



Preparing Students for Active Participation at a Transition Fair

Many schools have found that holding Transition Fairs or Agency Fests is a great way to bring agencies together for the purpose of providing information about services to those who may need to access them now, or in the future. These events are ideal in getting many agencies/resources together for a few hours to provide information to a lot of people at one time, but it is very important to make sure that students are actually gathering the information and asking important questions.

The following suggestions are to help educate and prepare your students to ACTIVELY participate in these events. Many suggestions and pieces in this packet are from school districts in Arkansas that have developed them and found they work! We must keep the goal of the event in mind: To provide students with a better understanding of relevant information regarding agencies, services and programs that they can apply for and, if eligible, greatly benefit from in an effort to achieve their post-secondary goals.

Of course you want to make sure you are choosing the best place and time to fit the needs of the people you want to attend. Many hold these events only for students, while others hold them for students and their families. It's also important to consider is if students are aware of what their actual disability is and how it affects them. If they do, then they are more likely to have a better grasp of what programs might benefit them the most. A suggestion is to look at their IEPs and discuss their disability and why they need certain things in place, discuss their deficits as well as their strengths. There are good resources to discuss disabilities: www.nichcy.org or you can use a FREE curriculum "The 411 on Disability Disclosure," which covers lots of important components. There are many other assessments that can help you determine what a student's knowledge is of their needs and available resources—contact your Transition Consultant.

Once they have a better understanding of their disability, begin talking about the different agencies. Use the Agency Brief on our website, www.arkansastransition.com, to access basic information about Arkansas agencies. You could have them research agencies on the internet, make phone calls to get more information or even locate them with in their community, all in preparation to speak to the agency representative one on one.

Don't forget the importance of INVITING parents and making sure they know what exactly the event is if you choose to make it a family event. A sample invitation is provided. This should be sent out well in advance so they can fit it in their schedule, arrange for time off work, childcare, etc. These invitations can be adapted to send to other school staff, school boards

Consider other ways students might be a part of the Transition Fair. Helping plan the event will definitely provide them with a better understanding of what to expect. Some districts have developed committees for which students can volunteer. There are so many things that staff usually handles that would really benefit the students to handle. They could help make calls to agencies inviting them to attend, create invitations and flyers, promote it within the school by creating posters to hang, solicit donations for food, drink or door prizes, greet people as they enter, help create fun activities to help keep people engaged, brainstorm ideas for break-out sessions or guest speakers, if using that format and help set up and/or clean up. After the fair, SURVEY the students and get their thoughts on what they liked or didn't like about the fair. This will only help you improve!

We have tools that can also help students prepare for what they want to ask of agencies. Once they know more about the agency they can select questions from the "Student Script for the Transition Fair." Reviewing this script in class can really make a student more comfortable. Role playing activities and discussing the need for the answers to these questions will all make the student more confident and certainly better able to get more information from the agencies. You can probably come up with many fun and creative ways to get your students interested in learning what they need to ask of agencies and why they will benefit from gaining answers. The important thing to remember is to PREPARE the students.

Please take a look at the different pieces in this packet and determine if they will work for YOUR transition fair. There are several helpful tools to get you started in planning your event and preparing your students:

- Sample Flyers to promote/advertise
- Strategies for Increasing Attendance at your District's Transition Fair
- Tips for Agency Linkages
- Sample of Student Instructions for Transition Fair
- Sample of Student Responsibilities for Transition Fair
- Sample Teacher Instructions for 2010 Transition Fair
- Sample Special Invitation to Parents/Guardians
- Samples of Student Surveys/Evaluations

Tools for Classroom Activities/Discussion:

- "What do you want to do when you graduate?" – thought provoking flyer to begin discussion of students' futures
- Discussing Your Disability – tips for discussing disabilities with post-secondary schools
- Tips on Talking with Your Instructors – tips in discussing various things with post-secondary instructors
- Agency Brief
- Goal Setting Activity – great way to begin thinking about goals and what steps to take in achieving goals. Completed forms could be used to enter for chance to win a door prize or it could just be used for discussion.
- Student Script for the Transition Fair – questions to consider asking agencies at the Fair

Also check out:

www.nichcy.org to get more information on disabilities

The 411 on Disability Disclosure:

http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/guides/411/411_Disability_Disclosure_complete.pdf

ME! Lessons in Self-Advocacy: <http://www.ou.edu/content/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/trasition-education-materials/me-lessons-for-teaching-self-awareness-and-self-advocacy.html>

Student Directed Transition Planning (SDTP): <http://www.ou.edu/content/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/trasition-education-materials.html>

Don't forget about ways to continue the discussions/activities AFTER the fair:

Report on the agency the student thought was the most beneficial and why (could be oral or written)

Ask agency representative(s) of top choice(s) to come and speak to the class

Ask agencies to bring individuals who received services and are now successful

Have students create Powerpoint presentations on various topics (agency services, success stories of agencies)

Create the class' own Agency Resource List

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