

Using Employment Predictors to Build Quality Transition Plans

As described in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), transition services are a coordinated set of activities that facilitate a student's movement from school to postschool activities. The types of services a student receives depend on the student's needs, strengths, preferences, and interests. Although the recipe for postschool success looks different for each student, there are several predictors that positively correlate with postschool success in the areas of education, employment, and independent living. These predictors can be used to build the transition plan within the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). This brief will describe the predictors of postschool success and provide examples of how to apply employment predictors within the IEP.

What are the Predictors of Postschool Success?

Predictors of postschool success are the activities, skills, or experiences that are positively correlated with successful postschool outcomes (Mazzotti et al., 2021). Currently there are 23 predictors of postschool success. These predictors align with positive outcomes in the areas of employment, postsecondary education, and independent living. Within the current list of identified predictors (see Mazzotti et al., 2021), there are three levels of evidence. An evidence-based predictor has the highest level of research support. A research-based predictor has less research support but sufficient positive correlations across studies to support its effectiveness. Finally, a promising predictor has the least amount of research support, but still demonstrates a positive correlation between the predictor and the intended outcome.

What the Research Says

Of the 23 predictors of postschool success identified by Mazzotti et al. (2021), 21 are correlated with employment (see Table 1). The amount of evidence to support each predictor varies, with most predictors identified as promising or research-based. The only evidence-based predictor for postschool employment is Career Technical Education (CTE). Mazzotti et al. (2021) identified six studies that resulted in CTE being labeled an EBP. All of these studies noted that job readiness training and having students with disabilities targeted for inclusion in CTE contributes to the effectiveness of CTE (Mazzotti et al., 2021).

The predictors study conducted by Mazzotti et al. (2021) builds on the work of Test et al. (2009) and Mazzotti et al. (2016). In the 2021 update to the predictors, Mazzotti et al. not only found additional research to support many of the previously existing predictors, but they also moved the employment predictors of student support, parent expectations, program of study, and youth autonomy/decision making from promising predictors to research-based predictors based on additional research conducted since the 2016 review. Regardless of whether a predictor is currently identified as having research-based, evidence-based, or promising evidence, school teams are encouraged to consider all identified predictors in the design and evaluation of their transition programs.

Guidelines for Practice

Knowledge and understanding of the predictors of postschool success is the first step in creating effective transition programming for students with disabilities. Being aware of what activities, opportunities, and skills are more likely to improve postschool outcomes provides IEP teams with the tools needed to determine appropriate transition services and goals.

Table 1*Considerations for Aligning Employment Predictors within the IEP Secondary Transition Plan*

Employment Predictor	Current level of evidence	Considerations for alignment within IEP secondary transition plan				
		Age-Appropriate Assessments	Postsecondary Outcomes	Course of Study	Transition Services	Annual Transition Goals
Career Awareness	PP	X	X	X	X	X
Career Technical Education	EBP	X		X	X	X
Community Experiences	PP	X	X		X	X
Exit Exam Requirements/High School Diploma Status	PP			X	X	X
Inclusion in General Education	RBP			X	X	X
Interagency Collaboration	PP	X	X		X	X
Occupational Courses	PP	X		X	X	X
Paid Employment/Work Experience	RBP	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Expectations	RBP	X			X	
Parental Involvement	PP	X			X	
Program of Study	RBP	X	X	X	X	X
Psychological Empowerment	PP	X	X	X	X	X
Self-Care/Independent Living	PP	X	X	X	X	X
Self-Determination/Self-Advocacy	RBP	X	X		X	X
Self-Realization	PP	X	X		X	X
Social Skills	PP	X	X		X	X
Student Support	RBP	X		X	X	
Technology Skills	PP	X		X	X	X
Transition Program	PP			X	X	X
Work Study	RBP	X		X	X	X
Youth Autonomy/Decision-Making	RBP	X	X		X	X

Note. Table 1 is based on Mazotti et al. (2021). This is not a comprehensive list of the predictors of postschool success. The table only includes evidence for employment predictors. See www.isbe.net/Pages/SpED-IEP-Forms.aspx for more information about the sections of the Illinois School Board of Education (ISBE) Secondary Transition form. PP = promising; RBP = research-based; EBP = evidence-based.

IEP teams in Illinois may find it helpful to refer to Table 1 to identify where employment predictors for postschool success can be embedded within the IEP. The table provides suggestions for appropriate matches between the predictors and specific sections of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Secondary Transition form (see www.isbe.net/Pages/SpED-IEP-Forms.aspx). The table can be used in two ways.

1. Option 1. If the IEP team determines that one or a combination of the predictors for postschool success would be an appropriate match for the student's postschool employment goals, they can identify the sections of the secondary transition section of the IEP with an X, indicating that the particular section could include activities related to the predictor(s).
2. Option 2. Another way the table can be used is if an IEP team is looking to develop a particular section of the secondary transition plan within the IEP and is looking for predictors that could be included in that particular section by finding the predictors with X's in the column for the section.

The table is a simplified way of looking at the potential crossover of the employment predictors for postschool success and secondary transition plan sections of the IEP. Teams using the table to develop transition plans will need to seek further definition of both the predictors and IEP sections to ensure they are appropriate and aligned for the individualized needs of each student. Additionally, the Transition Services section of the secondary transition plan includes seven sub sections that should be looked at individually to determine appropriate alignment of the predictor. Within the subsections of Transition Services, there could be meaningful alignment between a predictor and one or multiple services, so it is important to look at each of them individually to determine if inclusion of the predictor is appropriate.

Additional Resources

Secondary Transition Predictors of Postschool Success: An Update to the Research Base

doi.org/10.1177/2165143420959793

Free download, reference for definitions of predictors

ICTW Research Brief on Predictors of Postschool Success

ictw.illinois.edu/resources/research-briefs/other-topics/brief-predictors-of-postschool-success

Provides an overview of the research related to the predictors

References

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004, P. L. No. 108-446, 118 Stats. 2647. (2004).
- Mazzotti, V. L., Rowe, D. A., Kwiatek, S., Voggt, A., Chang, W., Fowler, C., Poppen, M., Sinclair, J., & Test, D. W. (2021). Secondary transition predictors of postschool success: An update to the research base. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 44(1), 47-64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143420959793X>
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