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## Perspectives on Youth Transition Services in Rhode Island: An Implementation Guide for East Greenwich High School

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**PERSPECTIVES ON YOUTH TRANSITION SERVICES IN RHODE ISLAND:  
AN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR EAST GREENWICH HIGH SCHOOL**

by

Margaux Officer

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A Capstone Project Presented to the  
FACULTY OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY  
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In Partial Fulfillment of the  
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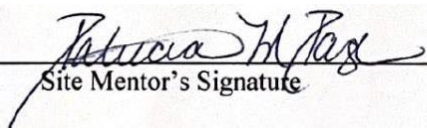
**CAPSTONE FINAL PAPER APPROVAL FORM**

The Capstone Final Paper is the final product that the OTD students need to complete to report his/her Capstone Project and his/her Capstone Experience.

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We, the undersigned, recommend that the Capstone Final Paper completed by the student listed above, in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements, be accepted by the Georgia State University.

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the pivotal transition from high school to adulthood for youth with disabilities, emphasizing the crucial acquisition of academic knowledge, independent living skills, work readiness, and self-determination. Despite federal and state policies mandating transition services to improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities, this population continues to face lower rates of independence, marriage, financial literacy, and employment, highlighting the need for enhanced support.

To bridge this gap, this study investigates transition services at East Greenwich High School (EGHS) through interviews and focus groups with 33 stakeholders, including students, parents, staff, and external personnel. Findings reveal recurring themes such as the lack of student perceived practical relevance in education, parental challenges in navigating resources, fragmented services, and barriers to functional instruction. Thus, highlighting the need for student-centered instruction, improved family usability of resources, dedicated interdisciplinary communication, broader social inclusion, and more opportunities for functional skill building.

The study recommends implementing an off-campus transition program, increasing community-based instruction, and fostering a culture of community and inclusion. To ensure long-term effectiveness, a transition coordinator role should be introduced, along with formal policies and procedures, despite limitations such as limited participation and logistical constraints. Addressing these recommendations can significantly enhance EGHS's transition program, empowering students with disabilities for post-high school success and better preparing them for adulthood.

## SUMMARY PAGES

Youth transition can be defined as transitioning from the sheltered existence of childhood to adulthood (Federal Partners in Transition, 2016). Recognizing its significance, the federal government allocates funds to support youth with disabilities through a range of transition services to starting at age 14 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 2016). For children with disabilities, the transition from high school into adulthood is often prolonged and requires additional resources (Foley et al., 2012). Transition services are commonly noncomprehensive and rely heavily on parent involvement, leaving children with disabilities and their caregivers to feel ineffectively supported and alone (Benson et al., 2021; Cheak-Zamora et al., 2015; Foley et al., 2012; Rosner et al., 2020).

Currently, East Greenwich High School (EGHS) offers a life skills class and special educators facilitate transition planning with students' team and family. The life skills class is not classified as a formal Career and Technical Education (CTE) program as defined by the Rhode Island Board of Education (RIDE). To be a CTE program, it must include at least three progressive courses, include a work-based learning opportunity, and allow students to earn a diploma endorsement upon completing the school's proficiency-based graduation assessment (RIDE, 2020).

As it stands, EGHS does not have a formal avenue for students with IEPs to learn and earn credit for career and technical skills. To solve this, we are proposing the creation of a youth transition program that facilitates transition planning and vocational and life skills building. The purpose of this project is to create an implementation guide for developing improved youth transition services. The services aims to teach students with Individualized Education Plans

(IEPs) vocational and life skills to foster independence in their transition from public school to adulthood. The guide developed from this Capstone Project will provide recommendations for the program's curriculum, logistics, and interdisciplinary communication. Recommendations will be derived from a literature review in addition to interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders, including local transition educators, support staff, EGHS students, as well as the families of students with IEPs.

This project's primary emphasis is to involve students with disabilities, parents, transition professionals, and other professionals in the creation of the pathway. The voices of the students and parents/guardians will be vastly important as they are at the center of this program. This project strives to be in accord with the Disability Rights Movement's mantra "Nothing about us (people with disabilities), without us" (Charlton, 1998). To achieve the purpose of this capstone project, I proposed three specific aims:

**Aim 1: To understand the perspectives of stakeholders (i.e., students, parents, educators, and support staff) at EGHS regarding their need for a youth transition program via interviews and focus groups.**

I will post flyers around EGHS to recruit students, educators, and support staff. The flyer will also be sent out via email as part of the principal's existing newsletter to the entire district for the potential participants. Additionally, I will attend the EGHS Special Education Advisory Committee Meetings (SEAC) at EGHS to share information about my project to recruit parents and EGHS staff.

Participants will be asked to join an individual interview or a focus group one time virtually (via phone or Webex) or in person. During these sessions, I will follow a question guide to promote natural flowing conversations and opportunities to gain additional information

prescriptive questions may have missed. Interview and focus group data will be collected through notes and audio recordings. An informal qualitative analysis of the data will be conducted to generate themes. Such themes will inform the implementation guide in providing recommendations for improving services.

**Aim 2: To understand the existing transition programs in other organizations in Rhode Island to help develop a youth transition program for EGHS.**

I will be interviewing the key informants (e.g., educators and support staff) to understand their programs. Similar interview strategies (e.g., following a guide) and data analysis plans (e.g., qualitative analysis) will be conducted as described above.

**Aim 3: To create an implementation guide based on the needs of stakeholders at EGHS and information regarding other existing transition programs.**

I will perform an informal qualitative analysis on the data gathered from all interviews and focus groups to synthesize overall themes and program priorities. With the results of this analysis, I will create an implementation guide uniquely tailored to EGHS for their new youth transition pathway.

***Output***

This project will generate an implementation guide for EGHS to use in its execution of improving transition services for students with IEPs. The guide will minimally include recommendations for the program's long-term logistics, interdisciplinary communication, and curriculum. The recommendations will be rooted in the data I acquire and will be keenly functional for EGHS.

***Significance and Impact***

Currently, East Greenwich Public Schools Student Services Department does not have the bandwidth to thoroughly include a wide array of stakeholders in the development of new transition

services. The added insight this project provides will ensure services are maximally functional for everyone involved. Furthermore, this project will help expedite and alleviate the workload needed to start new initiatives. Most importantly, the implementation guide will help students with IEPs receive more robust transition services as part of their free and public education. Finally, this guide will ideally contribute to the ongoing advocacy efforts to make Rhode Island CTE programming more accessible to students with disabilities.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Literature Review

#### *Transition from Adolescent to Adulthood*

Transitioning from high school to adulthood marks a crucial milestone in life for everyone. As adolescents prepare for this significant shift, they must learn and apply essential skills to achieve self-sufficiency and independence as adults. Such skills include academic knowledge, independent living skills, work readiness skills, and self-determination, all of which are commonly acquired through a combination of school and home support (Cobb & Alwell, 2009). For youth with disabilities, the development of these skills requires additional time and support, thus disrupting a smooth transition into adulthood (Test et al., 2009). Entering adulthood is an exciting and pivotal moment in a young person's life, but without the necessary resources and supports it can become daunting and overwhelming.

#### *Federal Policy and Legislation*

In the United States, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) mandates all public education systems to provide youth with disabilities "Youth Transition Services". These services aim to improve the education and employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities, and to facilitate their transition from school to post-school activities. Youth transition services must be provided through direct teaching, related services, vocational skills, community experiences, and when appropriate, daily living skills (IDEA, 2004).

Continually, in 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) passed as an amendment of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This legislation mandates that state vocational

agencies allocate 15% of their federal funds towards providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (pre-ETS) to youth with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)(WIOA, 2014). In implementation, state vocational agencies collaborate with public school systems to deliver work readiness training, work-based learning experiences, information on postsecondary/transition programming, and self-advocacy instruction, to students with disabilities (Office of Rehabilitation Services, 2022).

### ***Rhode Island Policy and Legislation***

The “Rhode Island Regulations Governing the Education of Children with Disabilities” require the initiation of youth transition services by age 14 (Rhode Island Department of State, 2022). The aforementioned regulations are aligned with IDEA in requiring services to be centered around measurable postsecondary goals and be tailored to the child’s unique strengths and interests to assist the child in reaching those goals (IDEA, 2004).

In 2014, Rhode Island (RI) was the first state to enter into a consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice to address violations of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (Shogren et al., 2020). The state was putting individuals with disabilities at serious risk for segregation due to its excessive and unacceptable dependence on sheltered workshops and adult day centers for service delivery (*United States of America v. State of Rhode Island Consent Decree*, 2014). The consent decree mandated the state commit to a 10-year plan that prioritizes “Youth in Transition” and aims to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to engage in integrated employment and day services (The State of Rhode Island, 2024).

In response to the consent decree, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) adopted the “RIDE Employment First Policy”. This rule prioritizes employment as the primary

objective for transition services (RIDE Employment First Policy, 2014). The policy promotes interagency collaboration between educational institutions and vocational organizations, while simultaneously underscoring the importance of personalized programming aligned with each student's unique strengths and goals.

### ***Post-school Outcomes for Young Adults with Disabilities***

While transition services are supported by federal and state level policies, outcomes for young adults with disabilities remain poor. Compared to individuals without disabilities, young adults with disabilities showed 5-6% lower rates of living independently, getting married, and owning a checking account (Newman et al., 2011). When asking about personal finance, only 41% of the young adults with disabilities own a credit card, which was 20% lower compared to individuals without disabilities (Newman et al., 2011). Continually, the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) revealed that people with disabilities were 20% less likely to hold a bachelor's degree or higher (Houtenville & Bach, 2024).

In an analysis of the 2016 – 2020 United States Census, individuals with disabilities faced lower chances of securing employment after high school compared to people without disabilities (Cheng & Shaewitz, 2022). This finding is echoed in the ACS, where approximately 26% of working-age adults with disabilities are employed, a considerable contrast of the 53% employment rate for individuals without disabilities (Thomas et al., 2024). Results from the same survey indicated that Americans with disabilities experience poverty at nearly double the rate of those without disabilities (11% vs 21%). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024) released a news report that identifies the consistent pattern in lower employment rates for adolescents aged 16 to 19 with disabilities compared to their able-bodied peers. Specifically, 18% of youth with

disabilities in this age group were unemployed, whereas only 11% of those without disabilities faced unemployment. This disparity widens further among youth aged 20 to 24, where the disability unemployment rate is 11.8%, compared to just 6.4% for their non-disabled counterparts. Additionally, the report notably isolates that working people with disabilities are more likely to work part-time, with a part-time employment rate of 28%, compared to the 15% rate among working people without disabilities. These comparative results underscore that, although we do have existing youth transition services to assist youth with disabilities, the outcomes are barely satisfactory and therefore illustrate the need for continuous improvement of services.

### ***The Use of Lived Experiences to Improve Transition Services***

While statistics illustrate a compelling call to action for improving youth transition services, they do not encapsulate the true lived experience of transition. Disability and education literature hardly cite the lived experiences of young disabled people and their families when describing the inequities they face (Wilson, 2004). Parent and student experiences are exceptionally vital when making improvements to services as their involvement in transition planning are strong predictors of post-secondary success for students with disabilities (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test et al., 2009). Student viewpoints are of paramount significance, as they possess unique insights as experts of their own lives that can significantly shape program development and service delivery (Correia et al., 2017). Although transition service delivery happens mostly in school, families continue to have a significant influence in supporting and advocating for the provision of transition services (Schutz et al., 2022). Additionally, parents understand their children deeply and are often able to better recognize their children's interests, preferences,

strengths, and support needs compared to educators and other service providers. Finally, there is limited research dedicated to understanding the intricacies that impede transition services (Snell-Rood et al., 2020). The significance of incorporating transition service provider perspectives in the development of programs cannot be overstated, as they possess a comprehensive understanding said nuances.

### ***Purpose***

The primary purpose of this study is to understand the unique stakeholder perspectives of transition services at East Greenwich High School (EGHS) through interviews and focus groups with students, parents, staff, and relevant external personnel. The secondary objective is to utilize the shared experiences to develop recommendations for enhanced transition programming at EGHS.

## CHAPTER 2

### Needs Assessment

#### *East Greenwich High School (EGHS)*

EGHS is a public, four-year high school part of the East Greenwich Public Schools District (EGPS) that is fully accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and the State of Rhode Island Department of Education. The Mission of the EGHS is “to genuinely know, support and celebrate all students in meeting their full potential”. Furthermore, EGHS envisions their graduates to be knowledgeable, connected, skilled, and reflective individuals (East Greenwich Public Schools, 2019). The student demographics of EGHS are shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1. EGHS Student Demographics**

EGHS Student Demographics	n (%)
Total Students Enrolled	737
Total Students with Disabilities	70 (9.4%)
Total Students with Disabilities Enrolled in Intensive Resource Programming	17 (24%)
Graduation Rate of All Students	96.6%
Post-Secondary Education Enrollment Rate for Students with a Disability	55 (77.8%)
Post-Secondary Education Enrollment Rate for Students without a Disability	582 (87.2%)

### ***Transition Related Personnel***

Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are entitled to receive transition services through EGPS. The extent of services provided are determined by the student, parent, and IEP team. Members of the IEP team at EGHS can be classified in the following categories, internal academic support, internal related services, external vocational support, and additional external agencies (*Figure 1*).

**Internal Academic Support.** There are eight special educators responsible for specialized instruction and case management for students with IEPs. All special educators serve as case managers for students with IEPs, but they may not necessarily serve as the case manager for every student they teach. The special education department determines caseloads, and the number of students assigned to each case manager varies based on the level of support required by the students. The added role as case manager requires special education teachers to facilitate and coordinate transition related services, ensuring programming is compliant with federal, state, and district level requirements. This project primarily concentrates on the role of special educators as case managers. As such, for the purposes of this paper, special educators will be referred to as case managers.

There are three primary administrators that preside over the high school's special education department: the principal, the director of student services, and the special education department chair. They are responsible for school finances, curriculum development, program development, school culture, and student affairs. An administrator must be present at each IEP meeting to oversee the delivery of specially designed instruction.

Guidance counselors help develop students' careers and academic plans. Every student with a disability is assigned a counselor who will also support all students in selecting their high school courses and create their schedules.

Paraprofessionals are responsible for providing hands-on support to students and teachers in the classroom. Their primary role is to support students in achieving their IEP goals by supporting the provision of IEP services. Paraprofessionals do this through engaging in behavior management and modified instruction, as well as providing any additional accommodations that promote student success in the classroom.

**Internal Related Services.** Related service providers are written into student IEPs as determined by the IEP team. Service providers support transition-related IEP goals through direct service delivery or consultations. Services include adapted physical education (APE), applied behavioral analysis (ABA), nursing, occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), school psychology, social work, and speech therapy.

**External Vocational Support.** As appropriate, Launched Beginnings provides students with community-based job coaching. Here, students have a one-to-one job coach that accompany them in the community to provide volunteer/unpaid work experience, career exploration, and other community-based life skills instruction. In addition to Launched Beginnings, students with IEPs are also entitled to Pre-Employment Transition Services (pre-ETS) provided by the Office of Rehabilitative Services (ORS). Pre-ETS include job exploration counseling, work-based learning, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs, workplace readiness training, and self-advocacy. Typically,

case managers refer students to ORS at age 15, and they can continue receiving services until their goals are met, which may extend beyond high school.

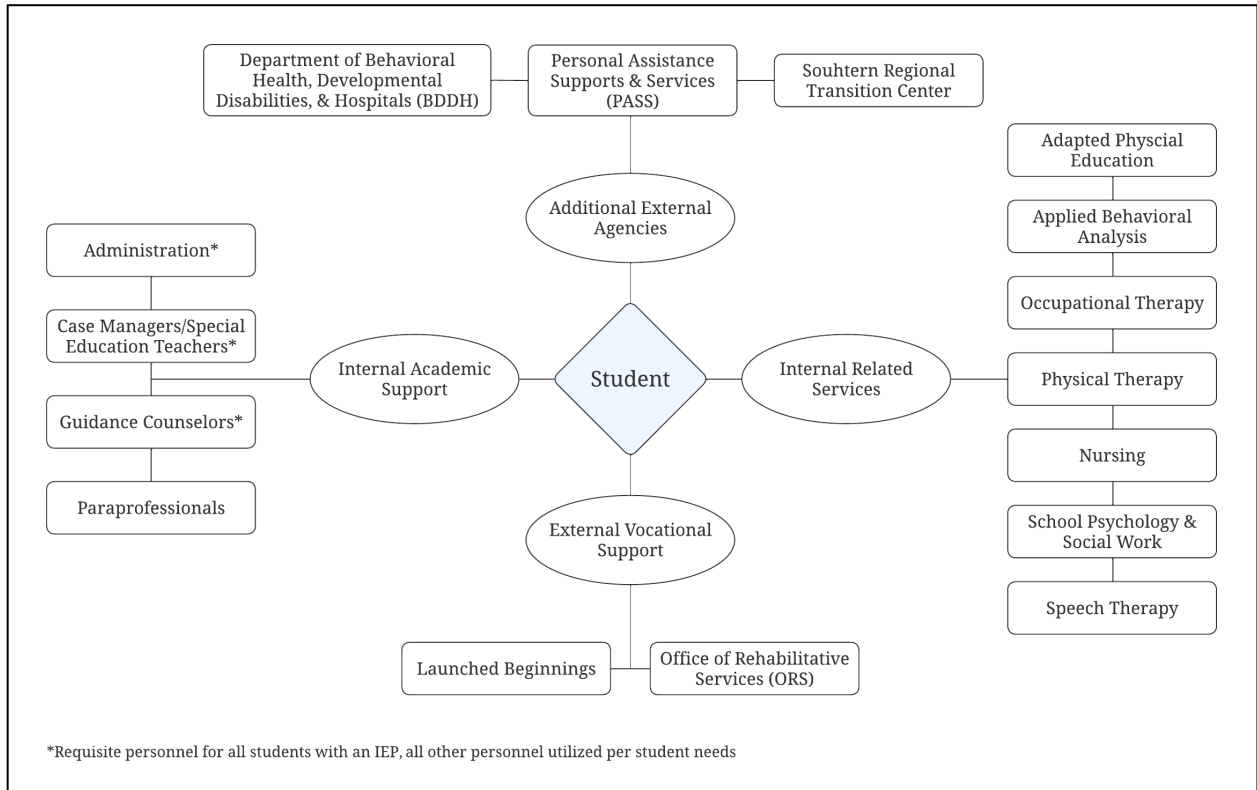
**Additional External Services.** A student's IEP team may refer them to additional external agencies as needed to fulfill their transition goals. Such agencies include the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH), Personal Assistance Support and Services (PASS), and the Southern Regional Transition Center.

BHDDH strives to provide people with intellectual and developmental disabilities a coordinated network of community-based services and assistance. They recommend that students are referred two months before their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. Once a referral has been made, a case worker from BHDDH will attend an IEP meeting to initiate the Systems of Support Assessment (SIS-A). The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the type and degree of support required for an adult with a developmental disability to successfully live in their community. The results of the SIS-A determine the service needs and corresponding funding levels that transitioned students are entitled to receive.

PASS is a system of services that children with disabilities can access outside of school to promote the child's safety, access to their community, social skills, and ability to perform activities of daily living (ADLs). PASS is helpful in the transition period as they can be utilized to increase community engagement for better carryover of related skills.

The Southern Regional Transition Center works with public, private, and chartered school systems in supporting their students with disabilities in their transition to adulthood. They do so through collaborating with adult service agencies, post-secondary education institutions,

training programs, and parent advocacy groups to uphold Rhode Island’s Employment First Policy.



**Figure 1. Student Network of Support.** This figure illustrates the network of transition supports available to students with disabilities.

**Overview of Transition Services**

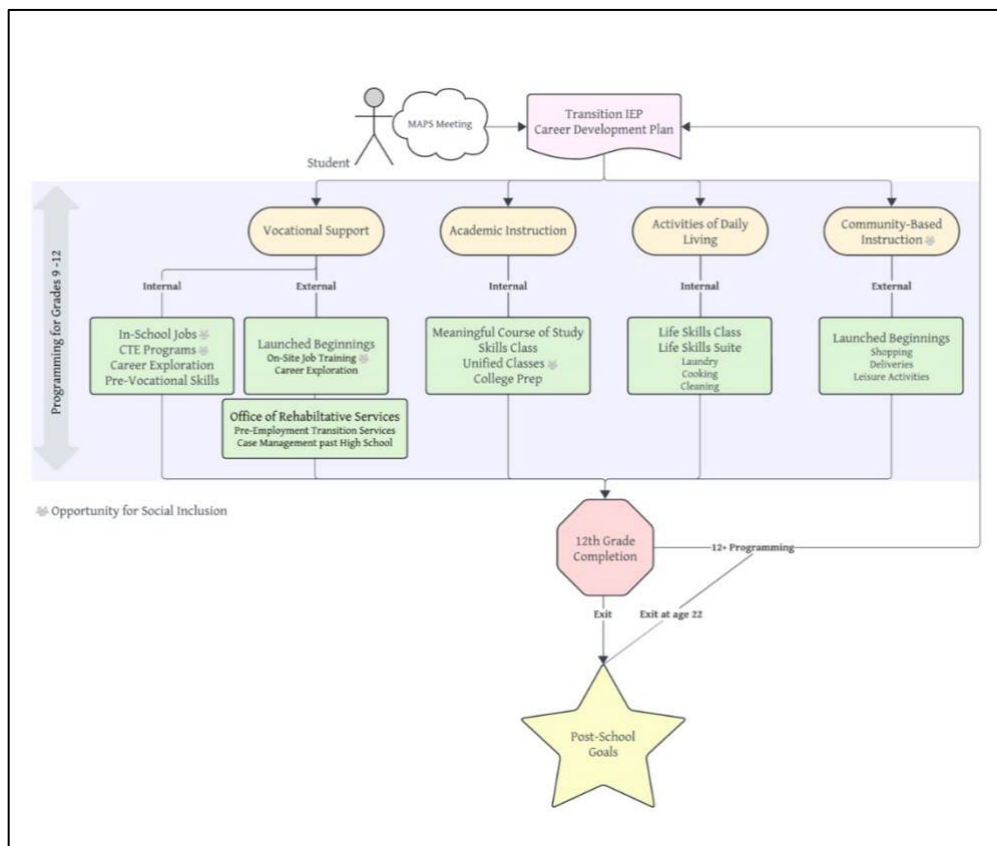
The overview of transition services offered by EGPS describes the current model of service delivery and identifies areas of potential strengths and weaknesses to be addressed in this project. It is important to note that the purpose of this project is not to overhaul all EGHS provided transition services, but to offer recommendations for *improved* services.

**Process.** Transition services at EGHS begin with an IEP meeting when the student turns 14 years old. IEP meetings happen annually where the student, caregiver(s), and education team review the student's academic and functional progress and develop new goals. After reaching the age of 14, student IEPs are centered around the development of a transition plan and the delivery of corresponding services. Using new evaluation results and existing student data, the team develops a "Present Levels of Performance" (PLOP) outlining the student's baseline in education, employment readiness, and, if relevant, independent living skills. From the PLOP, the team establishes measurable goals aligned with the student's post-school objectives, aiming for achievement within one year. Each goal includes outlined steps and necessary transition services. The IEP document is a legally binding agreement, meaning the district is required by law to provide the student with all outlined services and accommodations.

In addition to the IEP, students with higher support needs or those whose post-school goals focus on employment may participate in a Making Action Plans (MAPS) meeting. This is a person-centered planning technique that supports students in creatively planning for their future (Vandercook & York, 1989). The MAPS meeting helps the student and their IEP team build their Career Development Plan (CDP) (*Figure 2*). The CDP outlines any BDDH or ORS referrals, participation in career and technical education programs, transition assessments, areas of strength and need, vocational experiences, transportation needs, and community experiences. The CDP is not a legally binding document, it is to be used in tandem with the IEP as a way to outline the student's needs and requests in plain language.

Once a student's transition IEP has been established, they are eligible for EGPS provided transition services as long as the student is part of the district and remains eligible for special education services. Transition services are implemented across the four federally mandated

means, vocational support, academic instruction, community-based instruction, and activities of daily living (Figure 2) (IDEA, 2004). Students are no longer entitled to EGPS provided transition services once they graduate or age out of the system. Students must meet all graduation requirements before their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday to earn a diploma. It is common for students with high support needs to stay until they age out of services and are then identified as being in grades 12+ between the ages of 19 and 21. Grade 12+ programming is an extension of the student's existing services with a greater emphasis on functional skill building as outlined in their updated IEP and CDP.



**Figure 2. Current Model of Transition Services.** This figure illustrates the available transition programming at EGHS.

**Academic Instruction.** The majority of students with IEPs at EGHS are enrolled in a course called Study Skills. The purpose of this class is to give students additional time to enhance their academic and functional proficiency. Special Education Case Managers may utilize this class to provide transition related instruction. Related service providers may also utilize this period for delivering their services, which are commonly connected to a student's transition plan. The adaptable and customizable nature of the skills class offers students an opportunity to receive personalized guidance toward their post-school goals.

For students who plan to pursue postsecondary education, case managers and guidance counselors instruct students on how to request and obtain their academic accommodations at colleges and universities. They facilitate student and family comprehension of the differences in accommodation services provided at the college level and those offered in high school. Consequently, case managers and guidance counselors will prepare students to adapt to the diverse accommodations they may encounter.

EGHS offers Unified Classes that deliver academic instruction in subjects such as mathematics, English, social studies, and science to both students with and without disabilities. In these classes, peer mentors who do not have disabilities receive elective credit, while students with disabilities earn course credit. The curriculum of these courses aims to provide practical applications of academic concepts, such as budgeting in math, reading a map in social studies, writing a letter in English, or baking in science. However, the program implementation is still in its infancy and requires additional work towards a sustainable model of instruction.

**ADLs.** The Life Skills Course aims to educate students with significant disabilities on instrumental ADLs, such as cooking, cleaning, organization, etc. The intent is to help students

gain living skills for independence outside of school and better transition into adulthood. However, due to staffing restraints, this course essentially acts as a placeholder in students' schedules for their related service delivery (i.e., OT, PT, Speech, etc.).

Continually, EGHS has a Life Skills Suite equipped with a full kitchen and laundry room that students with disabilities have access to for practicing ADLs. Every day, students in this classroom cook their own lunch and collectively participate in the laundry process. Because some students spend the majority of their day in this classroom, these tasks are readily accessible and achievable throughout the school day. However, due to scheduling and environmental constraints, this space is most accessed by students with intellectual disabilities and high support needs, rather than their general education peers with and without disabilities.

**Vocational Support.** EGHS has a multitude of in-school jobs for students with disabilities to practice vocational skills. The library has students make internal deliveries and prepare books to be donated. Students support the guidance office by shredding paper and performing various other clerical jobs. The ceramics classroom gets support with their laundry, as students pick up, clean, fold, and deliver their aprons. EGHS also has a "Snack Shack" facilitated by an OT where teachers place online orders for snacks and students manage inventory, package orders, and make deliveries. Finally, one student is responsible for changing the schedule board at the front of the school each day. These roles are notably valued by the entire school, while helping students with disabilities develop vocational and social skills.

Additionally, first-year students may pursue a four-year Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway that enables students to participate in extensive learning and experiences in a particular career domain. Content areas include Computer Science, Graphics Communication

Technology, Engineering Design and Manufacturing, Finance and Entrepreneurship, Music and Performing Arts, and Visual Arts. Pathways consist of at least three successive academic courses, work-based learning hours, and a final capstone project. CTE programs can be exceptionally beneficial for students, but the workload is vastly inaccessible to students with learning and cognitive disabilities. The coursework is highly demanding, and the CTE curriculum requirements limit teachers' ability to modify or simplify content.

EGHS supports students in their career exploration through related assessments, interest inventories, class assignments, and a digital program called Virtual Job Shadow. The assessments and interest inventories support students in identifying potential career options based on their strengths and talents. Class assignments are designed to provide students with the opportunity to explore their chosen career paths and gain insight into the skills, qualifications, and resources necessary to pursue them. Finally, Virtual Job Shadow offers students the ability to virtually observe and experience different professions to better understand work demands and expectations for a given career.

The only opportunity for students to practice vocational skills in a natural and inclusive setting during the school day is through Launched Beginnings. Currently, Launched Beginnings supports high school seniors with high support needs. Charitable and unpaid work positions are available at various establishments, such as Burlington Coat Factory, Joann's Fabrics, CVS, Meals on Wheels, and a local pizzeria. Despite best efforts, placement options are limited and are not always meaningfully related to a student's post-school goals. Additionally, because Launched Beginnings is contracted by the district, EGHS does not have the authority to determine the implementation of student programs, and therefore, cannot assure the quality of intervention provided.

Students who would benefit from additional employment support are entitled to receive pre-ETS from ORS in tandem with the above opportunities provided by EGHS. If a student may or may not utilize ORS, case managers will typically refer them anyways, as initiating services for students is more straightforward than for independent adults.

**Community Experiences.** Launched Beginnings also supports the district in providing students community-based activities such as running errands and participating in leisure activities. Once more, the lack of autonomy over service implementation prevents the EGHS from ensuring the quality of the services provided. EGHS does not possess its own transportation for community outings, which means that students do not regularly access their community as part of their schooling until their senior year.

**Social Inclusion.** Unified Courses foster inclusion and facilitate meaningful integration opportunities for students with significant disabilities who may otherwise face barriers to accessing education alongside their non-disabled peers. However, the student-to-mentor ratio was approximately 1 to 4, which does not constitute compelling inclusivity. In addition to Unified Classes, EGHS offers Unified Sports which apply the same model of inclusion to basketball and volleyball. The mentor-to-student ratio is approximately 1 to 2 making it a more robust opportunity for social inclusion compared to the classes. However, it is only offered after school leaving few opportunities for inclusion during the school day.

Student jobs within the school are excellent opportunities for students with disabilities to be part of the broader school community. Students are supporting departments that the entire school utilizes thus providing meaningful engagement with their general education peers, staff,

and faculty. Seniors participating in on-site job training and any experience in the community with Launched Beginnings receive ideal opportunities for social inclusion. These dynamic experiences give students exposure to their community and help foster a sense of belonging and social inclusion.

Due to the rigor of CTE programs, students without IEPs are the primary students enrolled. However, should it be functional and meaningful for a student with an IEP to participate, CTE programs are excellent opportunities for long-term social inclusion.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methods

#### *Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria*

Participants were required to be between the ages of 14 and 89, understand English, and have a self-proclaimed personal or professional connection to people with disabilities.

#### *Recruitment*

To recruit EGPS personnel, I distributed copies of my study's flyer throughout the school. The flyer was also sent out via email as part of the principal's monthly newsletter to the entire district (students, service providers, parents, and educators). Additionally, I shared my study through direct emails to parents and teachers and presented the study at the EGPS Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) meeting. To recruit out-of-district transition related personnel, I directly contacted West Bay Collaborative, Pathways Strategic Learning Center, and three individuals from my professional network (1 special educator and 2 transition researchers).

#### *Participants*

I recruited 3 students, 4 parents/guardians, 20 EGPS personnel, and 6 out-of-district transition related personnel for a total of 33 participants spanning 21 interviews and 4 focus groups (*Table 1*). EGPS personnel were split into two subcategories of EGPS case managers and EGPS service providers. This was done to distinguish the perspectives between case managers and service providers, where case managers play a central role in organizing and facilitating IEPs, and service providers are supplemental to the IEP process. There was a total of 9 EGPS

case managers including 7 from the high school and 2 from the middle school. There was a total of 11 EGPS service providers consisting of 5 OTs, 1 SLP, 1 BCBA, 1 school psychologist, 1 administrator, and 2 paraprofessionals. The group of out-of-district transition related personnel included 1 job coach, 1 transition coordinator, 2 special education teachers, and 2 transition researchers.

**Table 2.** *Number of interviews and focus groups completed per role.*

Role	Interviews (n)	Focus Groups (n)
Students	3	0
Parents/Guardians	4	0
Out-of-district Transition Related Personnel	4	1
EGPS Personnel		
EGPS Case Managers	7	1
EGPS Service Providers	3	2

***Procedures***

Participants had the option to partake in an individual interview or a focus group one time. Individual interviews were conducted via in-person or remote meetings (either through phone calls or Webex). Each focus group had 2-5 participants and was held in person at EGHS or online via Webex.

I used different question guides (Appendix 1) for the interviews and focus groups depending on the role of the participant(s). Questions aimed to understand how each individual

felt about transition services within their context. For example, “As an educator, *when do you find your/your organization’s services are best supported?*”, “*In relation to your child’s life after high school, describe the areas you find you have the most support in.*”, and “*As a student, what are you learning in school right now that will help you after you graduate?*”.

### ***Data Analysis***

Interview and focus group data was obtained using notes and audio recordings. Any spontaneous inquiries and corresponding responses that emerged during the session were documented in my notes. Following the completion of all sessions, I conducted an informal qualitative analysis to identify recurring themes. The process involved consolidating each completed question guide into a single document organized by the participants’ roles and manually highlighting the data for overarching themes of sentiment, potential solutions, and relevant anecdotes that illustrated the participants' experiences. Additionally, the audio recordings supplemented my notes and aided in identifying direct quotes that exemplified the themes.

## CHAPTER 4

### Results

#### *Student Perspectives*

All of the students (n = 3) stated that they did not recognize the practical relevance of the subject matter they are learning in school and how it pertains to their life beyond high school. Two thirds of the students held the perception that the school could do more to provide direct and tangible support in helping them meet their goals. All student participants supported the idea that learning practical life skills, such as finance and household management, would be beneficial. Two students expressed feeling isolated within the school, with one student communicating a desire to learn how to make friends. Additionally, one student consistently emphasized how important social skills are for becoming a successful adult and stressed how it is crucial to develop these skills in high school.

#### *Parent & Caregiver Perspectives*

There was a unanimous request for more information about post-school options available to their children. Each parent described the process of navigating adult programs, resources, and organizations as overwhelmingly daunting. One parent described that while their case manager provided them a list of resources, this list was not customized to their child's profile, leaving them to decipher which option would be most appropriate for their child and family. All parents (n = 4) emphasized that having a clearer understanding of available options would greatly assist them in planning for their child's future. Half of parents expressed that they rely on word of mouth to understand the different options available. One parent highlighted the significant value

of having a friend who had already navigated the same journey with their own child. They emphasized that the perspective of another parent is distinctively unique and cannot be fully replicated by education teams. Three parents discussed that while they value the acquisition of skills during high school, their primary concern is knowing where exactly their child will be headed after high school.

Moreover, 75% of parents expressed regret for not initiating the planning process sooner. Two parents shared similar experiences specifying that when their child was young, their family was navigating more immediate concerns related to their child's health and wellbeing. They continued in saying that discussing transition when their child was young would have been exceptionally challenging; however, both parents maintained their sentiment of regret for not initiating the process earlier.

All parents reported that they felt supported by at least one EGPS staff member, with 75% of them identifying the occupational therapist as being extremely helpful in their child's transition planning. Alternatively, 50% of parents had reservations about the standard of vocational support their children were receiving from Launched Beginnings, with their primary concern being the qualifications and training of the staff.

Finally, all the parents expressed how frightened they feel about their child transitioning into adulthood. One parent stated, *"I literally think about it every day, and it's a really scary thought."* Another parent expressed her anxiety about finding reliable and trustworthy staff to support her son while she works, while conveying how she wants to avoid a day program at all costs.

### *EGPS Personnel Perspectives*

All high school case managers (n = 7) acknowledged their respective roles in transition planning. Each manager outlined their individual approach to transition planning for their unique caseloads. However, their degree of involvement in the transition planning process varied and was contingent upon the teachers' backgrounds and the needs of their students. Regarding service delivery, 40% of case managers whose caseload primarily consists of students that are regularly accessing general education classrooms reported satisfaction with their transition related service delivery and did not stress a need for vast improvements. The other 60% of case managers serving a similar caseload communicated a confusion over the process and expressed a need for updated guidelines and procedures from administration.

Sixty percent of EGPS personnel pointed out the lack of a systematic structure to transition planning, consequently leaving IEP teams to independently develop and implement transition plans. This fragmentation subsequently enables families and students to receive varying levels of support and assistance. Ninety percent of EGPS personnel reported discussing transition related topics when their schedule allowed. Communication was often occurring in the hallways when running into other team members or just before or just after an IEP meeting. Teams do not receive dedicated time to address transition. Ninety percent of EGPS personnel expressed appreciation for current interdisciplinary relationships and supported the idea that having dedicated team meetings about transition would be beneficial. One service provider succinctly illustrated the importance of collaboration in saying, "*We cannot create a culture of inclusion without including everyone in these [transition planning] conversations.*"

Eighty percent of EGPS personnel emphasized the importance of including functional skill building as part of students with disabilities high school education. According to all EGPS

case managers (n = 9), academic pursuits take precedence over transition planning and intervention. On the other hand, 92% of service providers stated having capacity to prioritize the development of transition-related skills in their service delivery. Over three fourths of the EPGS personnel working at the high school described the school culture as being overly focused on academic achievement, thus posing barriers for students who are unlikely to attend a 4-year college. The perspective is that academic success is given excessive importance, which leads to the marginalization of students who are not conventionally successful in the classroom. Moreover, this culture complicates the integration of transition-related assessments, meetings, and interventions into the already hectic schedules of students, especially for those not receiving related service delivery.

Two of the EGPS case managers and six of the EGPS service providers have a caseload at the high school that primarily supports students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, who do not regularly access a general education classroom. This group of eight EGPS personnel stressed the need of better programming for their students, and unanimously highlighted the importance of community access and increased social inclusion. The two case managers explained how they are unable to coordinate additional community-based opportunities because the district lacks their own transportation. Moreover, the case managers expressed frustration with the rotating bell schedule as it prevents consistent daily class structure and routines that would expressly support their students. Finally, this specific group of EGPS personnel (n = 8) pinpointed the significance of starting community experiences earlier than what is currently being implemented and identified staffing and scheduling to be a substantial barrier in service implementation.

When presented with the idea, all EGPS personnel (n = 20) responded very positively to the development of an off-campus transition program that would support community-based transition services for students in grades 12+.

### ***Out-of-District Transition Related Personnel***

The conversations with out-of-district transition related personnel focused on general transition services and topics related to transition aged youth with disabilities. This group of participants unanimously (n = 6) emphasized the importance and value of community-based instruction in transition services.

Additionally, 80% of the out-of-district transition related personnel articulated the significance of educating students on their disability as a way to develop self-awareness, self-advocacy, and self-esteem. The two transition researchers independently discussed how disclosing a student's disability to them gives them access to the rich disability culture and community. One individual noted that, "*Not telling a student about their disability denies them access to a part of their identity.*" Forty percent of the out-of-district transition related personnel outlined how important they feel it is to let students with disabilities make age-appropriate mistakes. These individuals explored how students with disabilities are held to higher standards than their nondisabled peers and supported the notion that mistakes, and failure facilitate learning.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

This chapter presents a structure for EGPS to utilize when revising their transition services, as indicated by the aforementioned findings and supplemental literature (*Figure 3*). It is important to note that the recommendations paint an ideal picture of transition services at EGHS and may not be immediately feasible or realistic for the district. However, the purpose of the recommendations is to challenge the district in developing robust transition services that stem from the shared lived experiences of students with disabilities, with added insight from parents, EGPS personnel, and out-of-district transition related personnel.

#### *Student-Centered Instruction*

It is essential that EGHS align students with transition related opportunities that are both practical and meaningful for each individual student. Student apathy toward what they are learning in high school showcases a deficit in student centered instruction therefore posing a barrier to developing self-determination. While individualizing planning and instruction is a federal requirement of transition services, Causal Agency Theory further justifies its importance through illustrating its role in fostering self-determination (IDEA, 2004). The theory states that tailoring instruction and opportunities across contexts to align with student aspirations promotes intrinsic motivation and therefore facilitates the development of self-determination (Shogren & Raley, 2022). Causal Agency Theory defines a self-determined person as one who is a causal-agent in their own life; where causal agency does not require independent action, rather only the

capacity to exert influence over occurrences (Shogren & Raley, 2022). This formulation of self-determination is intended to acknowledge individuals who possess self-determination but lack the ability to independently execute their choices, yet still possess authority and sway over their own lives. Causal Agency Theory can be implemented in transition programming through the use of the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) (Shogren & Raley, 2022). The SDLMI facilitates students' planning by teaching them the identification of goals, the requisite actions to accomplish those goals, and the assessment of whether those goals have been achieved. The plan for goal attainment is then established through the support mechanisms identified by the student, providing additional opportunities for the student to have an impact on the plan. Therefore, by appreciating and advocating for student influence over their lives both within and beyond the realm of education, EGHS can significantly contribute to building causal agency and self-determination among their students with disabilities.

### ***Improving Family Usability of Resources***

EGHS parent perspectives align with existing literature where families feel isolated and overwhelmed in navigating available resources for post high school. Following a survey of 253 parents of transition-aged youth with disabilities, results indicated that providing parents and students a clear and accessible outline of services and key personnel was a crucial component of the transition process (Schutz et al., 2022). Because transition services are fragmented at EGHS, parents are not receiving the same information and are therefore left to figure it out on their own. To support parents in understanding the different programming offered at EGHS, listed in Appendix 2 are the three most common student profiles that include areas where students typically require support, supports students may benefit from, and student typical grades 9-12

course of study at EGHS. The document also briefly describes the proposed in-house transition program (*Figure 3*). It is important to note that students may fit multiple profiles and this document serves only to help parents understand typically appropriate in-school placements based on common student needs. Students' course of study at EGHS is continuously assessed throughout their academic journey and may be subject to alterations depending on their evolving needs and accomplishments.

Furthermore, the parent experiences gathered in this study stress a dire need for increased parent education and support surrounding post-school services and placement opportunities. This increased support, however, should go beyond giving parents a generic resource bank of potential agencies to contact. To meet the identified need of parents, EGHS should be making efforts to understand family priorities and matching them with related resources.

### ***Interdisciplinary Communication***

To address the described fragmentation of transition services, it is recommended EGHS provide IEP teams weekly dedicated time to discuss their caseloads which includes their students' transition plans and programming. Additionally, when a student turns 14, IEP teams should host an annual transition meeting with the student and family to promote consistent communication and to support families in started the planning process sooner. This meeting would supplement the current MAPS and IEP meetings and would primarily focus on discussing student progress and making any necessary adjustments to the established transition plan.

### ***Meaningful Social Inclusion***

Student perspectives on social participation and inclusion, emphasize the need to increase opportunities for students with disabilities to meaningfully engage with their peers, especially for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In making CTE programming more accessible as a means for meaningful vocational preparation and increased social participation, the district would have to advocate to RIDE for modified curriculum standards. RIDE states that CTE programming must be aligned to federal, state, and industry standards (RIDE, 2015, 2023). The industry standards are what make course adaptation and modifications challenging and therefore present barriers to students with disabilities. However, according to evidence, participation in CTE programming is a positive indicator of post-school employment and education (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test et al., 2009). While EGHS continues to navigate ways to include their students with disabilities in CTE programming, the school has found a way to utilize CTE in a different way to promote social engagement.

EGHS is in the beginning stages of developing a paraprofessional CTE pathway where students would be required to become Unified mentors as part of their work-study. The implementation of this proposal would facilitate the recruitment of additional mentors, thereby increasing the number of mentors available to address the inadequate mentor-to-student ratio in the Unified courses. Consequently, this would improve meaningful social engagement within Unified classes.

A further opportunity for increasing inclusive social engagement throughout the school day is to include more students with disabilities in elective courses, especially the students who

are not regularly accessing general education classrooms. Electives can be easily modified to fit the needs of students with disabilities and are typically more laidback than core academic courses. These electives would give students with disabilities an opening to explore their interests and be involved in the fabric of the school community. This recommendation is again rooted in evidence where inclusion in general education was found to be a consistent positive predictor of post-school education, employment, and independent living (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test et al., 2009).

### ***Enhanced Programming, Grades 9 – 12***

**Vocational Support.** Increasing the in-house vocational support initiated and implemented by EGPS would grant the district greater autonomy, oversight, and control over the services provided. Through district-owned transportation and on-site work-based learning experiences in early high school, students can begin practicing their pre-vocational skills in a natural and inclusive environment. This approach would also facilitate increased community access, supporting the development of foundational skills necessary for regular community engagement in adulthood. It's important to note that the proposed addition would not replace Launched Beginnings' services, however, the district would shift from complete dependence on Launched Beginnings to utilizing them as a supplement to existing implementation. Similarly, ORS would remain a consultative agency that would support students with their pre-ETS.

**ADLs.** Increasing attention to and the utilization of the Life Skills class will give students increased opportunities to integrate functional skill building into their daily instruction. Given case manager perspectives of finding time to implement functional instruction, the Life Skills

class has gone neglected. The lack of attention to this course may be a symptom of EGHS' overly academic culture, where functional instruction comes secondary to academic instruction. In reimagining the course, the EGHS OT should play a crucial role in supporting the Life Skills class. Promoting ADL development is a key aspect of occupational therapy and falls squarely within the scope of practice (OTPF-4, 2020). The recommendation is grounded in the parent and service provider perspectives and is further corroborated by the literature that underscores the important role OT has in devising purposeful programs that facilitate adolescents' independent living in adulthood (Benson et al., 2021).

**Community-Based Instruction.** Ninety-one percent of *all* participants in this study (n = 31), stressed the value and importance of community-based instruction for students with IEPs. This sentiment is also expressly backed by the literature where exposure to community experiences in transition programming was found to be a consistent predictor of post-secondary success among youth with disabilities (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test et al., 2009). Furthermore, community-based instruction is part of the transition service requirements mandated by IDEA (2004). As described by case managers and service providers, the lack of district owned transportation poses the largest barrier to increasing opportunities for students with disabilities to engage with their community. District owned transportation would allow for increased opportunities to access the community and would decrease the district's reliance on Launched Beginnings in providing this federally mandated component of transition programming. Similar to the on-site work trials, EGPS transportation would allow students to access the community earlier and more consistently. Although insurance, logistics, and funding present genuine

challenges in implementing district-owned transportation, the advantages of possessing it are pervasive reasons to conquer these obstacles.

**Academic Instruction.** Incorporating an Applied Skills course of study will facilitate the provision of transition-related services within academic instruction. Based on the experiences of case managers supporting students accessing 12+ programming, the addition of an Applied Skills course of study would promote the legitimacy and implementation of transition-related skill building in school in response to the overly academic culture at EGHS. A complete overview of the objectives and student profiles of the Applied Skills Course of Study is drafted in Appendix 2 which aims to support administration, students, parents, and IEP teams in making decisions regarding student placement in grades 9-12. The proposed Applied Skills classes are a progressive four-year course of study for students who are likely to participate in 12+ programming. These courses would follow a comparable progression to general education where all academic graduation requirements are satisfied after successful completion of 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Academic class offerings include Applied Math I, II, III, IV; Applied Language Arts I, II, III, IV; Applied Science I, II, III; Applied Social Studies I, II, III. Similar to the Unified Courses, academic content will be taught using functional applications of the material, with an added emphasis on functional communication, vocational skills, social skills, self-care, citizenship skills, and household management. The main distinction between Applied Skills and Unified classes lies in the extent of content customization. While both types of classes offer personalized learning experiences, Applied Skills classes are designed to be more adaptable and tailored to the unique needs of each student with increased opportunities for hands-on functional skill building.

### ***Enhanced Programming, Grades 12+***

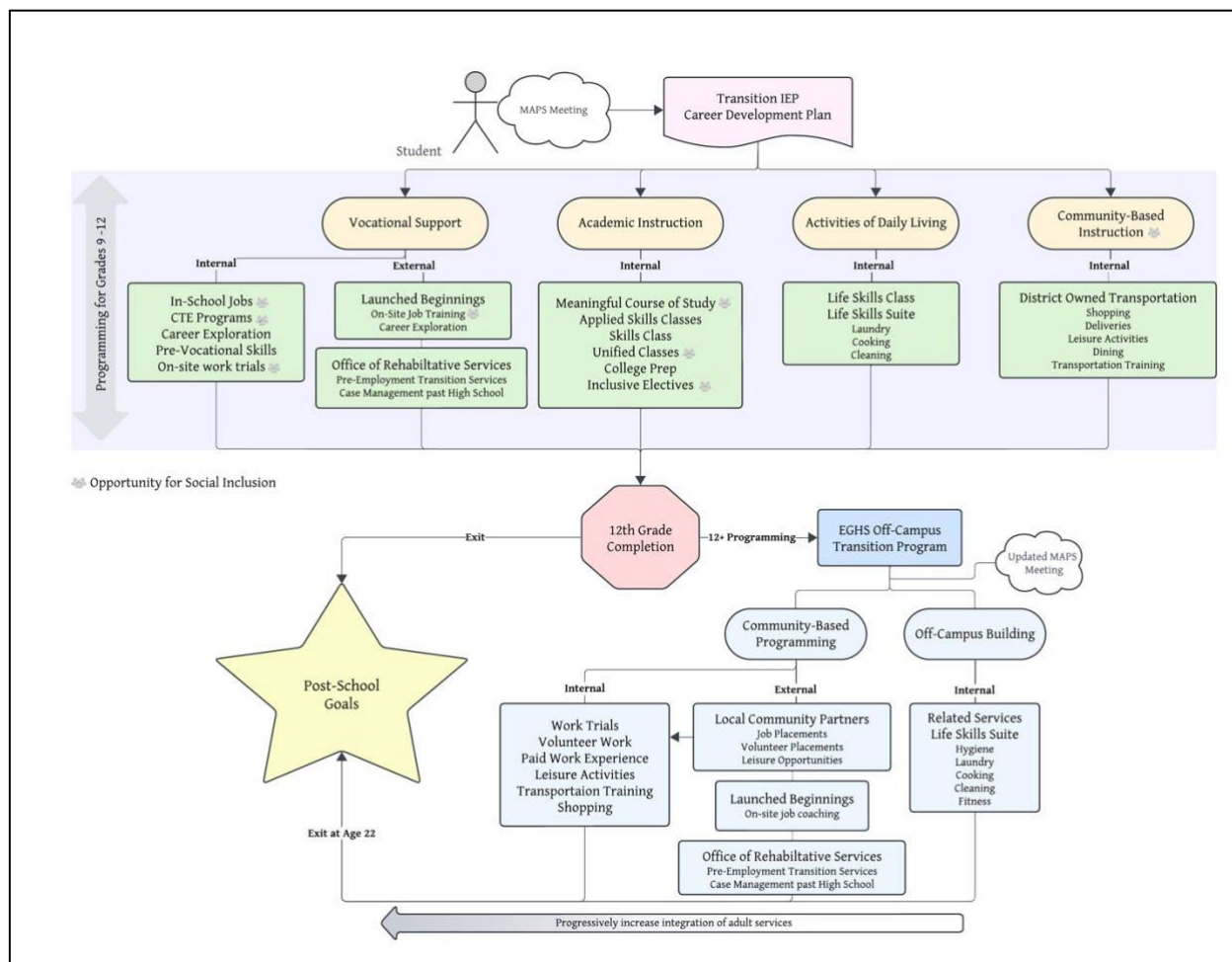
**Off-campus Transition Program.** The proposed off-campus transition program for grades 12+ serves to provide students that are close to exit with increased access to their community and adult services. All students entitled to receive specialized transition services may participate in the program as deemed appropriate by the student, parents, and IEP team. The program would operate under a faded support model where, as the student approaches graduation, the level of intervention provided by EGHS decreases and the level of support from adult services increases. The purpose of this is to support a more seamless transition to adulthood. Parents are extremely overwhelmed in navigating the initiation of adult services, so increased guidance and facilitation from EGHS could alleviate some of this burden. This adjustment is additionally critical, because *youth* with disabilities are entitled to receive services, however, *adults* with disabilities are eligible for services. This distinction makes it challenging for families to access post-school supports, because they are no longer guaranteed to occur.

The main goal of service delivery is to maximize students' involvement in their community, aiming to establish them as meaningful and regular contributors to community life. Central to this transition program is the creation of a sustainable and organic social support network for students. This principle was underscored by both parents and EGPS perspectives, highlighting the importance of community and mutual support during the transition process. Therefore, it is crucial for EGHS to prioritize efforts towards fostering an inclusive community, both within the school itself and in its external partnerships.

Supporting students in obtaining paid work experiences in high school is considered the best approach. Students who participated in a paid work experience during high school showed improved postschool employment, education, and independent living outcomes (Mazzotti et al.,

2021; Test et al., 2009). In further justification, this program would directly perpetuate the RI consent decree by providing individuals with disabilities integrated and inclusive work opportunities (The State of Rhode Island, 2024). Paid work experiences could also promote a smoother transition as a student could remain in their job following high school.

The purpose of the off-campus building is to alleviate teachers and students from the burden of the bell schedule and limited accessibility to the Life Skills Suite. Additionally, by hosting students outside the main high school, the Life Skills Suite will become more available to students in the younger grades who may not currently be utilizing the space. If this building were ideally situated in downtown East Greenwich, it would enhance student access to their community, as the main high school building is rather secluded in its location. Continually, the off-campus building would be utilized for related service delivery and would serve as a central hub for students who are primarily engaging with the community throughout the day. Preferably, the building would be a simulated apartment with a kitchen, laundry facilities, living room, and bedroom for increased practice of household management skills. Similar to the Life Skills class, an OT should play a prominent role in implementing this facet of programming by providing skilled insight and intervention of student occupational performance and contributing to recommendations for adult supports.



**Figure 3. Ideal Model of Transition Services.** This figure illustrates an ideal model of transition service implementation that is rooted in literature and data collected in this study.

### **Program Sustainability**

Employing a full-time transition coordinator is the cornerstone of this program’s sustainability. This person’s job would be to preside over all transition planning, implementation, and program development. Having a consistent person whose sole purpose is to understand the intricacies of transition services at EGHS gives all stakeholders a clear point of contact for support and assistance. The qualitative data revealed that while there are opportunities for growth in program implementation, the reality is that transition services are taking place at EGHS, but

they are fragmented, disjointed, and inconsistent. The transition coordinator has the potential to effectively address these inadequacies by functioning as a continuous element of efficient and organized services. Additionally, the transition coordinator would be able to record and track student outcome data to build an internal understanding of the efficacy and validity of transition services provided by EGPS. This will be vital in justifying the program's budget and will ensure that students are benefiting from the highest quality services available. Finally, the transition coordinator would be able to make transition services more manageable for case managers and related service providers through taking ownership of some of the clerical procedures related to transition.

Furthermore, it is recommended EGPS develop and adopt formal policies and procedures related to transition to ensure programming is consistent for students, families, and staff no matter their case manager or possible transition coordinator. Furthermore, these documents would serve as a compliance measure for transition related federal and state requirements.

### ***Limitations***

This study's most significant limitation was the limited student and parent participation. While both students and parents were directly contacted about recruiting for the study, few responded or initiated interest. This could be attributed to the students' busy school schedules or an apprehension to talking with someone they are unfamiliar with. This study was also unable to incorporate the perspectives of guidance counselors and additional administrators and additionally had a restricted number of focus groups. These limitations were attributed to the condensed capstone project timeline, EGHS scheduling constraints, and other logistical challenges. Future research should include a higher percentage of student and parent participants, and more guidance counselors and administrators for a more robust understanding

of lived experiences in the transition process. Additionally, the use of more focus groups may be beneficial in future research to inspire more in-depth responses from participants who share similar roles.

### ***Conclusion***

In conclusion, this study underscores the critical need for improving transition services at EGHS for students with disabilities. Student voices highlight a concerning lack of perceived relevance in their education and a pressing desire for more concrete support. Parents echo these sentiments, expressing overwhelming challenges in navigating resources and planning for their child's future. Additionally, EGPS personnel acknowledge the complexities of integrating transition planning amidst academic priorities.

To address these pressing concerns, recommendations center around prioritizing student-centered instruction, improving the accessibility of resources for families, enhancing interdisciplinary communication, and expanding in-school opportunities. Furthermore, proposals for an off-campus transition program, increased community-based instruction, and an Applied Skills course of study are strongly advocated for.

To ensure long-term effectiveness, the establishment of a transition coordinator role and formal policies and procedures are strongly encouraged. However, it's important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including limited participation among students, parents, and additional EGPS personnel as well as logistical constraints.

By heeding these recommendations, EGHS can take substantial strides toward fostering more inclusive and supportive transition services, thus empowering students with disabilities to become a true vision of an East Greenwich High School graduate, “One that is knowledgeable, connected, reflective, and competent” (East Greenwich Public Schools, 2019).

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## APPENDIX 1

### Question Guides

#### Parent Question Guides

1. Describe your child – what does a good day look like for them?
2. What transition services and supports do you have access to?
  - a. Which do you utilize?
3. What do you envision your child's life after high school to be?
  - a. Do you already have a plan? Supports set up?
4. In relation to your child's life after high school, describe the areas you find you have the most support in.
5. In relation to your child's life after high school, describe the areas you find you're lacking support in.
6. What do you think is important in helping your child successfully transition?
7. How can EGHS support your child's transition into adulthood?

#### EGPS Personnel and Out-of-District Personnel Question Guide

1. Describe the program/organization you work for.
2. Describe your role in, or connection to youth transition services.
3. Describe your service delivery (if applicable).
4. When do you find your/your organization's services are best supported?
5. When do you find your/ your organization's services to be inhibited?
6. Do you engage in interdisciplinary communication? If so, how often, by what means, and describe the quality of the communication.
7. How do you view local RI transition services as a whole – where are we strong, where are we weak?
8. Logistically, what do you think is important to include in a 4-year youth transition pathway?
9. What do you think is most important to include in a transition curriculum and why?

#### Students Question Guide

1. What do you see yourself doing after high school?
2. What kind of help do you think you'll need after high school?
3. What are you learning in school right now that will help you after you graduate?
4. What do you think would be helpful to learn in school to help you after your graduate?

## APPENDIX 2

### Common Student Profiles and their Corresponding Course of Study

Applied Skills Students	Unified Students	Resource Students
<p>Requires significant assistance with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academics</li> <li>• Pre-Vocational Skills</li> <li>• Functional Communication</li> <li>• Self-care and/or household management</li> <li>• Personal Safety</li> </ul> <p>Commonly Benefit From:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12+ Programming</li> <li>• ORS &amp; BDDH Referrals</li> <li>• Non Traditional Classroom Environment</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>9-12 Course of Study</u></p> <p>Participation in the Applied Skills Course of Study with access to inclusive electives to fulfill alternate assessment graduation requirements.</p>	<p>Requires support or assistance with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academics</li> <li>• Social Participation</li> <li>• Self-care and/or household management</li> <li>• Vocational Skills</li> </ul> <p>May Benefit from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12+ Programming</li> <li>• ORS &amp; BDDH Referrals</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>9-12 Course of Study</u></p> <p>Unified content classes and inclusive electives in traditional classroom environment to fulfill alternate assessment graduation requirements</p>	<p>Requires academic support within general education classrooms and may benefit from support in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Participation</li> <li>• Self-care and/or household management</li> <li>• Vocational Skills</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>9-12 Course of Study</u></p> <p>Enrolled in appropriate content courses and electives typically within the general education environment.</p>

#### In House Transition Program

All students entitled to receive specialized transition services may participate as deemed appropriate. Programming for grades 12+ centered in community based instruction. Opportunities for work study, community participation, and integration of life skills into a real-world context.

## APPENDIX 3

### Applied Skills Course of Study Objectives

- **Comprehensive Skill Development:** Instruction is based on common-core principles with an emphasis on functional academics, functional communication, vocational skills, social skills, self-care, citizenship skills, and household management.
- **Work-Based Learning Experiences:** Students will participate in pre-vocational and vocational skill building through in-school and community-based instruction.
- **Natural Environments:** Students will participate in regular community outings to provide opportunities to generalize their skills and practice community safety (in real-world settings).
- **Meaningful Inclusion:** Students will have continuous active engagement in the broader school community through meaningful and inclusive academic and social opportunities.
- **Student-Centered Approach:** The program utilizes person-centered planning processes to customize student post-school goals and promote leadership, self-advocacy, and self-determination.
- **Coordination and Collaboration:** Case managers will facilitate referrals to the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH), adult service agencies, higher education institutions, training programs, and parent advocacy organizations serving young adults with disabilities to support a seamless transition to adulthood.

## APPENDIX 4

### Learning Objectives

Learning objectives (LTGs)	Short-term objectives	Learning activities	Outcome measures	Timeline for completion
<p>I will gather information on existing Rhode Island youth transition programs to inform the development of the youth transition career and technical education (CTE) program at East Greenwich High School (EGHS).</p>	<p>1. I will identify at least 3 youth transition programing offered in Providence/East Greenwich, RI.</p> <p>2. I will gather information on implementation and logistics from each program and identify at least five strengths and weaknesses per program.</p> <p>3. Summarize the program visits to develop recommendations for the new program at EGHS.</p>	<p>A. Conduct an online search and communicate with local colleagues.</p> <p>B. Make contact with the program director and (if applicable) the occupational therapist via site visit, phone, and/or email.</p> <p>C. Develop a summary of each program's outcomes, strengths, and weaknesses.</p>	<p>i. Generate a list of local youth transition programs to include at least 3 existing programs.</p> <p>ii. Schedule of appointments with the program directors and occupational therapists.</p> <p>iii. Share and discuss program summaries with my site mentor.</p>	<p>1/12/2024: STG 1 due 1/19/2024: STG 2 due 1/26/2024: STG 3 due</p>
<p>I will justify the need for the youth transition CTE program for students with IEPs at EGHS.</p>	<p>1. Interview at least 5 students with IEPs, 5 parents/guardians, and 5 educators at EGHS to understand the need for transition services.</p> <p>2. Outline gaps in East Greenwich youth transition and career education programming and its effects on transition outcomes of young</p>	<p>A. Identify the transition needs from the students and families.</p> <p>B. Identify how Rhode Island young adults with disabilities are impacted by youth transition programming.</p> <p>C. Discuss potential solutions with site mentor and create a summary of ideas.</p>	<p>i. Host interviews and focus groups with students, parents/guardians, and educators.</p> <p>ii. Develop a written summary of the interviews/focus groups and literature review to describe the need for transition programming at EGHS.</p> <p>iii. Create an outline of discussed potential solutions.</p>	<p>2/28/2024: STG 1 due 2/16/2024: STG 2 due 2/28/2024: STG 3 due</p>

	adults with disabilities.  3. Construct ways in which the youth transition CTE program at EGHS can address the identified need(s).			
I will provide recommendations for the implementation of a youth transition program at EGHS.	1. Identify key departments that will be part of program implementation. 2. Gather information on relevant departments within EGHS. 3. Host meetings with each department to define available resources and roles. 4. Host a meeting with all departments to discuss lines of interdisciplinary collaboration and communication. 5. I will consolidate all internal and external information gathered to generate formal recommendations.	A. Meet with Dr. Page to identify departments and contact people for each.  B. Outline the scope of practice for each department and how it relates to the program.  C. Summarize each department's expected contributions and outline any needs.  D. Present an outline or figure that demonstrates methods for interdisciplinary communication and collaboration.  E. Present recommendations to my site mentor and the school committee of EGHS.	i. List of departments and contact information.  ii. Provide a written summary of each department's roles, responsibilities, and requirements.  iii. Create a list of needs per department and work with my site mentor to identify solutions.  iv. Discuss interdisciplinary findings and recommendations with my site mentor.  v. Develop a written report of all findings and recommendations.	3/1/2024: STG 1 due 3/15/2024: STG 2 Due 3/29/2024: STG 3 Due 4/12/2024: STG 4 Due 4/12/2024: STG 5 Due

## APPENDIX 5

### Supervision Plan

Item	Deliverable	Support from Dr. Page	Support from Dr. Chen	Timeline
Introductory meeting with Dr. Page, Site mentor	Agenda & Meeting minutes	Yes		January
Meeting with district admin to understand their hope for the program and gauge feasibility	Agenda & Meeting minutes	Yes		January
<b><u>Existing RI programs research</u></b>				
Identify 3 other RI youth transition programs	List of programs and contact information			January
Contact program 1	Appointment scheduled for site visit/interview			January
Contact program 2	Appointment scheduled for site visit/interview			January
Contact program 3	Appointment scheduled for site visit/interview			January
Site visit/interview with program 1	Written summary of visit/interview			January
Site visit/interview with program 2	Written summary of visit/interview			January
Site visit/interview with program 3	Written summary of visit/interview			January
Discussion with Dr. Page on information gained from each program	Agenda & Meeting minutes	Yes		January
<b><u>Developing Program Goals and Direction</u></b>				
Attend SEAC meeting to advertise project		Yes		January
Interview at least 5 students with IEPs/504	Notes			February
Host at least 1 student focus group	Notes			February
Interview at least 5 parents/guardians	Notes			February
Host at least 1 parent/guardian focus group	Notes			February
Interview at least 5 special educators AND/OR host at least 1 educator focus group (dependent on educator schedule)	Notes			February
Synthesize main points of all interviews/focus groups			Yes	February
<b><u>Interdisciplinary Collaboration for program development</u></b>				
Midpoint meeting with Dr. Chen	Agenda & Meeting minutes	Yes		March
Midpoint meeting with Dr. Page	Agenda & Meeting minutes		Yes	March
Meeting with special education department director to discuss their role in implementation	Agenda & Meeting minutes			March
Meeting with contract transition team to discuss possible role in implementation	Agenda & Meeting minutes			March
AS NEEDED: meetings with other departments to discuss program implementation	Agenda & Meeting minutes			March
Meeting with all departments and relevant personnel to discuss program implementation logistics	Agenda & Meeting minutes			March
Consolidate all information from departmental/logistics meetings to generate a list of roles and responsibilities per dept.	Written list of roles and responsibilities			March
Meet with Dr. Page about identified internal barriers to program implementation and discuss solutions	Agenda & Meeting minutes	Yes		March
Presentation and discussion on interdisciplinary communication (include information from literature review) to all departments and relevant personnel	Powerpoint presentation, agenda, meeting minutes			March
Create interdisciplinary communication policy and procedure	Written summary	Yes	Yes	March
<b><u>Final Write Ups and Presentations</u></b>				
Meet with Dr. Page to discuss all findings and plan for final presentation	Agenda & Meeting minutes	Yes		April
Meeting with Dr. Chen to discuss final GSU deliverable	Agenda & Meeting minutes		Yes	April
Combine all written summaries into final implementation guide	Report			April
Formal written report for GSU	Report		Yes	April
Presentation of findings to EGHS internal school committee	Powerpoint presentation		Yes	April