

## Engaging in Culturally Responsive Transition Planning

The demographics of Virginia's public schools are changing dramatically. Over the past ten years, minority student enrollment has increased as a reflection of ever-changing communities. This increasing population of students is typically categorized as being from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds, including African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, Pacific Islanders, students who speak English as a second language, and students who have immigrant or undocumented status. While best practices should be utilized for all students, effective transition planning requires intentional efforts by educators and service providers to improve their knowledge and skills in the use of culturally responsive transition practices.

### **Culturally Responsive Transition Practices**

---

To understand how to develop culturally responsive transition practices, it is important for educators to first acknowledge their own cultural values and then recognize how students' diversity impacts future planning. The following are recommendations educators should follow to support transition-age CLD youth and their families during transition planning.

#### **Develop increased knowledge and sensitivity of the students' and families' cultures, experiences, and values.**

- Attend pre-service and in-service training and/or courses on topics related to issues that impact youth and families from CLD backgrounds (e.g., history, perspectives involving placement in special education, cross-cultural communication).
- Learn how certain activities and concepts (e.g. eye contact, gender roles, work ethic, disability) affect the culture.
- Request internships and practicums in diverse racial and socio-economic settings.

#### **Develop relationships to build trust and rapport with students and families in addressing their concerns, needs, and safety.**

- Attend community events where interaction with diverse groups may occur.
- Be sensitive to basic survival needs of families. Take the time to build trust, rapport, and credibility with immigrant families to ease fears of deportation or interaction with presumed government authorities.

- Acknowledge that English may not be the dominant language in the home rather than assume English is understood.
- Speak slowly, and listen more.

### **Support the values of the family when identifying transition goals, work-based learning experiences, independent living, and community participation.**

- Ask questions of families and students that reflect respect for their culture, religion, and values as they pertain to planning for life after high school.
- Identify the views of the youth and family on education, employment, and independent living, including vocational training and community work experiences.
- Use methods, models, and questions for transition assessment that involve input from students, family, friends, and other key stakeholders to ensure culturally responsive data collection.
- Work in partnership with families to better understand their unique

### **Offer guidance and support in understanding the transition planning process.**

- Provide families information on special education laws related to transition in a form that is easy for them to understand.
- Create a checklist for parents targeting required transition milestones.
- Use interpreters familiar with the culture of the family and trained in the basics of special education and transition law.
- Access parent resource centers to support needs of youth from CLD backgrounds in the transition process.

Effective, culturally responsive transition planning requires forming collaborative relationships with CLD families and youth with disabilities. High parental involvement is associated with successful post-school outcomes. These recommendations, if appropriately acted upon, should result in stronger partnerships with families and students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds and more culturally responsive transition planning in the future.

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 Liz Getzel at (804) 827-1545 (Voice) or (804) 828-2494 (TTY).

