 National Leadership Summit Edition

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Alliance for Excellent Education

American School Counselor Association

American Youth Policy Forum

The Arc of the United States

Association for Career and Technical Education

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired

Association on Higher Education and Disability

Center for Workforce Development, Institute for Educational Leadership

Center for Workforce Preparation, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Council for Exceptional Children

Council of Chief State School Officers

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

Healthy & Ready to Work National Center

Learning Disabilities Association of America

National Alliance of Black School Educators

National Alliance on the American High School

National Association for Bilingual Education

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Association of Service and Conservation Corps

National Association of State Boards of Education

National Association of State Directors of Special Education

National Association of Workforce Boards

National Association of Workforce Development Professionals

National Council of La Raza

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

National Education Association

National Governors Association

National Middle School Association

National PTA

National Rehabilitation Association

National School Boards Association

National Youth Employment Coalition

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NASET
NATIONAL ALLIANCE
for Secondary Education and Transition

Foreword

The National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition's objective in publishing this Transition Toolkit is to provide a common and shared framework to help school systems and communities identify what youth need in order to achieve successful participation in postsecondary education and training, civic engagement, meaningful employment, and adult life. We see this framework as serving two important purposes:

- To respond to increased requests from states, school districts, and service providers for information on:
  - Research-based practices, programs, and services; and
  - Benchmarks for effective secondary education and transition practices.
- To address new responsibilities for states to focus on accountability for each and every young person.

This document combines the findings of current research on effective schooling, career preparatory experiences, youth development and youth leadership, family involvement, and connecting activities with the expertise of numerous individuals who work in these fields. The National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition sees the Transition Toolkit as an evolving document, requiring continual refinement as we learn more about what all youth need to achieve positive school and postschool results.

—*National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition*

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Cindy Sadler, Alliance for Excellent Education
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Ann Marie Cook, Fairfax County (VA) Public Schools
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John Nori, National Association of Secondary School Principals
Sally Prouty, National Association of Service and Conservation Corps
Mariana Haynes, National Association of State Boards of Education
Nancy Reder, National Association of State Directors of Special Education
Andrea Fiero, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
Stephanie Powers, National Association of Workforce Boards
C. Paul Mendez, National Association of Workforce Development Professionals
Peter Leone, National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice
Bob Stodden, National Center on Secondary Education and Transition—Center on Disability Studies
Christine Bremer, David Johnson, Donna Johnson, Pam Stenhjem, National Center on Secondary Education and Transition—Institute on Community Integration
Eduardo Garcia, National Council of La Raza
Suzanne Ripley, National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities
Patti Ralabate, National Education Association
Kristin Conklin, National Governors Association
Sue Swaim, National Middle School Association
Linda Hodge, National PTA
Reggie Felton, National School Boards Association
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Rhonda Basha, Jennifer Kemp, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor
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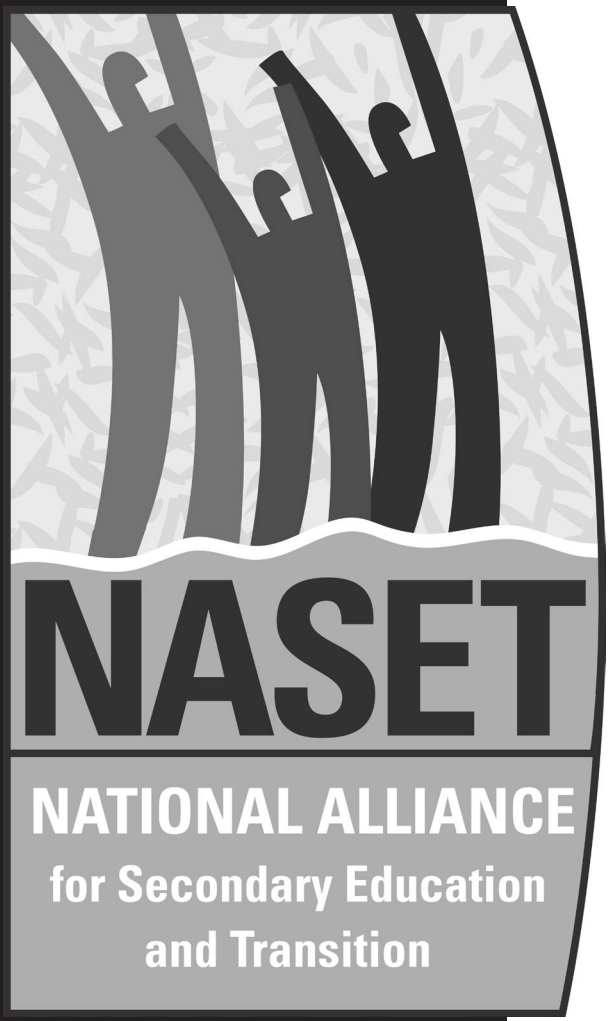
Bonnie Jones, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education
Deborah Leuchovius, PACER Center
Jamie Ruppman, TASH
Amy Pleet, Towson University (MD)
Kelli Crane, Richard Luecking, Marianne Mooney, TransCen, Inc.
Debra Hart, University of Massachusetts-Boston
Katie Furney, University of Vermont
Paula Kohler, Western Michigan University
Patti Barkin, Jane Storms, Western Regional Resource Center

Note: *Listing the names of those who worked on this project does not imply their endorsement of this or any related documents.*



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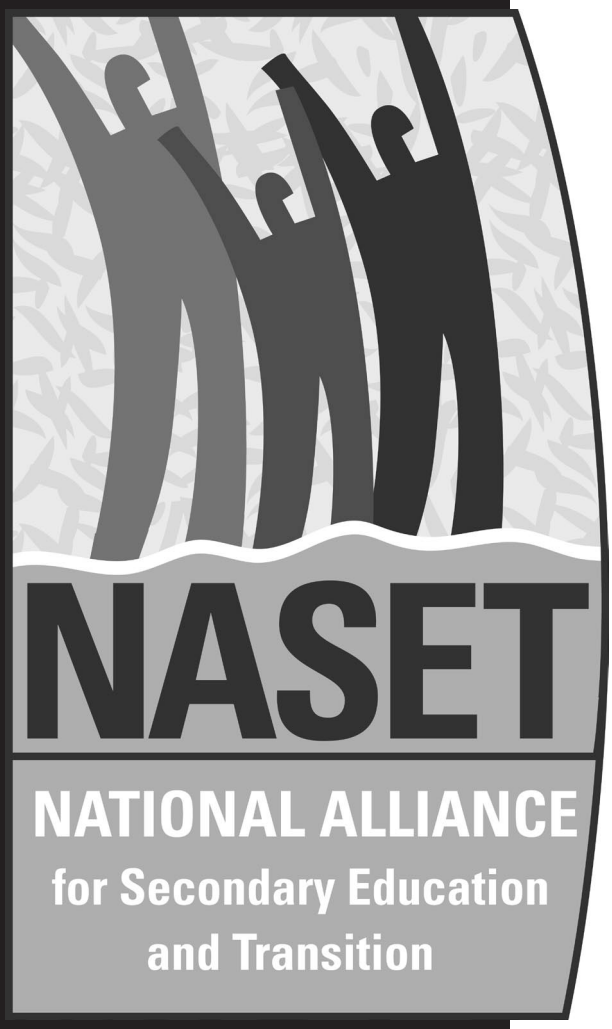

National Standards
for secondary education and transition
For All Youth

Introduction

State governments and local school districts have been challenged to improve student achievement, graduation rates, and the successful transition of students to postsecondary education, employment, and other aspects of community living. The federal government has assumed a key role in stimulating state and local efforts to improve secondary education and transition services through a variety of policy, interagency, systems change, demonstration, and research efforts. Importantly, these efforts have focused on creating educational, workforce, community-centered, and other developmental opportunities for all youth, including youth with disabilities, English language learners, youth from diverse multicultural backgrounds, youth from low-income families, and other at-risk youth. One major challenge in addressing diverse youth needs is the development of a common vision, shared goals, and coordinated strategies among schools, community service agencies, families, employers, and others. The development of a set of national standards for secondary education and transition that embraces the perspectives of these and other stakeholders is therefore critically important in helping all youth achieve positive school and postschool results.

In November 2003, 30 national organizations assembled in Washington, DC to establish a national voluntary coalition, the National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition (NASET). Subsequently, additional organizations joined the NASET effort, bringing the total involved to more than 40 national organizations and individuals representing general education, special education, career and technical education, youth development, postsecondary education, workforce development, and families. NASET was formed specifically to:

- identify what youth need in order to achieve successful participation in postsecondary education and training, civic engagement, meaningful employment, and adult life; and
- prioritize and address significant issues of national scale that have an impact on the provision of effective secondary education and transition services and policies for all youth.

Since November 2003, NASET has worked to define a multi-organizational perspective by identifying benchmarks that reflect

quality secondary education and transition services for *all* students. NASET's primary task, therefore, has been to promote high quality and effective secondary education and transition services by articulating standards that serve to guide policy development and professional practice at both state and local levels.

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), headquartered at the University of Minnesota, has facilitated the work of NASET since its inception. NCSET is a national technical assistance and information dissemination center funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. NCSET is specifically focused on strengthening state and local capacity to improve secondary education and transition policies and practices for youth with disabilities and their families (*http://www.ncset.org/*).

The Need for National Standards

The establishment of a common vision, along with goals and strategies for improving results for all youth, is necessitated by several significant trends and developments nationally. These include:

- ***Current Policy Focus on Serving All Students*** – The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), signed by President George W. Bush in 2002, requires schools and school districts to demonstrate that all students are making "adequate yearly progress," as benchmarked by test scores and other measures. NCLB specifically requires that youth with disabilities, English language learners, youth from diverse multicultural backgrounds, youth from low-income families, and other at-risk youth be fully included within state and local district testing and accountability practices. Further, with the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004, Congress renewed its commitment to supporting youth with disabilities in making a successful transition from school to adult life. Central to accomplishing this broad policy objective is the recognition that the magnitude of improvements currently needed can only be achieved through collaborative partnerships that include students and families, schools, and multiple agencies at the community, state, and national levels.
- ***Recognition that Collaboration is Needed*** – It has become evident that the diverse and complex needs of many youth cannot be met by any one school district, school, community service agency, or family, regardless of their hard work or good intentions. No single entity can go it alone. Today, a wide range of agencies are essential to establishing and maintaining quality programs and practices that help youth to achieve positive school and postschool results. Interagency collaboration and partnership development at the community level emphasize the importance of creating a shared mission and a common set of actions and strategies to support all youth and families within communities. Formal service coordination among collaborating entities is crucial to the transition success of many youth with disabilities and other youth with special needs.
- ***Ensuring All Youth Have the Skills Needed for Further Education and Employment*** – Currently, the White House, Congress, the National Governors Association, and other national groups and organizations have concluded that America's high schools are not meeting the needs of our youth, their families, postsecondary institutions, or employers. This view has lead to federal legislation and several emerging reform initiatives specifically focused on improving high school and postschool results for all students, including students with disabilities.
- ***Ensuring All Youth Full Access to Essential Learning Opportunities*** – Years of focused research has demonstrated that youth achieve better postschool outcomes when the transition from high school to careers, postsecondary education, and independent living is grounded in varied learning experiences which include academic development, career and technical education, work-based opportunities, service learning, youth development activities, and other related experiences. Creating this breadth and depth of learning opportunities requires collaboration among schools, community-based youth development organizations, postsecondary programs, employers, families, and others.

- *Families' Expectations for Participation* – Although the nature of the relationship between parent and child changes during adolescence, families continue to play important roles in the lives of youth during high school and beyond. Parents and families expect to participate meaningfully in their childrens' educational planning, life planning, and other decision-making, and have become primary stakeholders in school governance, planning committees, and other efforts. It is essential to reflect families' perspectives and interests in national standards for secondary education and transition.

NASET Standards Development

As a first step, the NASET members identified five key areas for standards development (see figure below):

1. Schooling
2. Career Preparatory Experiences
3. Youth Development and Youth Leadership
4. Family Involvement
5. Connecting Activities

Next, internal focus groups were established to address each of the five areas. Each focus group consisted of 7–10 members and included both national organization representatives and experts from the field. Group members also represented the perspectives of youth with and without disabilities, family members, educators, administrators, researchers, service providers, and employers.

NASET members participated in several day-long facilitated discussions to collectively describe the five areas and define associated standards of effective practice and quality indicators. The standards and indicators were derived from practices supported by research as well as from members' experiences with and knowledge about secondary education, transition, youth development, family involvement, workforce preparation, and service coordination. Moreover, members identified existing research and best practices on which to base these standards.

Criteria were established to guide the development of standards and quality indicators. It was determined that standards and indicators should:

- reflect all youth;
- be general enough to serve various audiences;
- reflect both research-based practices and best practices in the field;
- identify what is needed for youth to achieve successful participation in postsecondary education and training, civic engagement, meaningful employment, and adult life; and
- focus on effective practices within secondary education and transition programs and services provided to youth with disabilities and other youth with special needs.

A consensus-building process was used to achieve agreement on the standards and indicators for each of the five areas.

The Standards for Secondary Education and Transition

Following is the work of NASET. The document outlines standards and indicators that can be used to help assure high-quality transition for youth who are moving from a secondary school setting to the adult world. The standards and indicators identify practices that create quality secondary education and transition experiences for all youth. These standards can guide state and local administrators and practitioners responsible for planning and implementing comprehensive transition systems for youth, ultimately becoming a catalyst for constructive change in transition practices and policies nationwide. The member organizations of NASET intend this to be a living document that is regularly updated to reflect current knowledge.

1. Schooling

Schooling is the process of imparting knowledge and skills to individuals through curriculum and instruction, experiential learning, and work-based learning. Effective schooling provides individuals with the necessary tools to become productive citizens, pursue higher education and lifelong learning, engage in meaningful employment, and work toward achieving their life goals.

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, all students are required to participate in assessments and accountability systems in order to ensure that (a) schools are held accountable for students' access to the general education curriculum, (b) schools hold high expectations for all students, and (c) student achievement is improved (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004).

Conditions that promote positive schooling experiences are supported when all students "have access to challenging curriculum and their educational programs are based on high expectations that acknowledge each student's potential and ultimate contribution to society" (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2000, p. 2). All youth need to participate in educational programs grounded in standards, clear performance expectations, and graduation exit options based upon meaningful, accurate, and relevant indicators of student learning and skills.

Schools promote student learning when they:

- implement curriculum and academic programs based on clear state standards;
- implement career and technical education programs based on professional and industry standards;
- provide universally designed assessment, curriculum, experiential learning, and work-based learning experiences;
- build small learning communities;
- hire and retain highly qualified staff; and
- implement high school graduation standards and options based on meaningful measures.

Well-designed schools consider the needs of all youth and implement academic and non-academic courses and programs of study that help all youth achieve successful postschool outcomes such as postsecondary education and training, employment, and civic engagement.

Standards and Indicators

1.1	**SEAs/LEAs provide youth with equitable access to a full range of academic and non-academic courses and programs of study.**
1.1.1	Youth are aware of and have access to the full range of secondary education curricula and programs designed to help them achieve state and/or district academic and related standards and meet admission requirements for postsecondary education.
1.1.2	SEAs/LEAs provide youth with information about the full range of postsecondary options and encourage youth to participate in secondary courses that will enable them to meet the admission requirements of their selected postsecondary program of study.
1.1.3	Youth are aware of and have access to work-based learning (programs that connect classroom curriculum to learning on job sites in the community), service-learning (programs that combine meaningful community service with academic growth, personal growth, and civic responsibility), and career preparatory experiences such as job shadowing and informational interviewing.
1.1.4	Each youth completes an individual life plan based on his or her interests, abilities, and goals.
1.1.5	SEAs/LEAs use universally designed and culturally competent curriculum materials (e.g., assignments, tests, textbooks, etc.) that are accessible and applicable to the widest possible range of youth.
1.1.6	Youth are aware of and have access to technology resources to enhance learning.

1.1.7	SEAs/LEAs integrate advising and counseling into the education program of every youth and ensure that supports are readily available to enable each youth to successfully complete secondary school and enter postsecondary education or other chosen postschool options.
1.2	**SEAs/LEAs use appropriate standards to assess individual student achievement and learning.**
1.2.1	All youth participate in large-scale assessment and accountability systems, with appropriate accommodations, alternate assessments, and universal design.
1.2.2	Youth have access to appropriate accommodations and multiple assessment strategies.
1.2.3	SEAs/LEAs use assessment and accountability systems reflecting standards that prepare graduates for successful postsecondary education experiences, meaningful employment, and civic engagement.
1.2.4	SEAs/LEAs use assessment results to review instruction and implement appropriate educational plans for each youth.
1.2.5	SEAs/LEAs use assessments that are not culturally biased.
1.3	**SEAs/LEAs systematically collect data on school completion rates and postschool outcomes and use these data to plan improvements in educational and postschool programs and services.**
1.3.1	Data are disaggregated and reported in clear and relevant language for the intended audiences.
1.3.2	Data and resulting reports are widely disseminated throughout the education community, to policymakers, school board members, school administrators, parent groups, postsecondary educators, public and private school educators, and the community.
1.3.3	SEAs/LEAs use reliable and valid instruments and data collection strategies.
1.3.4	Data are used to evaluate current programs and services and to make recommendations for future programs and services linked to positive postschool outcomes.
1.4	**SEAs/LEAs offer educators, families, and community representatives regular opportunities for ongoing skill development, education, and training in planning for positive postschool outcomes for all youth.**
1.4.1	Administrators, principals, educators, and paraprofessionals meet the essential qualifications to perform their jobs.
1.4.2	Staff development programs are based on careful analysis of data about the school and youth achievement and are evaluated for their effectiveness in improving teaching practices and increasing student achievement.
1.4.3	Educators, families, and community representatives are active members of the school leadership team.
1.4.4	Youth have the opportunity to participate in all meetings in which decisions may be made concerning their school and postschool plans.
1.4.5	Educators, families, and youth receive training on using data for planning and informed decision-making.
1.5	**SEAs/LEAs establish and implement high school graduation standards, options, and decisions that are based on meaningful measures of student achievement and learning.**
1.5.1	State and local assessments linked to high school graduation use measures of student achievement and learning that are valid and reliable and allow for accommodations and modifications as appropriate.

(Continued)

1.5.2	Allowable accommodations and modifications, and the circumstances in which they may be used, are clearly defined for state and local assessments.
1.5.3	School staff members are provided training on determining and implementing appropriate accommodations and on determining eligibility for alternate assessments.
1.5.4	Educators, families, and youth are aware of and have access to information about the possible ramifications of completing alternate assessments.
1.5.5	Educators, families, and youth are counseled on how the choice of diploma options may affect postschool options.

2. Career Preparatory Experiences

Career preparatory experiences are designed to help young people prepare for success in postsecondary education, a career, and/or independent living. Preparatory activities include career awareness, career exploration, and career assessment tied to classroom learning; employability skills training; and work experiences. Appropriate career preparatory experiences allow youth to explore a variety of career opportunities while identifying their career interests, abilities, and potential need for accommodation and support. Career preparatory activities help young people make informed decisions necessary for successful transition into careers.

Research shows that preparation for the transition from secondary school to postsecondary education, employment, and independent living must begin well before exiting high school. Career preparation is essential throughout the school experience and can be accomplished in part through career preparatory activities that include both classroom- and community-based experiences. During this time young people can explore the types of learning options and experiences needed to develop basic work skills for employment, take courses required for enrollment in postsecondary education and training programs, and acquire the skills necessary for independent living.

Career preparatory experiences expose youth to career opportunities by: (a) organizing the curriculum in more logical and meaningful ways; (b) highlighting occupations, career paths, and experiences in the community youth might not otherwise be aware of; (c) giving youth the skills, academic knowledge, and personal competencies required in the workplace and for continued education; and (d) providing youth with tailored opportunities and related skills to meet their individual needs (e.g., budgeting, transportation) (American Youth Policy Forum & Center for Workforce Development, 2000). Schools are not the only organizations that offer career preparatory opportunities. Postsecondary education institutions, community-based organizations, employers, public employment and training agencies, and intermediaries also play a role in the career preparation of youth.

Career preparatory activities, such as guest lecturers or field trips to work sites, can start in the elementary grades and continue in a sequence of coordinated and comprehensive activities designed to expose young people to a variety of career options. Career preparatory activities in the high school years allow youth to explore specific careers more closely through mentoring, job shadowing, work-based learning, and/or classroom projects that apply academic concepts to careers. Participating in a structured sequence of courses in a career path or major further exposes youth to potential careers.

Standards and Indicators

2.1	**Youth participate in career awareness, exploration, and preparatory activities in school- and community-based settings.**
2.1.1	Schools and community partners offer courses, programs, and activities that broaden and deepen youths' knowledge of careers and allow for more informed postsecondary education and career choices.
2.1.2	Career preparatory courses, programs, and activities incorporate contextual teaching and learning.

2.1.3	Schools, employers, and community partners collaboratively plan and design career preparatory courses, programs, and activities that support quality standards, practices, and experiences.
2.1.4	Youth and families understand the relationship between postsecondary and career choices, and financial and benefits planning.
2.1.5	Youth understand how community resources, experiences, and family members can assist them in their role as workers.
2.2	**Academic and non-academic courses and programs include integrated career development activities.**
2.2.1	Schools offer broad career curricula that allow youth to organize and select academic, career, or technical courses based on their career interests and goals.
2.2.2	With the guidance of school and/or community professionals, youth use a career planning process (e.g., assessments, career portfolio, etc.) based on career goals, interests, and abilities.
2.2.3	Career preparatory courses, programs, and activities align with labor market trends and specific job requirements.
2.2.4	Career preparatory courses, programs, and activities provide the basic skills crucial to success in a career field, further training, and professional growth.
2.3	**Schools and community partners provide youth with opportunities to participate in meaningful school- and community-based work experiences.**
2.3.1	Youth participate in quality work experiences that are offered to them prior to exiting school (e.g., apprenticeships, mentoring, paid and unpaid work, service learning, school-based enterprises, on-the-job training, internships, etc.).
2.3.2	Work experiences are relevant and aligned with each youth's career interests, postsecondary education plans, goals, skills, abilities, and strengths.
2.3.3	Youth participate in various on-the-job training experiences, including community service (paid or unpaid) specifically linked to school credit or program content.
2.3.4	Youth are able to access, accept, and use individually needed supports and accommodations for work experiences.
2.4	**Schools and community partners provide career preparatory activities that lead to youths' acquisition of employability and technical skills, knowledge, and behaviors.**
2.4.1	Youth have multiple opportunities to develop traditional job preparation skills through job-readiness curricula and training.
2.4.2	Youth complete career assessments to identify school and postschool preferences, interests, skills, and abilities.
2.4.3	Youth exhibit understanding of career expectations, workplace culture, and the changing nature of work and educational requirements.
2.4.4	Youth demonstrate that they understand how personal skill development (e.g., positive attitude, self-discipline, honesty, time management, etc.) affects their employability.
2.4.5	Youth demonstrate appropriate job-seeking behaviors.

3. Youth Development and Youth Leadership

Youth development is a process that prepares a young person to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood and to achieve his or her full potential. Youth development is promoted through activities and experiences that help youth develop social, ethical, emotional, physical, and cognitive competencies.

Youth leadership is part of the youth development process and has internal and external components, such as: (a) the ability to analyze one's own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and vocational goals, and have the self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and abilities to carry them out (including the ability to establish support networks in order to fully participate in community life and effect positive social change); and (b) the ability to guide or direct others on a course of action, influence the opinions and behaviors of others, and serve as a role model (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998).

Conditions that promote healthy youth development are supported through programs and activities in schools and communities. Youth development researchers and practitioners emphasize that effective programs and interventions recognize youths' strengths and thus seek to promote positive development rather than addressing risks in isolation. Youth who are constructively involved in learning and doing and who are connected to positive adults and peers are less likely to engage in risky or self-defeating behaviors.

Providing the conditions for positive youth development is a responsibility shared by families, schools, and communities. The conditions for healthy youth development have been described as follows. Families promote healthy youth development when they:

- provide support;
- develop positive family communication;
- are involved in their adolescent's school;
- have clear rules and consequences and monitor their adolescent's whereabouts;
- provide positive, responsible role models for other adults, adolescents, and siblings;
- expect their adolescent to do well; and
- spend time together.

Schools promote healthy youth development when they:

- expect commitment from youth;
- develop a caring school climate;
- have clear rules and consequences;
- provide positive, responsible adult role models; and
- expect youth to do well.

Communities promote healthy youth development when:

- adults advocate for youth;
- neighbors monitor youths' behavior;
- adults model positive, responsible, and healthy behavior;
- youth model positive, responsible, and healthy behavior; and
- youth programs are available (Konopka Institute, 2000, pp. 3-4).

It is unusual for all these positive influences to be present at the same time; unfortunately, too many youth grow up in circumstances that provide limited support for healthy development.

Well-designed and well-run youth development programs promote youth leadership by involving youth in many roles: needs assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. A growing number of organizations include youth on their boards of directors. Effective programs engage all participating youth in constructive action through activities such as service learning, arts, and athletics, and emphasize broad values such as friendship, citizenship, and learning.

Research on factors promoting resilience in youth at risk has shown that the consistent presence of a single caring adult can have a significant positive impact on a young person's growth and development (Garmezy, 1993). Well-designed programs promote positive relationships with both peers and adults (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, 2004).

Standards and Indicators

3.1	**Youth acquire the skills, behaviors, and attitudes that enable them to learn and grow in self-knowledge, social interaction, and physical and emotional health.**
3.1.1	Youth are able to explore various roles and identities, promoting self-determination.
3.1.2	Youth participate in the creative arts, physical education, and health education programs in school and the community.
3.1.3	Youth are provided accurate information and given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss sexual attitudes.
3.1.4	Youth develop interpersonal skills, including communication, decision-making, assertiveness, and peer refusal skills, as well as the ability to create healthy relationships.
3.1.5	Youth interact with peers and acquire a sense of belonging.
3.1.6	Youth participate in a range of teamwork and networking experiences.
3.1.7	Youth have significant positive relationships with mentors, positive role models, and other nurturing adults.
3.2	**Youth understand the relationship between their individual strengths and desires and their future goals and have the skills to act on that understanding.**
3.2.1	Youth develop ethics, values, and reasoning skills.
3.2.2	Youth develop individual strengths.
3.2.3	Youth demonstrate the ability to set goals and develop a plan.
3.2.4	Youth participate in varied activities that encourage the development of self-determination and self-advocacy skills.

3.3	**Youth have the knowledge and skills to demonstrate leadership and participate in community life.**
3.3.1	Youth learn specific knowledge and skills related to leadership, and explore leadership styles.
3.3.2	Youth learn the history, values, and beliefs of their communities.
3.3.3	Youth demonstrate awareness, understanding, and knowledge of other cultures and societies and show respect for all people.
3.3.4	Youth engage in experiential learning and have opportunities for genuine leadership, taking primary responsibility for developing plans, carrying out decisions, and solving problems.
3.3.5	Youth participate in service to others in their community, their country, and their world.
3.3.6	Youth identify and access resources in their community.
3.4	**Youth demonstrate the ability to make informed decisions for themselves.**
3.4.1	Youth practice self-management and responsible decision-making that reflects healthy choices.
3.4.2	Youth demonstrate independent living skills.

4. Family Involvement

Family involvement is defined as family participation in promoting the social, emotional, physical, academic, and occupational growth of youth. Successful family involvement relies on meaningful collaboration among youth, families, schools, and agencies.

Societal views of family have changed in recent years. Traditional definitions of family have expanded beyond the nuclear family. The definition of family must be inclusive of and respectful of any child's family structure, and therefore is not limited to just parents or legal guardians and children in the home. For example, a family may also include new spouses and partners of parents, extended families (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.), step-relatives, or any other person a youth or family unit considers a family member.

In recent years there has been a significant shift in how schools and communities conceptualize family involvement, from an earlier focus on how families could support schools and community systems to a current orientation toward what schools and communities can do to support families. The goal is to develop partnerships with families that nurture and support all children to learn. These partnerships need to be based on an understanding of the great diversity among families and differences in cultural and socioeconomic conditions. It is clear that an individualized approach toward including families will help build strong home involvement practices at school and in the community.

A family's involvement in their child's education is recognized by many as the single most important factor in school success and achievement. Research has shown that not only does family involvement increase academic achievement as reflected in higher test scores and graduation rates, but it also increases the likelihood that youth will pursue higher education and positively affects their behavior and attitudes (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Successful family involvement:

- is championed by the school's principal and implemented by administrators, teachers, and staff;
- includes nurturing a young person's interests;
- provides for individualized choices rather than general offerings; and
- includes family-staff partnerships at the classroom and programmatic levels.

On a practical level, "involvement" often means getting families to participate in an activity with their adolescent at school or in the community. However, due to the wide range of barriers and individual differences, schools and communities must allow for and promote participation in various ways, at different levels of commitment, and at different frequencies. To that end, effective family involvement approaches can:

- offer a wide variety of ways to participate;
- support family participation in any school or community opportunity;
- account for cultural and individual differences;
- enable participation for all who want to contribute, regardless of skill level; and/or
- provide support to improve participation skills.

Standards and Indicators

4.1	**School staff members demonstrate a strong commitment to family involvement and understand its critical role in supporting high achievement, access to postsecondary education, employment, and other successful adult outcomes.**
4.1.1	School programs and activities support a wide range of family involvement and actively engage families and youth in the home, classroom, school, and community.
4.1.2	School programs and activities are designed, implemented, and shaped by frequent feedback from youth and families.
4.1.3	School staff development includes training on youth and family involvement based on individual strengths, interests, and needs.

4.1.4	Youth and families have clear and accessible information regarding school curricula, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet.
4.2	**Communication among youth, families, and schools is flexible, reciprocal, meaningful, and individualized.**
4.2.1	Youth, families, and school staff utilize telephone, face-to-face, electronic, group meetings, and other methods as needed to support and enhance communication.
4.2.2	School staff individualize communication methods used with youth and families to meet unique needs, including provision of text materials in alternate formats and non-English languages.
4.2.3	Youth, families, and school staff share reports of positive youth behavior and achievement.
4.2.4	Schools, families, and youth enhance communication through use of school programs that improve literacy and communication skills.
4.3	**School staff actively cultivate, encourage, and welcome youth and family involvement.**
4.3.1	School staff use a formal process to help youth and families identify their strengths and needs and to connect them with other youth and families for support, guidance, and assistance.
4.3.2	School staff provide flexible meeting arrangements to accommodate the varied needs of youth and families, addressing childcare needs, transportation needs, language barriers, and time schedules.
4.3.3	Youth, families, and school staff participate in training on parenting, childcare, and positive family-child relationships.
4.3.4	School staff participate in training on creating a welcoming school climate and working collaboratively, respectfully, and reciprocally with youth and families.
4.3.5	All school information, materials, training, and resources reflect the diversity of the community.
4.3.6	School staff provide referrals to community programs and resources that meet the individual needs of youth and families and allow youth and families to make informed choices.
4.4	**Youth, families, and school staff are partners in the development of policies and decisions affecting youth and families.**
4.4.1	Youth, families, and school staff jointly develop a family involvement policy and agreement outlining shared responsibility for improved student achievement and achieving the State's high standards.
4.4.2	School staff regularly share information about school reforms, policies, and performance data with youth and families in a variety of formats.
4.4.3	School staff ensure school policies respect the diversity of youth and family cultures, traditions, values, and faiths found within the community.
4.4.4	School staff provide youth and families with training on school policies, budgets, and reform initiatives to ensure effective participation in decision-making.
4.4.5	Youth and families have a variety of opportunities to participate in decision-making, governance, evaluation, and advisory committees at the school and community levels.

5. Connecting Activities

Connecting activities refers to a flexible set of services, accommodations and supports that help youth gain access to and achieve success within chosen postschool options. Postschool options may include postsecondary education, community service, employment, mental and physical health care, access to transportation, access to financial planning advice and management, and participation in leisure or recreational activities, as well as a number of other adult roles.

Most youth use informal sources of support such as family, friends, community education programs, recreation programs, and employers. Other youth, including many youth with disabilities and at-risk youth, may require assistance and support from public and private organizations, agencies, and programs. Federal and state laws require the provision of individualized services to certain youth, including youth with disabilities, youth in the juvenile justice system, homeless youth, and others. For these youth, receiving appropriate assistance requires service coordination, which is a structured, cooperative effort among organizations and agencies to effectively and efficiently provide services to those who qualify for them.

Organizations and agencies each have a mission and focus for their work and may have specified groups they are legally required to serve, or audiences that they seek to serve. In order for youth to access connecting activities, organizations and agencies must work cooperatively and have clarity concerning their own and each others' responsibilities for providing services.

Standards and Indicators

5.1	**Organizations coordinating services and supports align their missions, policies, procedures, data, and resources to equitably serve all youth and ensure the provision of a unified flexible array of programs, services, accommodations, and supports.**
5.1.1	At the state and community level, public and private organizations communicate, plan, and have quality assurance processes in place within and across organizations to equitably support youths' access to chosen postschool options. Each organization has clear roles and responsibilities, and ongoing evaluation supports continuous improvement.
5.1.2	Organizations have missions, policies, and resources that support seamless linkage and provide youth with access to needed services and accommodations.
5.1.3	Youth and families report that organizations provide, or provide access to, seamlessly linked services, supports, and accommodations as necessary to address each youth's individual transition needs.
5.1.4	Organizations have implemented an agreed-upon process to coordinate eligibility and service provision requirements, helping youth to participate in the postschool options of their choice.
5.1.5	Organizations have shared data systems in place, or have established processes for sharing data, while fully maintaining required confidentiality and obtaining releases as needed. These systems include provisions for collecting and maintaining postschool outcomes data.
5.2	**Organizations connect youth to an array of programs, services, accommodations, and supports, based on an individualized planning process.**

5.2.1	Organizations inform all youth about transition and the programs and services available to them.
5.2.2	Organizations use an interagency team process to share decision-making with youth and families, linking each youth to the services, accommodations, and supports necessary to access a mutually agreed-upon range of postschool options.
5.2.3	Youth report satisfaction with the services, accommodations, and supports received as they connect to chosen postschool options.
5.3	**Organizations hire and invest in the development of knowledgeable, responsive, and accountable personnel who understand their shared responsibilities to align and provide programs, services, resources, and supports necessary to assist youth in achieving their individual postschool goals.**
5.3.1	Personnel (e.g., general and special education teachers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, service coordinators, case managers) are adequately prepared to work with transition-aged youth, understand their shared responsibilities, and use coordination and linkage strategies to access resources, services, and supports across systems to assist youth in achieving their postschool goals.
5.3.2	Organizations hire well-prepared staff; provide ongoing professional development; and have a set of common competencies and outcome measures that hold personnel accountable for their role in ensuring that youth are prepared for, linked to, and participating in activities that will assist them in achieving their postschool goals.
5.3.3	Youth and families report satisfaction with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of personnel they encounter in collaborating organizations during the transition process.

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Supporting Evidence and Research

Research must serve as the foundation for state and local technical assistance and improvement efforts. The five key areas of Schooling, Career Preparatory Experiences, Youth Development and Youth Leadership, Family Involvement, and Connecting Activities provide a useful structure for examining critical areas of need for all youth and their families. The standards and indicators developed by the National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition are based on sound evidence and research that supports their utility in the field. This document highlights the evidence and research that supports each of the key areas and the specific standards and indicators found in this document.

This document identifies and presents research, federal government documents, commissioned reports, and other sources that serve as the foundation upon which the National Standards for Secondary Education and Transition for all Youth are based. This compilation should not be viewed as all-inclusive, but rather as illustrative of the range of research and expert analysis currently available. Cited documents were identified through a variety of sources and strategies including: (a) literature searches within each of the five NASET organizing domains, (b) recommendations by staff of NASET member organizations, (c) members of the five workgroups that developed the standards and indicators, and (d) consultation with recognized experts. It is important to note that this document, and the Standards themselves, will require regular updating in response to new research developments and advancements in professional practice.

1. Schooling

Standards

1.1 SEAs/LEAs provide youth with equitable access to a full range of academic and non-academic courses and programs of study.

1.2 SEAs/LEAs use appropriate standards to assess individual student achievement and learning.

1.3 SEAs/LEAs systematically collect data on school completion rates and postschool outcomes and use these data to plan improvements in educational and postschool programs and services.

1.4 SEAs/LEAs offer educators, families, and community representatives regular opportunities for ongoing skill development, education, and training in planning for positive postschool outcomes for all youth.

1.5 SEAs/LEAs establish and implement high school graduation standards, options, and decisions that are based on meaningful measures of student achievement and learning.

Ensuring Access to Academic and Non-Academic Courses and Programs of Study

To prosper and gain the knowledge and skills necessary for success in a variety of settings, all students—including students with disabilities—must have access to educational curriculum and instruction designed to prepare them for life in the 21st century (Murnane & Levy, 1996). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) underscores this assumption, as does federal legislation in the areas of workforce development, youth development, postsecondary education, and other areas. For students with disabilities, this assumption was the basis, in part, for the requirements included in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) legislation of 1990, 1997, and 2004. Under IDEA, states must provide students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum, including: the identification of performance goals and indicators for these students, definition of how access to the general curriculum is provided, participation in general or alternate assessments, and public reporting of assessment results. All of these requirements are embedded within a context of standards-based education, in which standards for what students should know and be able to do are defined at the state level, appropriate standards-based education is provided, and success in meeting expectations is measured through large-scale assessment systems.

The need for access requirements in legislation was supported by research demonstrating both a lack of educational success (or a lack of any information about educational success) for many students with disabilities (e.g., McGrew, Thurlow, & Spiegel, 1993; Shriner, Gilman, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 1994-95), and the all too common provision of an inappropriately watered-down curriculum (Gersten, 1998) or a curriculum undifferentiated for students with disabilities (McIntosh, Vaughn, Schumm, Haager, & Lee, 1993). According to Nolet and McLaughlin (2000), the 1997 IDEA reauthorization was "intended to ensure that students with disabilities have access to challenging curriculum and that their educational programs are based on high expectations that acknowledge each student's potential and ultimate contribution to society" (p. 2). Within the educational context of the late 1990s and early 2000s, this means that all students with disabilities, regardless of the nature of their disability, need to have access to standards-based education.

Providing meaningful access to the general curriculum requires a multifaceted approach. Appropriate instructional accommodations constitute one piece of this picture (Elliott & Thurlow, 2000). Other elements include the specification of curriculum domains, time allocation, and decisions about what to include or exclude (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2000). The process of specifying the curriculum in a subject matter do-

main requires cataloging the various types of information included in the domain (facts, concepts, principles, and procedures) and setting priorities with respect to outcomes. Allocation of time for instruction should be based on the priorities that have been established. Decisions about what to include or exclude in curriculum should allow for adequate breadth (or scope) of coverage, while maintaining enough depth to assure that students are learning the material. Universal design is another means of ensuring access to the general curriculum (Orkwis & McLane, 1998). When applied to assessment, universal design can help ensure that tests are usable by the largest number of students possible (Thompson, Johnstone, & Thurlow, 2002).

Research indicates that a variety of instructional approaches can be used to increase access to the general curriculum and standards-based instruction (Kame'enui & Carnine, 1998). Approaches such as differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 1999), strategy instruction (Deshler et al., 2001), and technology use (Rose & Meyer, 2000) are showing that access to the curriculum can be substantially improved, with positive outcomes for students with disabilities.

Other researchers have examined the teaching and learning conditions and strategies in schools that lead to positive outcomes for students (Wagner, 1993). Gersten (1998), The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (2004a), and Nolet and McLaughlin (2000) noted that students with disabilities and other at-risk students need access to the full range of curriculum options, not watered-down versions, if they are to meet content and performance standards. Research by Tralli, Colombo, Deshler, and Schumaker (1999) indicated that many low-achieving students can be taught strategies that will raise their performance to meet content standards. Other academic and non-academic components that have been linked to positive youth outcomes include: (a) a broad spectrum of work-based learning components such as service learning, career exploration, and paid work experience (American Youth Policy Forum & Center for Workforce Development, 2000; Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1997; National Commission on the High School Senior Year, 2001); (b) academic and related standards (Nolet and McLaughlin, 2000), and a full range of postsecondary options (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004a); (c) universally designed curricula and materials (Bowe, 2000; Orkwis & McLane, 1998) including culturally appropriate strategies (Burnette, 1999; Hale, 2001); (d) instructional approaches that include the use of technology (Rose & Meyer, 2000) and learning supports including advising and counseling (Aune, 2000); and (e) a move to smaller learning communities (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2001; Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Ort, 2002; Stern & Wing, 2004).

Basing Assessment on Appropriate Standards

States and districts have become engaged in the work of identifying content standards and setting performance standards for what students should know and be able to do in the 21st century (American Federation of Teachers, 2001; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003). While these standards-setting efforts may not initially have considered students with disabilities (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Gutman, & Geenen, 1998), as time has passed, many states have reconsidered their standards in this light. This reconsideration occurred, if for no other reason, because the IDEA assessment requirements indicate that states need to develop alternate assessments for those students who cannot participate in general assessments. The alternate assessments, like the general assessments, are to be aligned to the state's standards, a requirement reinforced by the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The IDEA requirements for inclusion of students with disabilities in assessments and access to the general curriculum have been reinforced strongly by NCLB, which requires that students with disabilities

participate not only in assessments but also in accountability systems. The purpose of these requirements is to ensure that schools are held accountable for access to the general curriculum, high expectations, and improved learning. Requirements for students with disabilities to be included in state accountability systems and for measuring whether schools have achieved adequate yearly progress (AYP) have heightened the importance of access to the general curriculum for all students with disabilities, while also raising concerns about access to transition-related curricula and experiences (Furney, Hasazi, Clark/Keefe, & Hartnett, 2003).

Research (Thurlow, Elliott, & Ysseldyke, 1998) and reviews of standards-based approaches (Elmore & Rothman, 1999; McDonnell, McLaughlin, & Morison, 1997; Thurlow & Johnson, 2000) indicate that assessments and standards must be aligned and that all youth, including those with disabilities, must be included in large-scale assessments and other accountability measures to ensure that accountability systems are valid. Further, schools should provide the supports and resources to help all students meet challenging standards (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2004). Assessment accommodations, alternate assessments, and other performance indicators should be addressed within accountability systems (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004a; Thurlow et al., 1998), and assessment results should be used in individualized educational planning. Standards should also look beyond purely academic goals and include the knowledge and skills required for desired postsecondary outcomes such as employment, higher education, and civic engagement (Achieve, Inc. 2004; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004a).

No Child Left Behind requires that educational decisions be based on student performance data and research-based instructional strategies, and that performance data be shared with parents and other stakeholders. Components of this data-based decision-making process that have been identified through research and best practice reviews include: (a) reporting data in understandable language and in useful categories (Halpern, 1990; Hogan, 2001), (b) sharing data and analyses with a broad range of stakeholders and the general public (Halpern, 1990; Hogan, 2001), (c) including stakeholders in the process of developing data collection instruments (Florio & DeMartini, 1993; Halpern, 1990; Hogan, 2001), and (d) using data to evaluate programs and develop additional programs and services (Halpern, 1990; Hogan, 2001).

Improving School Completion

The prevalence of students dropping out of school is one of the most serious and pervasive problems facing special education programs nationally. The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) found that more than a third of students with disabilities exited school by dropping out. The NLTS data also revealed that factors such as ethnicity and family income are related to dropout rates, and that some groups of special education students are more apt to drop out than others. Of youth with disabilities who do not complete school, the highest proportions are among students with learning disabilities and students with emotional/behavioral disabilities (Wagner et al., 1991).

National data indicate that there has been some improvement in the overall graduation rate of students with disabilities in the United States. Between the 1995-1996 and 1999-2000 school years, the percentage of youth with disabilities graduating with regular diplomas, as reported by states, grew from 52.6% to 56.2%. During the same period, the percentage of students with disabilities reported as having dropped out of school declined from 34.1% to 29.4% (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). While these data are encouraging, the dropout rate for students with disabilities still remains twice that of students without disabilities.

Concern about the dropout problem is increasing because of state and local education agencies' experiences with high-stakes accountability in the context of standards-based reform (Thurlow, Sinclair, &

Johnson, 2002). State and local school districts have identified what students should know and be able to do and have implemented assessments to ensure that students have attained the identified knowledge and skills. However, large numbers of students are not faring well on these assessments. For youth with disabilities, several factors beyond academic achievement affect their performance on these tests, including accurate identification of their disability, provision of needed accommodations, and availability of educational supports that make learning possible regardless of disability-related factors. The provision of accommodations is of particular importance in helping to ensure students' success within state standards and reform initiatives.

In the United States, dropout prevention programs have been implemented and evaluated for decades, but the empirical base of well-researched programs is scant, and well-done evaluations of dropout prevention programs specifically targeted towards students with disabilities are rare. Perhaps the most rigorously researched secondary level program for students with disabilities at risk of dropping out is the Check & Connect program (Christenson, 2002; Sinclair, Christenson, Evelo, & Hurley, 1999). Using randomized assignment to experimental and control groups, these researchers found significant positive effects of their program. Check & Connect includes the following core elements: (a) a monitor/advocate who builds a trusting relationship with the student, monitors the student on risk indicators, and helps problem-solve difficult issues between the student and the school; (b) promotion of student engagement with the school; (c) flexibility on the part of school administrative personnel regarding staffing patterns and use of punitive disciplinary practices; and (d) relevancy of the high school curriculum to students.

The empirical literature on dropout prevention programs for at-risk students (including, but not limited to, students with disabilities) is somewhat broader but still lacking in high-quality research designs. Lehr, Hansen, Sinclair, and Christenson (2003) analyzed dropout studies published between 1980 and 2001; 45 research studies were included in the final integrative review. Of these, less than 20% employed randomized assignment procedures, and not a single study was a true experiment. Nonetheless, the findings were quite consistent with well-researched components of the Check & Connect model and were also consistent with a number of other empirical sources of information. Two common components of successful secondary dropout prevention programs are work-based learning and personal development/self-esteem building (Farrell, 1990; Orr, 1987; Smink, 2002). Equally important, however, is tailoring or contextualizing these and other intervention components to the particular school environment (Lehr et al., 2003). Finally, early intervention also appears to be a powerful component in a school district's array of dropout prevention strategies. In an experimental study collecting longitudinal data for 22 years, Schweinhart and Weikart (1998) documented impressive outcomes of their High/Scope Perry preschool project, which involved three- and four-year-olds who were at risk of school failure.

Skill Development as a Means to Improve Educational Results

Training and professional development for educators and other stakeholders have been identified as critical components of school reform and improving student achievement and other outcomes. Research studies and analyses of best practices have identified the following essential components of training and development programs: (a) ensuring that school personnel have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively perform their duties (Joyce, 1990); (b) incorporating student performance data and effective strategies for improving student achievement into professional development (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1996; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2001); (c) including educators, family members, and other stakeholders on school leadership teams (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition,

2004b); (d) person-centered planning activities for youth, such as involving them in individualized school- and career-related decision-making and planning (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004b); and (e) collaborative leadership (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2001).

Many new teachers are entering the field without the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to support transition. Miller, Lombard, and Hazelkorn (2000) report that few special education teachers have received training on methods, materials, and strategies for developing meaningful Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that include goals and objectives on transition or that specifically address students' transition needs through curriculum and instruction. Further, many special education teachers underutilize community work-experience programs and fail to coordinate referrals to adult service providers.

Beyond preservice training, high-quality continuing professional development is needed to ensure that teachers are up-to-date and fully able to support students in the transition from school to adulthood. Miller et al. (2000), in a national study, found that nearly 8 out of 10 teachers (79%) reported receiving five hours or less of inservice training regarding inclusion of students with disabilities in their districts' school-to-work programs. Further, nearly half (49%) indicated they had received no inservice training related to inclusionary practices for students with disabilities. These findings are consistent with the report published by the National Center for Education Statistics regarding the preparation and qualifications of public school teachers (Lewis et al., 1999). This report notes that fewer than 2 out of 10 teachers (19%) spent more than eight hours per year on professional development activities to address the needs of students with disabilities, despite the fact that teachers report that professional development of longer duration is more effective. The promotion of improved levels of collaboration between general education and special education is in response to another area of need. General education classroom teachers, work-study coordinators, career and technical education instructors, and high school counselors all play an important role in supporting the transition of students with disabilities. These general education personnel need training and other support to help them work effectively with students with disabilities. A recent study of personnel needs in special education (Carlson, Brauen, Klein, Schroll, & Willig, 2001) found that general educators' confidence in serving students with disabilities was dependent on their relationship with special education teachers: those who often received instruction-related suggestions from special educators felt significantly more confident.

Basing Graduation Requirements on Meaningful Measures and Criteria

Requirements that states set for graduation can include completing Carnegie Unit requirements (a certain number of class credits earned in specific areas), successfully passing a competency test, passing high school exit exams, and/or passing a series of benchmark exams (Guy, Shin, Lee, & Thurlow, 1999; Johnson & Thurlow, 2003; Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Anderson, 1995). Currently, 27 states have opted to require that students pass state and/or local exit exams in order to receive a standard high school diploma (Johnson & Thurlow, 2003). This practice has been increasing since the mid-1990s (Guy et al., 1999; Thurlow et al., 1995). States may also require any combination of the above requirements. Variability in graduation requirements is complicated further by an increasingly diverse set of diploma options. In addition to the standard high school diploma, options now include special education diplomas, certificates of completion, occupational diplomas, and others.

Many states have gone to great lengths to improve the proportion of students with disabilities passing state exit exams and meeting other requirements for graduation. Strategies have included grade-level retention,

specialized tutoring and instruction during the school day and after school, and weekend or summer tutoring programs. While these may be viewed as appropriate interventions and strategies, there is little research evidence supporting these practices. Available research indicates, for example, that repeating a grade does not improve the overall achievement of students with disabilities (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1992; Holmes, 1989).

The implications of state graduation requirements must be thoroughly understood, considering the negative outcomes students experience when they fail to meet state standards for graduation. The availability of alternative diploma options can have a considerable impact on raising graduation rates. However, the ramifications of receiving different types of diplomas need to be considered. A student who receives a non-standard diploma may find their access to postsecondary education or jobs is limited. It is also important for parents and educators to know that if a student graduates from high school with a standard high school diploma, the student is no longer entitled to special education services unless a state or district has a policy allowing continued services under such circumstances. Most states do not have such policies.

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2. Career Preparatory Experiences

Standards

2.1 Youth participate in career awareness, exploration, and preparatory activities in school- and community-based settings.

2.2 Academic and non-academic courses and programs include integrated career development activities.

2.3 Schools and community partners provide youth with opportunities to participate in meaningful school- and community-based work experiences.

2.4 Schools and community partners provide career preparatory activities that lead to youths' acquisition of employability and technical skills, knowledge, and behaviors.

Youth Benefit from Career Preparatory Activities in Schools and Communities

Several positive academic and vocational effects are attributed to school-based career development—specifically, career advising and curriculum-based interventions such as computer-based career guidance. These positive effects include higher grades, better relationships with teachers, increased career planning, greater knowledge of careers, improved self-esteem, improved self-knowledge, and less career indecision (Hughes & Karp, 2004; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997).

Participating in Career and Technical Education (CTE) results in short- and medium-term earning benefits for most students at both the secondary and postsecondary levels and increased academic course taking and achievement by students, including students with disabilities (Castellano, Stone, Stringfield, Farley, & Wayman, 2004; Plank, 2001; Stone & Aliaga, 2003). Those who complete both a strong academic curriculum and a vocational program of study (*dual concentrators*) may have better outcomes than those who pursue one or the other (Silverberg, Warner, Fong, & Goodwin, 2004; Plank, 2001; Stone & Aliaga, 2003). CTE participants are more likely to graduate from high school (Schargel & Smink, 2001; Smink & Schargel, 2004), be employed in higher paying jobs, and enroll in postsecondary education (Hughes, Bailey, & Mechur, 2001).

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 reinforces the need for career preparatory experiences for all youth. WIA services include: (a) comprehensive career development services based on individualized assessment and planning, (b) youth connections and access to the One-Stop career center system, and (c) performance accountability focused on employment.

While work experiences are beneficial to all youth, they are particularly valuable for youth with disabilities (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Colley & Jamison, 1998; Kohler, 1993; Kohler & Rusch, 1995; Luecking & Fabian, 2000; Mooney & Scholl, 2004; Morningstar, 1997; Rogan, 1997; Wehman, 1996). Youth who participate in occupational education and special education in integrated settings are more likely to be competitively employed than youth who have not participated in such activities (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Colley & Jamison, 1998; Luecking & Fabian, 2000; Mooney & Scholl, 2004; Rogan, 1997).

Activities in School-Based and Community Settings

Career preparation components that are related to positive secondary and postsecondary school outcomes include: (a) opportunities for both school-based and community-based experiences that expose youth to a broad array of career paths, experiences, and occupations; (b) opportunities for youth to build relevant skills, academic knowledge, and personal competencies required in the workplace and for continued

education; and (c) opportunities for youth to tailor their career experiences to meet their individual needs (American Youth Policy Forum & Center for Workforce Development, 2000; Castellano, Stringfield, Stone & Lewis, 2002). School-based and community-based career preparatory activities provide the skills and knowledge young people need to make more informed decisions, to progress toward postsecondary education, and to be successful in a career (National Commission on the High School Senior Year, 2001). Career preparatory activities also provide youth with the opportunity to test academic theories through real-world applications (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003). Contextual learning is at the core of career preparatory activities; community-based learning helps youth to build upon their life experiences and apply existing knowledge at the workplace (Pierce & Jones, 1998). Additionally, such activities allow students to see the practical value of the high school curriculum (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2004).

Quality career development goes beyond simple academic or vocational guidance to help align academic experiences with student interests and strengths, learning preferences, and education goals. Through activities such as career awareness in the elementary years and career exploration in secondary grades, youth not only learn about a variety of careers and occupations but also begin to identify the skills required to succeed in these areas, allowing them to make better-informed career decisions (American Youth Policy Forum & Center for Workforce Development, 2000; Castellano, Stringfield, Stone & Lewis, 2002).

Integrated Career Development Activities

Effective career development approaches that integrate academic and non-academic components include: (a) a process for career planning and goal setting (Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997; Goldberger, Keough, & Almeida, 2001), (b) alignment of school-based career preparatory experiences with employer and occupational requirements and with postsecondary education plans (Bremer & Madzar, 1995; Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003; Haimson & Bellotti, 2001), and (c) teaching of basic skills needed for career success and growth (Haimson & Bellotti, 2001; Luecking & Fabian, 2000; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997).

Meaningful School- and Community-based Work Experiences

Through partnerships with employers, schools are able to provide a range of learning experiences for students. Nearly 55% offer job shadowing, 44% offer co-op programs, 40% provide school-based enterprises, 35% provide mentoring activities, and 34% offer student internships (Medrich, Ramer, Merola, Moskovitz, & White, 1998). With the number of school/employer partnerships on the rise, participating businesses are now recognizing that improved work-based learning for youth means better-prepared future employees, reduced recruitment costs for firms, and reduced employee turnover (Wills, 1998).

Components of meaningful school- and community-based work experiences include high-quality work experiences, careful planning to match work experiences with each youth's interests and assets, linkages between work experience and academic content or school curriculum, and individual supports and accommodations (American Youth Policy Forum & Center for Workforce Development, 2000; Benz et al., 1997; Bremer & Madzar, 1995; Colley & Jamison, 1998; Goldberger et al., 2001; Haimson & Bellotti, 2001; Luecking & Fabian, 2000; Mooney & Scholl, 2004; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997; Scholl & Mooney, 2005).

Acquisition of Employability and Technical Skills, Knowledge, and Behaviors

Work-based learning is an integral part of the academic curriculum, reinforcing academic and occupational skills learned in the classroom, providing career exploration and a broad understanding of an occupation or industry, motivating students, introducing generic workplace skills, and teaching entry-level

technical skills (American Youth Policy Forum & Center for Workforce Development, 2000). Working closely with employers allows schools to define the knowledge and skills necessary for graduates to successfully perform in college and the workplace (Achieve, 2004).

Through formal and informal work-based learning, students begin to apply academic knowledge to workplace settings and gain greater respect for and facility in the types of learning required by the workplace. Students acquire skills and develop attitudes that are critical to on-the-job success, including: (a) an understanding that learning often is related to a clear and meaningful goal, (b) the need for quality and the consequences of compromised quality, (c) critical thinking, (d) different approaches to problem-solving, (e) the importance of immediate feedback for learning and improvement, (f) improved skills for working in teams, (g) appreciation of the importance of deadlines, and (h) a higher motivation to examine a particular subject more deeply (Center for Workforce Development, 1998).

Strategies leading to the acquisition of employability and technical knowledge, skills, and attitudes include: (a) instruction in employability skills (Bremer & Madzar, 1995; Kohler, 1994; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997); (b) assessments of career interests and abilities (Bailey & Hughes, 1999; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1997; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997), (c) exposure to and understanding of workplace expectations and conditions (Luecking & Fabian, 2000; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997); (d) life skills instruction and development in areas such as self-determination, self-evaluation, planning, and social-behavioral skills (Kohler, 1994; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997); and (e) job-seeking activities (Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997).

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3. Youth Development and Youth Leadership

Standards

3.1 Youth acquire the skills, behaviors, and attitudes that enable them to learn and grow in self-knowledge, social interaction, and physical and emotional health.

3.2 Youth understand the relationship between their individual strengths and desires and their future goals, and have the skills to act on that understanding.

3.3 Youth have the knowledge and skills to demonstrate leadership and participate in community life.

3.4 Youth demonstrate the ability to make informed decisions for themselves.

Youth Develop Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes That Enable Them to Learn and Grow

Ferber, Pittman, and Marshall (2002) identified five areas in which youth development should be promoted: learning (developing positive basic and applied academic attitudes, skills, and behaviors), thriving (developing physically healthy attitudes, skills, and behaviors), connecting (developing positive social attitudes, skills, and behaviors), working (developing positive vocational attitudes, skills, and behaviors), and leading (developing positive civic attitudes, skills, and behaviors). While noting the limited amount of quality research on youth development and leadership (Benson & Saito, 2000; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Edelman, Gill, Comerford, Larson, & Hare, 2004), a number of studies and program evaluations have identified components of effective youth development programs and curricula. These components include: strong relationships with adults (Boyd, 2001; James, 1999; Moore & Zaff, 2002; Woyach, 1996); training in mediation, conflict resolution, team dynamics, and project management (Edelman et al., 2004); new roles and responsibilities based on experiences and resources that provide opportunity for growth (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003); teamwork and peer networking (Boyd, 2001;Woyach, 1996); and opportunities to practice communication, negotiation, and refusal skills (ACT for Youth, 2003).

Youth development is best promoted through activities and experiences that help youth develop competencies in social, ethical, emotional, physical, and cognitive domains (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The Konopka Institute (2000) identified components of effective youth development programs, including: decision-making; interaction with peers; acquiring a sense of belonging; experimenting with their own identity, with relationships to others, and with ideas; and participating in the creative arts, physical activity, and health education. The American Youth Policy Forum conducted a national review of 50 evaluations of youth interventions and identified nine basic principles of effective youth programming and practice, including: (a) high quality implementation; (b) high standards and expectations for participating youth; (c) participation of caring, knowledgeable adults; (d) parental involvement; (e) taking a holistic approach; (f) viewing youth as valuable resources and contributors to their communities; (g) high community involvement; (h) long term services, support, and follow-up; and (i) including work-based and vocational curricula as key components of programming (James,1999). The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS) *Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education* (1997) included: (a) providing accurate information about human sexuality; (b) providing an opportunity for young people to question, explore, and assess their sexual attitudes; (c) helping young people develop interpersonal skills, including communication, decision-making, assertiveness, and peer refusal skills; and (d) helping young people exercise responsibility regarding sexual relationships.

Youth Understand the Relationship between Their Strengths and Their Goals, and Have the Skills to Act on That Understanding

Research on social-emotional learning has found that instruction in self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making results in greater attachment to school (Blum, McNeely, & Rinehart, 2002; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Greater attachment to school, in turn, leads to less risky behavior, more developmental assets, better academic performance, and improved long-term outcomes such as higher graduation rates, higher incomes, lower arrest rates, and fewer pregnancies (Blum, Beuhring, & Rinehart, 2000; Wilson, Gottfredson, & Najaka, 2001).

Youth who participate in organizational leadership roles, planning activities, making presentations, and participating in extra-curricular activities show higher levels of self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and self-determination (Edelman et al., 2004; Larson, 2000, Sagawa, 2003). Other components of effective youth development programs include discussing conflicting values and formulating value systems (Konopka Institute, 2000); developing ethics, values, and ethical reasoning (Boyd, 2001; Woyach, 1996); developing personal development plans; assessing individual strengths and weaknesses; and skill-building in goal-setting, planning, and self-advocacy (Edelman et al., 2004). Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) identified similar self-determination and self-advocacy skills needed by students with disabilities such as communicating interests and preferences, setting achievable goals, planning and time management, problem-solving, negotiating and persuading, leadership skills, and self-monitoring and reinforcement.

Youth development and youth leadership experiences can have positive effects on behaviors and skills including self-efficacy, self-determination, communication, and problem-solving. Each of these skills is linked to higher student achievement, lower dropout rates, and/or better postschool outcomes(Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem & Ferber,2003; Sagawa, 2003). Adolescents involved in community volunteer service-learning programs that featured both community volunteering and classroom activities were less likely to be sexually active and become pregnant than teens not involved in such programs. Combining sex education with youth development activities (such as educational mentoring, employment, sports, or the performing arts) also reduced frequency of sexual activity as well as pregnancies and births (Manlove et al., 2002).

Youth involved in civic engagement programs were more likely "to be more involved in school, to graduate from high school, to hold more positive civic attitudes, and to avoid teen pregnancy and drug use than those who are not" (Zaff, Calkins, Bridges, & Margie, 2002, p. 1). Teens' relationships with adults outside their families—teachers, mentors, neighbors, and unrelated adults—can promote their social development and overall skills. These relationships can be informal or part of formal mentoring programs (Hair, Jager, & Garrett, 2002; Tierney & Grossman, 1995). Research by Gambone, Klem, and Connell indicates that supportive relationships, particularly with parents, have "strong, positive effects on adolescents' learning to be productive and to navigate by the end of their high school years" (2002, p.38).

Youth Develop the Knowledge and Skills to Demonstrate Leadership and Participate in Community Life

A study by Woyach (1996) identified 12 principles for effective youth leadership programs, including knowledge and skills related to leadership; the history, values, and beliefs of communities; leadership styles; awareness, understanding and tolerance of other people, cultures and societies; experiential learning and opportunities for genuine leadership; and service to others in the community, country, and world. Boyd (2001)

and Ferber et al. (2002) also found experiential learning, such as service-learning projects, to be an effective method for teaching leadership skills and applying academic skills. Additional experiential learning or on-the-job leadership experiences that have proven to be effective include mentoring and counseling, formal leadership training programs, internships, special assignments, and simulations or case studies (James, 1999; Lambrecht, Hopkins, Moss, & Finch, 1997); activities that convey information about life, careers, and places beyond the neighborhood, as well as community service opportunities (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995); and activities providing a sense of connection to the community, problem solving and social skills, and after-school recreation programs (Komro & Stigler, 2000).

Effective youth leadership experiences identified by research include placement in a variety of challenging situations with problems to solve and choices to make under conditions of manageable risk; and placement in a supportive environment with supervisors who provide positive role models and constructive support, and mentors who provide counseling (James, 1999; Lambrecht et al., 1997). For many youth, leadership skills are developed during structured extracurricular (recreational and social development) activities, such as clubs, service organizations, sports programs, and fine arts (Larson, 2000; Wehman, 1996). Few youth with disabilities participate in these types of activities and groups unless teachers, families, and other advocates facilitate these conditions (Amado, 1993; Halpern et al., 1997; Moon, 1994). Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) found that students with disabilities who have self-determination skills have more positive educational outcomes and have a greater chance of being successful in making the transition to adulthood, including achieving employment and community independence. For youth with disabilities, the importance of developing self-advocacy skills (those skills individuals need to advocate on their own behalf) has been well-documented (Agran, 1997; Sands & Wehmeyer, 1996; Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1994; Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998).

Research on factors promoting resilience in youth at risk has shown that the consistent presence of a single caring adult can have a significant positive impact on a young person's growth and development (Garmezy, 1993). Well-designed programs include experiences that promote positive relationships with both peers and adults (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disabilities for Youth, 2004).

Successful youth development programs must be able to adapt to the social, cultural, and ethnic diversity of the young people that they serve and the communities in which they operate (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Programs that promote understanding and tolerance in their participants have been shown to promote the development of positive social behaviors, attitudes, and skills (Edelman et al., 2004; Ferber, Pittman & Marshall, 2002).

Youth leadership is part of the youth development process and has internal and external components, such as the ability to analyze one's own strengths and weaknesses, set and pursue personal and vocational goals, guide or direct others on a course of action, influence the opinions and behaviors of others, and serve as a role model (Wehmeyer et al., 1998). Evaluations of youth development programs have demonstrated that young people who participate in youth leadership and civic engagement activities consistently get the supports and opportunities needed for healthy youth development (Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, 2003).

Youth Have the Ability to Make Informed Decisions

Parents, educators, and researchers agree on the need to promote self-determination, self-advocacy, and student-centered planning. Self-determination, the combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior, has become an important

part of special education and related services provided to individuals with disabilities (Abery & Stancliffe, 1996). Self-determination skills include self-advocacy, social skills, organizational skills, community and peer connection, communication, conflict resolution, career skill building, and career development and computer/technological competency (Martin & Marshall, 1996; Wehmeyer, Kelchner, & Richards, 1996). Research has found that helping students acquire and exercise self-determination skills is a strategy that leads to more positive educational outcomes. For example, Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) found that one year after graduation, students with learning disabilities who received self-determination training were more likely to achieve positive adult outcomes, including being employed at a higher rate and earning more per hour, when compared to peers who had not received the training. Youth development programs foster self-determination by increasing participants' capacity for independent thinking, self-advocacy, and development of internal standards and values. (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002).

Starting with the 1990 IDEA legislation, transition services must be based on students' needs and take into account students' interests and preferences. To accomplish this goal, students must be prepared to participate in planning for their future. The IDEA 1997 regulations support students' participation in planning for their future by requiring that all special education students be invited to their IEP meetings when transition goals are to be discussed. The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has played a major role in advancing a wide range of self-determination strategies through sponsored research and demonstration projects.

Research indicates that many students are attending their IEP meetings (Hasazi, Furney, & DeStefano, 1999; Johnson & Sharpe, 2000). There remain, however, a significant number who are not involved. This raises questions as to whether these students are not being extended opportunities for involvement, or are simply choosing not to attend. Effective student participation in the IEP process requires that students have the skills to move their lives in the directions they themselves choose, and have the support of their school and family and the adult service system in accomplishing their goals.

A common element of many exemplary self-determination programs is the presence of an individual with a philosophy, and the accompanying motivation, to see self-determination practices implemented or enhanced in his or her school or district. Exemplary self-determination programs also have strong administrative support encouraging the implementation of self-determination programs in schools. Without administrative support, student self-determination programs are often limited to individual classrooms and teachers who are dedicated to doing what they can to further their students' self-determination despite limited resources and inadequate administrative commitment (Wood & Test, 2001).

Educators, parents, and students consistently recommend that self-determination instruction begin early, well before high school. This recommendation is consistent with published recommendations for self-determination instruction (Wood & Test, 2001). Natural opportunities for making choices occur throughout life, and increased opportunities to express preferences and choices, beginning in early childhood, can heighten an individual's sense of self-esteem and self-direction. Izzo and Lamb (2002) suggested that schools seeking to encourage self-determination and positive postschool outcomes for students with disabilities should: (a) empower parents as partners in promoting self-determination and career development skills; (b) facilitate student-centered IEP meetings and self-directed learning models; (c) increase students' awareness of their disability and needed accommodations; (d) offer credit-bearing classes in self-determination and careers; (e) teach and reinforce students' internal locus of control; (f) develop self-advocacy skills and support student application of these skills; (g) infuse self-determination and career development skills into the general education curriculum; and (h) develop and implement work-based learning programs for all students.

Youth who participate in developmentally appropriate decision making activities and those who have access to meaningful youth development supports and opportunities are better equipped to make a successful transition to adult life (Gambone, Klem, and Connell 2002). Effective practices relating to decision-making include: opportunities for critical thinking and active, self-directed learning (ACT for Youth, 2003); setting goals and solving problems (Boyd, 2001; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995); and gaining experience in decision-making (Boyd, 2001; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995; Konopka Institute, 2000).

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4. Family Involvement

Standards

4.1 School staff members demonstrate a strong commitment to family involvement and understand its critical role in supporting high achievement, access to postsecondary education, employment, and other successful adult outcomes.

4.2 Communication among youth, families, and schools is flexible, reciprocal, meaningful, and individualized.

4.3 School staff actively cultivate, encourage, and welcome youth and family involvement.

4.4 Youth, families, and school staff are partners in the development of policies and decisions affecting youth and families.

Demonstrating Commitment to Family Involvement and the Family's Role in Supporting High Achievement and Postschool Results

A number of research studies, literature reviews, and program evaluations have linked family involvement and support to positive outcomes for youth with and without disabilities (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hughes et al., 1997; James & Partee, 2003; Keith et al., 1998; Kohler, 1996; Sanders, Epstein, & Connors-Tadros, 1999; Shaver & Walls, 1998; Simon, 2001; Yap & Enoki, 1994). These outcomes include improved achievement test results, decreased risk of dropout, improved attendance, improved student behavior, higher grades, higher grade point average, greater commitment to schoolwork, and improved attitude toward school. Some studies have found that characteristics of family involvement are correlated with social, racial/ethnic, and economic variables (Catsambis & Garland, 1997; Harry, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; Muller & Kerbow, 1993). Research findings indicate the appropriateness of refraining from broad generalizations with regard to family involvement and its relationship to increased student achievement, as such generalizations mask the complexity of the issue. The research literature indicates that student achievement outcomes differ depending on: (a) the particular component(s) of family involvement studied, and whether data analyzed were provided by parents or by schools; (b) achievement measure(s) used (e.g. achievement test scores, grades, GPA); (c) cultural or racial/ethnic groups involved; (d) the subject matter (e.g. mathematics, reading, science) being tested; (e) income levels of the parents; and (f) gender of the parents (Harry, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; National Middle School Association, 2000).

Although several studies have examined the relationship between family involvement during the K-12 years and student outcomes (Cotton & Wicklund, 1989; Desimone, 1999), the majority have focused on the elementary school setting. Much less is understood about the impact of family involvement on middle and high school students (Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Brough, 1997; Keith et al., 1993; Rutherford & Billing, 1995; Trivette et al., 1995). Morningstar, Turnbull, and Turnbull (1995) found that secondary students with disabilities themselves report the need for their families to guide and support them as they plan for the future.

Components of effective family involvement identified in the literature include: (a) engaging and supporting families in a wide range of activities from preschool through high school (Epstein, Simon, & Salinas, 1997; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; James & Partee, 2003; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Sanders & Epstein, 2000), (b) collaborative plans based on annual feedback (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000; Mapp, 1997), (c) regular staff development on student and family involvement (Boethel, 2003; Furney, & Salembier, 2000; Harry, 2002; Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; James & Partee, 2003;

Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Kohler, 1998;; Lamorey, 2002; National PTA, 1997; Rutherford & Billing, 1995), and (d) clear information on school or program expectations, activities, services, and options (Catsambis, 1998; Grigal & Neubert, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 1997; Leuchovius, Hasazi, & Goldberg, 2001; National PTA, 1997; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997).

Strengthening Communication Between Youth, Families, and Schools

The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs (National PTA, 1997) states that "communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful." Outreach, communication, and relationships with families have been identified as key ingredients of effective programs and schools (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; James & Partee, 2003; Keith, et al., 1998; Mapp, 1997; Rutherford & Billing, 1995; Sanders, et al., 1999; Yap & Enoki, 1994) and are especially important for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Espinosa, 1995; Martinez & Velazquez, 2000). Effective communication strategies identified in the literature include: (a) a variety of communication methods (James & Partee, 2003; National PTA, 1997; Sanders & Harvey, 2000), (b) communication based on individual student and family needs and that includes alternate formats and languages as needed (Brough & Irvin, 2001; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Harry, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; James & Partee, 2003; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Kohler, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research, 1999), (c) reports of positive student behavior and achievement (Epstein et al., 1997; National PTA, 1997), and (d) improving the literacy skills of English Language Learners (Boethel, 2003; Espinosa, 1995; Yap & Enoki, 1994).

Family relationships and support can play a particularly influential role in the lives of youth from diverse cultural communities (Harry, 2002; Hosack & Malkmus, 1992; Irvin, Thorin, & Singer, 1993; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; Leung, 1992). Despite recognition of the importance of student and family involvement, families are resources that have been underutilized by transition and vocational rehabilitation professionals (Czerlinsky & Chandler, 1993; DeFur & Taymans, 1995; Marrone, Helm, & Van Gelder, 1997; Salembier & Furney, 1997). Although parents and professionals are working to forge new relationships, there remains a need to build the level of trust and collaboration between them (Guy, Goldberg, McDonald, & Flom, 1997).

The importance of establishing credibility and trust with culturally and racially diverse populations cannot be overemphasized; cultural responsiveness is essential to establishing such confidence (Harry, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research, 1999). Tailoring training to the cultural traditions of families improves recruitment and outcome effectiveness (Kumpfer & Alvarado, 1995). For example, parents from culturally and racially diverse populations may prefer one-on-one meetings rather than more traditional training formats such as workshops (Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, 1998; National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research, 1999). Additional strategies may include family-mentoring programs, needs assessment surveys, and working with culturally specific community organizations that have created relationships of trust (Harry, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2002). Establishing effective levels of communication between youth, families, and school professionals is critically important in relation to these research findings.

Embracing Youth and Family Involvement

While the value of family involvement is well-understood, the current system does not make it easy for families to be effective partners in the transition process. Multiple service programs form a confusing,

fragmented, and inconsistent system (General Accounting Office, 1995). Parent centers report that families of young adults with disabilities are deeply frustrated by the lack of coordinated, individualized services for high school students and the paucity of resources, programs, and opportunities for young adults once they graduate (PACER, 2000). Cultural differences may further complicate relationships with professionals (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1998).

Recent surveys indicate that families seek information on a variety of issues including: helping youth develop self-advocacy skills; balancing standards-based academic instruction with functional life skills training; inclusive education practices at the secondary level; postsecondary options for young adults with developmental and cognitive disabilities; pre-employment experiences and employment options that lead to competitive employment; financial planning; resources available to youth through the workforce investment, vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, and Social Security systems; better collaboration with community resources; housing options; and interacting with the juvenile justice system (PACER, 2001).

A number of studies and program evaluations highlight the importance of actively encouraging family involvement and creating a welcoming school or program climate for families (Boethel, 2003; Brough & Irvin, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; James & Partee, 2003; Rutherford & Billing, 1995; Simon, 2001;Yap & Enoki, 1994). Strategies for cultivating family involvement include: (a) a formal process identifying strengths and needs and connecting families and students to support and assistance (Kohler, 1993; Rutherford & Billing, 1995); (b) meeting schedules that accommodate scheduling, transportation, and other family needs (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Martinez & Velazquez, 2000; National PTA, 1997); (c) family training on positive family-child relationships (James & Partee, 2003; National PTA, 1997; Simmons, Stevenson, & Strnad, 1993); (d) staff development on welcoming and working collaboratively with families and students (Boethel, 2003; Espinosa, 1995; Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000; Kreider, 2002; National PTA, 1997); (e) supports and materials that reflect community diversity (Boethel, 2003; Furney & Salembier, 2000; Harry, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; Martinez & Velazquez, 2000); and (f) referrals to community resources (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Youth, Families, and School Staff as Partners in Policy Development and Decision Making

Family involvement as well as training in program design, planning, and implementation are significant factors leading to positive youth outcomes (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 1998; Sanders et al., 1999; Simon, 2001). Research also indicates that parent participation and leadership in transition planning are important in successful transitions for youth with disabilities (DeStefano, Heck, Hasazi, & Furney, 1999; Furney, Hasazi, & DeStefano, 1997; Hasazi, Furney, & DeStefano, 1999; Kohler, 1993; Taymans, Corbey, & Dodge, 1995). Strategies for effective partnering of families, educators, and community members include: (a) an accessible and understandable decision-making and problem-solving process for partners (National PTA, 1997); (b) dissemination of information about policies, goals, and reforms to families and students (Kohler, 2000; Lopez, 2002; National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research, 1999); (c) policies that respect diversity (Boethel, 2003; Harry, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; National PTA, 1997); (d) adequate training for families on policy, reform, and related issues (James & Partee, 2003; National PTA, 1997); and (e) the inclusion of students and families on decision-making, governance, and other program and school committees (Furney & Salembier, 2000; James & Partee, 2003; National PTA, 1997; Sanders et al., 1999).

Further, meaningful family involvement and participation must expand beyond the individual student level. Student and family involvement are important in making service systems and professionals aware of their needs (Gloss, Reiss, & Hackett, 2000). Family members can be fully included in the research process (Turnbull, Friesen, & Ramirez, 1998) and at all levels of policy and service delivery planning. Involving family members in the development and evaluation of federal, state, and local policies and practices helps assure that the services and supports available to youth with disabilities are of the highest quality (Federal Interagency Coordinating Council, 2000). In addition, research indicates that family participation and leadership in transition planning practices enhances the implementation of transition policy (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002). In order for family members to expand participation beyond their own child, they must have opportunities to increase their own knowledge and develop leadership skills.

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5. Connecting Activities

Standards

5.1 Organizations coordinating services and supports align their missions, policies, procedures, data, and resources to equitably serve all youth and ensure the provision of a unified flexible array of programs, services, accommodations, and supports.

5.2 Organizations connect youth to an array of programs, services, accommodations, and supports, based on an individualized planning process.

5.3 Organizations hire and invest in the development of knowledgeable, responsive, and accountable personnel who understand their shared responsibilities to align and provide programs, services, resources, and supports necessary to assist youth in achieving their individual postschool goals.

Organizations Collaborate to Serve all Youth Equitably With a Variety of Programs and Services

Effective transition planning and services depend upon functional linkages among schools, rehabilitation services, and other human service and community agencies. However, several factors have stood as barriers to effective collaboration. These include: (a) lack of shared knowledge and vision by students, parents, and school and agency staff around students' postschool goals and the transition resources necessary to support students' needs and interests (Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, Luecking, & Mack, 2002); (b) lack of shared information across school and community agencies, and lack of coordinated assessment and planning processes (Benz, Johnson, Mikkelsen, & Lindstrom, 1995); (c) lack of meaningful roles for students and parents in a transition decision-making process that respects both students' emerging need for independence and self-determination, and parents' continuing desire to encourage and support their children during the emancipation process that is part of becoming a productive, contributing young adult (Furney, Hasazi, & DeStefano, 1997); (d) lack of meaningful information on anticipated postschool services needed by students, and lack of follow-up data on postschool outcomes and continuing support needs of students that can be used to guide improvement in systems collaboration and linkages (Hasazi, Furney, & DeStefano, 1999; Johnson & Sharpe, 2000); (e) lack of effective practices for establishing and using state and local interagency teams to build capacity for collaboration and systems linkages; and (f) lack of coordinated eligibility requirements and funding for agency services (Luecking, Crane, & Mooney, 2002).

These barriers to effective collaboration are not insurmountable. Research suggests that systems can work more effectively together, and student achievement of meaningful secondary and postschool outcomes can be improved, through: (a) the use of written and enforceable interagency agreements that structure the provision of collaborative transition services (Johnson et al., 2002); (b) the development and delivery of interagency and cross-agency training opportunities; (c) the use of interagency planning teams to facilitate and monitor capacity building efforts in transition (Furney et al., 1997); and (d) the provision of a secondary curriculum that supports student identification and accomplishment of transition goals and prepares youth for success in work, postsecondary, and community living environments (Hasazi et al., 1999). Promising collaboration strategies have been proposed to link secondary education systems with employers and community employment services funded under the Workforce Investment Act (Luecking, Crane, & Mooney, 2002; Mooney & Crane, 2002) and with postsecondary education systems (Flannery, Slovic, Dalmau, Bigaj, & Hart, 2000; Hart, Zimbrich, & Whelley, 2002; Stodden & Jones, 2002).

Collaborative approaches bring together community agencies to focus their collective expertise and combined resources to improve the quality of transition planning and services for youth. This sharing of resources, knowledge, skills, and data requires planned and thoughtful collaboration among all participants. The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002) suggested connecting special education to outside services such as vocational rehabilitation, as a way to improve postschool outcomes for youth. The Commission also found that not enough interagency activity occurs between schools and vocational rehabilitation agencies. Further, fiscal disincentives should be removed and waiver options provided to promote cost-sharing and resource-pooling among agencies to improve the availability and cost effectiveness of transition services and supports for students with disabilities.

Knowledgeable, Responsive, and Accountable Personnel are in Place to Help Youth Achieve Their Goals

In addition to the need for collaboration among youth-serving organizations, these organizations must be committed to supporting the development and retention of personnel who are knowledgeable, responsive, and accountable. State and local education agencies across the United States are experiencing a shortage of qualified personnel to serve children and youth with disabilities. In 1999-2000, more than 12,000 openings for special education teachers were left vacant or filled by substitutes (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Further, an additional 31,000 positions were filled by teachers who were not fully certified for their positions (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

New teachers are entering the field without the specific knowledge and skills needed to support transition. Miller, Lombard, and Hazelkorn (2000) reported that few special education teachers have received training on methods, materials, and strategies for developing meaningful IEPs that include transition goals and objectives and specifically address students' needs through curriculum and instruction. Further, many special education teachers underutilize community work-experience programs and fail to coordinate referrals to adult service providers.

Teachers and others assisting students in the transition from school to adult life need specialized skills and knowledge. Several states have developed state licensure or certification for transition coordinators, support services coordinators, work experience coordinators, and school vocational rehabilitation counselors. However, these licensure and certification programs are few in number and have been difficult to maintain, due to costs and competing demands for personnel in other, broader classifications of special education teacher licensure, such as learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disorders.

Rehabilitation and career counselors are often the only link that school programs have to postschool environments, including employment. Concern about the quality of services in the area of rehabilitation counseling led to the mandate for the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) in the 1992 and 1998 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This directive seeks to ensure that personnel are qualified by establishing CSPD minimum standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). However, the CSPD initiative is being implemented in the context of what may be the largest turnover and retirement of counselors in the history of the state-federal system of rehabilitation (Bishop & Crystal, 2002; Dew & Peters, 2002; Muzzio, 2000). Turnover and retirements have been reported to be as high as 30-40% of personnel in some states (Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, 2001). In general, job openings across all categories of counseling occupations is expected to increase 36% or more through 2010, faster than the average for other employment categories (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002a). The existing counseling training programs

cannot be expected to meet this expanding need. Bishop and Crystal reported that in the preceding five-year period, less than one-third of vacant positions were filled by staff with a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. The implications of losing experienced qualified professionals and replacing those individuals with less qualified and inexperienced staff are clear. This trend will have a tremendously detrimental impact on transition services, and the situation warrants a concerted effort to address this concern. In the immediate future, the collaboration needed to provide effective transition services may be in jeopardy until new counselors fill the vacant positions, stabilize their workload responsibilities, and receive needed training.

As young people with disabilities prepare to exit their public school programs, a significant number will need access to community services that address their community living, social and recreational, health, and other related needs. Persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, in particular, will need to rely on service program personnel to support their everyday living needs. Significant worker shortages and the associated factors of compensation, recruitment, training, and support and supervision have become increasingly prominent issues within the adult service-delivery system for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Larson, Lakin, & Hewitt, 2002). As the national movement from institutional to community settings has occurred, community service agency professionals and direct support personnel have been requested to do more with greater individual responsibility, less direct supervision, less structure, and greater competency, but without preparatory or ongoing training. Direct support staff, in particular, have been the most difficult to recruit, retain, and provide with proper training to ensure that they have the ability to address the residential and employment needs of the individuals they serve in community settings.

Direct support professionals play a key role in the lives of young people with disabilities exiting public schools by supporting them in their own homes, in community employment situations, and in other community settings. There are over 410,000 direct support professionals working in community residential programs and 90,500-120,000 of these personnel are working in vocational and employment settings (Larson, Hewitt, & Anderson, 1999; Prouty, Smith, & Lakin, 2001). In addition, the number of personal and home care aides and home health aides supporting adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities is estimated respectively at 414,000 and 615,000 nationwide (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002b, 2002c). In the past quarter-century, annual staff turnover rates have consistently averaged between 43%-70% in community residential settings alone (Larson, Lakin, & Bruininks, 1998). Low average wages and lack of training for those filling these positions have compounded these difficulties.

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Self-Assessment Tool

Purpose

The *National Standards for Secondary Education and Transition Self-Assessment Tool* is designed to facilitate communication and sharing within and among interagency partners, based upon a common understanding of what constitutes quality and best practice in secondary education and transition. State and local communities are encouraged to use this self-assessment tool to:

- better understand current operations;
- identify areas of strength, weakness, and opportunity;
- promote planning and continuous improvement;
- begin action for improving and scaling up systems; and
- assess progress.

By completing this self-assessment tool, users will achieve a shared frame of reference from which to build commitment and focus for setting priorities and improving secondary education and transition practices at both state and local levels. The information is for planning purposes only and *will not be used by any federal program or agency to determine compliance.*

Directions

The *National Standards for Secondary Education and Transition Self-Assessment Tool* asks key partners in secondary education and transition to identify the extent to which each quality indicator is evident within their state or local community. Using the four-point rating scale (Always Evident, Usually Evident, Seldom Evident, Not Evident), respondents can assess the status of each quality indicator (3 = Always Evident, 2 = Usually Evident, 1 = Seldom Evident, and 0 = Not Evident). Respondents then communicate their individual ratings to each other and come to agreement on a single rating for each indicator. The self-assessment tool includes instructions for the computation of a single self-assessment score for each standard, based on the ratings of the indicators within that standard. Space for comments is provided at the bottom of each page; here, users can record key themes and how they determined whether an indicator was always evident, usually evident, seldom evident, or not evident.

After completing the self-assessment tool, and calculating a self-assessment score for each standard, use the *Priority Setting* worksheet to rate the *Importance* of each standard. Then, considering the relative *Importance* of each standard in conjunction with its *Self-Assessment Score*, determine the *Priority for Improvement* for each standard. Your state or district team can then use this information for both short-term and long-term planning.

1. Schooling				
1.1 • SEAs/LEAs provide youth with equitable access to a full range of academic and non-academic courses and programs of study.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
1.1.1 • Youth are aware of and have access to the full range of secondary education curricula and programs designed to help them achieve state and/or district academic and related standards and meet admission requirements for postsecondary education.				
1.1.2 • SEAs/LEAs provide youth with information about the full range of postsecondary options and encourage youth to participate in secondary courses that will enable them to meet the admission requirements of their selected postsecondary program of study.				
1.1.3 • Youth are aware of and have access to work-based learning (programs that connect classroom curriculum to learning on job sites in the community), service-learning (programs that combine meaningful community service with academic growth, personal growth, and civic responsibility), and career preparatory experiences such as job shadowing and informational interviewing.				
1.1.4 • Each youth completes an individual life plan based on his or her interests, abilities, and goals.				
1.1.5 • SEAs/LEAs use universally designed and culturally competent curriculum materials (e.g., assignments, tests, textbooks, etc.) that are accessible and applicable to the widest possible range of youth.				
1.1.6 • Youth are aware of and have access to technology resources to enhance learning.				
1.1.7 • SEAs/LEAs integrate advising and counseling into the education program of every youth and ensure that supports are readily available to enable each youth to successfully complete secondary school and enter postsecondary education or other chosen postschool options.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **7**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **1.1**.				

COMMENTS:

1. Schooling				
1.2 • SEAs/LEAs use appropriate standards to assess individual student achievement and learning.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
1.2.1 • All youth participate in large-scale assessment and accountability systems, with appropriate accommodations, alternate assessments, and universal design.				
1.2.2 • Youth have access to appropriate accommodations and multiple assessment strategies.				
1.2.3 • SEAs/LEAs use assessment and accountability systems reflecting standards that prepare graduates for successful postsecondary education experiences, meaningful employment, and civic engagement.				
1.2.4 • SEAs/LEAs use assessment results to review instruction and implement appropriate educational plans for each youth.				
1.2.5 • SEAs/LEAs use assessments that are not culturally biased.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **5**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **1.2**.				

COMMENTS:

1. Schooling				
1.3 • SEAs/LEAs systematically collect data on school completion rates and postschool outcomes and use these data to plan improvements in educational and postschool programs and services.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
1.3.1 • Data are disaggregated and reported in clear and relevant language for the intended audiences.				
1.3.2 • Data and resulting reports are widely disseminated throughout the education community, to policymakers, school board members, school administrators, parent groups, postsecondary educators, public and private school educators, and the community.				
1.3.3 • SEAs/LEAs use reliable and valid instruments and data collection strategies.				
1.3.4 • Data are used to evaluate current programs and services and to make recommendations for future programs and services linked to positive postschool outcomes.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **4**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **1.3**.				

COMMENTS:

1. Schooling				
1.4 • SEAs/LEAs offer educators, families, and community representatives regular opportunities for ongoing skill development, education, and training in planning for positive postschool outcomes for all youth.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
1.4.1 • Administrators, principals, educators, and paraprofessionals meet the essential qualifications to perform their jobs.				
1.4.2 • Staff development programs are based on careful analysis of data about the school and youth achievement and are evaluated for their effectiveness in improving teaching practices and increasing student achievement.				
1.4.3 • Educators, families, and community representatives are active members of the school leadership team.				
1.4.4 • Youth have the opportunity to participate in all meetings in which decisions may be made concerning their school and postschool plans.				
1.4.5 • Educators, families, and youth receive training on using data for planning and informed decision-making.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **5**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **1.4**.				

COMMENTS:

1. Schooling				
1.5 • SEAs/LEAs establish and implement high school graduation standards, options, and decisions that are based on meaningful measures of student achievement and learning.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
1.5.1 • State and local assessments linked to high school graduation use measures of student achievement and learning that are valid and reliable and allow for accommodations and modifications as appropriate.				
1.5.2 • Allowable accommodations and modifications, and the circumstances in which they may be used, are clearly defined for state and local assessments.				
1.5.3 • School staff members are provided training on determining and implementing appropriate accommodations and on determining eligibility for alternate assessments.				
1.5.4 • Educators, families, and youth are aware of and have access to information about the possible ramifications of completing alternate assessments.				
1.5.5 • Educators, families, and youth are counseled on how the choice of diploma options may affect postschool options.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **5**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **1.5**.				

COMMENTS:

2. Career Preparatory Experiences				
2.1 • Youth participate in career awareness, exploration, and preparatory activities in school- and community-based settings.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
2.1.1 • Schools and community partners offer courses, programs, and activities that broaden and deepen youths' knowledge of careers and allow for more informed postsecondary education and career choices.				
2.1.2 • Career preparatory courses, programs, and activities incorporate contextual teaching and learning.				
2.1.3 • Schools, employers, and community partners collaboratively plan and design career preparatory courses, programs, and activities that support quality standards, practices, and experiences.				
2.1.4 • Youth and families understand the relationship between postsecondary and career choices, and financial and benefits planning.				
2.1.5 • Youth understand how community resources, experiences, and family members can assist them in their role as workers.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **5**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **2.1**.				

COMMENTS:

2. Career Preparatory Experiences				
2.2 • Academic and non-academic courses and programs include integrated career development activities.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
2.2.1 • Schools offer broad career curricula that allow youth to organize and select academic, career, or technical courses based on their career interests and goals.				
2.2.2 • With the guidance of school and/or community professionals, youth use a career planning process (e.g., assessments, career portfolio, etc.) based on career goals, interests, and abilities.				
2.2.3 • Career preparatory courses, programs, and activities align with labor market trends and specific job requirements.				
2.2.4 • Career preparatory courses, programs, and activities provide the basic skills crucial to success in a career field, further training, and professional growth.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **4**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **2.2**.				

COMMENTS:

2. Career Preparatory Experiences				
2.3 • Schools and community partners provide youth with opportunities to participate in meaningful school- and community-based work experiences.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
2.3.1 • Youth participate in quality work experiences that are offered to them prior to exiting school (e.g., apprenticeships, mentoring, paid and unpaid work, service learning, school-based enterprises, on-the-job training, internships, etc.).				
2.3.2 • Work experiences are relevant and aligned with each youth's career interests, postsecondary education plans, goals, skills, abilities, and strengths.				
2.3.3 • Youth participate in various on-the-job training experiences, including community service (paid or unpaid) specifically linked to school credit or program content.				
2.3.4 • Youth are able to access, accept, and use individually needed supports and accommodations for work experiences.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **4**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **2.3**.				

COMMENTS:

2. Career Preparatory Experiences				
2.4 • Schools and community partners provide career preparatory activities that lead to youths' acquisition of employability and technical skills, knowledge, and behaviors.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
2.4.1 • Youth have multiple opportunities to develop traditional job preparation skills through job-readiness curricula and training.				
2.4.2 • Youth complete career assessments to identify school and postschool preferences, interests, skills, and abilities.				
2.4.3 • Youth exhibit understanding of career expectations, workplace culture, and the changing nature of work and educational requirements.				
2.4.4 • Youth demonstrate that they understand how personal skill development (e.g., positive attitude, self-discipline, honesty, time management, etc.) affects their employability.				
2.4.5 • Youth demonstrate appropriate job-seeking behaviors.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **5**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **2.4**.				

COMMENTS:

3. Youth Development and Youth Leadership				
3.1 • Youth acquire the skills, behaviors, and attitudes that enable them to learn and grow in self-knowledge, social interaction, and physical and emotional health.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
3.1.1 • Youth are able to explore various roles and identities, promoting self-determination.				
3.1.2 • Youth participate in the creative arts, physical education, and health education programs in school and the community.				
3.1.3 • Youth are provided accurate information and given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss sexual attitudes.				
3.1.4 • Youth develop interpersonal skills, including communication, decision-making, assertiveness, and peer refusal skills, as well as the ability to create healthy relationships.				
3.1.5 • Youth interact with peers and acquire a sense of belonging.				
3.1.6 • Youth participate in a range of teamwork and networking experiences.				
3.1.7 • Youth have significant positive relationships with mentors, positive role models, and other nurturing adults.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **7**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **3.1**.				

COMMENTS:

3. Youth Development and Youth Leadership				
3.2 • Youth understand the relationship between their individual strengths and desires and their future goals and have the skills to act on that understanding.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
3.2.1 • Youth develop ethics, values, and reasoning skills.				
3.2.2 • Youth develop individual strengths.				
3.2.3 • Youth demonstrate the ability to set goals and develop a plan.				
3.2.4 • Youth participate in varied activities that encourage the development of self-determination and self-advocacy skills.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **4**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **3.2**.				

COMMENTS:

3. Youth Development and Youth Leadership				
3.3 • Youth have the knowledge and skills to demonstrate leadership and participate in community life.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
3.3.1 • Youth learn specific knowledge and skills related to leadership, and explore leadership styles.				
3.3.2 • Youth learn the history, values, and beliefs of their communities.				
3.3.3 • Youth demonstrate awareness, understanding, and knowledge of other cultures and societies and show respect for all people.				
3.3.4 • Youth engage in experiential learning and have opportunities for genuine leadership, taking primary responsibility for developing plans, carrying out decisions, and solving problems.				
3.3.5 • Youth participate in service to others in their community, their country, and their world.				
3.3.6 • Youth identify and access resources in their community.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **6**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **3.3**.				

COMMENTS:

3. Youth Development and Youth Leadership				
3.4 • Youth demonstrate the ability to make informed decisions for themselves.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
3.4.1 • Youth practice self-management and responsible decision-making that reflects healthy choices.				
3.4.2 • Youth demonstrate independent living skills.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **2**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **3.4**.				

COMMENTS:

4. Family Involvement				
4.1 • School staff members demonstrate a strong commitment to family involve-ment and understand its critical role in supporting high achievement, access to postsecondary education, employment, and other successful adult outcomes.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
4.1.1 • School programs and activities support a wide range of family involvement and actively engage families and youth in the home, classroom, school, and community.				
4.1.2 • School programs and activities are designed, implemented, and shaped by frequent feedback from youth and families.				
4.1.3 • School staff development includes training on youth and family involvement based on individual strengths, interests, and needs.				
4.1.4 • Youth and families have clear and accessible information regarding school curricula, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the profi-ciency levels students are expected to meet.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **4**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **4.1**.				

COMMENTS:

4. Family Involvement				
4.2 • Communication among youth, families, and schools is flexible, reciprocal, meaningful, and individualized.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
4.2.1 • Youth, families, and school staff utilize telephone, face-to-face, electronic, group meetings, and other methods as needed to support and enhance communication.				
4.2.2 • School staff individualize communication methods used with youth and families to meet unique needs, including provision of text materials in alternate formats and non-English languages.				
4.2.3 • Youth, families, and school staff share reports of positive youth behavior and achievement.				
4.2.4 • Schools, families, and youth enhance communication through use of school programs that improve literacy and communication skills.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **4**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **4.2**.				

COMMENTS:

4. Family Involvement				
4.3 • School staff actively cultivate, encourage, and welcome youth and family involvement.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
4.3.1 • School staff use a formal process to help youth and families identify their strengths and needs and to connect them with other youth and families for support, guidance, and assistance.				
4.3.2 • School staff provide flexible meeting arrangements to accommodate the varied needs of youth and families, addressing childcare needs, transportation needs, language barriers, and time schedules.				
4.3.3 • Youth, families, and school staff participate in training on parenting, childcare, and positive family-child relationships.				
4.3.4 • School staff participate in training on creating a welcoming school climate and working collaboratively, respectfully, and reciprocally with youth and families.				
4.3.5 • All school information, materials, training, and resources reflect the diversity of the community.				
4.3.6 • School staff provide referrals to community programs and resources that meet the individual needs of youth and families and allow youth and families to make informed choices.				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **6**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **4.3**.				

COMMENTS:

4. Family Involvement				
4.4 • Youth, families, and school staff are partners in the development of policies and decisions affecting youth and families.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
4.4.1 • Youth, families, and school staff jointly develop a family involvement policy and agreement outlining shared responsibility for improved student achievement and achieving the State's high standards.				
4.4.2 • School staff regularly share information about school reforms, policies, and performance data with youth and families in a variety of formats.				
4.4.3 • School staff ensure school policies respect the diversity of youth and family cultures, traditions, values, and faiths found within the community.				
4.4.4 • School staff provide youth and families with training on school policies, budgets, and reform initiatives to ensure effective participation in decision-making.				
4.4.5 • Youth and families have a variety of opportunities to participate in decision-making, governance, evaluation, and advisory committees at the school and community levels.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **5**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **4.4**.				

COMMENTS:

5. Connecting Activities				
5.1 • Organizations coordinating services and supports align their missions, policies, procedures, data, and resources to equitably serve all youth and ensure the provision of a unified flexible array of programs, services, accommodations, and supports.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
5.1.1 • At the state and community level, public and private organizations communicate, plan, and have quality assurance processes in place within and across organizations to equitably support youths' access to chosen postschool options. Each organization has clear roles and responsibilities, and ongoing evaluation supports continuous improvement.				
5.1.2 • Organizations have missions, policies, and resources that support seamless linkage and provide youth with access to needed services and accommodations.				
5.1.3 • Youth and families report that organizations provide, or provide access to, seamlessly linked services, supports, and accommodations as necessary to address each youth's individual transition needs.				
5.1.4 • Organizations have implemented an agreed-upon process to coordinate eligibility and service provision requirements, helping youth to participate in the postschool options of their choice.				
5.1.5 • Organizations have shared data systems in place, or have established processes for sharing data, while fully maintaining required confidentiality and obtaining releases as needed. These systems include provisions for collecting and maintaining postschool outcomes data.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **5**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **5.1**.				

COMMENTS:

5. Connecting Activities				
5.2 • Organizations connect youth to an array of programs, services, accommodations, and supports, based on an individualized planning process.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
5.2.1 • Organizations inform all youth about transition and the programs and services available to them.				
5.2.2 • Organizations use an interagency team process to share decision-making with youth and families, linking each youth to the services, accommodations, and supports necessary to access a mutually agreed-upon range of postschool options.				
5.2.3 • Youth report satisfaction with the services, accommodations, and supports received as they connect to chosen postschool options.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **3**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **5.2**.				

COMMENTS:

5. Connecting Activities				
5.3 • Organizations hire and invest in the development of knowledgeable, responsive, and accountable personnel who understand their shared responsibilities to align and provide programs, services, resources, and supports necessary to assist youth in achieving their individual postschool goals.				
INDICATORS	ALWAYS EVIDENT	USUALLY EVIDENT	SELDOM EVIDENT	NOT EVIDENT
5.3.1 • Personnel (e.g., general and special education teachers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, service coordinators, case managers) are adequately prepared to work with transition-aged youth, understand their shared responsibilities, and use coordination and linkage strategies to access resources, services, and supports across systems to assist youth in achieving their postschool goals.				
5.3.2 • Organizations hire well-prepared staff; provide ongoing professional development; and have a set of common competencies and outcome measures that hold personnel accountable for their role in ensuring that youth are prepared for, linked to, and participating in activities that will assist them in achieving their postschool goals.				
5.3.3 • Youth and families report satisfaction with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of personnel they encounter in collaborating organizations during the transition process.				
ENTER NUMBER OF CHECKS IN EACH COLUMN				
Calculate column scores	x 3 = ___	x 2 = ___	x 1 = ___	x 0 = 0
Add column scores together and divide by **3**. Record the resulting Assessment Score here _____ and transfer this number to the Priority Setting form on the line for Standard **5.3**.				

COMMENTS:

Priority Setting Tool

Purpose

The *National Standards for Secondary Education and Transition Priority Setting Tool* is designed to assist interagency partners in identifying primary areas for improvement and in ranking their order of importance. Each standard is rated high, mid, or low importance in conjunction with its *Self-Assessment* score to determine its *Priority for Improvement.* Your state or district team can then use this information for both short-term and long-term planning.

Directions

The *National Standards for Secondary Education and Transition Priority Setting Tool* asks key partners in secondary education and transition to identify the extent to which each standard is important in conjunction with its *Self-Assessment* score. Respondents then rate the priority for improvement based on the level of importance and the *Self-Assessment* score. For example, a standard which receives a high level of importance rating and a low self-assessment score may warrant a high level of priority for improvement rating.

FRAMING AREAS AND STANDARDS	Importance			Self-Assessment Score	Priority for Improvement		
	High	Mid	Low		High	Mid	Low
1. Schooling							
1.1 • SEAs/LEAs provide youth with equitable access to a full range of academic and non-academic courses and programs of study.							
1.2 • SEAs/LEAs use appropriate standards to assess individual student achievement and learning.							
1.3 • SEAs/LEAs systematically collect data on school completion rates and postschool outcomes and use these data to plan improvements in educational and postschool programs and services.							
1.4 • SEAs/LEAs offer educators, families, and community representatives regular opportunities for ongoing skill development, education, and training in planning for positive postschool outcomes for all youth.							
1.5 • SEAs/LEAs establish and implement high school graduation standards, options and decisions that are based on meaningful measures of student achievement and learning.							
2. Career Preparatory Experiences							
2.1 • Youth participate in career awareness, exploration, and preparatory activities in school-based and community-based settings.							
2.2 • Academic and non-academic courses and programs include integrated career development activities.							
2.3 • Schools and community partners provide youth with opportunities to participate in meaningful school- and community-based work experiences.							
2.4 • Schools and community partners provide career preparatory activities that lead to youths' acquisition of employability and technical skills, knowledge, and behaviors.							

3. Youth Development and Youth Leadership							
3.1 • Youth acquire the skills, behaviors, and attitudes that enable them to learn and grow in self-knowledge, social interaction, and physical and emotional health.							
3.2 • Youth understand the relationship between their individual strengths and desires and their future goals and have the skills to act on that understanding.							
3.3 • Youth have the knowledge and skills to demonstrate leadership and participate in community life.							
3.4 • Youth demonstrate the ability to make informed decisions for themselves.							
4. Family Involvement							
4.1 • School staff members demonstrate a strong commitment to family involvement and understand its critical role in supporting high achievement, access to postsecondary education, employment, and other successful adult outcomes.							
4.2 • Communication among youth, families, and schools is flexible, reciprocal, meaningful, and individualized.							
4.3 • School staff actively cultivate, encourage, and welcome youth and family involvement.							
4.4 • Youth, families, and school staff are partners in the development of policies and decisions affecting youth and families.							
5. Connecting Activities							
5.1 • Organizations coordinating services and supports align their missions, policies, procedures, data, and resources to equitably serve all youth and ensure the provision of a unified flexible array of programs, services, accommodations, and supports.							
5.2 • Organizations connect youth to an array of programs, services, accommodations, and supports, based on an individualized planning process.							
5.3 • Organizations hire and invest in the development of knowledgeable, responsive, and accountable personnel who understand their shared responsibilities to align and provide programs, services, resources, and supports necessary to assist youth in achieving their individual postschool goals.							

Action Plan, Part I

Directions

After completing the priority setting tool, select the three standards which received a high rating under Priority for Improvement. Write each of the high priority standards under Priority Issue #1, Priority Issue #2, and Priority Issue #3. Next, develop up to five goals for each of the priority issues. For each goal, identify action steps and technical assistance needs. These action steps and technical assistance needs are likely to fall under one of the following categories:

- Research
- Training/Technical Assistance
- Public Relations/Outreach
- Policy
- Funding

Priority Issue #1:

Goal #1:

Brainstorm Action Steps	Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What will your state or local community do?	*Q. What help does your state or local community need?*
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Goal #2:

Brainstorm Action Steps	Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What will your state or local community do?	*Q. What help does your state or local community need?*
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Goal #3:

Brainstorm Action Steps
Q. What will your state or local community do?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What help does your state or local community need?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Goal #4:

Brainstorm Action Steps
Q. What will your state or local community do?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What help does your state or local community need?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Goal #5:

Brainstorm Action Steps
Q. What will your state or local community do?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What help does your state or local community need?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Priority Issue #2:

Goal #1:

Brainstorm Action Steps	Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What will your state or local community do?	*Q. What help does your state or local community need?*
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Goal #2:

Brainstorm Action Steps	Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What will your state or local community do?	*Q. What help does your state or local community need?*
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Goal #3:

Brainstorm Action Steps
Q. What will your state or local community do?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What help does your state or local community need?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Goal #4:

Brainstorm Action Steps
Q. What will your state or local community do?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What help does your state or local community need?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Goal #5:

Brainstorm Action Steps
Q. What will your state or local community do?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What help does your state or local community need?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Priority Issue #3:

Goal #1:

Brainstorm Action Steps	Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What will your state or local community do?	*Q. What help does your state or local community need?*
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Goal #2:

Brainstorm Action Steps	Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What will your state or local community do?	*Q. What help does your state or local community need?*
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Goal #3:

Brainstorm Action Steps
Q. What will your state or local community do?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What help does your state or local community need?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Goal #4:

Brainstorm Action Steps
Q. What will your state or local community do?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What help does your state or local community need?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Goal #5:

Brainstorm Action Steps
Q. What will your state or local community do?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Brainstorm Technical Assistance Needs
Q. What help does your state or local community need?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Action Plan, Part II

Directions

Now transfer the priority issues, goals, and action steps from the previous worksheet, "Action Plan, Part I," onto this worksheet—"Action Plan, Part II." For each action step, identify the lead agency, the critical partners, timelines, technical assistance needs, and projected outcomes.

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Priority Issue #1:

Goal #1:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Goal #2:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Goal #3:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Goal #4:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Goal #5:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Priority Issue #2:

Goal #1:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Goal #2:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Goal #3:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Goal #4:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Goal #5:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Priority Issue #3:

Goal #1:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Goal #2:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Goal #3:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Goal #4:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Goal #5:					
Action Step	Lead Agency	To be Done by (Date)	Technical Assistance Needed	Partners & Resources	Expected Outcomes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

If you list this document as a reference, we recommend the following format for documents requiring APA style:

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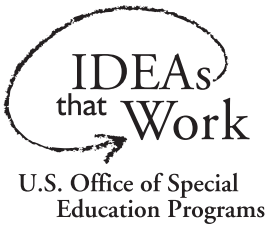

For further information about NASET, contact:
David R. Johnson, Project Director
National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
Institute on Community Integration (UCE) • University of Minnesota
102 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Dr SE • Minneapolis, MN 55455
612-624-2097 (phone) • 612-624-8279 (fax) • johns006@umn.edu

This document available in alternate formats upon request. Please contact Donna Johnson at 612-624-1143 or johns042@umn.edu.