

Strategies for Increasing Attendance at your District's "Transition Fair"

Transition Fairs are designed for students and parents to meet their community's service providers. These fairs can be a great way to bring all interested parties together in one place, to increase awareness of services, and foster a sense of community. These are field-tested strategies to help you put together a successful event. This information was based on strategies used by David Williams of Prince William County Public Schools in Virginia.

1. Incorporate attendance into IEP's.

Williams recommends making attendance at the Transition Fair one of the goals and objectives in a student's IEP. Having to navigate through the fair, collect information, and ask questions can also teach students important advocacy skills.

2. Map out community resources.

The more resources you make available that are relevant to people's needs, the more people are likely to attend. (Your local Transition Consultant has a comprehensive list for each county)

3. Offer innovative programming.

Make your fair more like a conference, says Williams, and more people will come. Instead of just having exhibitor booths, have seminars, question and answer sessions, and presentations on topics that will interest attendees. Like a conference, try to create programming that will appeal to all segments of the district's special education population.

4. Use surveys to determine needs.

Williams used surveys to find out suggestions for programming, time and date. Surveys can be done by phone, email or through a written form sent home by the students.

5. Employ effective marketing techniques.

In addition to circulating flyers, Williams used a multi-level approach.

- "Save the date" flyers. Send to all service providers well in advance of the event.
- Personalized direct mail. Model invitations available, if needed.
- Follow-up phone calls.

6. Let providers that can't attend, post information.

You can let absent providers display posters, brochures, and display boards. That way you can still list those providers as part of the program in your flyer.

Involve your students in all aspects of planning, organizing and setting up the fair!

Call your Transition Consultant for more details.