

EXTENDING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

School and Agency Policies that Influence Provision of Transition Education and Services

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Many school and agency policies directly influence the ability of educators and service providers to implement effective transition practices. Policies are more than the written laws, rules, and regulations mandated by local, state, or federal bodies. They also include the inducements, capacity building, and system changing activities in which an organization engages (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987).

Written and unwritten policies influence the climate and everyday activities of schools and service agencies; thus, policies can both promote and inhibit implementation of effective transition education and services, including collaboration with families. Further, the effects of specific policies can influence the degree of family involvement far into the future (deFur, Todd-Allen, & Getzel, 2001). It is therefore important to examine our policies regularly to determine how they are influencing our ability to collaborate with families and implement effective transition practices, and to change those policies when necessary.

The following table presents examples of school and agency actions related to five areas of effective transition practices. It is the school and agency *policies* that determine how and to what extent these actions occur.

STUDENT-FOCUSED PLANNING

- ▶ Collection of student assessment information and the way this information is shared with students, their families, and relevant service providers, including other educators
- ▶ IEP meeting planning, including when and where meetings are held
- ▶ How and when agency representatives are invited to IEP meetings
- ▶ How and when students are prepared and supported to participate actively in their IEP development and meetings
- ▶ How, when, and who determines a student's course of study, including their electives

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Opportunities and resources for community-based education, including student participation in paid and non-paid work experiences
- ▶ Pupil accounting regarding work-based education and other transition services
- ▶ Strategies for determining students' accommodations, support, and needs
- ▶ Provision of accommodations, support, and technology to meet student needs
- ▶ Student access to high quality academic and occupational programs
- ▶ Availability of curriculum materials

INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

- ▶ Inclusion of family members on interagency councils
- ▶ Release time for teachers and service providers to attend interagency council meetings
- ▶ Family, educator, and service provider access to relevant information and means for sharing information with each other
- ▶ Opportunities for service providers to meet with students and their parents at schools or other locations convenient to families
- ▶ Eligibility and referral information and procedures provided regularly and routinely to families

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

- ▶ Selection process for identifying members of the parent advisory committee (PAC)
- ▶ Extent to which the PAC is actively involved in planning and evaluating transition education
- ▶ Expectations and support for educators to communicate with parents routinely and regularly
- ▶ Parent needs assessment to determine information and service needs
- ▶ Variety of roles and opportunities provided for family involvement in their child's education
- ▶ Resources allocated for family training
- ▶ Inclusion of family members in professional development activities for educators and service providers
- ▶ Information provided to families in their primary language and through a variety of media

PROGRAM STRUCTURES

- ▶ Allocation of funds and resources for transition education and services and the availability of funds for "blended" transition services
- ▶ Student disciplinary procedures and actions
- ▶ Family involvement in disciplinary decisions and enforcement
- ▶ Establishment of transition-related competencies and the provision of transition-related professional development for educators and service providers
- ▶ Establishment of criteria for student involvement in academic programs, career and technical education, and co-curricular and extracurricular activities
- ▶ Provision of monitoring results to families
- ▶ Inclusion of parents in school reform and in school and program evaluations
- ▶ Follow-up of students to determine post-school outcomes
- ▶ Results for students with disabilities included in accountability standards

References

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