

SECONDARY INDIVIDUAL TRANSITION PLAN CURRICULUM

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of  
California State University, Stanislaus

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Arts in Education

By  
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

SECONDARY INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN CURRICULUM

by  
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## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my parents, Tim and Nancy, and Fiancé, Andrew.

Thank you for always believing in me and giving me the confidence to chase my dreams. I could not have done this without your support.

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## ABSTRACT

This project outlines the Individual Transition Plan created for students in a Special Education Program at the secondary level. Students in Special Education are required to have an Individualized Transition Plan in their Individualized Education Plan by the age of 15. This project explains the need for a cohesive curriculum that can be utilized at the secondary level for all students in Special Education. In this curriculum, there will be activities, lessons, and learning experiences that are necessary to help students in Special Education transition from high school into their post-secondary lives and become productive members of society. This curriculum has been designed to help Special Education teachers at the secondary level provide their students with age appropriate interventions to assist students and parents in planning their futures and create a set of goals and objectives to help these students successfully transition out of high school.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

#### **Introduction**

Students with all types of disabilities will someday enter society as adults. Individuals with disabilities often have more difficulty transitioning into society than their typically developing peers (Newman, Madaus, & Javitz, 2016). Students who are 15 years old or older, and in Special Education, are required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), to have an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) written into their Individualized Education Plans (IEP) (United States Department of Education, 2006). The Individualized Transition Plan is created to brainstorm, implement, and document progress a student is making towards goals that lead them to education and employment after high school. Students that have an IEP in place during high school, qualify for special education services due to a deficit in one or more specific areas. These students will struggle, in some way, accessing a general education curriculum, whether it be socially or academically. An ITP is created by the IEP team in order to develop ideas and strategies to best support the student in developing post secondary goals, and help that student achieve those goals. The IEP is ethically and legally liable in creating a successful and meaningful Individualized Transition Plan for the students in secondary Special Education.

An Individualized Transition Plan consists of 3 major parts. The first part is a description of the student's goals and aspirations for life after high school. This part



contains current personal goals of the student and possible outcomes of those goals. This portion states who is responsible for achieving those goals and which services are put in to place to help the student access those goals. The second page of the ITP is a layout of the students' courses in which they have taken, or will take in the future. This layout can include remediation courses, course retakes, and credit make-up opportunities. The purpose of this portion of the ITP is to create a plan in order to obtain the student's achievement of a High School Diploma or Certificate of Completion. The final portion of the ITP is the annual goals created in order to achieve the personal goals the student has stated. These goals are written in a format in which the goal will be achieved in one year from the annual IEP. There is an annual goal in place for each type of postsecondary goal that the student, or IEP team, has determined necessary for success after high school. Goals for students who have mild disabilities often contain the option to attend a college of their choice.

Individualized Transition Plans are developed in order to support the students goals. These goals are determined by the IEP team with the student included. The entirety of the IEP includes services, strategies, supports, accommodations, and modifications that are deemed by the IEP team as necessary for the student to be successful in high school. Students are provided accommodations and modifications in their high school classes in order to help them be as successful as their typically developing peers.

Once students transition to postsecondary life, they are often faced with challenges they are not prepared for. In college students are required to disclose their

disability to the Disability Services Office to receive any accommodations in their classes. Only 35% of students with disabilities who received special education services in high school and later attended post secondary school disclosed their disability (Newman et al. 2016). Due to the small amount of disclosures, students with disabilities are not able to successfully perform at the necessary levels to achieve in college level courses, therefore are unable to complete their desired degrees.

Not all students in special education have aspirations to go to college. With the IEP team, the student is able to discuss their wants and needs for their own post-secondary goals, therefore, they are able to identify other options besides college. In their ITPs, their wishes are identified, and possible activities are suggested to meet these post-secondary goals.

A way to help high school students with disabilities and their transition to postsecondary goals is helping them develop self-confidence and self-determination. Much like athletes, students need constant feedback and coaching in order to improve academically and socially (Cox Suarez, 2010). By providing high school teachers with a curriculum to support all students' paths after high school, teachers will be strongly equipped to prepare their students to enter society and achieve their goals.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Forty-five percent of youth with disabilities were reported to have continued on to postsecondary education within 4 years of leaving high school. They were less likely to enroll in postsecondary programs than were their peers in the general population, of whom more than half ever had attended post secondary school

(Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009). Despite the laws put in place by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Individualized Transition Plans are not being created or implemented appropriately. Only 70% of students with a high incidence disability, such as a Specific Learning Disability (SLD), have transition plans that are being implemented (Trainor, Morningstar, & Murray, 2016). This problem has negatively impacted students with all types of disabilities. Not having proper Transition Plans, or ones that are not implemented, do not accurately prepare students for life after high school. A possible cause of this problem is teachers or case managers that do not focus on the individuality of all Transition Plans. Often times, transition plans are created with an entire grade-level or age range in mind, and do not address individual goals. The transition plans may outline a broad goal for all students and give the teachers/case managers the ability to adjust and complete activities at their own discretion. Perhaps a study which investigates the likelihood a transition plan is replicated among multiple students by a review of Individualized Transition Plans across the country could remedy the situation.

### **Significance of the Project**

The significance of this curriculum is to help teachers of students in special education create lessons, activities, and projects that will best assist students in achieving their post secondary goals. By using this curriculum beginning in 8th grade (or when the student is 15 years old), students will be able to identify their wants and goals for their life after high school. Utilizing this curriculum, teachers will have a tool that will assist students in learning more about themselves, their interests, as well

as gaining important life skills that will prepare them for the adjustment of life after high school. This curriculum provides a tool that is not currently available to teachers to help students as early as possible to identify and achieve post secondary goals. This curriculum will identify four “paths” that students in special education will be given to explore in order to determine the most beneficial way to research and identify post-secondary options. The curriculum is designed to be easily interpreted and adapted so that it does not take a significant amount of time to prepare the lessons or activities and is accessible to a range of disabilities with a secondary special education program. This tool will also be something that can be used within a special education environment and as a resource for teachers with students who have Individualized Transition Plans in place. This project will outline and develop activities, lessons, and assessments designed to plan, implement, and assess the progress of Students in special education towards their post-secondary goals.

### **Definitions of Core Concepts**

*Academic Strategies* - (Name may vary) - A course provided to students in Special Education at the Secondary level to address needs stemming from the students’ ITP. This class is considered a Special Education Service and is written into the Student's’ IEP.

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* - is a federal law that requires schools to serve the educational needs of eligible students with disabilities.

***Individualized Education Plan (IEP)*** - A written statement of the educational program designed to meet a child's individual needs. Every child who receives special education services must have an IEP.

***Individualized Transition Plan (ITP)***- A section of the IEP that outlines transition goals and services for the student with disability. The IDEA requires that all students must have an ITP by the age of 16. The ITP is the template for mapping out short-term to long-term adult outcomes from which annual goals and objectives defined.

***Mild/Moderate Disabilities*** - Individuals with a primary disability of specific learning disabilities, mild/moderate mental retardation, other health impairment, emotional disturbance, and autism spectrum disorders.

***Postsecondary Education*** - Any education beyond high school. Including but not limited to; 2-year colleges, 4-year colleges, Military, and Trade Schools.

***Secondary Education*** - Children ages 12 - 18. In special education, students are able to complete their secondary education until they reach age 22.

***Self-Determination Theory*** - The theory concerned with the motivation behind choices people make without external influence and interference.

### **Summary**

This chapter explained the need for this project, and the limits by which it shall take place. Students in Special Education that are 15 years or older, require an Individualized Transition Plan in order to plan and document progress towards the students' post-secondary goals. This curriculum will be developed by grade level to

assist in identifying students' wants and needs in their post-secondary transition. This curriculum will also assist teachers in ensuring that their students are prepared for life after high school. In the following chapters, a review of literature, methodology, and implementation will be discussed and identified to further express the necessity of implementing ITPs properly.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a problem in the success rate of students with disabilities outside of high school. Despite the laws put in place by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Individualized Transition Plans are not being created or implemented appropriately. Only 70% of students with a high incidence disability have Transition plans that are being implemented (Trainor et al. 2016). This problem negatively impacts students with all types of disabilities because those not having proper Transition Plans or ones that are not implemented do not accurately prepare for life after high school. A possible cause of this problem is teachers or case managers that do not focus on the individuality of all Transition Plans and create one common plan for all students. This literature review will first define Transition Planning for students in special education. The review will then shift into discussing Self-Determination Theory. Finally, I will present the effects of Self-Determination Theory will be presented and the outcomes of Transition Planning for students in special education.

#### **Transition Planning in the Individualized Education Plan**

A review of the literature on Transition Planning in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) focused on three major areas; college/education, career/employment, and independent living skills. First, many articles defined transition plans through Education Code (Ed. Code) and the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Next, the articles discussed the requirements of a transition plan for each Individualized Education Plan.

### **Defining Transition Planning**

The Transition Plan is a required piece of an IEP once a student turns sixteen years old (Mazzotti et al., 2009). A transition plan includes goals, activities, and service minutes that are individually tailored to students based on each student's postsecondary goals. Each student is required to have an Individualized Transition Plan that is tailored to each student's wants and needs. The main goal of a transition plan for students with mild to moderate disabilities is to help students make informed decisions about their life and goals in the future (Mazzotti, et al., 2009). For individuals with moderate/severe disabilities, the main goal of a transition plan is to prepare them for independence after their education has ended. Students in special education are able to stay in school until they reach the age of 22. At that point, it is up to their families or legal guardians to make a decision if and what services they will receive. Everyone involved in an IEP team must see a clear link between the goals learned in high school, and the student's postsecondary aspirations (Szidon, Rappaport, Smith, p. 147).

### **Requirements of a Transition Plans in the IEP**

Transition Plans within an IEP are required portions that are required due to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Each transition plan is required to have multiple components addressing college/education, career/employment, and independent living needs for each student in special education. The plan is required to



have a description of the students' interests and wants. In this description, the case manager is required to gain this information through interviews with the student, questionnaires, and possibly tests given to determine interests. Next, the transition plan is required to state the long-term goal for college/education, career/education, and if needed, independent living and any activities that will help achieve those goals. In addition, the transition plan will include a description of the courses each student must complete in order to graduate with a high school diploma or a certificate of completion. Finally, the transition plan requires goals for each of the identified areas of need. Each student requires an annual goal for college/education and career/employment, however; only requires an independent living goal if that is an area of need for that specific student. These components are required, by law, to have included in the IEP (United States Department of Education, 2006). Those who support the proponents of a transition plan understand the importance of these plans. Unfortunately, these plans have still not always helped students gain the necessary skills needed to be successful in higher education, especially in a social skills piece (Coles & Dente, 2012, p. 33).

### **Self Determination Theory**

Self Determination is a component everyone deals with on a daily basis (Hart & Brehm, 2013, p. 43). Research has shown, that those who are more 'self-determined' to do well and be successful, are in fact more successful throughout their lives (Olimpio & Gamboa, 2017, p. 216). A review of this literature showed that students who are not motivated, tend to have difficulties viewing a future for

themselves as well as exploring possible future life choices (Olimpio & Gamboa, 2017, p. 216). The purpose of introducing self-determination theory is because students in special education, as well as students in general education, have a tendency to suffer from a lack of motivation. Motivation can be linked to the Self Determination Theory because it identifies the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

### **Defining Self Determination Theory**

A review of the literature has determined that the definition of Self-Determination Theory is a macro theory of human motivation and personality that concerns people's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs. It is concerned with the motivation behind choices people make without external influence and interference (Cox, Suarez, 2010, p. 21). Self-Determination Theory affects students with disabilities because oftentimes, motivation has a large impact on their success. It is the job of educators to identify ways to help individuals with disabilities to be successful. Self Determination Theory proposes that intrinsic goal pursuits have positive effects on well-being because they promote satisfaction of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness; that is, they promote people's natural growth tendencies (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is an incentive created for ourselves because we enjoy something or find something interesting (Marchal, 2016), such as personal friendship or physical aspirations. Extrinsic motivation is an incentive we create for ourselves in order to gain an

external reward, something tangible, or to avoid negative consequences (Marchal, 2016). For example money, status, or fame.

### **Tools used to help with Self Determination**

According to the research, there are multiple resources that can be used to help students with special needs be successful in school and after school by using techniques designed to improve their self-determination. Self-determination can be a factor of internal and external forces for each student (Fichten, et. al, 2016, p. 210). A student can have a planned behavior that will determine whether or not a student has the intentions of graduating from high school. Being successful is based on a student's' desire to achieve a goal, by including accommodations, modifications, and services, into a student's' IEP, they are given the external forces needed, at school, to set and achieve their goals (McEwan & Downie, 2015, p. 241). In high school, students with special needs are provided with accommodations to help "level the playing field" to those who do not have a disability. Many of these accommodations will follow them into college, if that is a postsecondary choice for them (Newman et al. 2016, p. 498). However, developing self-determination among adolescence can be a challenge. Everywhere, parents, teachers, coaches, and managers struggle with how to motivate those with whom they work with. Individuals everywhere struggle to find the energy, effort and persistence at the tasks of life and work. People are often motivated by external factors such as reward systems, grades, evaluations, or the opinions they fear others might have of them. However, people are also often motivated from within, by interests, curiosity, care or abiding values. These intrinsic

motivations are not necessarily externally rewarded or supported, but nonetheless they can sustain passions, creativity, and sustained efforts. The interaction between the extrinsic forces and intrinsic forces are ingrained in human nature (Ryan, Deci, & Robertson Hoefen, 2018).

### **Effects of Transition Planning for Students in Special Education**

Only 35% of students with disabilities, who receive special education services in high school, actually attend a postsecondary school and disclose their disability (Newman et al. 2016, p. 498). Having a transition plan in their IEPs is required, but is not always tailored to each student. In recent studies and research, it has shown that the more “student tailored” a transition plan is, the more likely it is that that student will actually achieve the goals (Gothberg, Peterson, Peak, Sedaghat, 2015, p. 345).

### **Outcomes of transition plans for students in college**

For students who have a high-incidence disability, the likelihood of them completing a college degree is only 41%, as compared to students who do not have a disability of any kind (Showers & Kinsman, 2017, p. 82). A high-incidence disability is a disability that has a higher likelihood of being encountered in the classroom (Hadley, 2012, p. 22). In a longitudinal study that tracked 10th graders to 12th graders and then on to their first year of college, it was determined that those who had tailored transition plans were 13% more likely than the individuals who did not have tailored transition plans, to attend the college that was discussed in their transition plans (Hadley, 2012, p. 22).

### **Student Accounts**

In a few experiences told by individuals who have disabilities about their college experiences, multiple students stated that they were “overwhelmed with the number of assignments” a class had given and eventually dropped the courses (Hadley, 2012, p. 22). Instances like this prove that educators have not given enough time and effort into preparing these students for life in college. Students with special needs who have attended schools that focus on science, technology, engineering, and math knowledge have helped introduce better learning opportunities for these students. For examples, students are introduced to internships and immersion into college or the workforce to better understand the process and tools needed to be successful (Erdogan & Stuessy, 2015, p. 1519).

### **College data**

Moving on to colleges and how these students are to be successful in colleges, is also a huge component of transition plans. Ensuring students have all they need in college is key to making sure they can be successful. One of the biggest issues in colleges today, is the knowledge and awareness of its faculty. The lack of faculty knowledge and awareness is a huge hurdle that students face while in college (Perry, Sniatcchi, Snell, and Perry, 2010, p. 259). Despite increasing enrollment rates in colleges, the literature still suggests that students with disabilities do not engage in postsecondary education like their non-disabled peers (Perry, et. al. 2010, p. 259). Students with disabilities tend to not progress through their degrees as quickly as students without disabilities (Hamblet, 2007, p. 53). In order to improve these rates,

families must be educated on how to better assist their student on making adjustments in their education (Hamblet, 2007, p. 54).

### **Summary**

The research discussed in this literature review suggests that students with disabilities without effective Transition Plans are not accurately prepared for life after high school. This literature review has defined Transition Planning for students in special education, discussed Self-Determination Theory, and the outcomes of Transition Planning for students in Special Education. Effective transition planning will help students with disabilities be better prepared for their choice of activities after they graduate from high school.

## CHAPTER III

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to develop a curriculum for Transition Plan activities for high school students in special education. The lessons are designed to provide students with opportunities to learn and develop skills necessary to transition from high school to life after they graduate. This curriculum will provide activities and lessons for transition to college, both two and four year options, careers, and life skills.

This project is intended to be used as supplemental materials that can be utilized as goals in the Individualized Education Plan, as well as in designated Transition Courses in high school. This curriculum may be used in part or in whole to best support each student individually. This project will cover lessons on identifying student interests in education and employment after high school and will also address possible life skills needed to be successful outside of school. The design of this project is to allow teachers the flexibility to adapt any lesson to meet the needs of their students.

The goal of a Transition Plan is to identify areas of interest for students and develop goals and activities to help specify and narrow down options for students once they graduate. Because each student requires a goal on education and employment, each lesson created within this project will address those two subjects. However; many students in special education with a more severe disability, often

need activities and lessons on skills that are not educationally based. This project will also include a variety of life-skills our students need throughout adulthood to be a contributing member of society.

### **Intended Audience**

The intended audience for this project is secondary Special Education Teachers. These teachers are required to write goals and activities for education, employment, and even independent living skills. Providing a common curriculum for these goals and activities will not only create uniformity across programs, but also allow teachers to develop plans that are individualized to each student. An additional audience has also been kept in mind throughout the development of this project; the students. Students in Special Education often have difficulties accessing educational material. Providing them with structure similar to that of their other classes, yet using information more applicable and easier for them to understand, this curriculum also assists in helping students feel more in control, and more successful in their future endeavors.

### **Desired Impact**

The goal of this project is to create a curriculum that helps students be as successful as possible once they graduate high school. Being successful looks different for each student. The point of developing lessons and activities for everyone, is to help teachers, parents, and students understand the importance of life after high school, and planning for the future. The most important portion of this project is



helping students develop the necessary skills they need to become a contributing member of society in any way they are capable of doing so.

### **Summary**

Based on the research from Chapter II, there is a significant need for Transition Plans in IEPs to have the components needed for students to be successful after high school. This project will outline and develop lessons for success in the areas of education, employment, and independent living skills. Each category will have lessons, activities, and experiences that are vital to the success of these students after high school.

## CHAPTER IV

### IMPLEMENTATION

The curriculum that will be implemented is called *Secondary Transition Curriculum for Post-Secondary Goals*. The curriculum will outline four specific tracks in which the IEP team will be able to determine which tracks the student will be most interested and successful in researching and pursuing. The curriculum will cover activities, research, lessons and projects that the teacher will be able to implement, by grade level, in order to enable the students to explore all the possible options outlined within their Individualized Transition Plan. This curriculum will also include instructions on how to maintain and keep pieces of evidence to include in a Transition Portfolio for each student. This will enable the student to keep track of their own goals, as well as have a working portfolio full of information that can follow them to different high schools, jobs, and colleges. This curriculum will be able to help teachers, parents, and students. Teachers will be able to implement a cohesive curriculum to assist them in implementing ITPs. Parents will be able to have evidence that their student is progressing towards their post secondary goals. Finally, students will be able to keep track of their progress and implement new activities they deem necessary to achieve their post secondary goals.

## **Teachers, Parents, and Students**

### **The Curriculum and Teachers**

While developing this curriculum, it was important to keep the teachers who will be implementing this curriculum in mind. Teachers of students in special education are often given a list of tasks that should be completed by more than one adult, however, is the sole responsibility of the special education teacher. While creating this curriculum, the ease at which the teacher was going to be able to implement this curriculum was key. This curriculum can be implemented into a Resource setting, where teachers can implement the activities in a small amount of time, or designate an entire class period to the activities. The curriculum may also be utilized in a content course designed for students in special education (i.e. English Essentials), and can be followed in a 'unit' format to implement directly into a curriculum already in use. Finally, the use of the portfolio, which is created by the student, was implemented as a way for teachers to have easy access to their students' previous work, as well as work from students transitioning into high school from a Middle School or Jr. High setting. The portfolio requires minimal materials and time to create and keep track of.

### **The Curriculum and Parents**

While creating this curriculum, the parents of students in special education were also kept in mind. Often times, parents are busy with their own home, work, and school schedules. Parents may have difficulty being as involved as they would like to be. This curriculum was designed to implement activities in which students can take

home and show parents their outcome. The portfolio aspect of this curriculum also allows parents to see the progress over the years of their students interests, activities, and goals.

### **The Curriculum and Students**

Students in special education often have a difficult time seeing their own futures. Student may resort to stating “I don’t know” as a response to the question: “What do you want to do after high school.” The goal of this curriculum is to help students identify their own goals and aspirations after high school. This curriculum was created with students at the forefront of the purpose. Students in special education need the best supports, activities, and curriculum in order for them to be successful not only in school, but also after high school. Students in special education often lack confidence and the basic skills necessary to achieve their own personal goals. This curriculum will not only assist teachers in building these skills, but will also give students the opportunity to take charge and inform their own learning to be successful. This curriculum was developed for students with ranging abilities in order for all populations in secondary education to access the activities and form opinions on their own futures.

### **Summary**

In this chapter the discussion was focused on the way the curriculum, *Secondary Transition Curriculum for Post-Secondary Goals*, will be implemented. The stakeholders for this project include: teachers, parents and students. There was an explanation of how the curriculum will affect the teachers, parents, and students, and

how it will benefit each of them. In the following chapter, there will be a description of the purpose of the curriculum, *Secondary Transition Curriculum for Post-Secondary Goals*.

## CHAPTER V

### PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this curriculum is to give teachers activities to help implement Individual Transition Plans, parents the ability to see their students grow and change, and students the ability to create and follow their own aspirations and goals for after high school. This curriculum is important because it gives teachers the tools to help their students be successful outside of the walls of their classrooms. This curriculum will help teachers build the skills and tools their students need to access all that life has to offer outside of high school.

#### **Teacher Gains**

Teachers will be given access to a curriculum that is easily adaptable for all ability levels. This curriculum will take the strain of ITP's off of the teacher and allow them to focus on what their students will learn, instead of how they will learn it. Teachers will be able to adapt, change, and add activities they deem fit to the curriculum in order to fit their populations. Ultimately, teachers will gain a curriculum that they do not need to devote a copious amount of time in developing or implementing, because the work is already finished for them.

#### **Parent Gains**

Parents will gain the ability to monitor their students progress with ease and minimal time. Because parents are incredibly busy, they will have an opportunity to observe the work their student is completing without having to research on their own.

Parents will also gain a tremendous piece of mind due to the implementation of this curriculum. Parents will rest-easy knowing that their student is learning the skills needed to achieve their post secondary goal and be successful after high school.

### **Student Gains**

Students will gain confidence, skills, and knowledge necessary to access any goal they set for themselves in the future. Students will have the ability to create a goal, work to achieve that goal, and ultimately, achieve that goal with confidence. Students will create a portfolio that will help demonstrate their knowledge and successes as a student in the workforce, as well as in the continuation of school. Students will gain the abilities needed to be successful not only in their eyes, but also in the eyes of their peers, parents, and teachers.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the purpose of the curriculum, *Secondary Transition Curriculum for Post-Secondary Goals* was discussed. The gains of each of the stakeholders were outlined and examined. Each stakeholder will be able to gain information, tangible work, and piece of mind, with implementation of this curriculum.

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## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A

### SECONDARY TRANSITION CURRICULUM FOR POST-SECONDARY GOALS

This handbook is designed to support teachers with developing Transition Plans for students with Individual Transition Plans. The following is a link that will lead to a PDF file that is available for download and use.

<https://goo.gl/7w8KJ5>