

# Post-Secondary Transition Planning: A Therapeutic Day School Perspective

New Connections  
Academy



x x April 2025  
x x ITCW Symposium

# Welcome To Presentation

This session explores the unique approach of therapeutic day schools in collaborating with professionals for post-secondary transition planning. Through a multidisciplinary perspective, we will examine how transition staff at New Connections Academy work together with therapists, related service providers, educators, and community partners to develop comprehensive transition services. Attendees will gain insights into integrating therapeutic interventions into transition planning and fostering holistic support for students with diverse needs. This session also features real-world examples that illustrate the success of integrated transition planning. Meet our panel of experts all of whom play pivotal roles in these collaborative efforts. By sharing tangible examples, we will highlight the practical applications of collaborative strategies and the positive outcomes for students.





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# Introduction

School, Roles, & Collaboration

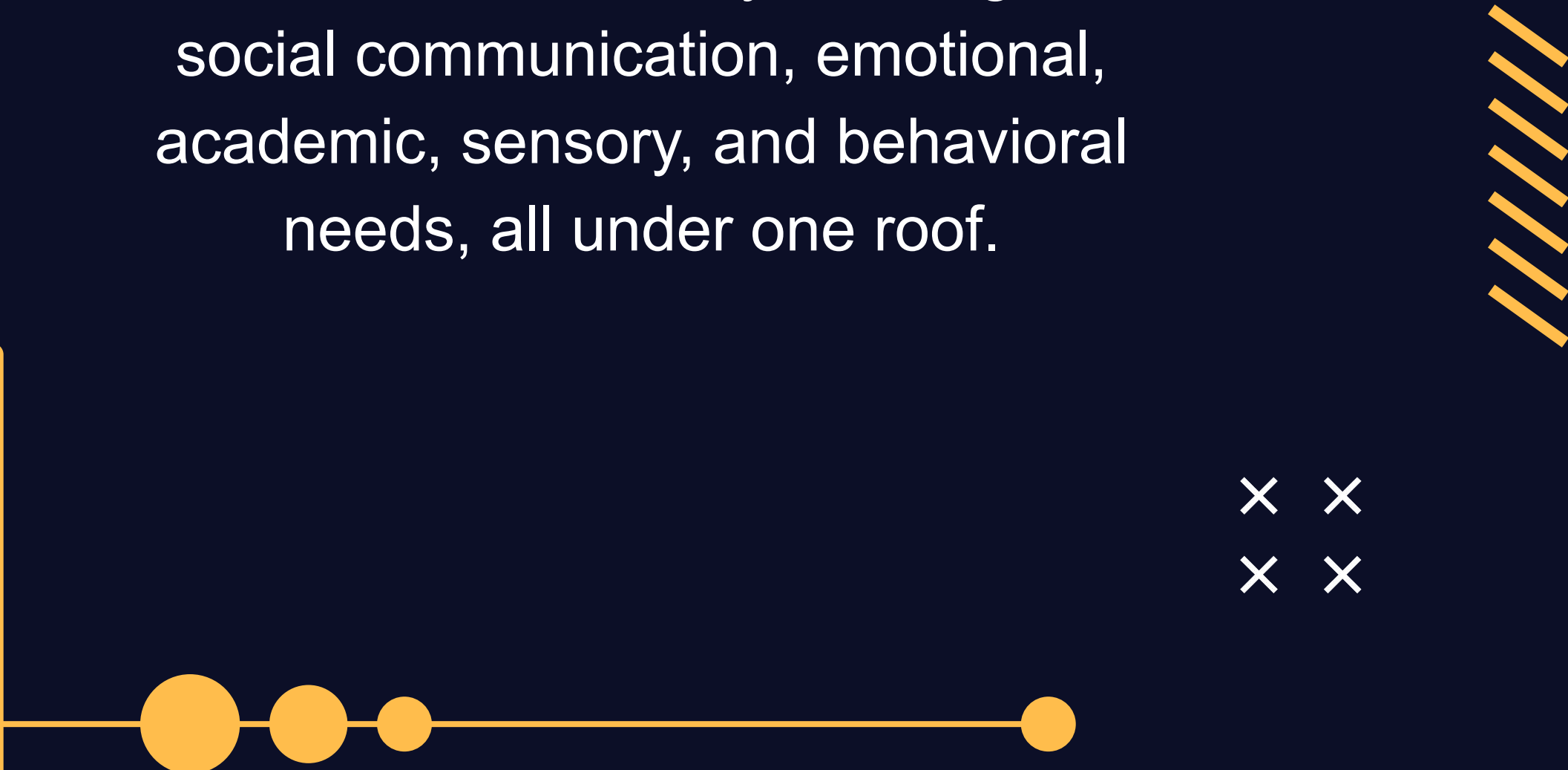


# New Connections Academy



NCA's Unique Programming caters to students on the autism spectrum or those with similar needs. Our specialized lens allows us to provide services to students by meeting their social communication, emotional, academic, sensory, and behavioral needs, all under one roof.

NCA Brochure



# Who is on Team Transition?

## Everyone

In our school, **everyone** is on the transition team. The unified approach ensures that every interaction and support system is geared toward empowering students to become their most successful independent selves as they transition to adulthood.

# Rachel Merke



- Transition Coordinator
- Post-Secondary Transition Planning For Organization
- Transition Services and Activities School Wide
- Building the Transition Network
- Coordinate Transition Planning Weekly Collab Meetings



# Build Network of Transition Team Members

- Implement cross-training activities focused on Transition
- x x
- x x Active member of Local, State, and National Transition Organizations
- Network opportunities for students with district partners, adult agencies, collaboratives, and community resources





# “Cafe Collab”

## Weekly Transition Meetings

Standing weekly 30 Min Meeting (Mandatory)

x x

x x

Transition Teacher/Case Manager, Program Assistants, Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Speech Therapist, Therapy Group Leaders, Restorative Interventionist, Vocational Counselor, PE Teacher

Expectation to Review Previous Agenda and Contribute to New

Any discussion more than 5 min, Team Meeting is Assigned



x x  
x x

Dates:	
Cafe:	
PE:	
RIS:	
OT:	
Speech:	
VOC:	



x x  
x x

Student:	
Student:	
Student:	
Student:	
Student:	
Student:	



# Amanda Boyd



- Vocational Counseling
- Transition Group and Supported Employment Experiences
- Establish Partnerships with Linkages and Districts
- Supervise Vocational Counselor Interns/Externs
- Ensures Transition Planning through holistic approach



# Vocational Counseling

Therapeutic Interventions & Incentive Plans

x x  
x x Vocational Counseling in the Milieu

Recognizing the unique requirements of students with different backgrounds and challenges.

Weekly Updates



# Informal Transition Discussion Meetings

“Informal” creates a collaborative space

x x  
x x

Educate Student And Families

Agenda and Documentation

Develop Transition Plans

Assign Action Steps



# Alisa Halfman



- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Group Leader of Transition Classroom
- Provide related service minutes stated on IEPs
- Assessments and Observation within school setting, at supported vocational sites and in the community



# Speech-Language Therapy for Transition

Every Day is an Interview

- × × Collaborate with staff and students on communication and it's place, power, and impact on the work and community settings
- × ×

Bridge the gap between vocabulary in the classroom and workplace

Support communication solutions that foster success beyond the classroom





# Matt Henning



- Physical Education Teacher
- Previously worked as a Program Assistant and Restorative Specialist
- Collaborate in developing curriculum and goals
- Established Partnership with community organizations (NWSRA)





# Community PE

Promoting physical well-being, social integration, and lifelong fitness skills

Community Based Instruction

Physical Activity for Self-Regulation



Hidden Rules, Community Awareness and Safety

Provide Observations, Feedback, and Data

# Chris Moore



- Job Coach
- Previously worked as a Program Assistant
- Collaborate in developing curriculum and goals
- PAES curriculum and assessment





# Vocational Lab

Introduction to vocational skills and behaviors

Collaboration with Occupational Therapist

Collaboration with Vocational counselor



# Lyndsay Palach Shelton



- Transition Specialist
- Provide clients with individualized transition support as they plan to navigate life beyond high school
- Collaborates and consults with school districts to get the best possible outcomes for each student in their care
- Conduct trainings for local business partners
- Supports families as they navigate next steps



x

x

x

x



# School to Community Collaboration

Initiate, Present, and Develop partnership  
opportunities

Discuss with local employer about workforce  
needs

Develop Agreement between NCA and Golf  
Club

Follow-up conversation and problem solve

x x  
x x





# Case Study

Conceptualizing Transition-Related Needs



# Case Conceptualization

What are their needs?

Employment support

Therapeutic support

Academic support

Life Skills support

Family support

Combination / All of the  
above

x x

x x

x x  
x x  
x x  
x x

What are their challenges &  
strengths?

Mental health (self and familial)

Outside supports

Social skills

Functional skills

Academic skills

Self-Advocacy skills

Self-Management skills



# Student A

- Still accessing therapeutic supports as needed
- Regular school attendance
- Regularly attends specials & groups
- Some involvement in community
- Rarely accesses RIS

## Transition Activities for Student A

- ★ Weekly Transition Group
- ★ Vocational Counselor/Coordinator
- ★ Field Trips focusing on Social/Communication Skills
- ★ Optional Volunteer Experiences
- ★ Fliers to Events, Links to resources
- ★ *May be considered for homeschool classes or opportunities (clubs, other transition activities)*
- ★ Assessments/Data to demonstrate “emerging skills”
- ★ Transition Back to district for a Transition Program
- ★ ~~Community Employment~~

# Student A

- Still accessing therapeutic supports as needed
- Regular school attendance
- Regularly attends specials & groups
- Some involvement in community
- Rarely accesses RIS

## Real World Examples

- ★ Vocational Counselor
  - ★ Speech Language-Pathologist
  - ★ Physical Education Teacher
  - ★ Job Coach
  - ★ Transition Specialist
-

# Student B

- Cognitive/Functional/Executive Functioning needs as biggest barrier to less restrictive environment
- Regular School Attendance
- Utilizes therapeutic and academic supports
- Minimal involvement in community
- May still need immediate access to RIS

## Transition Activities Student B

- ★ Weekly Transition Group
- ★ Personal Development
- ★ Meet with Vocational Counselor
- ★ Support recognizing strengths and weaknesses
- ★ Electives/Life Skills Curriculum
- ★ Voc Assessments: Life Skills
- ★ Field Trips focusing on skill practice
- ★ Informal Planning Sessions with family
- ★ Transition to Adult Services Programming for Employment & Life Skills

# Student B

- Cognitive/Functional/Executive Functioning needs as biggest barrier to less restrictive environment
- Regular School Attendance
- Utilizes therapeutic and academic supports
- Minimal involvement in community
- May still need immediate access to RIS

## Real World Examples

- ★ Vocational Counselor
  - ★ Speech Language-Pathologist
  - ★ Physical Education Teacher
  - ★ Job Coach
  - ★ Transition Specialist
-

# Student C

- Mental health needs as biggest barrier to less restrictive environment
- May have inconsistent attendance and/or participation
- May have extremely limited positive community involvement
- Needs immediate access to RIS and other therapeutic supports

## Transition Activities Student C

- ★ 100% Support Completing Transition Assessments
  - ★ 100% Support to engage in Transition Activities
  - ★ 100% Support Register Events & attending
  - ★ 100% Signing up for Adult Services & Follow Up
  - ★ 100% Support SSI & Medicaid
  - ★ Vocational Counselor
  - ★ Support in recognition of mental health needs
  - ★ Voc Assessments:  
Self-determination
  - ★ Connect with Outside Therapist
  - ★ Medication Management
  - ★ Transition to Adult Programming for Case Management & Therapeutic services
-

# Student C

- Mental health needs as biggest barrier to less restrictive environment
- May have inconsistent attendance and/or participation
- May have extremely limited positive community involvement
- Needs immediate access to RIS and other therapeutic supports

## Real World Examples

- ★ Vocational Counselor
  - ★ Speech Language-Pathologist
  - ★ Physical Education Teacher
  - ★ Job Coach
  - ★ Transition Specialist
-



# Questions

Open floor for question and sharing examples



Map out your future - but  
do it in pencil. The road  
ahead is as long as you  
make it. Make it worth the  
trip.

— Jon Bon Jovi







# Thank You

Enjoy the rest of the conference!

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# Credits

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