

In response to a history of poor postschool outcomes, federal legislation evolved that required schools to rethink the curriculum they offer and focus more specifically on preparing students for adulthood. In 1990, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandated that all students with disabilities receive an education that prepared them for adult life (i.e., education/training, employment, independent living). This mandate was reaffirmed in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), which requires students be prepared for college, careers, and adult life. In addition, both the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) and ESSA (2015) require teachers to prepare students for adult life using instruction that is supported by research. For students with disabilities, predictors of postschool success (Mazzotti et al., 2016, 2021; Test et al., 2009) address these legislative mandates to prepare students for adult life, while having a substantive research base to support their use. Given the importance of preparing students for life after high school this research brief will focus on predictors of *postschool success*.

### What are Predictors of Postschool Success?

Education/training, employment, and independent living are three outcomes that federal legislation mandates for students with disabilities (IDEA, 2004). Predictors of these three postschool outcomes are skills or experiences correlated with success after high school. When students with disabilities experience a predictor, they are more likely to experience success in the outcome areas after high school. Currently, there are 23 predictors that align with the three outcome areas. Some predictors (e.g., career awareness, career technical education) correlate to multiple outcome areas.

There are three levels of evidence to consider when evaluating the efficacy of a specific predictor of postschool success. An evidence-based predictor is considered to have the highest level of efficacy supported by high-quality research. A research-based predictor has less research to support its use, but still has research to support its effectiveness. A promising predictor has the least amount of high-quality research support regarding the predictor's effectiveness. The list of predictors and levels of evidence will expand and change over time as research continues to be conducted.

### Research on Predictors of Postschool Success

Researchers have conducted an analysis of existing research to identify predictors of post-school success for students with disabilities. The findings of these analyses are published in three comprehensive literature reviews. Each review focuses exclusively on studies that demonstrate a correlation between a skill or experience and one or more post-school outcome areas. Test et al. (2009) conducted an initial review of the research literature and identified 16 in-school predictors of post-school success. Mazzotti et al. (2016) performed a secondary analysis of high-quality research from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2). They identified four new predictors and found additional research evidence to support the pre-existing predictors identified by Test et al. Most recently, Mazzotti et al. (2021) identified three new predictors and found additional research evidence to support the existing predictors. In total, 23 in-school predictors of postschool success have been identified. Table 1 provides a timeline of when predictors were identified and highlights how the number of predictors has grown.

**Table 1***Timeline for Predictor Identification*

Study	Predictors Identified
Test et al. (2009)	Career awareness, community experiences, exit exam requirements/ high school diploma status, inclusion in general education, interagency collaboration, occupational courses, paid employment/work experience, parental involvement, program of study, self-advocacy/self-determination, self-care/independent living skills, social skills, student support, transition program, vocational education, work study
Mazzotti et al. (2016)	Parent expectations, goal setting, youth autonomy/ decision making, travel skills
Mazzotti et al. (2021)	Psychological empowerment, self-realization, technology skills

## Guidelines for Practice

The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) has developed a free resource to help educators assess their use of the predictors (see [transitionta.org/pisa-self-assessment](https://transitionta.org/pisa-self-assessment)). The PISA provides operational definitions of each predictor and helps teams examine the alignment of their transition programs and/or instruction with specific predictors. Findings from the assessment may be helpful in determining predictors that need further development in a student's program or the school's transition program.

When possible, consider using evidence-based practices that align with predictors of postschool success to prepare students with disabilities for adult life. Collect ongoing data to document instruction delivered to students with the predictors

and make data-based decisions about the instruction and experiences students receive.

## Additional Resources

**Predictor Implementation School/ District Self-Assessment (PISA)**  
[transitionta.org/pisa-self-assessment/](https://transitionta.org/pisa-self-assessment/)

**Mazzotti et al. (2021) Secondary Transition Predictors of Postschool Success: An Update to the Research Base**  
*(Note. This article is free to download.)*  
[journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2165143420959793](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2165143420959793)

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