

Trail Marker 1

Preparing for the Journey: Transition Activities from Elementary School to Middle School

This short guide is designed to help families and their students with disabilities from 5th to 9th grade. Middle School (MS) grades differ from school district to school district and the MS experience will differ depending on the types of programming and resources available. For example, school districts may identify MS as 6th-8th, 7th-9th and some may identify 5th grade as a part of MS. Students may also be attending a school with students in grades K through eight (8) or a center school. Students enter MS from elementary school and exit middle school to high school. Middle School is where most students become teenagers.

Meet Ethan, Mia, Zoey and Levi. These students will be our guides on the MS trail and help us to clearly see the challenges and potential solutions they face as they transition through the MS. The students' MS stories will be told throughout the trail map and will be shaded in light blue. Their stories shine light on MS transition planning for your youth.

Ethan (5th grade)



Mia (6th grade)



Zoey (7th grade)



Levi (8th grade)



Transitioning from Elementary School into the Middle School: Transition Activities and Responsibilities

Students with disabilities, including students with the most significant disabilities, will be supported during their transition into MS. Transition activities and responsibilities for school personnel, families and students are included in this section. The upper elementary and middle schools are responsible for providing students and families with the information and support they need for a smooth transition. Families of students with disabilities and the students themselves also have responsibilities to ensure a successful transition to MS. Review the recommendations for transition activities and responsibilities in the table that follows. For families of students with the most significant disabilities, the transition activities are an especially critical time to work with school personnel to ensure your student's needs will be met (*Making the Move from Elementary to Middle or Junior High School: Transition Tips for Parents of Students with Disabilities* <https://www.pacer.org/transition/resource-library/publications/NPC-53.pdf>.)

Transition Activities and Responsibilities for the Elementary School (ES) and Middle School (MS) Personnel	Transition Activities and Responsibilities for Families and Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ES will share student files to help middle school personnel to understand the student's strengths and needs in the areas of academics, behavior and social-emotional development. 	<p>Participate in transition events sponsored by the ES.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MS personnel will make sure accommodations that have been provided in elementary school will be considered for the move to middle school. The ES IEP team may invite a middle school representative to participate in the student's final meeting. 	<p>Attend the final IEP meeting in ES.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ES will provide information to families that will help them begin to prepare their students for middle school. The information packets could include details about the middle school the student will be attending, brochures related to middle school transition and suggestions for activities that can be completed in the summer to support a smooth transition. 	<p>Schedule a visit to the new MS to walk through the facilities and identify class locations during after school or summer hours.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MS may host a Transition event to familiarize families with school personnel, schedules, policies, facilities, extra-curricular activities and more. MS may host a Family Panel event in which a panel of MS families speak to the families of rising students and answer questions. 	<p>After the student is enrolled in MS, attend school-sponsored orientation activities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MS will extend an invitation to parents to participate in the initial IEP meeting. 	<p>Attend the first IEP team meeting for MS. Ensure that you understand the educational setting in which the student is being placed.</p>

If you have ever been hiking through a long trail, you know how important it is to get ready for the hike. A successful hike depends on planning and preparation. Your backpack should be filled with all the necessary items, such as a raincoat, water bottle, map, compass, food and a flashlight with extra batteries. There are many items to put into your virtual transition backpack, too.



Transition into Middle School: Ethan's Backpack Checklist

Attend final IEP meeting for 5th grade with a family member.

Choose summer learning activities that I like, such as reading, playing word games and physical activities

Visit my new middle school or junior high school on 6th Grade Transition Night

Visit the website of my new middle school or junior high school to learn more about the school

Attend my first IEP meeting for 6th grade with a family member

Talk with my family or teachers about any concerns or questions I have about going to a new grade and a new school

Ethan, our 5th grade trail guide, and his family talked about the student responsibilities during the transition from 5th to 6th grade and now he is getting his backpack ready.



He has a checklist for things he can do to make his journey a successful one. Take a look at Ethan's checklist and add some of your own ideas. You will see that Ethan added summer learning to his list of preparations. Great idea, Ethan! Take a look at these Six Great Ideas for Summer Learning published by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7581/urlt/SummerLearningHandout.pdf>

Trail Marker 2

Every Day on the Trail: Social-Emotional Competence (SEC)

Ethan knows that there are important things to take along on a hike. If he doesn't take enough water, he could get dehydrated and find it difficult to complete the hike. On the transition trail, it is equally important to stay "emotionally hydrated".

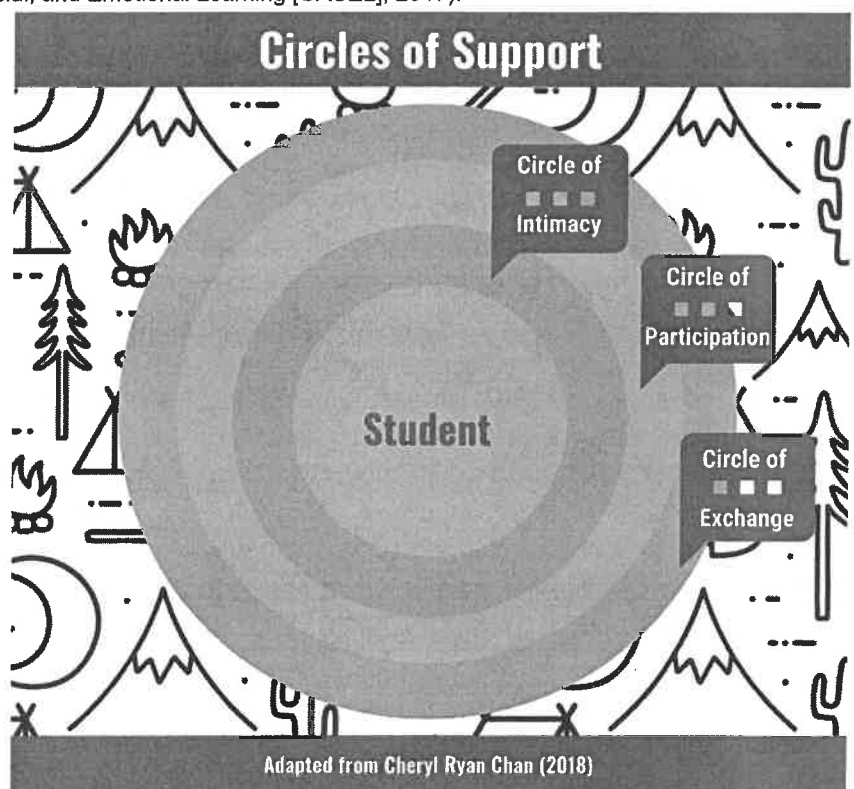


Social-emotional competence (SEC) skills help us to be successful at school, work and in the community. You may be asking, "What are the skills included in SEC?" There are five basic clusters of skills that define SEC. They are as follows:

- **Self-awareness** - Refers to knowing about oneself, including emotions and thought processes; strengths and abilities; needs and limitations; as well as disabilities. Self-awareness can also encompass self-determination skills, such as confidence in oneself and self-advocacy skills, such as speaking up for one's ideas and opinions.
- **Self-management** - Refers to managing one's emotions and behaviors in a variety of situations, including times of stress, sadness and anger. Self-management also includes the ability to overcome obstacles and set goals.
- **Social awareness** - Refers to respecting the opinions and feelings of others.
- **Relationship skills** - Refers to building healthy relationships at home, school and in the community. There are many settings in which students can build relationships, including athletic teams; faith-based organizations; creative arts groups; humanitarian and civic organizations; and recreation and leisure groups.
- **Responsible decision-making** - Refers to analyzing the possible outcomes of a decision and choose a path that considers the well-being of self and others (Choicemaker Self-Determination Curriculum, 2008; Fredericks et al., 2005; Tennessee Department of Education, 2017; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2017).

Teaching students how to develop SEC is referred to as social-emotional learning (SEL). Social-emotional skills are used throughout all areas of life and SEL is best when learned and practiced in all areas of life. SEL occurs inside and outside of school. There is a wide network of people who impact students' lives. People who are in close relationship to an individual usually provide greater levels of support, but it is important to remember that all levels of support are valuable. The Circles of Support describe the different levels of support that students experience.

- **The Circle of Intimacy** includes parents, grandparents, other family members and caregivers. These are the people who are deeply connected and committed to the student's care and well-being.
- **The Circle of Participation** possibly includes friends, teachers, mentors, teammates, co-workers and neighbors. These are the people who are connected, caring and committed to assisting the student through their daily interactions.
- **The Circle of Exchange** includes support providers, doctors, therapists, hair stylists, or anyone in the community who is regular contact with the student. These are the people who are connected to the student through positive and caring interactions in the community.



The Circles of Support graphic shows that the student is at the center of all of the support circles. The surrounding circles ripple outward based on the level of contact. An individual at any level in the network could become a strategic contact. One way to help students with disabilities to practice SEL and increase their integration with the community is to strengthen and expand their circles of support (Chan, 2018). Chan is a mom to her 27-year-old son who is severely impacted by autism. She is a personal speaker and trainer in person-centered planning. <https://www.slideshare.net/cherylryanchan/afc-summit-workshop-on-circles-of-support-may-2018-97489002>



Mia, our 6th grade trail guide, found support from her neighbors (Circle of Participation). Mia has an intellectual disability and also has a huge heart for people and all living creatures. Mia's neighbor needed someone to take his dog outside in the backyard in the afternoon and noticed that Mia was frequently outside playing with her dog in her yard. The neighbor asked Mia if she was interested in taking his dog outside for some exercise every afternoon. Mia began taking care of her dog and her neighbor's dog every afternoon. She enjoys the respect she has earned for the work she does and the extra money comes in handy, too. Mia did such a great job exercising her neighbor's dog that other neighbors have contacted her for assistance with their pets. Through one contact with her neighbor, Mia developed new contacts that enabled her to widen her circles of support and grow in self-confidence by sharing her abilities with her community.

Parent Tips: Take Daily Steps to Develop SEC with Your Middle School Student

Focus on your youth's strengths	Follow up misbehavior with fair and sensible consequences	Ask your youth about how he/she is feeling
Find ways to stay calm when angry	Be willing to apologize to your youth	Give youth choices and respect their decisions
Ask questions that help youth to solve problems on their own	Set high expectations for your youth's educational activities	Encourage helping at home and in the community
Communicate with youth about homework and school activities	Be aware of your youth's activities, including after school, tv and online habits	Participate in school events

Schools, Families, and Social and Emotional Learning: Ideas and Tools for Working with Parents and Families. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Parent Involvement in Social-Emotional Competence

Studies indicate that youth benefit socially, emotionally and academically when parents are involved in their lives. See the table for tips that can help parents to support their youth in the development of social-emotional competence. More ideas are available at Schools, Families, and Social and Emotional Learning: Ideas and Tools for Parents and Families Parents and Families.

Self-Determination

Self-determination skills are connected to SEC skills, but what do we mean by self-determination? In the "How Self-Determined Are You? A Toolbox of Resources to Help Build Self-Determination Skills", self-determination can be defined as follows:

- **Knowing and believing in yourself.**
- **Knowing what you want your future to be and how to make plans to achieve this future.**
- **Knowing what supports you need to take control of your life** (How Self-Determined Are You?, 2016, p. 1).

Helping your youth to develop self-determination skills begins early. Some recommendations for families on promoting self-determination at home include the following:

- "Give your youth opportunities to have a wide variety of experiences so he/she can discover likes and dislikes, and strengths and challenges" (How Self-Determined Are You?, 2016, p. 9).
- Teach choice-making by giving your youth the opportunity to make choices at home such as, clothing, hair style, music, exercise and more.
- Explain to your youth the self-determination skills that you use regularly. For example, if you are saving money to take the family on a special outing, explain the steps you are taking to reach that goal. Help your youth set goals to work toward.
- Help your youth to practice respectfully speaking up for his/her point of view at home.

Trail Marker 3

Middle School Course Requirements and Options

Zoey, our 7th grade trail guide, and her family have been reviewing the middle school promotion requirements. In order for Zoey to be promoted to high school from the middle grades, she must successfully meet the following requirements:



1. Physical education is required one semester each year for students in grades six through eight. There are circumstances under which the physical education requirement can be waived. See the Florida Statutes for complete details.
2. One course in Career and Education Planning that results in an academic and career plan (to be completed in grade six, seven or eight). More information on this course will be discussed in Trail Marker 6.
3. Three middle school or higher* courses in English language arts.
4. Three middle school or higher* courses in mathematics.
5. Three middle school or higher* courses in science.
6. Three middle school or higher* courses in social studies. (One of the social studies courses must be civics. There is a statewide, standardized end-of-course (EOC) exam for civics that must be taken and factored in as 30% of a student's course grade. When the individual education plan (IEP) team determines that the statewide, standardized assessments under this section cannot accurately measure the student's abilities, the assessment results can be waived for the purpose of receiving a course grade.) Because of Mia's intellectual disability, the IEP team has determined that her EOC exam results can be waived. More information is available here.

**May include high school courses for credit.*

Taking High School Courses in Middle Grades

Did you notice that middle grades course requirements allow students to take high school level courses that not only satisfy middle grades promotion requirements, but also count as high school credit?

Levi, our 8th grade trail guide, and his family have been considering this opportunity. His family heard that there can be pros and cons to students taking high school courses in middle school.

First, let's think about the advantages for Levi when he successfully completes high school courses during middle grades.

They include the following:

- When Levi receives credit for a high school course in middle school, that's one less class he has to take to graduate from high school. Even if he only takes one course early, the result is that he could have a shorter school day during the senior year, which allows him to be involved in more extracurricular activities or get a part-time job.
- When Levi takes high school courses in middle grades, he gets some of the basic high school classes out of the way immediately. This leaves room for dual enrollment, which is where students take college-level courses during high school. The result is that Levi could graduate from college early, saving time and money, or have space in his college schedule to take additional courses of interest.



Studies show that taking challenging classes at a young age can improve the odds of getting into college. More specifically, students who take algebra in eighth grade and geometry in ninth grade are more likely to attend college than those who don't take those courses at that time.

On the other hand, Levi's family learned there are some possible disadvantages of taking high school courses during middle grades.

Potential disadvantages are as follows:

- Levi may not be prepared for above grade-level work.
- Time demands of above grade-level courses could be challenging for Levi.
- High school courses require increased levels of maturity and critical thinking. Is Levi ready for this?
- High school courses that are not successfully completed at the middle school level can negatively affect Levi's grade point average (GPA), which has implications for graduation and post-school options. In addition, this negative experience could affect Levi's confidence.

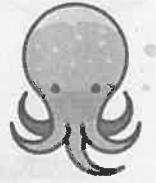
Both the advantages and disadvantages of taking high school courses during middle school should be carefully considered before making the final decision for your youth. This decision should be individualized to students and their unique situation, goals and abilities.

Black Diamond Trail Tip: Check prerequisite courses for specific high school programs to ensure the middle school courses prepare your student for his/her educational and career goals.

Trail Marker 4

Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Information

Zoey, our 7th grade trail guide, has many academic interests. Science is her favorite subject and she is specifically interested in oceans and the marine animals that live there. She can tell you anything you want to know about cephalopods like squid and octopus. However, sometimes Zoey loses track of time when she is doing science homework and doesn't get to the rest of her homework.



She also has trouble remembering to take her homework and projects to school after she has completed them. When Zoey went to middle school, her problems with organization increased. It was difficult for her to manage the requirements of different teachers and classes. Zoey was identified for an evaluation which revealed a need in the area of executive function. Executive function skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, organize and juggle multiple tasks successfully. In 6th grade, Zoey received an IEP that outlined services to improve her executive function and provide the support she needs from her teachers and family that help her to be successful in her classes. Even with the supports included in her IEP, sometimes Zoey gets overwhelmed; however, with support, she is able to get back on-track.

IEPs are guiding documents for academic planning that support students with disabilities in kindergarten through high school who require specialized instruction. Each IEP is unique and is based on each student's needs. The IEP describes the exceptional student education (ESE) services and supports a student with a disability will receive to assist him/her to be successful in school. The development of the IEP is completed by a team that includes the student, parents, school district representatives and other service providers who work together to design an effective plan that builds on the student's strengths. Services and supports to meet the student's particular needs are also identified (Developing Quality Individual Educational Plans, 2015).

Is your student turning 14 during middle grades? If so, you need to know about changes you will see in the IEP. As students approach the age of 14, there are new requirements for the IEP related to helping students with disabilities to get ready to complete high school and move forward with post-school activities such as college, career and technical education (CTE), employment and independent living. The IEP becomes the **transition IEP** (TIEP). Not all middle school students will reach age 14 before being promoted to high school, but some students will turn 14 in middle school and a few students may turn 14 in elementary school. One of the transition requirements in the IEP is ensuring that students receive an invitation to the IEP meetings. This encourages student participation in the IEP and allows students to better understand that IEP meetings are for their benefit. This requirement begins the school year in which a student turns 14, but is a beneficial practice for students of all ages. Students should be invited to attend an IEP meeting any time transition services will be discussed.



A summary of items that are unique to the TIEP and begin at age 14 include the following:

- Parents must be notified that the purpose of the IEP meeting will include the development of a statement of needed transition services.
- The student must be invited to the IEP meeting.
- Age-appropriate transition assessments indicating the student's strengths, preferences and interests are documented and aid in developing post-school goals that must be in place by the age of 16.
- Begin identifying transition services needs of students (through annual goals, short-term objectives/benchmarks, or services). Document the need for self-determination and self-advocacy instruction in the IEP.
- Discuss measurable postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessment in the areas of education, training, employment, including career goals and independent living (where appropriate). (At age 16, the measurable postsecondary goals are required to be developed and documented in the IEP.)
- Document the diploma decision and the student's course of study.
- Representatives of any agency that may be responsible for providing or funding transition services must be invited to the IEP meeting (pending permission of the parent or the student who has reached the age of majority)



Black Diamond Trail Tip: Find opportunities for students to exercise self-determination and self-advocacy during IEP meetings. Student participation and leadership is a valuable experience that helps to prepare students for a lifetime of self-direction.

Trail Marker 5

Early Warning Systems (EWS) - The ABCs of Student Data

School districts use some type of system to monitor student data that will signal when students may be at risk for academic problems and need support. Families can support these efforts by keeping track of their students' **Attendance, Behavior and Course performance (ABC)**, too.

Attendance

Students with disabilities are among the student populations most significantly affected by chronic absence. Students with physical disabilities may incur absences due to health concerns. Another reason for chronic absences may be school aversion, perhaps related to school bullying or other school environment issues (Mapping the Early Attendance Gap, 2015).

Behavior

Florida supports the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) on its school districts, but PBIS can be used everywhere.

Through PBIS, families can do the following: establish routines; set home expectations; and teach, remind and reward expected behaviors.

Through PBIS, students learn to manage their behavior by developing positive coping strategies to manage their feelings and handle challenging situations that trigger inappropriate behaviors.

Course Performance

Middle school students who fail courses in math or English/language arts or attend school less than 80% of the time have only a 10% - 20% chance of graduating on time. Students fail 9th grade more than any other grade. Middle school is preparing students to make a successful transition into high school, so catching and addressing problems early is critical.

PBIS helps schools to create productive classroom environments that support student learning and provide security for all members of the educational community.

Did you know signs indicating risk of high school dropout can appear as early as middle school or earlier? Students who demonstrated these signs in sixth grade have shown worse post-school outcomes than students demonstrating these signs later on (Balfanz, 2009).

Tips for Families: Helping Students Succeed in School



01. Let your youth know that you value education as important to his/her future.



02. Set aside time every day to assist with homework. Find out if the school has homework assignments posted online.



03. Limit the amount of time your youth watches television and plays video games.



04. Talk to your youth about school successes and problems.



05. Help your youth use problem-solving skills in difficult situations at home and at school and affirm his/her efforts.



06. Know your youth's friends and their families.



07. Let teachers know that you want to be contacted immediately if your youth has problems with attendance, behavior or course work.



08. If your youth is struggling, seek help. Parents and other adults can reduce the likelihood of dropout if they take steps to help youth cope with their problems.

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=3135>

Suggestions from the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) assist families to help students succeed in school and are listed in the graphic, Tips for Families: Helping Students Succeed in Schools (<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=3135>).

Trail Marker 6

Career Education and Planning

A Career and Education Planning course during grade six, seven or eight is a requirement for promotion to high school. The course includes the development of a personalized academic and career plan that may be updated as the student progresses through middle school and high school. The career plan will emphasize the importance of employability skills and will inform students of high school graduation requirements. Four phases of career development have been defined by the Linked Learning Alliance's Work-Based Learning Subcommittee as follows:

- **Career Awareness** - "Learning about opportunities, education and skills needed in various occupational pathways to choose a career that matches one's strengths and interests" (NTACT, 2015).
- **Career Exploration** - "Students explore career options to provide motivation and inform decision-making" (Linked Learning, 2012).
- **Career Preparation** - "Students apply learning through practical experience and interaction with professionals from industry and the community in order to extend and deepen classroom work and support the development of college- and career-readiness knowledge and skills (e.g., higher-order thinking, academic skills, technical skills and applied workplace skills)" (Linked Learning, 2012).
- **Career Education and Training** - Students pursue postsecondary education and train for employment in a specific field or range of occupations (Work-Based Learning in Linked Learning, 2012).

See how career experiences connect to grade levels in the Career Experience Timeline.



Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Levi, our 8th grade trail guide, will be eligible to receive Pre-ETS when he turns 14. Pre-ETS provide trainings that help students with disabilities explore, prepare for and make informed career-based decisions. Students ages 14 through age 21 with an IEP or 504 are eligible to receive Pre-ETS at no cost through Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). Students with a documented disability can be referred for Pre-ETS by school personnel through VR's online STAR Portal. There is also a form that can be filled out by another adult in the student's life with permission from the student. This form can be downloaded from VR's website. Levi is especially interested in the work-based learning experiences (WBLEs). The following list includes all five of the Pre-ETS options:

- Job Exploration Counseling
- Work Readiness Training
- Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLEs)
- Self-Advocacy Training and Peer Mentoring
- Postsecondary Educational Counseling

Learn more about Pre-ETS/STAR Program and STAR Portal on VR's website.

http://www.rehabworks.org/stw_star.shtml

Career Experience Timeline

A Progressive Plan for Career-Related Experiences

Elementary School

Career Awareness

Learning ABOUT Work

- Self-Awareness
- Career-Awareness
- Career Interests
- Field Trips
- Community-Based Instruction



High School

Career Preparation

Learning ABOUT and THROUGH Work

- Career Planning
- Job Shadowing
- Service Learning
- School-Based Enterprises
- Apprenticeships
- Internships
- Paid Employment

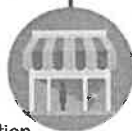


Middle School

Career Exploration

Learning ABOUT and THROUGH Work

- Career Planning
- Career Exploration
- Job Shadowing
- Workplace Tours
- Community-Based Instruction



Post-School

Career Education/Training

Learning THROUGH and FOR Work

- Postsecondary Education Practicums
- Apprenticeships
- Internships
- Paid Employment



*Adapted from NTACT's *Timeline of Work Experiences*, FDOE's *Career and Education Planning Course Standards*, *Work-Based Learning in Linked Learning*, and ACTE's *Career Exploration in Middle School*

Black Diamond Trail Tip: "Work-based learning experiences (WBLEs) have been shown to be one of the strongest predictors of adult employment success for students and youth with disabilities" (Federal Partners in Transition, 2015, p. 1).



Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Middle School and Beyond

During middle school, students can significantly benefit from the process of career exploration which includes:

- Building self-awareness,
- Learning about potential careers and
- Developing a plan for reaching future goals.



Career exploration engages middle school students at a time when they are at a higher risk for disengaging from learning due to challenges in forming identity, coping with puberty and navigating new environments. Middle School provides an excellent opportunity to teach students skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and teamwork through career exploration activities.

Did you know that approximately half of the 50 fastest-growing occupations require a postsecondary career certificate or associate degree?

Measuring the Economic Success of Florida's Graduates: Economic Security Report 2018 analyzed data collected from 2011-2015 and showed that an associate in science degree (a two-year degree) stacks up favorably to a bachelor's degree (four-year degree) in regard to first-year wages and percentage of graduates employed.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Options

There are many programs available in Florida's Career and Technical Colleges. There are 17 career clusters that range from Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources to Transportation, Distribution and Logistics. Within each career cluster, there are a multitude of courses, programs, certificate programs and degree programs that are available. There are also career exploratory courses and career planning courses. **Be sure to investigate some of these courses in MS.**

CAPE Digital Tool Certificates

The Florida Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act was created to expand and retain high-value industries and sustain a healthy state economy by preparing students for employment in such . Student's IEPs must identify the CAPE Digital Tool certificates and CAPE industry certifications the student seeks to attain before high school graduation. More information about CAPE Digital Tools Certificates and CAPE Industry certifications is provided in the Resources section.

Looking Ahead to High School Diploma Options

There are five (5) diploma options described in the Graduation Options Chart, three (3) of which are open to all students, one (1) that is available only to students with disabilities and one (1) that is only available to students with significant cognitive disabilities. Get prepared to select a diploma option that is best for the student by reviewing all of the graduation pathways in the Graduation Options Chart on the Project 10 website - <http://project10.info/DPage.php?ID=77#NS138>.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Clusters

1. Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources
2. Architecture & Construction
3. Arts, A/V Technology & Communication
4. Business Management & Administration
5. Education & Training
6. Energy
7. Engineering & Technology Education
8. Finance
9. Government & Public Administration
10. Health Science
11. Hospitality & Tourism
12. Human Services
13. Information Technology
14. Law, Public Safety & Security
15. Manufacturing
16. Marketing, Sales & Service
17. Transportation, Distribution & Logistics



Levi is considering the 24-Credit Standard Diploma Option with Academic and Employment which is available only to students with disabilities. Levi took a CTE course, Architecture & Construction, in 7th grade and wants to get some on-the-job experience in high school to see if it might be a good career direction for him.

Trail Marker 8



Transition from Middle School to High School

There are many changes to manage in middle school. First there is the transition from elementary school into middle school and then, before you know it, it's time to start planning for the transition to high school.

Transition from middle school to high school focuses on the goals and vision you and your student have for the future. The purpose of transition planning during high school is to provide your student with the services and support he/she needs to make a successful move into adult life. The transition to high school can be divided into two parts.

Part 1 - Planning for the Transition to High School

Mia, our sixth grade Trail Guide is at the beginning of part 1. Mia has just moved into middle school and has three years to get ready for the transition to high school.

Part 2 - Making the Transition to High School

Levi, our eighth grade Trail Guide, is at the beginning of part 2. He is in his third year of middle school and has taken a course of study that will help him reach his goals for high school.

Review the recommendations below for navigating the part 1 and 2. Refer to Project 10's *Secondary Transition Road Map for Families* to find pertinent information on navigating through high school, preparing for graduation and transitioning to post-school activities (employment, postsecondary education and/or training and independent living).

Transition from Middle School to High School

Part 1 - Planning for the Transition to High School

Ensure your middle school IEP team leader invites a high school staff person. It will be helpful to both the parents and students to meet someone from the high school exceptional student education (ESE) staff in the context of the middle grades IEP team meeting.

Attend any events the middle provides to prepare students and families to transition to high school. Events may include informational meetings, opportunities to meet high school representatives, etc.

Learn more about the new high school through the website.
Explore curricular and extracurricular opportunities and/or activities.

During middle school, schedule a visit to the high school.
Take a campus tour during after school hours or summer hours.

Part 2 - Making the Transition to High School

Attend any events the upcoming high school provides to prepare students and families to transition to high school. Events may include orientation, school tours, meetings with teachers, etc.

Identify a point of contact for your student to turn to if help is needed.
The point of contact may be a school counselor, a mentor a teacher or an older student.

Students and families should attend all Transition IEP meetings. Review information about and be prepared to participate in the following:

- Declaring a diploma option
- Determining a course of study
- Identifying a diploma designation

Trail Marker 9

Planning for College, Career and Life Readiness in Middle School

Although choosing a postsecondary education option is a few years away, it is important to ensure that middle school students are thinking about and moving towards becoming college, career and life ready. Although choosing a postsecondary education option is a few years away, it is important to ensure that middle school students are thinking about and moving toward becoming college, career and life ready. Research consistently shows that parent/family involvement is an influential factor on student participation in postsecondary education.


In a national study on transition outcomes, the students of parents who held high expectations for their youth to graduate from high school, attend postsecondary education or training and find employment, were more likely to achieve those goals than students whose parents who did not hold high expectations for their youth (Mazzotti et al., 2016). The purpose of secondary transition for students with disabilities is to prepare them for the future they want. It's about preparing them to participate in adult life, make positive contributions to their communities, develop a career, maintain a job and live as independently as possible. Below is a breakdown of a variety of postsecondary education options along with the credentials or outcomes that may be expected through each type of postsecondary education experience.

Postsecondary Education Options	Potential Outcomes/Credentials
Training Opportunities and Apprenticeships	Career Certificates and Industry Certifications
Career and Technical Education - College/Center	Career Certificates, Industry Certifications and Associate of Science degrees (AS)
State College	Non-credit courses, Career Certificates, Industry Certifications, Associate of Arts degrees (AA) Associate of Science degrees (AS) and Bachelor's degrees
University	Associate of Arts degrees (AA), Bachelor's degrees, Master's degrees, Doctoral programs (Ph.D.)
Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE)	Inclusive college programs for students with intellectual disabilities vary in the types of credentials earned and can be accessed at participating technical colleges, colleges and universities

There is a resource available at Project 10 that provides information for families about how to prepare their youth for postsecondary education (PSE) options - *Getting Ready for Educational Opportunities After High School: Families Supporting Students for Success*.

<http://project10.info/DPage.php?ID=77#NS138>


Highlights include supporting information on the following: researching potential PSE opportunities; the importance of an appropriate course of study; ensuring students understand and can describe their disabilities; developing effective communication and social skills with adults and peers; ensuring students have computer skills to complete computer-based tasks; the development of skills to organize, plan and prioritize activities; and assisting students to accept responsibility for their success.

 **Black Diamond Trail Tip:** Start preparing now. Families can begin helping their youth to prepare for post-school life at an early age. The family is a child's first community experience. Help your children to know that they are valued members of their family and understand that their contributions to the family are needed and appreciated.

A Journey Worth Every Step

When you are on a long journey, it can be a challenge to navigate the difficult parts of the path. Supporting youth, with or without a disability, to complete middle school, move to high school and transition to life after high school may seem like an arduous process. Take the journey one step at a time and remember these five things that every parent of a student with a disability needs to hear:

1. "Make time to enjoy your kids.
2. You aren't perfect – and that's okay.
3. Being a parent is hard. Being a parent to a child with extra needs is extra hard.
4. Celebrate the little things.
5. You are a superhero" (20 Things Every Parent of Kids with Special Needs Should Hear, n.d. <https://www.abilities.com/community/parents-20things.html>).



**Parenting is Like Skateboarding:
It Requires a Good Sense of Balance**

Do More Listening	→	Than Talking
Set Appropriate Boundaries	→	But Allow Youth to Make Mistakes and Learn from Them
Remain Involved	→	While Encouraging Independence
Remain in Charge	→	But Share the Power
Be a Parent First	→	Be a Friend Second
Protect	→	Without Taking Away Freedom

It is a balancing act between holding on and letting go.

Parenting Advice and Regrets from Empty Nesters, 2018



Packing Your Parent Backpack: Resources and References

Find transition-related resources and references to support you and your youth during the transition to and from MS on the Project 10 website at the following:

<http://project10.info/DPage.php?ID=77#NS138>