Zack Cartmel

SPED 760

M8: Assignment on Transition

 I currently work in a self-contained classroom for students with autism eligibility at a middle school. I have also spent two years working in ABA clinics prior to my experience in the public-school system. The biggest challenge when it comes to transitions in my setting is planning with parents on realistic long-term goals for students. With some parents this means that they are not worried about the day their student ages out of school and do not have any ideas what their day will look like once school is over. For some parents it means that they have unrealistic expectations of what their student is capable of and what skills they can learn. For others it means that we have to work on a student’s independent skills because they have become dependent on their parents to do things for them when they are capable of doing so much more on their own.

 I work with students who are middle school aged (11-14 years old). Currently, in our school district, once a student turns 13 the transition planning process begins so that by their IEP meeting at age 14 we have a transition plan in place that can be continually updated as they continue through school. This process begins with a person-centered planning meeting with the parents and student as well as administration employees who specifically specialize in creating transition plans, usually a lead diagnostician and a district parent advocate. This is where we discuss plans for the future and begin to ensure IEP goals meet the needs for the transition goals. Our district is putting a bigger emphasis on transition this year and trying to express its importance even at the elementary school level.

 I think the main advantage of the current supports is that there is open communication between teacher, parents, and district staff in order to help create a realistic and successful plan. It is also an advantage that the district requirement sets an earlier age to begin transition planning than is required by law, so that gives us more time to prepare the student for their future. I also think discussing transition even in elementary school is advantageous for future planning. I think the main issue with the current system is that programs do not necessarily support the plans created. From what I have seen, the programs for students requiring a lot of support do not prioritize skills needed for transition, but just provide these students a place to be during the day. I think this is the main area requiring improvement.

 I think a strategy that our district should implement is gap analysis between future goals and current skills (Schall & Wehman, 2016). I think that would help with developing strong IEP goals that bridge the gap between where students are and where they need to be. This would also help teachers implement instruction in order to achieve these goals and not merely supervise older students. I think the primary barrier to this is getting the time and resources to train teachers to understand transition better and to help them be able to make this analysis. This is a small barrier that I think can be easily overcome by emphasizing the importance of transition planning so that we, as a district, are planning for our students’ futures well. I think right now we may focus too much on academic achievement and focus on younger students when we have older students who are not going to find their lives improved by doing well academically. They need independent skills to be able to support themselves to the best of their ability. I think if our district realized that it would be easily to start training teachers to plan transitions better.

 I think this assignment was particularly helpful as I have three students this year who we are going to start having transition planning meetings for. I think this assignment helped me to consider what I think we do well and what we might need to make sure we work harder at as we plan these meetings for these students and work towards their goals. This assignment definitely allowed me to reflect on this process and how I can best serve my students this year. I do not think this assignment needs improvement.

References

Schall, C. M., & Wehman, P. (2016). Transition programming for youth and young adults with

ASD: Planning for independence, college, and career readiness. In Simpson, R. L., & Smith Myles, B. (Eds.), *Educating children and youth with autism: Strategies for effective practice* (3rd ed., pp. 175-192). Austin, TX: pro-ed.