

Transition TIPS:
A guide to managing a student's IDEA
Transition status while in high school



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

'Transition Tips' is for all special education students who receive support and services on an IEP.

Issues and Questions to consider:

1. MCAS:

- Talk with the Team about your student's MCAS score. Review their MCAS status every year.
- MCAS accommodations cannot be different from those provided to the student on a regular basis.
- Students who struggle to pass the regular MCAS may want to consider the Alternate Portfolio Assessment¹.
- The Portfolio is designed so the student can "show what they know" by documenting work samples in a portfolio. Parents should view the student's Portfolio each year before it is submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE)
- Both the regular MCAS (with or without accommodations) and the Alternate Portfolio Assessment are held to the same high standard; both formats require a passing score to receive a competency determination² for a state standard diploma.
- Certificates of attainment and completion do not satisfy competency determination for a state standard diploma.
- The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks³ insure access to the general curriculum to all students.
- A passing MCAS score does not automatically mean you are no longer eligible for special education. (See # 6)

Transition Tips: Consider your student's vision for post high school and MCAS. MCAS is a test of the general curriculum based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks available online or by mail from MA DESE. Maintain a portfolio of your student's work throughout high school to support results of any high stakes test. Have a comprehensive discussion with the TEAM to review the appropriateness of the standard MCAS test or Alternate Portfolio Assessment. Be mindful of what MCAS accommodations have been agreed upon and be sure they are documented on the IEP.

Students must pass 10th grade English & Math portions of MCAS (Portfolio or regular) to satisfy competency determination to receive a state standard diploma⁴. Students who do not pass both English & Math portions of MCAS remain eligible for Transition services through their IEP and have many Transition service options to consider. These Transition options should be community based in 'real world' settings in preparation for 'real life' experiences. (see #3)

2. The MADESE Transition Planning Form⁵ (TPF)

- Who is part of the Transition planning team? Are there some team members who did not attend or were not allowed to participate?
- Did the school Team help you and your child understand the TPF and the Transition Planning process before the Transition planning meeting?
- Did the student attend? Was the student prepared to participate?
- What Transition Assessments were requested or discussed⁶?
- Were Transition services/supports discussed at the TPF meeting (Disability Related Needs) developed into Transition goals and services on the IEP?

Transition Tips: Don't let the TEAM shrink in high school. Be sure that the family and student's vision is understood and respected. Be proactive. Invite anyone who you think has a unique perspective of the student; a coach, work support staff, friend/peer, sibling, mentor, etc. Make the process dynamic, collaborative, focused and driven by the student's vision for their future. Like any other school evaluation, a request for any type of Transition assessment must be in writing⁷. The TPF is a mandated MA DESE document meant to guide the Transition discussion and help with the development of appropriate results

¹ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/> MCAS Alternate Portfolio Assessment

² <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr30.html?section=03> MCAS Standards for Competency Determination

³ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/>

⁴ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html> Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System High School Graduation Requirements, Scholarships, and Academic Support Opportunities

⁵ <http://www.fcsn.org/pti/topics/transition/index.html> MADESE Transition Planning Form

⁶ http://www.nsttac.org/pdf/trans_fact_sheet.pdf Appropriate Transition Assessment Fact Sheet

⁷ N1 form <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/iep/forms/word/N1.doc>

oriented IEP Transition goals. Only Transition services developed from Transition goals and documented in the IEP are guaranteed to occur.

3. Transition Services

- When discussing Transition Services, did you use the **Transition Planning Form (TPF)**?
- At what age did the student's Transition services begin?
- What Transition services did your child receive?
- Were Transition services results oriented? Were they a "coordinated set of activities" based on the student's vision for post school outcomes?
- Were Transition services developed from transition goals in the IEP?
- Did the IEP show progress toward the Transition goals each year?

Transition Tips: Students must be invited to participate in the Team meeting at age 14. Transition goals are based on a student's vision for their future. The student's vision must drive the Transition process to insure that the learning opportunities developed from Transition goals meet the individual needs of the student. Be sure the TPF (see #2) guides the Transition discussion at the Team meeting. The Disability Related Needs⁸ discussed using the TPF must be incorporated into the IEP document as Transition goals and services. If Transition goals are not documented in the IEP there is no guarantee that Transition services will occur.

Every student on an IEP is eligible for appropriate measurable Transition goals and services before they exit special education. A parent can challenge a student's graduation date on the basis that the student has not received individualized Transition services during the time that the student was eligible for special education. (see #6)

4. Transition and the IEP

- At what age was Transition discussed at a TEAM meeting?
- Was the student invited? Did the student attend?
- Was the student prepared to participate in a meaningful way?
- Did the TEAM explain the MADESE Transition Planning Form (TPF)?
- After using the TPF to guide the Transition discussion, were appropriate Transition goals developed in the IEP?
- When students reach "the age of majority" at 18, only their signature is required for authorization.

Transition Tips: IDEA 2004 defines Transition services as a "coordinated set of activities designed to be within a results-oriented process that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities."⁹ Under MA law Chapter 285, Transition goals and services should be in the IEP in the year the student turns 14¹⁰. MADESE mandates the use of the Transition Planning Form (TPF) to guide and document the discussion. Download a sample TPF from the DESE website and be prepared for the meeting.

To insure timely provision of services at 14, Transition planning needs to start early. Begin with the TPF and important "self advocacy" goals to address student participation in a student driven IEP process. TPF is a mandated MA DESE form. Download a sample TPF at MA DESE website and be prepared for the meeting. (see #2)

At 18, students reach 'the age of majority' in MA¹¹ and only the student's signature is required in the IEP. If the student chooses to share or delegate decision making to a parent or other person, they must inform the Team in writing. In the absence of the student's documented choice, parents will continue to receive meeting notices; however, their attendance at team meeting and signature on the IEP is no longer required.

5. Local Graduation Requirements:

- Do you feel your child's coursework is comparable to their peers?
- Does your child have full access to the general curriculum?
- What are the 'local graduation requirements' in your city/town for receiving a high school diploma?
- Did your student waive coursework considered part of 'local graduation requirements'?

Transition Tips: Along with passing MCAS, students must pass all local graduation requirements in your town/city. Find out what local requirements are in your community and talk about them at your Team meeting. Check to see if courses that have been waived (because the student is in special education) would be counted as credit toward 'local graduation requirements'.

⁸<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/28MR/28m9.doc> Disability Related Needs on the TPF

⁹http://www.ncset.org/docs/osers/idea04_sec_transition.html IDEA – Reauthorized Statute Secondary Transition

¹⁰http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/09_1ta.html Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2009-1

¹¹<http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/231-85p.htm> The General Laws of Massachusetts

6. Graduation*/Exit from school

- What is the 'expected graduation date' noted on the last signed IEP and TPF?
- Has the Team changed the anticipated graduation date and/or the Team decision to continue services/eligibility?
- What is competency determination (CD)? (see #1)
- Has the Team or other administrative personnel informed the parent that the student MUST exit, citing that 'they have passed MCAS, local requirements and are no longer eligible for special education services'?
- Is the student participating in the graduation ceremony with or without a diploma?
- Has the student received appropriate individualized Transition services?

Transition Tips: High school graduation* is an important milestone. Every student needs to be prepared as they exit secondary school and enter into the next phase of life and learning. Graduation is not a voluntary decision, a student must be eligible. Eligibility is like a *3 legged stool*. The first leg is passing MCAS, the second leg is passing all local requirements in your city or town and the third leg is receiving appropriate and individualized Transition services based on a student's vision for their future. Like the stool all three are required; no one leg is more important than the other to receive a high school diploma. Starting with the graduating Class of 2010, requirements for a competency determination for some students will include fulfilling the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan¹²(EPP).

Although most people think of graduation as including a high school diploma, [Massachusetts law has been amended to ensure the right of a special education student to participate in graduation ceremonies even if he/she will not receive a regular diploma](#)¹³.

Students must be informed of their expected graduation date (in their IEP) one year prior to that date. Their expected graduation date is the year that the student's entitlement to special education services will end. In some instances, services may continue after graduation either through a private agreement of the parties or an Order from a hearing officer.

All students on an IEP are eligible to have results oriented Transition goals and services that are based on their vision for their future. Additionally, the school must document progress toward Transition goals every year in the IEP. For students 18-22, special education supports and learning opportunities should be based in the community so the student will be ready for a smooth transition to full participation and a meaningful adult life in the community.

If a student has not received Transition services based on their vision, during their period of entitlement (age 14-22) they may continue to be eligible for special education and receive Transition services through the IEP process. If graduation is challenged on that basis, parents must take action ASAP to notify the LEA that they are rejecting the diploma and rejecting the IEP because the student has not received Transition services. This letter should be sent along with the rejected IEP to the BSEA.

It is important to note that this type of challenge will require good solid information and current Transition assessments. The Quabbin¹⁴ and Dracut¹⁵ decisions in Massachusetts are two precedent setting Transition cases that are very important to review. In each instance they clearly identify the scope and purpose of Transition in IDEA.

The federal special education law, IDEA, mandates that students with disabilities receive "Transition Services¹⁶." According to the United States Congress, the purpose of IDEA is to ensure that the unique needs of students with disabilities are met, so that they will be prepared for further education, employment, and independent living as adults.

Begin the Transition journey early. As new ideas and educational opportunities evolve new skills emerge and help shed new light on the student's vision and future plans.

Partner with your student and school Team and create a meaningful individualized Transition plan. Be prepared to exit school ready with the skills to take the next step to follow your dreams.

** For all intents and purposes, in this document Graduation means exit from high school with a state standard diploma.*

¹² <http://www.pplace.org/publications/bulletins/English/ppbulletinv10n1.pdf> MCAS & Educational Proficiency Plans

¹³ <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/71b-16.htm> Chapter 71B: Section 16. participation in high school graduation

¹⁴ BSEA Quabbin decision http://www.doe.mass.edu/bsea/decisions/05-3115_05-4356.doc

¹⁵ BSEA Dracut decision <http://www.doemass.org/bsea/decisions/08-5330.pdf>

¹⁶ 34 CFR. § 300.43 (2006) IDEA

