

Translating Evidence for Successful Transitions (TEST)



INCORPORATING CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL DISTURBANCE

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Foreword

Young adults with mental health difficulties are capable of successfully engaging in school, training, and employment. The support these individuals receive as they progress through secondary education can help them realize their potential in life after high school. Many times teachers see different results for these students such as high school drop-out, lower rates of post-secondary education and employment, and even higher rates of involvement with law enforcement, poverty, and homelessness upon their exit from high school (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine); however, with the right information, resources, and determination teachers can make a lasting impact on these students.

In order to help students with Emotional Behavioral Disturbance (EBD) experience post-secondary success, teachers need resources to assist them with planning and preparing for student transition from high school into education and training programs and employment in young adulthood. This guide will offer practical ways to plan for these students' successful transition from high school to post-secondary life, which can lead to the positive outcomes for students with EBD.

All three practice guides of Translating Evidence to Support Transition (TEST) are based on analysis of the National Longitudinal Transition Survey 2 that identifies best predictors of positive post-secondary education in employment outcomes of students with EBD (Wagner & Newman, 2014).

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About this Guide

What is it?

This is a guide about how to include Career and Technical Education (CTE) into the transition plans of high school students with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders (EBD). It can be used as a roadmap and reference for steps to take and activities to engage in when planning for and incorporating CTE courses into the transition component of Individualized Education Plans (IEP). This document brings together existing tools and creates a continuum for how to braid them together into a transition plan that includes at least four credits of CTE.

Who is this for?

This guide is for a variety of educators who support and serve students with EBD such as special education teachers, transition planners, guidance or mental health counselors, as well as other related service providers who serve students with EBD. For this guide, “students with EBD” includes students formally identified as having an EBD who receive special education services, some students identified as having Other Health Impairment (OHI), or students with IEPs who have behavioral goals. Students with 504 plans for whom teachers are providing extra support would also benefit from the content and lesson plans included in this curriculum.

Why is this important?

High school students with EBD who receive special education services are a vulnerable population that is often under-recognized and underserved by existing school-based services. Students with EBD drop out of school more than any other group of students, a shortening of their education that has been related to lower wages, lower employment rates, and poorer health (Pleis, Ward, & Lucas, 2010). Youth with EBD also participate in postsecondary education less frequently and have lower rates of post-school employment than many other categories of students with disabilities. Missed early employment and educational opportunities can result in individuals achieving little economic progress, a pathway that can be difficult to modify later in life.

Obtaining 4 or more credits of CTE during high school is an evidence-based strategy to improve post-secondary employment and education outcomes for youth with EBD.

Research indicates that:

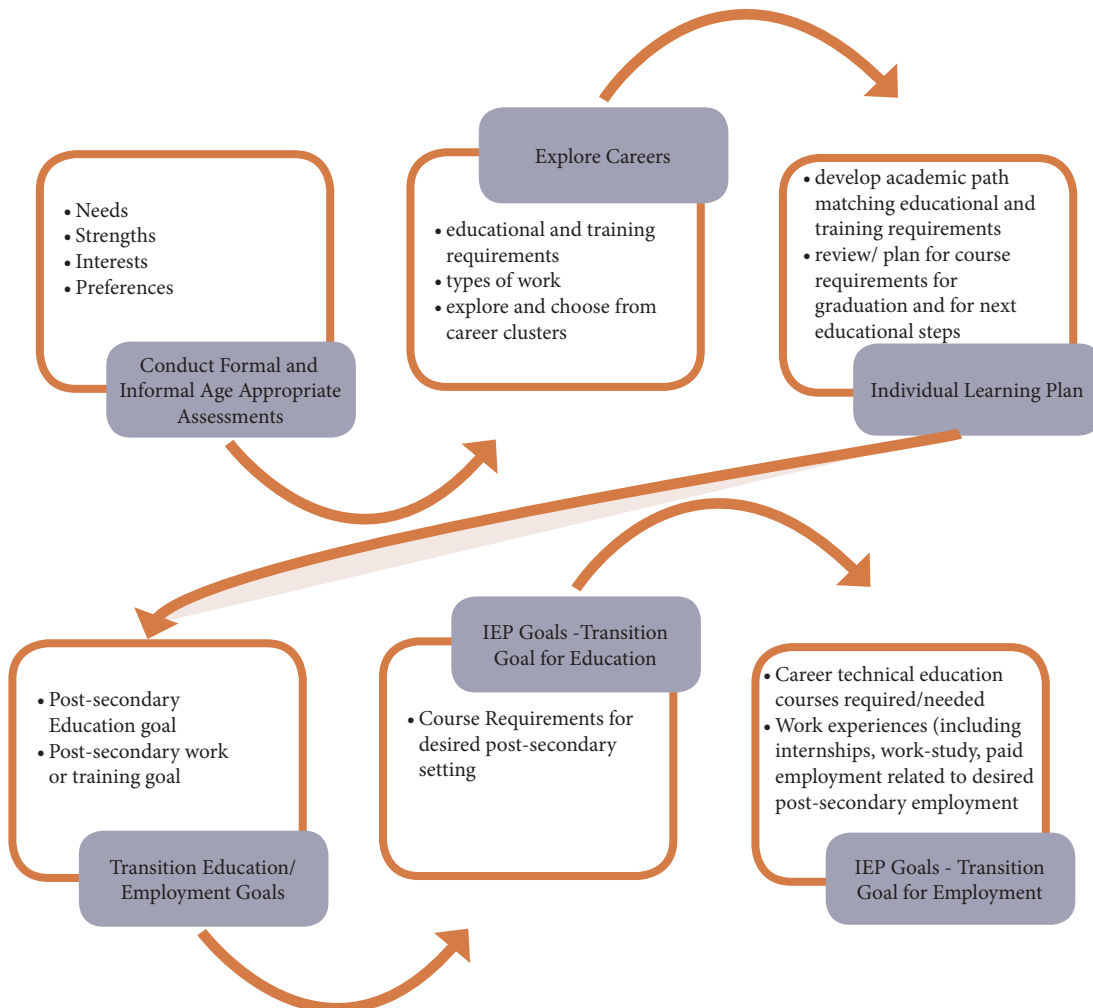
- Students with EBD with four or more units of CTE are four-times more likely than their peers without CTE coursework to have competitive employment in their early post-high school years (Wagner & Newman, 2014).
- Students participating in CTE programs have reduced drop-out rates and increased post-secondary success (Brand, Valent, & Browning, 2013).
- Students who participate in vocational education and receive vocational education credits in high school are more likely to engage in post-secondary education (Baer, Flexer, Beck, Amstutz, Hoffman, Brothers et al., 2003; Halpern, Yovanoof, Doren, & Benz, 1995; Harvey, 2002; Leonard, D’Allura, & Horowitz, 1999; Fast facts – Vocational Education, 2012).
- Youth who participate in career exploration and other transition services in a quality learning environment have higher self confidence in selecting and preparing for a career (Solberg, Howard, Gresham, & Carter, 2012).

Steps to incorporate CTE coursework into your student’s IEP are described in this guide. They are linked to the transition planning process you already complete and are listed below:

STEPS TO TAKE FOR CTE PLANNING	
1.	Conduct assessments and explore careers
2.	Use an Individual Learning Plan to identify careers and course-work
3.	Establish education/employment postsecondary transition goals in the IEP
4.	Set education goals for the upcoming year
5.	Set career training goals for the upcoming year

The roadmap below displays the major steps and activities for incorporating CTE in the transition component of the IEP.

Roadmap for Planning for CTE in the IEP Transition Component



I. Understanding the Basics

- ✓ Federal legislation supports the alignment of education with workforce needs
- ✓ CTE is a sequence of academic and vocationally oriented coursework
- ✓ CTE provides students with “employability” skills

I. Understanding the Basics

What you need to know about Incorporating Career and Technical Education into the Transition Components of IEPs for Students with EBD.

What is CTE?

✓ **CTE is a sequence of academic and vocationally oriented coursework**

Career and Technical Education, sometimes referred to as “vocational education,” is an educational strategy for providing young people with the academic, technical, and employability skills and knowledge needed to pursue postsecondary training or higher education and enter a career field (Brand et al., 2013).

CTE should include the following essential program characteristics: (Rowe, Alverson, Unruh, Fowler, Kellems & Test, 2013):

- A sequence of entry level and advanced integrated academic and vocational courses designed to improve students’ reasoning and problem-solving skills, academic knowledge, work attitudes, specific occupational and/or technical skills, and general skills needed for employment.
- A combination of in-school and community-based academic, competency-based, applied and hands-on learning experiences in the career pathways most appropriate to the local labor market.
- Linkages to post-secondary education and/or employment through site visits and connections with support services (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, disability support services).
- Opportunities to earn certificates in specific career areas (e.g., certified nursing assistant, welding, food handlers certification).
- Career counseling and guidance to assist students in career planning and development that is aligned with the students’ preferences, interests, needs, and skills.
- Instruction in career development through volunteer work, job shadowing, work-study, apprenticeships, or internships.
- Accommodation and supports to ensure students’ access and mastery of content.
- Instruction in soft skills (e.g., problem solving, communicating with authority figures, responding to feedback, promptness) and occupation-specific skills.
- Development of business partnerships to ensure a relevant curriculum.

Stages of CTE Coursework Planning

✓ CTE provides students with “employability” skills

The process of planning and incorporating CTE coursework into an IEP transition plan includes key steps that will be covered in this guide. For each step, we describe how the general process of planning for CTE is nuanced for the unique population of students with EBD.

Legislation supporting CTE

✓ Federal legislation supports the alignment of education with workforce needs

In 2006, the federal government enacted the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act with the purpose of developing the academic, career, and technical skills of secondary and post-secondary students. This act is a reauthorization of a similar piece of legislation from 1998 and others going as far back as 1917. In its current form, the Perkins CTE legislation includes language that focuses on key principles important in creating a prepared and effective workforce. These principles include 1) alignment of school curricula with employment skills, 2) collaboration between business, industry and education, 3) accountability for meeting high academic standards, and 4) innovation to create a skilled and prepared workforce.

II. Assessments and Career Exploration Activities

- ✓ **Conduct formal and informal assessments that suggest possible career paths**
- ✓ **Various career exploration strategies can be used to hone a student's career cluster and goals**
- ✓ **Students with EBD and their families may need special encouragement to foster a vocational identity, that is the idea of themselves (or their son/daughter) as a person with a career and intention to work**

II. Assessments and Career Exploration Activities

Formal and Informal Assessments

✓ **Conduct formal and informal assessments that suggest possible career paths**

Age-appropriate transition assessments are an important part of the transition process. Choose a variety of age appropriate assessments, both formal and informal, that focus on students' needs, strengths, interests and preferences.

Formal assessment tools. As special educators and transition planners, you most likely are familiar with available assessment tools. Online resources we recommend include:

- ***Age Appropriate Transition Toolkit***
This resource is published online by the National Technical Assistance Center for Transition (NTACT). Section 2 of this toolkit reviews samples of formal and informal assessment instruments and methods. Instruments range from interview protocols, questionnaires, direct observation guides, and curriculum-based assessments to achievement, intelligence, and aptitude tests, career development and interest inventories and self-determination assessments. Also included are a limited number of links to instruments that are available online at no cost. <http://transitionta.org/sites/default/files/transitionplanning/TransitionAssessmentToolkit.pdf>
- ***Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment at the University of Oklahoma***
Useful resources include curricula and lessons for self-determination, timelines for transition activities, and a Transition Assessment and Goal Generator (TAGG) to use with students. Materials are free, but require registering and creating an online account. <http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow.html>
- ***The Transition Coalition at the University of Kansas***
This website includes a “Tools” tab with tips for conducting transition assessments. Tips are searchable by category, state, and keyword. Reviews of assessment tools also are provided. For access to other resources on this site an account must be created. <http://transitioncoalition.org/>

Of special note:

All public school districts in the U.S. are obligated by law to conduct transition assessments, an obligation that has been reinforced in court decisions. Many districts that have failed to conduct transition assessment have incurred costly financial penalties (e.g., Gibson v. Forest Hills School District Board of Education, 2013; Carrie I. v. Department of Education, State of Hawaii, 2012).

Informal assessments. In addition to the formal assessment materials described above, we recommend encouraging your student to ask him/herself the questions detailed below. Doing so can increase the student's self-awareness regarding transition issues as well as ensure that you have all the information necessary about their needs, strengths, interests and preferences. Questions include:

1. What are my unique talents and strengths?
2. What do I want in life, now and in the future?
3. What are some of life's demands that I can meet now?
4. What are the main barriers to getting what I want from school and my community?
5. What can I do to prepare for what I want now and in the future? (Walker, Kortering, Fowler & Rowe, 2010)

These assessments can identify concrete interests that can inform career choices for which a student may

be best suited. For example, interests in mechanics and finding practical solutions using machines or hand tools could suggest careers such as civil engineering, sound engineering, electronics engineering, and so on.

Career Exploration

✓ **Various career exploration strategies can be used to hone a student’s career cluster and goal.**

Conducting assessments is only a first step to setting a post-secondary career or education goal. Directed effort is needed to explore careers that can match a student’s assessed needs, strengths, interests and preferences. Exploring careers leads to the next step of setting a career goal, and finally identifying the career and technical education needed to meet the goal.

Career exploration activities are described as “experiences in the community that help young people to: a) identify how their interests, values and skills relate to careers; b) describe the skills and activities associated with those careers; and, c) identify the post-secondary training, two-year, four-year, or graduate degree programs needed to successfully pursue those careers” (Career Exploration in Action, 2012).

Career exploration can be achieved in multiple ways, such as job shadowing, workplace visits and tours, employer presentations, career fairs, internships, and career focused mentoring (Career Exploration in Action, 2012). Such opportunities will help further hone the students’ career goals.

Career exploration activities will allow students to narrow in on their “career cluster” of interest. “Career clusters encompass occupations in the same field of work that require similar skills. Students, parents, and educators can use career clusters to help focus education plans towards obtaining the necessary knowledge, competencies, and training for success in a particular career pathway.” (US Department of Education Career Clusters Archives (n.d.) & All Career Clusters (n.d.)). The end result of assessment and career exploration is that students are better informed about the career opportunities available to them and are equipped to move on to setting a career goal as part of the transition component of the IEP.

Of special note:

Recent legislation (Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) has required state agencies of vocational rehabilitation to deliver career exploration services to eligible students (Marrone, 2016). See TEST curricula on Community Partnerships to learn how to involve these agencies in IEP meetings to capitalize on VR funded career exploration activities.

Special Considerations for Students with EBD

✓ **Students with EBD often face unique challenges when identifying and pursuing career exploration activities**

Some of the challenges include:

- Historic discouragement of individuals with psychiatric disabilities from pursuing work
- Unrealistic career plans
- Challenges in developing a vocational identity
- Family reliance on student’s financial assistance (e.g., social security)

Individuals with psychiatric disabilities have historically been discouraged from pursuing work.

Negative messaging about work. Some care is needed when exploring careers with students with EBD. Many adults with psychiatric disabilities have heard messages from health care and service providers and sometimes family members that work is too stressful for them and may aggravate symptoms of their disability. However, research shows that adults with psychiatric disabilities want to work in competitive jobs and, with the right supports, can be successful (Becker & Drake, 2003). It is crucial that youth and young adults don't receive these same negative messages. Educators have an important role to play in countering these negative messages with more positive images of work and of students' possibilities for employment success. Educators can use the IEP transition process to foster an intention and an expectation that students strive to be employed and/or continue education upon leaving high school.

Unrealistic career plans. Sometimes when pressed to imagine a career, a youth with EBD will make unrealistic choices. While it may be tempting to discount the dream of being a rock star, the activity of career exploration will allow the student to learn the requirements or expectations of that job and to assess whether those requirements are achievable. Similarly, by job shadowing or talking to people in a particular profession, students can learn how long preparing for a particular career can take, what is required to be successful, and how much training it needs. The educator also can explore achievable jobs that are related to an unrealistic career goal. For example, the wannabe rock star may consider instead exploring a career as a studio engineer, music producer, merchandiser, or promoter. These redefined goals can be mapped on to CTE courses that are building blocks for that career.

Challenges in developing a vocational identity. The years of transition services are important to developing a perception of oneself as a worker. However, some young people with EBD may be hindered in developing a vocational identity by a lack of self-confidence. A troubled present may limit their ability to think of a positive future or to try to plan for one. Some students with EBD also may have few family role models of vocational self-sufficiency. For others, a round robin of residential treatment placements, hospitalizations, and/or medication trials can result in a young person viewing him/herself as a permanent part of the mental health system. Targeted and "matched" career exploration activities can counter these messages and enable youth to view themselves as a part of the workforce instead. Career exploration experiences such as internships or volunteer work can be a critical step to changing that self-perception.

Family reliance on financial assistance. Many students with EBD receive federal or other disability benefits (e.g., SSI) and may have pressures to continue receiving those cash benefits because they provide financial support for the whole family. Other concerns, such as loss of health insurance, also can dissuade young people from seeking careers. Involving families to support career exploration activities may be an important activity for educators. One strategy to alleviate family concerns is to arrange benefits counseling for both the student and the family. Social Security offices, One-stop Career Centers, and other human service agencies may be able to refer transition team members to Certified Work Incentives Counselors who can explain in great detail to the student and their family how, whether, and to what extent working will impact receipt of disability benefits.

Resources for Fostering a Positive Vocational Identity

There are resources the educator can use to help foster a student's identity of themselves as a worker. These include:

"Possible Selves" (Hock, Schumaker & Deshler, 2003). This evidence-based curriculum gives teachers and counselors a tool for increasing student motivation. Lesson plans are presented in a step-by-step format

and have accompanying worksheets to distribute to students. Lesson plans within the “Possible Selves” curriculum include “Discovering strengths and interests,” “Thinking about hopes, expectations, and fears,” “Sketching me and my possible selves,” “Reflecting on goals,” “Planning ways to reach goals,” and “Working to reach goals.” This curriculum is part of the Strategic Instruction Model Learning Strategies created by the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning.

“Whose Future is it Anyway?” (*Whose Future is it Anyway, 2004*). **This** curriculum is designed to help prepare students to lead or participate in their IEP meetings and improve their sense of self-determination. It includes 36 lesson plans in each of 6 sessions addressing self-determination skills. Topics include planning for the IEP, choosing who should attend the IEP meeting, exploring interests, disability awareness, learning needs, and helpful supports.

Of special note:

See TEST curricula on Student Led IEP Planning for a step-by-step curriculum specifically designed to support educators and students with EBD to actively participate in and/or lead their own IEP planning and meetings.

III. Develop an Individual Learning Plan and/or Formulate Post-Secondary Education/Training and Employment Goals for the Transition Component of the IEP

- ✓ **Consider using an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) as a model for developing a career goal within the IEP**
- ✓ **Identify a post-secondary career goal in the transition component of a student's IEP**
- ✓ **Build hope for future career and higher education despite present day challenges**

III. Develop an Individual Learning Plan and/or Formulate Post-Secondary Education/Training and Employment Goals for the Transition Component of the IEP

Individualized Learning Plan (ILP)

- ✓ **Consider using an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) as a model for developing a career goal within the IEP**

The transition component of the IEP includes the formulation of goals for post-secondary education/training and employment in order to ready the student to achieve post-secondary goals during their high school experience. One model for developing post-secondary career goals is the Individualized Learning Plan (ILP). An ILP can be used to outline a course of study that is associated with a student’s career goals and aptitudes. The ILP specifies an academic path comprised of specific CTE courses and other district-approved internships and/or work-based learning opportunities to develop a student’s career path. Elements of ILPs are based on the framework set forth in the Perkins Act (One Hundred Ninth Congress of the United States of America, 2006) and include:

- choosing from defined career clusters;
- district- (or state-) level graduation requirements;
- college entrance requirements;
- career preparation certificate requirements,
- post-secondary plans;
- lists of courses to be taken each year
- short- and long-term goals, and
- parental involvement.

Identified goals and aptitudes can be connected to 16 career clusters that link to more than 70 career pathways and more than 1,800 career specialties. An ILP outlines an explicit pathway to get to a student’s career of choice. Some states require that the ILP be completed for students with disabilities; however, this is not the case in all states. Whether your state requires an ILP or not, you may find it helpful to use the strategies for completing the ILP when helping students create the transition component of their IEP.

Once a student has determined post-secondary career goals, the course selections and manner of exiting high school should be aligned with accessing the training and education required by the career choice. Below are differing exits from high school and their alignment with post-secondary education goals.

Exit from high school....	Path forward in post-secondary life...
Graduation (college prep course of study)	4 year college or university
Graduation (technical school course of study)	2 year technical school, technical school certificate program, 2 year transfer course of study to 4 year college or university
High School Certificate	College or university housed transition to life program (non-degree)
GED	2 year technical school, technical school certificate program, 2 year transfer course of study to 4 year college or university

Knowing what your exit strategy from high school will allow you to strategically plan the courses and credits you need as you progress in high school. This in turn provides an opportunity for selecting which CTE courses you may need and conversely, which CTE courses lead away from your career plan. Following is an example of four possible high school exits and the generic graduation requirements for these types of exits (these requirements can vary from school system to school system).

Generic Requirements For Four Types of School Exit

Regular Diploma	College Prep Diploma	High School Certificate	GED
<p>Students who wish to attend a community college or graduate employment ready with a certificate in a career</p> <p>4 credits of English</p> <p>3 credits of social studies e.g. History, Gov't/Econ.,</p> <p>3 credits of science</p> <p>4 credits of math</p> <p>1 credit of PE/ JROTC</p> <p>1 credit of computer science</p> <p>1 credit of foreign language or CTE classes</p> <p>7 credits of electives</p>	<p>Students who wish to attend a traditional 4-year college</p> <p>4 credits of English</p> <p>3 credits of social studies, e.g.,</p> <p>US History</p> <p>Gov't/Econ.</p> <p>World History</p> <p>3 credits of science</p> <p>4 credits of math</p> <p>1 credit of PE/ JROTC</p> <p>1 credit of computer science (e.g., keyboarding)</p> <p>2 credits of a single foreign language</p> <p>7 credits of electives</p> <p>*depending on the college a student wishes to attend, there may be more or specific core classes required</p>	<p>Students receiving IEP services who will not earn a diploma (students who cannot pass the state high school exit exam are awarded a high school certificate)</p> <p>A program of study will be established for students completing high school on this path.</p> <p>Courses will include functional work and living skills.</p>	<p>A high school equivalency degree traditionally for students who have dropped out of high school. Students may take the GED at age 16 with special permission and at 17 with an official withdrawal form from the high school they attended. This may be appropriate for students who:</p> <p>Re-enter high school after dropping out</p> <p>Are older than their same- grade peers</p> <p>Capable of completing coursework but not passing exit exams</p>

After discussing the variety of paths through high school to post-secondary life, it is appropriate to return to the assessments conducted with the student to determine strengths, interests, aptitudes, and needs (see section 2). The assessments can be used to make choices about careers that interest the student. This choice of career cluster and associated education, employment and independent living skills needed, will provide the basis for articulating post-secondary transition goals. Once these goals are stated, academic

courses, employment experiences and independent living skills can be planned for within the student's IEP for the upcoming year. Career interests and goals should be revisited and adjusted as appropriate at the student's annual IEP meeting.

Transition Component of a Student's IEP

✓ Identify a post-secondary career goal in the transition component of a student's IEP

Upon creation of age-appropriate assessments and career exploration activities, begin working on career or employment goals. Career clusters articulated on the Advance CTE website (Career Clusters, n.d.) will provide direction for CTE coursework planning and assist in effectively writing related goals in the transition component of the IEP.

To get the conversation going with the student, you might ask:

- How do the jobs related to the career cluster you have identified seem to fit with your plans and future goals?
- Tell me about some of the classes you are interested in taking while in high school that relate to these jobs.
- Do you see yourself going straight to work after high school or spending time getting more education or training?
- How much education and training are you interested in getting?
- What kinds of places have you considered getting this training?

To make an effective plan for the future, students need to learn a method for setting SMART goals, that is ones that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely. A guide for making SMART goals is included here, and more information about teaching students to use them can be found in the companion curriculum, Student Led IEP Transition Planning.

Creating SMART Goals

Use this worksheet to practice writing a SMART goal, and to draft your own SMART goals for your IEP. Remember, SMART goals should be:

- **Specific** – What am I going to do?
- **Measurable** – How will I know I have done it?
- **Achievable** – What steps do I need to take to make this happen?
- **Relevant** – How does this relate to my plans and needs?
- **Timely** – When will I have done it?

Goal:	
Specific - What I am going to do?	
Measurable- How will I know I have done it?	
Achievable-What steps do I need to take to make this happen?	
Relevant- How does this relate to my plans/ needs?	
Time bound- When will I have done it?	
Possible obstacles:	Solutions:
Revised/final goal example: <hr/>	

Sample Goal

“The student will attend a culinary arts program at a technical school of his/her choice.”	
Specific - What I am going to do?	The student will identify technical schools with culinary arts programs, choose a school, and complete the required application package.
Measurable- How will I know I have done it?	Complete school application
Achievable-What steps do I need to take to make this happen?	1) Locate technical schools with culinary arts programs; 2. Plan visits to those schools; 3. Download (or create) a list of steps to complete the application process for schools to be applied to.
Relevant- How does this relate to my plans/ needs?	Culinary arts matches my enjoyment of cooking and has good job opportunities
Time bound- When will I have done it?	End of senior year

Special Considerations for Students with EBD

✓ Build hope for future career and higher education

As you formulate post-secondary employment goals, there are some special considerations to keep in mind for some students with EBD. These include:

- A tendency to underestimate the potential for a career
- Students with EBD have rights to accommodations to support employment
- Consider higher education

Underestimating potential for careers. Sometimes students with EBD are considered to have behaviors, attitudes and capacities that will make successful careers very difficult to achieve. Despite often having typical intellectual and cognitive abilities, youth with EBD may have histories of poor performance in school, leading others and often themselves to believe that certain careers are out of reach for them. Youth with EBD have often hear repeatedly about their deficits and what they don't do well, leading to a cascading effect of low self-esteem and worsening behaviors. It is important to remember that youth have a long span of time in which developmental changes will occur. Risky behaviors, substance use, and trouble with the law that some students experience likely will decrease as they mature and learn coping skills for managing their EBD. The teenager at 16 is not the young adult at 26 or the adult at 30, when maturation can expect to be completed. By providing positive messages of hope for the future, educators can plant a seed that will later flower, even if today for some it may seem bleak.

Students with EBD have rights to accommodations to support employment. Students with EBD may have a better outlook for their future if they are aware of the accommodations that employers and schools are required to provide for people with disabilities, including those with mental health conditions (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990). Students with EBD can be supported and encouraged in their career potential by hearing about the ever-evolving innovations in employment practices for this population (Stone, Ellison, Huckabee, & Mullen, 2017). Let your students know the prospects for a career for a youth with EBD are more hopeful than ever.

Consider higher education. Having established a career aspiration, the student can be helped to understand the training, education, and competencies that will be needed to obtain that career. If higher education is required to reach a student's career goal, this may be intimidating. For many students with EBD, graduating high school may be in doubt, they may be the first generation of college students in their family, or affording college may seem insurmountable. The student may opt for post-secondary employment instead of higher education. In such situations, a teacher may be able to make an effective argument that will encourage the student to consider higher education. For example, it will help to remind students of the higher

Of Special Note:

In 2016, 7% of students with less than a high school diploma were unemployed, while having an associate's degree cut the probably of unemployment in more than half to 3.6 percent (Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment, 2016). By finishing high school and pursuing a 2-year degree, students are likely to fall below the average unemployment rate in America, (4%)(Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment, 2016). In terms of earning power, students with a high school diploma were found to have median weekly earnings of \$692 (Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment, 2016). An associate's degree increased this median earning power by over \$100 a week, and a bachelor's degree by over \$400 a week (Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment, 2016).

earnings power and protection from unemployment that each year of post-secondary education brings (Employment Projections, 2016).

Sometimes it's helpful to go through the requirements listed for real job openings in a student's career of interest to see the importance and value of higher education. Working through the possibilities of loans and financial aid or Vocational Rehabilitation aid and other opportunities for financing college can also help. As with employment, students with EBD are entitled to academic accommodations that can smooth their way in college. These tip sheets are useful resources for preparing students to obtain educational accommodations. (Costa, 2011; Degalbo, Logan, Duperoy & Smith, 2017).

IV. Specify a Progression of CTE Courses and Credits That Meet Career Transition Goals

- ✓ **Specify a progression of four credits of CTE in the transition component of the IEP**
- ✓ **If relevant CTE courses are unavailable, be creative to design credit-available work experiences or internships**
- ✓ **Special Considerations to keep in mind as students with EBD develop their plan for CTE coursework**

IV. Specify a Progression of CTE Courses and Credits That Meet Career Transition Goals

Specifying a Progression

✓ Specify a progression of four credits or more of CTE in the transition component of the IEP

Empirical evidence suggests that including four or more units of CTE during a student's course of study makes them four-times more likely to find competitive employment during the early post-high school years

A critical step in acquiring these credits is to specify them annually in the transition component of the IEP. Consequently, the task of the special educator and/or transition coordinator with direct input from the student, and potentially the student's parents, is to identify at least four credits of classes (or other credit-bearing work experiences) that are offered by your school system and are related to a student's career goals. It is important to ensure a student is included in course decisions and that a specified course trajectory meets their interests. If they aren't motivated to pursue their CTE courses, it is unlikely they will become invested in them and succeed. All decisions should be driven by student choice.

Ideally, there will be CTE courses available within your district that represent a wide variety of career clusters so that students can take CTE courses that match their preferences, interests, needs, and strengths. Having taken these courses, upon graduation the student may well have achieved certification for that career (e.g., certified nursing assistant) or will then be ready to enter into postsecondary training in their area of interest.

Ideally a student's CTE courses will have the following characteristics:

- Learning opportunities involving technology use, 21st century skills, and employability skills for specific careers/career clusters, and
- Hands-on and community-based opportunities to learn occupation-specific skills (Fast Facts, 2013)

Specific steps are detailed below to develop and indicate at least 4 credits of CTE coursework in the annual transition component of the IEP. These steps are designed to be done in order and in collaboration with your student, other educators, and a student's family.

Specific Steps to Develop and Earn 4 Credits or More of CTE Coursework

1. Review descriptions of high school occupational classes to become familiar with the skills, expertise, and knowledge being developed in each class.
2. Collaborate with occupational class teachers and guidance counselors to identify appropriate classes for individual students that match the skills needed for a student's identified career goal.
3. Share class descriptions with students and families to help students identify appropriate occupational courses that align with the career goal developed, as described in Section III.
4. Identify a progression of at least 4 credits that are needed/desired for the career area/job of interest that also count against graduation requirements.

5. Identify and plan for supports and or accommodations needed to progress in the chosen classes (described in Section V).
6. If workplace experiences or internships can qualify as an elective and this is desired by a student, take steps to identify or arrange for a work site (working with other agencies at the transition meetings may help – see the companion curriculum on Community Partnerships).
7. Ensure occupational coursework is specifically stated in students’ IEPs.
8. Monitor the selection of classes over a student’s high school career to ensure that graduation requirements are met.
9. Participate in curriculum alignment activities at the school, district, and state levels to ensure skills, expertise, and knowledge relative to a single occupation or career cluster are explicitly stated in curricula and that curricula are designed to include students with diverse abilities.

Some examples of how to implement a progression of CTE coursework are highlighted below. We describe a CTE progression that varies according to whether the post-secondary career goal is to obtain a trade certificate, or to become employed, or to go to college.

Examples of How to Implement a Progression of CTE Coursework for Different Post-secondary Goals

Post-secondary goal of:

- **Trade certificate** - To earn a certificate in Automotive Technology, students may complete training requirements for an entry-level position at a high school career center. First identify the core courses required for high school graduation. Then free up time to pursue Automotive Technology training in school. During one semester in the second 2 years of high school, a student could participate in an Automotive Technology program for 2 hours a day. At the end of the coursework, the student can take a qualifying exam to earn a certificate.
- **Employment** - After taking a few shop classes in woodworking in high school, a student may be granted a work-based learning opportunity for course credit. For example, the student may be offered an internship working with a local carpenter. If the student does well in the internship, the carpenter may hire the high school student to work as his assistant after graduation.
- **Higher education** - A progression of CTE courses may not seem related to a higher education career goal. However, CTE experiences and credits will help students develop discipline, stamina, a commitment to working to an expectation, and other work related behaviors that will help in a college as well as work setting. If a student has a specific college degree in mind, for example graphic design, the foundational courses in high school (e.g., foundational drawing or drafting and computer aided design) will give this student a strong advantage to applying for and succeeding in a college arts program. Keep in mind that students with EBD can also qualify for accommodations or even exemption from achievements tests (e.g., SATs).

Navigating CTE Course Availability

- ✓ **If relevant CTE courses are unavailable, be creative to design credit-available work experiences or internships**

In the event that appropriate courses for a given career or career cluster are not available, educators can

seek out work experiences (preferably for credit) that can substitute. Types of CTE experiences other than coursework may include: dual enrollment with community colleges to work on a student's career-based skills (e.g., finance, computer technology); internships with employers or other opportunities to observe/be involved in settings related to the career area/job of interest, and on-line classes. Educators also can "think outside the box" to come up with career preparatory experiences. For example, participation in "career centers," where students learn basic skills such as technology-based activities (e.g., website design), can be a substitute for structured classwork. Educators can be creative and ask questions e.g., can the student do an internship, can they go to a class at a career center, can they take certain CTE classes at the school?

Special Considerations for Students with EBD

✓ Special considerations to keep in mind as students with EBD develop their plan for CTE coursework

Stigma of CTE classes. Historically, vocational tracks or schools have been thought of as appropriate only for students who would not be able to perform well in "college preparatory" courses. Thus, some students with EBD may resist taking CTE classwork to avoid being stigmatized. It is important to correct this misconception and inform students that they can take CTE courses and then go to college if they wish. In fact, CTE courses could be advertised as a means to pay for college. For example, a student could get their CNA certification in high school and then work as a CNA during their college years to help pay tuition. At the same time, a student who does not intend to go to college should not feel ashamed or stigmatized as a result of enrolling in CTE courses. It is impressive that they have begun to pursue their work goals in high school. It is helpful to make the direct connection of CTE coursework to a student's career goal apparent so students can take pride in the training they are receiving.

Barriers for students in therapeutic settings. For EBD students who are in therapeutic settings or homebound, access to CTE coursework may be especially challenging. The educator should check into policies and attempt to link the student to other work-based learning opportunities, such as volunteer work in the community or internships. On-line classes or even adult education courses may be an option as well.

Limited development of soft skills. Often a student with EBD will have the cognitive abilities to succeed in employment but will lose a job over poor social or "soft" skills. Educators can seek out soft skills training as part of the CTE progression of courses. A recent curriculum for this is Skills to Pay the Bills (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). This curriculum includes hands-on activities in which students learn about communication, enthusiasm and attitude, teamwork, networking, problem solving and critical thinking, and professionalism in employment and professional settings.

Transportation. Some career and technical training courses are offered off of a high school's campus such as internship opportunities. Arranging to get a student to and from their CTE course may take some planning in terms of transportation. It is worthwhile to investigate public transportation options in your area if a student would be comfortable commuting independently. You could also have a conversation with a student's family around if anyone in their household would be able to offer them rides or if the student would be able to drive themselves to and from their career training opportunity.

Additional Costs. Some career and technical training for high school students is accompanied by additional costs. For example, a student may be required to purchase a uniform to wear at a work placement. A student should always be made aware of any expenses associated with a CTE course before enrolling so as not to be disappointed at a later date. If a student is particularly interested in a course that has challenging expenses associated with it, perhaps a payment schedule could be agreed upon through

which a student could be costs in monthly increments as opposed to an up-front lump sum. One could also search for and apply to scholarship opportunities available to finance career training courses.

V. Develop IEP Supports and Related Activities That Reinforce CTE Learning

- ✓ **Use accommodations to address challenges that are common for students with EBD**
- ✓ **Creatively design academic supports for CTE for students with EBD, especially in non-school settings**
- ✓ **Attempt to preserve CTE and work-based learning opportunities even if the school setting changes (e.g., residential placement)**

V. Develop IEP Supports and Related Activities That Reinforce CTE Learning

Accommodations for Students with EBD

- ✓ Use accommodations to address challenges that are common for students with EBD

The following chart lists some typical educational needs and the ways that accommodations can address them.

Things for Special Educators to do to Support Students with EBD in Their CTE Classes

Needed Supports	How to meet these needs
Test accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for times when the special education teacher can be present to administer tests with accommodations • Work with the CTE teacher to modify tests as prescribed by the IEP • Consider allowing the student to have a testing aide or testing partner to ease anxiety
Behavioral accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support CTE teachers in learning how to recognize possible triggers for poor behavior and address them before they can escalate • Provide examples of effective communication strategies to increase the likelihood of student compliance • Develop a plan with the CTE teacher in case a student with EBD experiences a trigger --- set aside a 'safe space' in the CTE setting for students with EBD to spend time if feeling emotional • Work with CTE to arrange for student to be able to exit classroom environment and take a break in a quiet space when needed
Appropriate work behavior at employment sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use time with the student to teach "soft skills," including how to talk with employers and appropriate workplace language and tone • Practice with the student ways to communicate about problems encountered in the workplace and ways to communicate with other employees and customers • Identify another student, co-intern, or someone other than the CTE instructor who is willing to be a resource and the "go-to person" for a student if they are having difficulty at an employment site

Returning from absences/hospitalizations (sometimes long periods of time)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the CTE teacher for the student's return, provide assistance in helping the student get up to speed on class assignments and activities • Practice with the student ways to talk about their absence with others they encounter
Assignment to home-based instruction for other than disciplinary reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for the student's continued participation in the CTE classes (perhaps suggesting partial home-based services) to encourage continued engagement in the school setting • Clarify to school personnel such as administrators and other teachers that the student should be allowed and able to participate in all school activities that are allowed by their physician

Be creative in designing other academic supports for students in CTE

✓ **Creatively design academic supports for CTE for students with EBD, especially in non-school settings**

Offering academic supports to students in CTE courses may be challenging. Often these courses take place away from the student's home school, and the special educator who normally works with students and general education teachers serving them are not accessible. Additionally, students with EBD may have needs that go beyond the usual academic accommodations, requiring behavioral supports in their CTE class settings. Addressing these challenges requires creativity and cooperation. Some ways these challenges can be overcome:

For the student and educator

- Visit the site of the CTE class ahead of time to find the room and become familiar with classroom routines.
- Anticipate what might be challenging about the CTE setting and plan ahead about how to address these concerns.
- Plan and advocate together before starting coursework for specific academic and behavioral supports in the CTE setting.

For the CTE instructor

- Review procedures for handling possible escalation of the student's behavior before class begins.
- Meet with the CTE teacher to discuss the student's strengths and needs before the student enters the class.
- Invite CTE teachers to attend IEP meetings and assist with transition planning and establishing a course of study in the area of student interest.
- Visit students at the CTE center (if allowed) and provide supports, such as testing accommodations.
- Establish a working relationship with CTE teachers in order to make collaborating easier.
- Assess attendance and behavioral policies and discuss accommodations to them that may help the student.

Special Considerations for Students with EBD

- ✓ Attempt to preserve CTE and work-based learning opportunities even if the school setting changes (e.g., residential placement). In the case of extended absences that do not allow for students' regular participation in CTE classes, options for continuing career-related education and experiences should be provided whenever possible. If a student is placed in a therapeutic setting but remains a student of record at the local high school, the special education teacher should lead a discussion at the required change of placement IEP meeting regarding preserving CTE educational and employment opportunities.

General tips to help students manage anxiety

Adjusting to new situations can be challenging, especially for students who are prone to experiencing general and social anxiety. Some students may avoid or even refuse to participate in activities or events that make them anxious. Below are some general tips to help support students who experience anxiety.

- **Modify expectations and praise small accomplishments.** It can sometimes seem like a student is uninterested or underachieving when exhibiting avoidance behaviors, but the opposite might be true. Students with anxiety may avoid situations because they are afraid of making a mistake or being judged. To combat this, try your best to refrain from expressing frustration or punishing mistakes. You may need to adjust your perceptions of success or progress according to the student or situation. Every success — even something small or simple — merits praise.
- **Prepare for the situation.** Help the student feel prepared by giving them a general sense of an event or situation beforehand (where it will be, who will be there, and what might happen). Scripting, role-playing and previewing are all excellent tools. Preparation will help an activity or event feel less new and scary. Students with social anxiety may benefit from arriving to an event or situation early for this reason. Make sure to account for extra time for this preparation if needed.
- **Reframe negative thoughts.** Students with anxiety are often overwhelmed by negative beliefs that reinforce their anxious thoughts (e.g., assuming the worst-case scenario, believing that others see them through a negative lens). Help a student to recognize negative thoughts and replace them with positive, realistic ones. If a student tends to say things like, “My teacher thinks I’m stupid because I’m bad at reading,” help the student recognize the negative thought, ground it in reality (a teacher’s job is to help students learn not judge them on what they already know), and replace it with a positive thought (“I’m having a hard time reading but my teacher will help me get better.”)
- **Use relaxation techniques.** It is nearly impossible to accomplish a task or engage in an activity while dealing with intense physical symptoms of anxiety. Deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation are helpful tools used to calm the body’s anxious response.

Deep breathing can calm rapid heart rate, shallow breathing and feeling dizzy. Instruct the student to count each breath to help slow the breathing (4 in, 4 hold, 4 out).

Progressive muscle relaxation, or the act of tensing and releasing muscles, can relieve some of the built-up tension in the body. Beginning with hands, have the student make a fist and hold it tight for five seconds then slowly release. Move on to the arms, neck and shoulders, and feet and legs.

- **Peer support.** Identify a current or former CTE student who may be willing to help as friend or supporter to your student with EBD. Having someone with you as you enter a new environment can greatly help to alleviate anxiety.

VI. Re-Assess Career Goals and CTE Course Progression

- ✓ **Monitor and measure progress toward meeting IEP goals**
- ✓ **Adjust career goals, if needed, to align with the student's changing learning and experiences**

VI. Re-Assess Career Goals and CTE Course Progression

Tracking Progress

✓ Monitor and measure student progress toward reaching IEP goals

In order for transition planning and setting IEP goals to be meaningful, the student's progress should be carefully tracked. When goals are created, a plan should be in place for who will collect the data relevant to the goals, and how the data will be collected and reviewed with the student.

To measure goals, help the student make a checklist of the needed actions required to complete all parts of the goal and keep it in the classroom to review with the student regularly. The student can check off the steps as they are completed to measure their progress towards their goals. For steps that must be completed outside of the classroom, the teacher and student can plan for and practice what the student must do to complete them. For academic goals linked to post-secondary employment, progress might be measured using interim reports, quarterly report cards, occurrence of behavioral issues, tracking absences, and the student keeping a calendar to track assignments, due dates, and planned assessments.

Starting when the IEP goes into effect, the student and teacher should discuss progress toward the goal weekly (e.g., what needs to be happening?, what are you doing to make that happen? what supports do you need (if any) to take the next required actions?). As the intermediate steps are completed, the student can check off the corresponding items on the checklist.

Measuring progress toward goals will differ with the type of goals the student is trying to reach. The important thing is to check for progress and then make adjustments as needed to facilitate meeting the IEP goals in support of attaining the post-secondary goals included in the transition planning component of the IEP.

For example, the post-secondary goal is: "The student will attend a culinary arts program at a technical school of their choice." The supporting IEP goals can be: The student will identify technical schools with culinary arts programs, choose a school, and complete the required application package. Steps may be to: 1) Locate technical schools with culinary arts programs; 2) Plan visits to technical schools with culinary arts programs; 3) Download (or create) a list of steps to complete application process for schools to be applied to; 4) Complete school application.

Adjustments along the Way

✓ Adjust career goals, if needed, to align with the student's changing learning and experiences

As the IEP year winds down and planning for the next transition planning and IEP meeting begins, meet with students to review the documentation created, to monitor progress, and have revisit the student's interest, strengths, and needs. There may be adjustments needed regarding the CTE curriculum the student is following- perhaps their interests have changed or their circumstances are now different in a way that makes the previous CTE curriculum less relevant/feasible. Further, some students may have thought they were interested in a certain career and then after trying relevant activities, job experiences, or classes realize that it is not what they would like to do after all. It is during these discussions with the student that the post-secondary transition goals can be adjusted if necessary and new IEP goals can be formulated. If the student is on a path she or he likes and wants to continue following, the discussion can be centered on appropriate next steps to facilitate meeting the desired post-secondary goals. This might

mean selecting more CTE classes, identifying new or different employment sites for work experience, and making sure that needed classes for high school completion and post-secondary training opportunities are signed up for by the student during registration for the following school year.

Summary

An educator can play an important role in supporting students with EBD as they develop a vocational identity and take advantage of CTE learning opportunities, both concrete and important tasks that can provide students with the necessary skills and behaviors to succeed in the workplace. This guide has provided an outline of steps that can lead a student with EBD from beginning to assess their strengths and aptitudes, to exploring careers and developing a career related post-secondary goal based on those activities.

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