

Stephanie:

Hey everyone. My name is Stephanie. I am your founder and host of all of these guest speaker chats here for the summer PD series and your monthly guest speaker chats at the intentional IP. I am here with Heather again today, and we are going to be talking all about transition activities. But before we get started, please introduce yourself. Share about your teaching experience and your role at the IEP table.

Heather :

Okay. Well, I am a special ed teacher. I've been teaching special ed for four years. I worked my first three years. I worked with high school level, uh, ninth grade through 12th grade, and I just come down to eighth grade. So I have lots of roles at the IEP table, getting kids ready to move up and transition and dipping their feet in to the waters of the world, around them as well. And I'm happy to be here.

Stephanie:

Yes. Well, this is a big topic to cover. Um, it has been a long time since I have taught students of transition age. So I'm very excited to bring all of this information and our guest speaker to you today. So let's get started. Well, what is trans and when does it occur?

Heather :

So transition is a little different from what everybody thinks. When we talk about transitioning, it's really kind of introducing students to what options are available after high school, which is not just college. It's not just a job. It's not just training. It's all of it. It typically starts around the eighth grade and we start those little introductions, like, Hey, let's do a virtual job shadow or let's do a virtual college tour. That's what we do. That's all transitioning is

Stephanie:

Yes. Well, and according to the I, DEA it's age 16, but in a lot of states, it's actually age 14 and you right. Guard it the year prior to them turning 14 or 16, whatever your state's age is. Is that correct?

Heather :

Yes. So Virginia, where I am, we, we start at age 14, it's mandatory in the IEP at age 14, we start introducing students to it at age 13 in the seventh grade, right. About, but they still really don't have a clue until they get to me.

Stephanie:

Yes, yes. And if you are teaching a younger grade and you're like, I would love to get students involved in transition prior to becoming of age 13, 14, 15, 16, whatever the age is, wherever you live. We had a couple of guest speakers last summer for the summer PD series, talking about how they get students involved in their IEPs. I'm a huge, huge proponent of this because then when they get to Heather, it's easier for her to do her job and guide them through all of that, um, than having to start at first base, they're already maybe on second base or third base and getting ready for, to, to run around home. That's a terrible analogy maybe, but that's what we're going with

Heather :

Works for me.

Stephanie:

Well, what are the different parts of a transition plan?

Heather :

So, um, I don't know if that varies from state to state, but I do know in Virginia, we hit on a couple of different topics. We do post secondary education. We do post secondary training. We do, uh, employment and we do independent living in the state of Virginia. So that's what I hit with all of my students, because it occurred to me this year that they didn't have a clue as to what I was talking about.

Stephanie:

Yes. Well, N IEPs are built for further education, employment and independent living. So that covers all of those things.

Heather :

Yes.

Stephanie:

Well, how do you plan and involve the student and their family in the transition plan and what does that look like?

Heather :

Okay. So the eighth grade, as far as transition goes, getting their feet wet is my favorite part because these kids don't know the options that are out there. So what I have done is we do college tours, virtual college tours. Pandemic was great for transitions because now I can take 'em, we've gone to Ithaca, we've gone to CIA, we've gone to Liberty university. We went to Berkeley university. All of these are virtual college tours. Lets 'em explore the campuses. We did some, um, job shadowing, the Virginia offers to the VDOE job shadowing program where you virtually shadow somebody in a field of your choosing. It's really incredible. I loved it. Uh, we do independent living. We do checkbook units. We work on cooking. We do little things that we need to know how to do when we get on our own like laundry.

Stephanie:

That's fun. I hate doing laundry.

Heather :

They did too. Don't worry. They did too.

Stephanie:

Well. How do you help them with like interview skills or like all of those life skills, like money and all of that.

Heather :

Um, I have, I, I started from scratch. I did not have a prebuilt curriculum handed to me this year until December. So I started from scratch. I looked into the pieces of the IEP and was like, okay, what would hit this for eighth grade students? So that's why, you know, secondary education. That's why we went

with the virtual college tours, um, employment. That's why we do did the job shadowing independent living. We did a unit in checkbooks where their grades for their paychecks. Oh, they would get paychecks every week and they had to manage their money. They would have to go grocery shopping with a local store flyer. Um, they had to make menus. They had to learn how to pay their bills. They had monthly rent to pay. We went through, they could get a house for \$600. They could get an apartment for like four. You know, we went through everything, car insurance, house, insurance, renters, insurance, we've done mortgage calculators, learning how to buy a house. Wow. Um, we have hit as much as I can think of hitting because adulting is not fun.

Stephanie:

No. And there's a lot to, I feel like you're saying all of these things and I'm like, man, I know a lot of students that when I was in the high school, I worked with students who didn't quite qualify for an IEP, but they needed a little bit extra support. And I was like a lot of the students in the general ed classes would benefit from these skills as well.

Heather :

Yes.

Stephanie:

Um, I love that you do all of that with them. So you mentioned like you didn't have a curriculum when you started, so do you have any like free or low cost websites or race sources that you use to kind of help build what you have?

Heather :

A lot of 'em were my own ideas. Um, and I just, I searched a lot of it because Google again is a wonderful search engine. Any search engine you get on and you have these ideas type it in and see what resources are immediately out there. I didn't know what was available until I started looking. Um, like I said, Google is great. Chrome is my favorite because it pulls up so much and it gives me the videos. It gives me the, Hey, you can find it here. That's kind of how I went about putting mine together.

Stephanie:

How did you, where did, how did you know where to like, I feel like that's probably the hardest part. How did you know where to start? Like did you map all the skills and then go from there? Or like how did that that's not on the question list, but

Heather :

It, it definitely wasn't um, chronologically planned. It was this lesson's gonna last me two days. What's another skill we need that doesn't matter chronologically obviously with like the mortgage calculator and the financing that went hand in hand. So we worked on that in the same unit, but now we've moved on to things like motivation, which don't fit in with that. But do, when you're talking about job skills, so it's kind of, we fit it in where we could fit it in.

Stephanie:

Yeah.

Heather :

That, I mean, there was just no set plan.

Stephanie:

So you just like thought of all the different things that they would need to be adults. So probably things that you use as adults, like as an adult. Right. And then just kind of went from there and built your own plan.

Heather :

Um, my former high school students had told me some of the things they were missing when they graduated because oh, I had worked with 'em for a couple of years, for two or three years and they would come back. I kept a good relationship with 'em after they graduated and they'd come back and say, well, I wish I had to learn how to do this. Or I wish I had somebody had to talk me to taxes or somebody had taught me how to sew a button or what, how mortgage worked. So just keeping all of that in mind, I brought it into play with my younger students thinking at least I'll get a taste of it now, before they get out of high school,

Stephanie:

I, I, would've never thought ask, like you could even ask seniors at the high school. Like what do you wish you had learned in high school? Like the gen ed kids ask them?

Heather :

Yes.

Stephanie:

And they would, oh, I, I would never have thought to ask them. That's genius. I love that.

Heather :

These transitions all the time.

Stephanie:

Yeah. That's great. Well, how do you, how do you tap that advice? What's your best piece of advice for writing a transition plan then?

Heather :

I, I mean, if you really wanna be able to target a trans well, ask the kids that just graduated, ask what's missing because that's where you're gonna learn where your gaps are.

Stephanie:

Yeah.

Heather :

I think

Stephanie:

Go ahead.

Heather :

No, you're good.

Stephanie:

I was gonna say, I think, I think that's huge. Like asking them what they, they feel like is missing. Not just like your students with, you know, that have disabilities, but like just the overall everyone. And then I feel like, and you wrote this on your notes as well. Um, but just kind getting to know your students.

Heather :

Yeah. I mean, how are you supposed to write a, for them to transition into a job if you don't know job, they like,

Stephanie:

That's true.

Heather :

Uh, if you don't know that, you know, so, and so doesn't like working with animals and you're gonna write 'em into be a vet. That's not gonna work.

Stephanie:

Right. That's true. Yeah. Love to see. That's very good advice. I had a question for you that, so, and I don't remember it now, which is gonna that stinks, cuz it was a really good question. Um, how do you something about getting them involved with the transition? Like what, how do you start that process with them? How do you, what does the conversation look like? Do you have them fill something out or like

Heather :

I have transition assessments that I like to do with them at the beginning of the school year. When they walk into my class that first week, I need to know some about you give me your information. And I have, it's a lot of sheets. I think I have like seven sheets and they ask questions. Like, what are your dreams? What do you wanna be when you grow up? Who do you live with? Who can you talk to? Who's willing to teach you these things. It's seven sheets of, of, you know, do you wanna work around people? Do you wanna work with music? Do you wanna work with animals? Do you wanna work inside or outside? It's just all of this information that I compile and we go from there.

Stephanie:

Do you involve, do you also have the parent or like the caregiver? I say parent loosely caregiver, whoever is in charge of that student. Do you have them involved now? I know like the age of majority falls into transition plan at like age 18. But do you, and do you ask them the same questions? Like when do you begin involving the parent or the caregiver as well?

Heather :

Um, usually. So what I, when I get those, I, if it's too late in the IEP, you know, if the IEP is run in April and we done it in September, I'll have them fill out a new interview before we go ahead and put it in the IEP. And that's the one I have them sit down with their, and we conduct that like an interview. So mom and dad know where they're going and they know that mom and dad are on board or are not on board with what we're doing. And then of course at the IEP meeting, we do spend a good amount of time talking about that transition piece because it is so important when you're moving on to ensure that they have a fallback plan.

Stephanie:

Ooh, I like that. Like having a plan a and talking about that, but also that's a life skill having a plan B. I love that. I have one more question for you that is not weird done through our questions, but I have one more question. Cause I think it's important. So you were talking about doing virtual college tours, which was not a thing when I was in, in college. Like I love that. That is a thing. Now you could tour any college. Do you, when you do those, do you do that like whole group or do you, do you just have students do like pick your own college and go tour it and like how does, how does does that all work? I'm intrigued.

Heather :

OK. So it's a little odd the way we do this, of course, because I have to have some record that they're paying attention. Um, I will ask what are five colleges. We wanna look at the whole group, what are five colleges? Let's poll? What are five colleges we wanna look at? And then they get this sheet has just boxes in it. It's got 10 boxes because we two are typically five in a class period and we'll go through and we'll read the descriptions and we'll talk about 'em and what we like and what we don't like. And they have to write down what college it comes from. And five things that they like about the college or dislike because you're not gonna like everything.

Stephanie:

Right?

Heather :

So that's what we do. That's I poll the whole group. They have to tell me what college it is. And five things about that college that they noticed. And then we'll discuss, you know, Hey, what do you think? Well, these are the programs that this college offers. Let's talk about out of state tuition. Let's talk about, do we have to live in a dorm? What degree program do we wanna look at? Is this college known for that degree program? We get it fairly in depth and I love it because you can see the way their minds work and they think it's the coolest thing ever.

Stephanie:

And that leads perfectly into life skills though, because when you, you go to college, you're living on your own. If you're in a dorm, you have to budget for food. If you're driving and have a job, how are you gonna get there? How are you gonna pick your class schedule? How much does it cost? How do you get student loans? Like, whew, I am here for this. There are so many life skills in just a virtual college tour.

Heather :

Yes. Wow.

Stephanie:

I'm here for this. Well, I could probably ask you a thousand other questions. Um, but I will not. I will. Um, I'll stop there. Um, thank you so much for being here and sharing about transition. I have thoroughly enjoyed this. I am very intrigued by all of this. Like I wanna go teach transition. Like that sounds like so much fun.

Heather :

That is my favorite class. I teach two and transitions is my favorite.

Stephanie:

Uh, like it's a class like a, a class like a period class. I love, I'm curious if that is the norm in schools. Is that the norm in high schools now? Or

Heather :

This is actually, this is a middle school that I'm in and it is an eighth grade and that is the norm in my county.

Stephanie:

Okay.

Heather :

I don't know if it's the norm everywhere because it was a study hall and they said, well, you deal with that beginning transition. So you need to make your class a transition class. And I said, okay, let's go.

Stephanie:

I love that. And I love that. That actually came out of this whole because now maybe those that are listening might be like, that would be a great, like block time in my middle school class. I need to talk to admin about adding that into the schedule or like I am here for this. That is fantastic.

Heather :

Hey, and the other thing I get to do next year is collaborate with a home economics teacher. Oh, Oh, I'm down. It's

Stephanie:

You know that I love cooking in the classroom and I am here for this. Like I may just have to fly to Virginia and just come hang out with y'all for a week and just live by.

Heather :

You could soak it up and you would love every minute.

Stephanie:

Oh my gosh, I'm here for this. Well, thank you so much for sharing all about transit, all that you do with your middle schoolers. I appreciate all that you do. So thank you so much. And thank you for being here

and sharing your knowledge and expertise on the transition. Um, where can we find you? Whether that's social media, a website, and I will link all of Heather's things below this video.

Heather :

I haven't set up my blog yet because you know, I'm a teacher in life is crazy, But when I do, you will be the first one to

Stephanie:

Know. Awesome. So if I have it, her blog link, by the time this video comes out for the summer PD series, I will share it below. Um, and you can also come back and anytime she sends it to me, I will update this video. So you can click, click, not click, click, and go right to Heather. I will link Heather's things below this video at I get them. So thank you again so much, Heather. I have truly enjoyed this chat. Thank y'all for being here, learning more about transition and we will see you guys in the next chat.