

Practical Strategies to Increase Graduation Success for Students with Disabilities

There is a gap in graduation rates between students with and without disabilities. Yet, educators can use several strategies to increase their students' chances of graduation.

Build Caring Relationships

Show you care by building authentic relationships with your students and their families. Encourage students to achieve by challenging them with tasks beyond what they are able to do. Share progress, and problem-solve areas of need. Teach and model with various methods, and offer support to build independence.

Empower Families

Invite families to academic and career planning events, and provide transition-related resources. Create opportunities for families to learn about their role in the transition process. Communicate often to share student successes and progress.

Foster Self-Determination

Foster self-determination with opportunities to develop problem-solving, goal-setting, choice-making, and self-advocacy skills. Encourage students to seek support, ask questions, and be open to receiving help.

Encourage Peer Relationships

Encourage healthy peer relationships by connecting students to school clubs and activities. Pair students with mentors who can share academic and social strategies for success.

Know the Requirements for Graduation

Know and understand the course and testing requirements for graduation. Partner early with school counselors to create an academic and career plan. Learn about credit accommodations to support students with disabilities in standardized testing.

Show Real-World Connections

Help students connect your lessons to their postsecondary goals. Provide examples of how employees actually use skills in the “real world.” Plan a course of study that reflects students' interests and excites them about their future.

Engage in Authentic Learning Experiences

Engage in authentic learning with career exploration, job shadowing, and hands-on work experiences. Team with Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (VADARS), or Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) counselors to identify work-based learning activities. Review students' strengths, interests, and preferences to identify career goals and pathways.

Partner for Success

Collaborate across home and school to connect families with community services and opportunities. Partner with general educators to offer a variety of instructional supports and strategies. Learn to use task analysis, a system of prompts, and explicit and differentiated instruction.

Conclusion

These are practical strategies that every educator can adopt to increase graduation success. Use these tips to support postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities.

The contents were developed under a contract (881-APE62524-H027A190107) from the Virginia Department of Education.

Virginia Commonwealth University, including the School of Education and Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, is an equal opportunity/affirmative action university providing access to education and employment without regard to age, race, color, national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, veteran's status, political affiliation or disability. If special accommodations are needed, please contact the Center on Transition Innovations at transition@vcu.edu.

