

Eric Neal: Hello and welcome to this episode of the State Support Team 11 podcast. I'm Eric Neil and today we're here with Steve Moran. Good morning, Steve. How are you?

Steve Moran: Good. Good morning Eric. How's it going?

Eric Neal: I'm all right. Tell us a little bit about what you do here at the State Support Team.

Steve Moran: Well, here at the State Support Team, I'm a consultant. This is my first year, just having started in August. I'm excited to be here. It's my 11th year in education. I did seven as a special education teacher, three as a program specialist with the Ohio Department of Education and now I'm here with the State Support Team.

Eric Neal: Yeah, we're happy to have you. Today we're going to be talking about transition planning for students with disabilities. What is transition planning?

Steve Moran: Well, in short, transition planning is really a process mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 for all students 14 years and older in Ohio who have an Individualized Education Plan or commonly known as an IEP. The purpose is to facilitate the student's growth to post-graduation through services and activities in three domains. Those three domains are post-secondary training and education, competitive integrated employment, and independent living if agreed upon by the IEP team to be appropriate for that student.

Eric Neal: All right, so it sounds like this applies to students with disabilities, their families, intervention specialists, and special education coordinators. Tell me a little bit specifically about how this applies to students and families.

Steve Moran: Well Ohio's operating standards, which is basically the law that Ohio has to follow, has put forth to have school districts follow to remain in compliance and receive funding through special education, requires that any student who is 14 or will be 14 years old during the time of their IEP must be involved in transition planning. As a parent there's also a requirement to allow them the opportunity to be an active member of the team. Beyond the requirements, however, the input of the parent and student is crucial to the development of the transition plan because nobody knows a student better than themselves and their parents.

Eric Neal: Yeah, so that's interesting. It seems like this is a federal mandated law that's happening here. Do you feel like a lot of parents and students really know about this and know about their rights or is this something we could maybe do a better job of communicating out to everybody?

Steve Moran: As times change people do and the focus of what we're doing with transition planning has also changed. There's been a lot of great work at the state department level as well as down into the schools where they're putting more

emphasis on really creating meaningful opportunities for students to be successful after graduation from high school. There's also a new requirement about progress monitoring those goals to ensure that sporadically throughout the year the teachers and staff that are providing those services do have something to answer to and show that they are making progress with that student.

Eric Neal: Okay. So it sounds like their first point of contact really, if you're a family, is to go to your school and just ask them about how they do this and what their plan is.

Steve Moran: Right.

Eric Neal: All right. What do intervention specialists specifically need to know about transition planning?

Steve Moran: Well the transition plan itself is a section of the IEP. It's broken down into basically five major parts. The measurable post secondary goal in all three domains, once again, that's the post-secondary training and education, competitive integrated employment, and independent living, if the team agrees. The second section is the age appropriate transition assessment, commonly known as the AATA. This section here is going to include the preferences, interests, needs, and strengths of that student based on ... it could be a formal assessment, informal assessment as long as it pertains to that area that one of those three domains that they're assessing in this section. The more specific that intervention specialist can get, the better the plan and the design for the student's then going to be.

Eric Neal: Yeah, so it sounds like the communication between the intervention specialists and the students, really, and families is critical if you're going to find ... not just be compliant and just be able to check off that we're doing all of this, but really find them meaningful employment or activities after graduation. I think that communication is probably the biggest thing.

Steve Moran: Right, yeah. Through that communication, sometimes I think even as adults individually, we don't know what we're not good at and having that honest opinion from somebody who's invested in us, whether it's a parent, significant other, whatever that may be, just to kind of bring those needs to the forefront. So that way we there's something we can study, work on, and help improve to make us more in this case employable or successful at the next level.

Eric Neal: Right. I mean this isn't even really specific just to students with disabilities. I mean, I think back to myself when I was 14 or 15 years old and you really don't have any idea what you want to do longterm and having adults that are trained, that are specifically put there to help you kind of through that thought process and everything that couldn't be anything but helpful.

Steve Moran: Yeah. And just to get to the last three components of that transition planning, the course of study, this is either going to be Ohio's learning standards and Ohio learning standards extended, which are going to be more applicable for our more involved students that are going to need a little bit more of a scaffolded approach towards this learning standards. The transition service or activity, this is going to be the biggest component and one of the biggest components in my opinion. This is going to be what the district or the adults are doing for that student, not the student behavior. This is the service that we as adults are providing these students. You must have at least one as required by the law. However, the more focused and direct you can get with that, I think the better.

Steve Moran: And then the last, the fifth component, is evidence indicating the service has been completed. This is kind of the shift that the state has taken as far as the accountability on the schools and they must be able to document for the transition progress reports. Intervention specialist should be gathering inputs from the parent and guardian like you said, the input there and the involvement of the parent. In the future planning section, which is in section one of the IEP, which can also be included in the age appropriate transition section in this area.

Eric Neal: All right. Is there anything specific that special education coordinators or other district administrators need to know about transition planning and the law?

Steve Moran: Like anything else in special education there is the compliance component outlined in the Indicator 13 Checklist, which is available via the search tool on the Ohio Department of Education's website. There's eight questions and depending on if the team determines the independent living goal is necessary for that student at that time, there is either 16 or 24 domains that those questions then apply to. The independent living isn't necessarily appropriate for all students, but it's definitely something that the team needs to take into consideration.

Steve Moran: All of those components within the eight questions must be considered a yes on the compliance checklist for the compliant piece to be applied to the Indicator 13. Indicator 13 is a sub component of the special education profiles also given annually to districts, which measures that all students 14 and older have a transition plan in place. This is important in a sense that it is putting an accountability on the district to ensure that transition plans are in place for students. And it is important for the districts to understand that while federal law mandates 16, Ohio has put in place for 14, so it should be for all students that are 14 or will be 14 during the life of the IEP. And just the federal and state requirements to report on transition progress with the evidence, either in the OP-6, which is an optional form number six, or locally created document that includes all required components that the department of education puts forth.

Eric Neal: Okay. So can you tell us anything about what we do here to support this work at the State Support Team?

Steve Moran: Well here at the State Support Team, like I said, I'm kind of learning the ropes. I'm learning from the great people I work with. We support the work through one-on-one district consultation. This might be with a special education director, a transition specialist coordinator, however the districts are structured. Professional development opportunities and array, those are available throughout the year. Transition networking groups as well as technical assistance to groups of people in districts that might be working with transition age students. We also attend various area transition fairs and support the work and requirements of the department Office for Exceptional Children through monitoring and supporting the districts and the Office for Exceptional Children through our onsite reviews. We're also available by phone and email if people have questions or need further assistance.

Eric Neal: All right, that's great. So that wraps up this episode of the State Support Team 11 podcast and I want to thank Steve Moran for joining us today. If you have any questions for Steve, you can reach him at steven.moran@escoco.org. If you'd like to reach me. I'm at Eric Neil, and that's also at escoco.org. For more information on transition or the other supports we offer, you can also check us out at our website. That's SST11.org or call us at (614) 445-3750. Thanks again for listening and we'll talk to you later.

Steve Moran: Thanks, Eric.

Eric Neal: Thanks.