

Transition Bulletin - Fall Issue

To Coordinate... To Enhance... To Serve... Through Communication

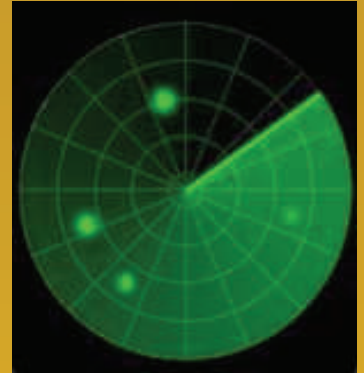
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What's on the Radar Screen for Transition? Challenges and Opportunities

By: Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MI-TOP) Core Planning Team

Each new school year brings added challenges and opportunities for students, families and professionals working in transition. Keeping it all in order is a challenge in itself as federal, state and local policies continue to shift. One thing is for certain – nothing stays the same! In this article, pertinent issues relating to transition are discussed.



Michigan-Transition Outcome Project (MI-TOP)

The Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MI-TOP) facilitates the development of effective systems that support students to achieve postsecondary outcomes, contain measurable student focused planning, student development activities, and continuous family and community involvement. The project supports the implementation of effective transition practices to ensure all students are prepared for postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.

The MI-TOP is led by a diverse group of transition professionals comprised of state and local leadership from education, families and community agencies. The MI-TOP core planning team meets on a regular basis to plan, develop and support the implementation of policy and practice that improves the quality and effectiveness of transition services across the state for students with disabilities.

This year MI-TOP has identified several areas of focus:

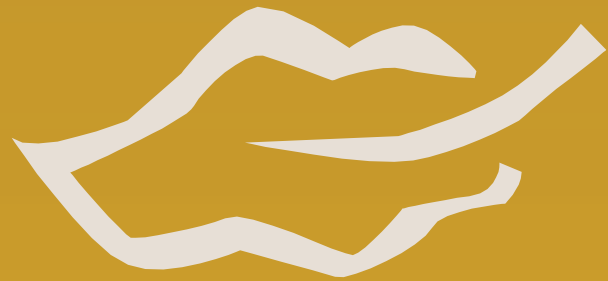
- Continuing to support the implementation of the transition requirements of IDEA,
- Improve the collection and utilization of student and systems data, and
- Design and implement online learning experiences that focus on consistent, usable and compliant transition processes building the capacity of the transition community to effectively support students in preparation for life after high school.

Additional information about MI-TOP is available at:

<http://www.cenmi.org/mi-top/Home.aspx>

Michigan Transition Services Association (MTSA)

Michigan Transition Association (MTSA) is a non-profit association that is dedicated to providing support to its members who assist students and young adults with disabilities as they transition through school to achieve their post-school goals. By providing leadership, support and service, MTSA's intent is to work with its members through professional growth and preparation, assist students and young adults with disabilities as they work towards their adult life vision, create and sustain community partnerships by assuring an exchange of information regarding current transition issues and trends, and promote research-based and



best transition practices.

MTSA's current goals are focused on four particular issues:

- Transition assessment,
- Integrating transition curriculum into content standards,
- Community partnerships, and
- Transition strategies for families.

MTSA seeks to demonstrate its commitment to transition and professional leadership by working with students and families, educators and staff, local agencies and partnering associations.

Additional information about MTSA is available at:

<http://www.michigantsa.com/>

Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC)

The Michigan Merit Curriculum, first signed into law in April 2006, impacts students graduating in the class of 2011 and beyond. The goal of the merit curriculum is to provide students the learning opportunity, knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college or the workplace. Districts are planning for the MMC by training staff in curriculum development, evidence based strategies to support student learning, adjusting course schedules to accommodate flexible learning opportunities, and expanding course offerings so that students will have multiple opportunities to meet the requirements.

Additional information about the MMC is available at:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ_-_Entire_Document_12.07_217841_7.pdf

Personal Curriculum (PC)

The PC is an option any student/family can explore as a process to modify certain graduation requirements and earn a diploma. All students (including students receiving special education services), have the option of pursuing a PC. The PC gives families and districts an option to explore, reach agreement on and document changes to the state graduation requirements in and personalized way so the student can meet the requirements of the MMC and receive a regular high school diploma. The legislative intent of the PC is to individualize the rigor and relevance of the educational experience. State statute allows a personal curriculum to be considered for four reasons:

- Go beyond the academic credit requirements by adding more math, science, English-language arts, or world languages credits,
- Modify the mathematics requirement,
- Modify, if necessary, the credit requirements of a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP),
- Modify credit requirements for a student who transfers from out of state or from a nonpublic school and is unable to meet the MMC requirements.

Additional information about the Personal Curriculum is available at:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/PC_Guide_Final_5_12_09_277958_7.pdf





Indicators 1, 2, 5, 8, 13 and 14

The U.S. Department of Education requires states to report on several indicators that are related to students in Special Education. Of the indicators that Michigan is responding to, Indicators 1,2,5,8, 13 and 14 are the ones that have the greatest impact on Transition. Indicator 14 has a direct impact on both the Michigan Department of Education and Michigan Rehabilitation Services.

➤ Indicators 1, 2, 13 and 14 address student readiness for life after high school:

- √ **Indicator 1 – Graduation**
Percent of youth with IEPs **graduating** from high school with a regular diploma compared to percent of all youth in the State graduating with a regular diploma.
- √ **Indicator 2 – Dropout Rate**
Percent of youth with IEPs **dropping out** of high school compared to the percent of all youth in the state dropping out of high school.
- √ **Indicator 13 – Content of IEPs**
Percent of youth aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes **coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services** that will reasonably enable the child to meet the post-secondary goals.
- √ **Indicator 14 – Post-School Outcomes**
Percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who are **competitively employed**, enrolled in some type of **post-secondary school**, or both, within one year of leaving high school.

➤ Indicators 5 and 8 address student achievement:

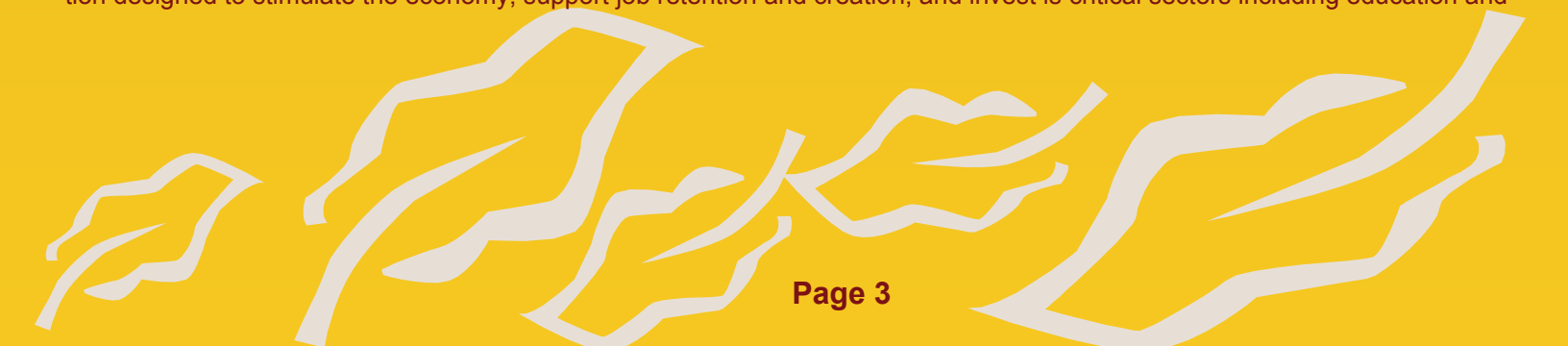
- √ **Indicator 5 – Educational Environments**
Percent of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21:
 - Inside the regular class 80% or more of the day;
 - Inside the regular class less than 40% of the day; or
 - Served in public or private separate schools, residential placements, or homebound or hospital placements.
- √ **Indicator 8 – Facilitated Parent Involvement**
Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.

Additional information about the Indicators is available at:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MichiganFFY2007-APRUpdated4-07-09_274199_7.pdf

ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act)

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, historic legislation designed to stimulate the economy; support job retention and creation; and invest in critical sectors including education and





vocational rehabilitation. As a result, both the Michigan Department of Education and Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) are receiving ARRA funds to invest in education and vocational rehabilitation services to improve results for people with disabilities while assisting in the nation's economic recovery. This temporary funding is only available for three years, through September 2011.

MRS has a unique opportunity to use ARRA funds to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Transition is one of MRS' priorities that has been identified for ARRA funds. MRS is receiving \$7.5 million this year and another \$7.5 million is expected in the next fiscal year. Local MRS offices, Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) and community partners are in the process of submitting proposals to receive funds at the local level. The MRS central office is reviewing and approving proposals that meet both MRS and ARRA criteria.

IDEA recovery funds given to the Michigan Department of Education lays the foundation for reform and are identified to invest in innovative strategies to improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, and youths with disabilities while stimulating the economy.

ARRA recovery funds distribution principles are:

- Spend funds quickly to save and create jobs and drive the nation's economic recovery;
- Ensure transparency, reporting and accountability; and
- Invest one-time ARRA funds thoughtfully to minimize the "funding cliff." ARRA represents a historic infusion of funds that is expected to be temporary.

Additional information about ARRA is available at:

<http://www.michigan.gov/recovery>

<http://www.recovery.gov/?q=content/act>

MT-21 (Michigan Transition for the 21st Century)

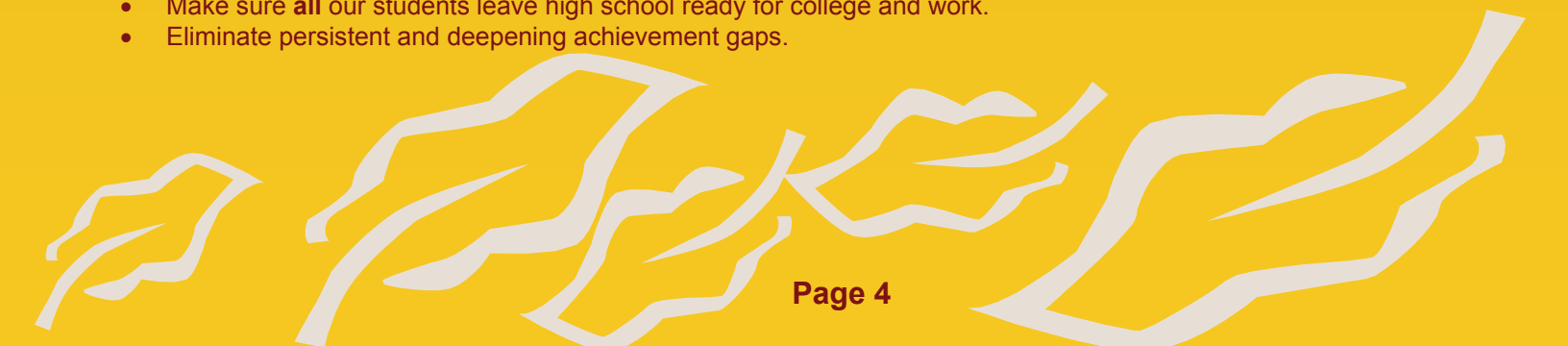
The MT-21 Project kicks off this year and is in the early phases of planning and rollout. Marcie Alling has been working with "implementation" teams from Michigan Rehabilitation Services and the Michigan Commission for the Blind to establish baseline youth data for each agency and plan next steps. The goal of the project is to take a close look at MRS and MCB transition programs and practices across the state to identify the most promising and effective. Over time, efforts will be made to share the knowledge and practices with all partners serving Transition-aged youth in ways that improve youth employment outcomes.

Marcie Alling comments on MT-21, "We finally have a chance to dig deeper into what makes practices and services effective for youth with disabilities – which ones really work and why. Then take that knowledge and share it in a way that promotes more consistency and overall better outcomes throughout the state."

Reimagining Schools

Reimagining Schools is a Michigan Department of Education (MDE) initiative to dramatically and profoundly change the educational system to:

- Give **all** our students the competitive edge they need to lead and thrive in highly skilled, creative work that will continue to drive the modern global economy.
- Make sure **all** our students leave high school ready for college and work.
- Eliminate persistent and deepening achievement gaps.





- Create a system built around students, not adults.
- Reimagine a system that can thrive with no new state funds for years to come.
- Be bold, be dramatic, re-think the system. Tinkering won't do.

MDE has selected twenty demonstration districts/organizations to serve as incubation sites to try out innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The goal of Reimagining Schools is system-wide reform, not projects.

Additional information about Reimagining Schools is available at:
http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-43092_52788---,00.html

Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE)

In June 2007, MAASE convened the Framework for the Future Project Committee for the dual purpose of developing a summary of the key issues in the current special education system (Phase I), and creating a set of recommendations (Phase II) that may be used to focus special education reform efforts in Michigan. As a result of this work, MAASE has developed a report titled, "Framework for the Future of Special Education in Michigan Executive Summary Project Phases I, II and III". In the report, MAASE has the following Vision:

"MAASE supports the vision of a comprehensive unitary education system in Michigan that assures no child with a disability, or their family, encounters barriers to the achievement of positive post school outcomes. The learning for every child is individualized and collaborative. It is the right of every Michigan child to be embraced by a nurturing, aligned system of community resources."

In addition, the following excerpt regarding MAASE "Grounding Beliefs" is taken from the report:

"Special Education must be proactive and must promote achievement leading to adult independence and positive post-school outcomes for SWD by:

- Removing barriers to learning,
- Providing effectiveness based on individual student needs, through curriculum and instruction that is embedded in a comprehensive education system, and
- Supporting general and special education providers adequately trained, resourced, and informed about effective practices.

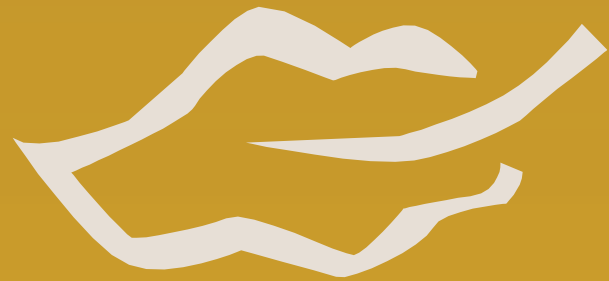
Special Education systems design must be supported by state and local implementation of:

- Responsible, flexible, streamlined, policy and procedure that support student outcomes,
- Cost-effective fiscal support and equitable delivery of programs and services regardless of student needs and location,
- Valid and reliable data collection that supports data-driven decision-making and public reporting for accountability and advocacy.

Special Education must:

- Embrace parents as partners in their child's education"





Additional information about MAASE is available at:
www.maase.org/

Superintendent's Dropout Challenge

Dropping out of school is a process, not an event. Students demonstrate predictable warning signals years before they actually drop out of school. The Superintendent's Dropout Challenge is a research-based approach to help address Michigan's staggering drop out rate.

Michigan's Superintendent Flanagan has stated, "Today, one out of every four Michigan children fails to graduate with their class. This challenge is the first step in helping thousands of Michigan students stay in school."

Many Michigan schools have committed to the Dropout Challenge. Each district will use their existing student achievement, retention, attendance and behavior data to identify 10-15 students at significant risk for dropping out of school. Districts taking the challenge will provide evidenced based supports and interventions to help students stay in school and share outcomes and what they have learned.

Additional information about the Superintendent's Dropout Challenge is available at:
http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-5235_53792---,00.html

Reaching and Teaching and Struggling Learners (RTSL)

Reaching and Teaching Struggling Learners is a Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (MDE, OSE-EIS) initiative promoting the following concepts:

- Access to the general curriculum,
- Inclusion,
- Accommodations and modifications in the general education classroom,
- Positive behavior support,
- Universal design for learning, and
- Differentiated instruction.

Contacts for Reaching and Teaching are:

Leisa Gallagher lgallagher@cenmi.org and Doug McCall dmccall@cenmi.org

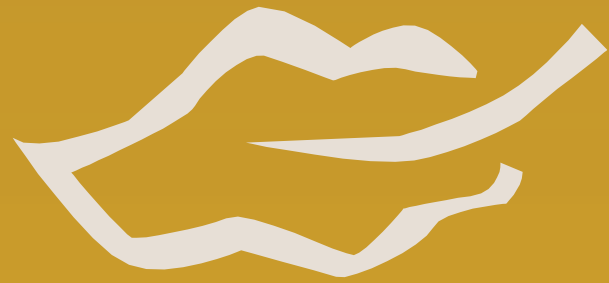
LearnPort

Michigan Department of Education - Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services has developed a partnership with Michigan Virtual University (MVU) to create flexible online professional development in the areas of Transition on LearnPort. In addition to "Transition Planning Made Easier", three new Transition classes will be available this year:

- Measuring the Possible: Assessment for Transition
- Seeing the Possible: What Does Post-School Vision Really Mean?
- Accessing the Possible: Making Community and Family Connections

LearnPort classes are designed as professional development opportunities for educators.





Additional information about MVU LearnPort is available at:
www.mivu.org

Michigan National Career Readiness Certificate (MI-NCRC) and Employability Achievement

The MI-NCRC is a portable credential made up of three “WorkKeys” job skills assessments created by ACT (formally known as American College Testing). The three assessments verify that an individual has essential core job skills, employers have said are most important, in Applied Mathematics, Locating Information and Reading for Information. The State of Michigan has adopted the MI NCRC as the standard job skills assessment in its workforce development system (Michigan Works!). Michigan high school juniors also have the opportunity to earn a MI NCRC when they take the Michigan Merit Examination. An individual can earn a platinum, gold, silver or bronze level certificate. Employers use the certificates as one tool in the hiring process in order to find workers with good foundational job skills.

In addition to the MI-NCRC, *Employability Skills Training* will be offered at Michigan Works Agencies! to individuals participating in workforce development programs. Employability Skills Training, also known as “soft skills”, addresses the development of interpersonal skills. Some of the areas covered under the Employability Skills Training include: communication skills, teamwork, information technology, critical thinking skills and diversity. Individuals that successfully complete the Employability Skills Training will receive an Employability Certificate of Completion along with their MI-NCRC from their local Michigan Works! Agency.

Additional information about MI-NCRC is available at:
<http://www.michigan.gov/MINCR>

Referring Students to MRS

By: Cynthia Wright, MRS Transition Consultant

It's the time of year when school staff assess which students need to be referred to MRS for vocational rehabilitation services. This article discusses issues to consider when evaluating student appropriateness and readiness for MRS services.

Does the student have a documented disability?

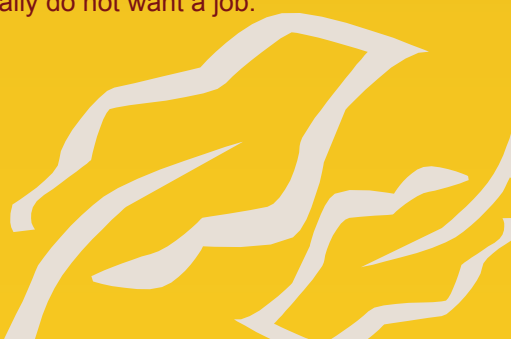
Individuals can be special education, 504 or be a student with a disability, but all students who receive MRS services must have a disability which is defined as a physical or mental impairment that constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment.

Is the student available to participate in the rehabilitation process?

The MRS process involves assessment and planning activities and students need to be at a stage in their education and development where they can participate in and benefit from these types of activities. Students are usually referred the year prior to exit or the beginning of the final year of high school.

Does the student want to work?

Of course most students want to become employed but in spite of how educators and rehabilitation counselors might feel about it, not all students want a job. There are some perceived disincentives to sort out that may be creating artificial barriers in the minds of students and families. It is crucial to dialogue with students and families regarding concerns about employment to sort out which individuals want to work but are anticipating barriers and difficulties that MRS can be helpful in removing or alleviating vs. which students really do not want a job.





Does the student want to participate with an agency to receive employment services and supports?

Many students are interested in employment but they do not want to be connected to an agency to receive supports. In these situations, school staff can give the student and their family contact information about MRS. Students can always apply for MRS services at a later date if they discover that they need assistance. Many times students are referred to MRS by adult service providers such as Postsecondary Institutions, Dept of Community Health, medical professionals, etc., after they exit secondary education.

Is the student/guardian willing to sign releases so MRS and education can exchange disability-related information?

In order for schools and MRS to effectively collaborate, students and/or families or guardians need to give permission for exchange and release of information.

Are school special education services able to address the student's barriers to employment without MRS services and supports?

Transition services that a school offers are often adequate to meet the needs of a student without additional assistance from MRS. Referrals to MRS are appropriate for the students whose situation warrants additional support and collaboration.

Does the student's disability create significant barriers to employment?

The presence of a disability alone does not necessitate the need for vocational rehabilitation services. Eligibility for MRS services is based on:

- Existence of a physical or mental impairment ,
- Substantial impediment to employment , and
- Requires MRS services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment.

It is important to note the difference between receiving services and supports in public education and receiving services and support from MRS. Special Education services are provided in an entitlement model, where MRS services are provided in an eligibility model. Therefore, not all Special Education or 504 students are eligible for MRS services. MRS counselors are trained to determine eligibility for MRS services based on the above criteria.

Is the student/guardian willing to use comparable benefits as appropriate?

MRS counselors are trained to be aware of community supports and services that are available to meet the unique needs of individual students. If another community agency offers a service or support that a student needs, MRS is required to help students access that support or service rather than duplicating the support or service. For example, if a student needs on-the-job training, and is eligible to receive that service through Michigan Works! programming, then that avenue would be pursued before MRS would automatically fund that service out of vocational rehabilitation dollars.

Is the student/guardian willing to contribute to the cost of vocational rehabilitation services if they are able?

Many Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) include services and supports that are costly. Students and families required to contribute to the cost of their rehabilitation to the extent that they are able. It is helpful if students and families know this up front so they are not disappointed when they discover that MRS can not pay for a student's entire college tuition.

If there is any clarification needed when thinking about whether or not it is appropriate and timely to refer a particular student to MRS, it is always best to call or email the MRS counselor assigned to the district where the student attends and have a conversation about the student. Remember to refer students early in the year giving MRS plenty of time to get the ball rolling. Assessing and getting to know students and families doesn't happen in one interaction - it is a process that takes time to do in a meaningful, comprehensive and effective way.





SAVE THE DATES

“Michigan Works! for People Conference
Soaring Eagle Resort & Casino, Mt. Pleasant, MI
September 13 – 14

Michigan Rehabilitation Association (MRA)
Amway Grand Plaza, Grand Rapids, MI
October 21 – 23

“Learning in the 21st Century”
Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan
Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center, E. Lansing, MI
November 16 – 17

MI TOP Workshop
Ramada Inn, Lansing, MI
January 28 – 29, 2010

MI TOP Workshop
Ramada Inn, Lansing, MI
April 22 – 23, 2010

MI TOP Workshop
Ramada Inn, Lansing, MI
October 14 and 15

“Career Planning for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders”
Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center, E. Lansing, MI
October 26 – 27

4th Annual Michigan’s Premier Mentoring Conference
Michigan State University Union, E. Lansing, MI
November 18

MTSA Conference
Bavarian Inn, Frankenmuth, MI
March 17 – 19, 2010

