

Transition planning for youth with disabilities is a critical aspect of their journey toward post-secondary employment success and independence. However, for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) youth and their families, navigating this process can be particularly challenging due to various cultural and systemic factors. This research brief examines key findings and insights from the literature that explore the intersection of transition planning and cultural responsiveness. The studies shed light on the importance of incorporating culturally responsive practices into transition planning efforts to better support CLD youth with disabilities and their families.

### What Does it Mean to be Culturally Responsive?

Culturally responsive practices involve approaches and strategies that recognize and respect the values, beliefs, and experiences of individuals and families from diverse cultural backgrounds. These practices aim to create inclusive and supportive environments that honor the diversity of students and their families. Culturally responsive practices in transition planning acknowledge the importance of considering cultural factors in assessment, decision-making, and supports provided. By incorporating these practices, educators can promote collaboration and partnership with students, families, and communities to ensure that transition plans are relevant, meaningful, and effective (Achola & Greene, 2016; Barrio, 2022; Brown-Ruiz & Scott, 2021; Gothberg et al., 2019; Suk et al., 2022).

### What the Research Says

Addressing the needs of CLD youth and their families during transition planning begins with understanding the barriers they face. One major barrier is the lack of cultural competence among

educators and service providers (Gothberg et al., 2019). Many professionals do not feel they have the knowledge, skills, or awareness needed to effectively engage with CLD youth and their families. Other notable barriers include limited access to translators trained in special education practices, few opportunities for families to network with each other, lack of specialized training for families, and limited use of person-centered planning in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings (Gothberg et al., 2019).

Several frameworks exist that provide guidance on culturally responsive approaches to transition planning. Brown-Ruiz and Scott (2021) describe guiding questions for educators to consider throughout the transition planning and pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS) process. Their framework emphasizes critical consciousness in the context of transition planning. Critical consciousness involves fostering a deeper understanding of how cultural and societal factors influence opportunities and outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Combining the need for collaboration and critical consciousness, the framework guides IEP teams to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their transition planning process and service delivery to provide better outcomes for CLD students (Brown-Ruiz & Scott, 2021). Alchoa and Green (2016) offer a complementary approach. Their approach emphasizes the importance of involving the individual and their family in the entire transition planning process, recognizing each family's unique perspectives, preferences, and aspirations. Additionally, they believe a collaborative approach to transition planning is essential. In a collaborative approach, educators and service providers empower families to work together to develop transition plans that align with the cultural values and goals of the student and their family.

## Guidelines for Practice

Supporting students from culturally diverse backgrounds requires specific considerations when building individualized and effective post-secondary transition plans. Transition professionals should consider the following:

- **Acknowledge cultural differences** – When preparing students and their families for life after graduation, it is important to understand that cultural differences exist and will have an impact on the students' post-secondary plans (Achola & Green, 2016).
- **Seek cultural competence training** – Educators benefit from ongoing training in culturally responsive practices. Look for training opportunities that delve into a range of topics such as cultural values, beliefs, practices, communication, and collaboration strategies (Gothberg et al., 2019).
- **Utilize culturally relevant assessments** – When conducting ongoing transition assessment, use tools that are sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of students and their families. Consider how cultural factors may influence students' strengths, needs, and goals, and ensure that assessments are appropriate and relevant (Suk et al., 2022).
- **Hire and train nonfamily member interpreters** – Training for interpreters should include the basics of special education, transition law, and familiarity with the individual students' culture (Gothberg et al., 2019).
- **Adopt a person-family centered approach** – Actively involve students and their families in the decision-making process by respecting and valuing the unique perspectives, preferences, and aspirations of students and their families within their cultural contexts (Achola & Green, 2016).
- **Allow time to build relationships** – It may take time for CLD families to build rapport with school professionals and develop relationships that are equal and not hierarchical. By fostering trust, transition personnel can empower families to take an active role in shaping the

development of their child's transition plan to align with their cultural values and goals (Achola & Green, 2016).

## Additional Resources

### Culturally Responsive Teaching

<https://cedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/culturally-responsive.pdf>

*This resource defines evidence-based culturally responsive teaching practices, approaches, and considerations.*

### Culturally Responsive Transition Planning (CRTP) Guide

<https://osepartnership.org/pd/T229-Culturally-Responsive-Transition-Planning-Guide-508.pdf>

*Guidelines for integrating and applying culturally responsive concepts into transition planning are described.*

## References

- Achola, E. O., & Greene, G. (2015). Person-family centered transition planning: Improving post-school outcomes to culturally diverse youth and families. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 45(2), 173–183. <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-160821>
- Barrio, B. L. (2022). Culturally responsive individualized education programs: Building transition bridges between families and schools. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 58(2), 92–99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10534512211051071>
- Brown Ruiz, A., & Scott, L. A. (2021). Guiding questions for a culturally responsive framework during preemployment transition services. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 53(5), 369–375. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004005992098231210.1177/0040059920982312>
- Gothberg, J. E., Greene, G., & Kohler, P. D. (2019). District implementation of research-based practices for transition planning with culturally and linguistically diverse youth with disabilities and their families. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 42(2), 77–86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/216514341876279410.1177/2165143418762794>
- Suk, A. L., Sinclair, T. E., Osmani, K. J., & Williams-Diehm, K. (2020). Transition planning: Keeping cultural competence in mind. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 43(2), 122–127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/216514341989030810.1177/2165143419890308>

This research brief was developed by the Illinois Center for Transition and Work at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign through a contract with the Illinois State Board of Education. Information presented may not reflect the position or policy of the Illinois State Board of Education.

