

Working Together to Improve Employment Success for Youth with Disabilities

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Illinois Center for Transition and Work Symposium

Keynote

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Agenda

- Overview of the Importance of Interagency Collaboration and Work Experiences for Students/Youth with Disabilities
- Considerations related to Developing Collaborative Partnerships focused on Work Experiences
- Secondary Predictors and EBPs related to Interagency Collaboration and Work Experience
- CIRCLES – a model of formalized transition planning to support competitive integrated employment
- Questions



“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

—

James Baldwin

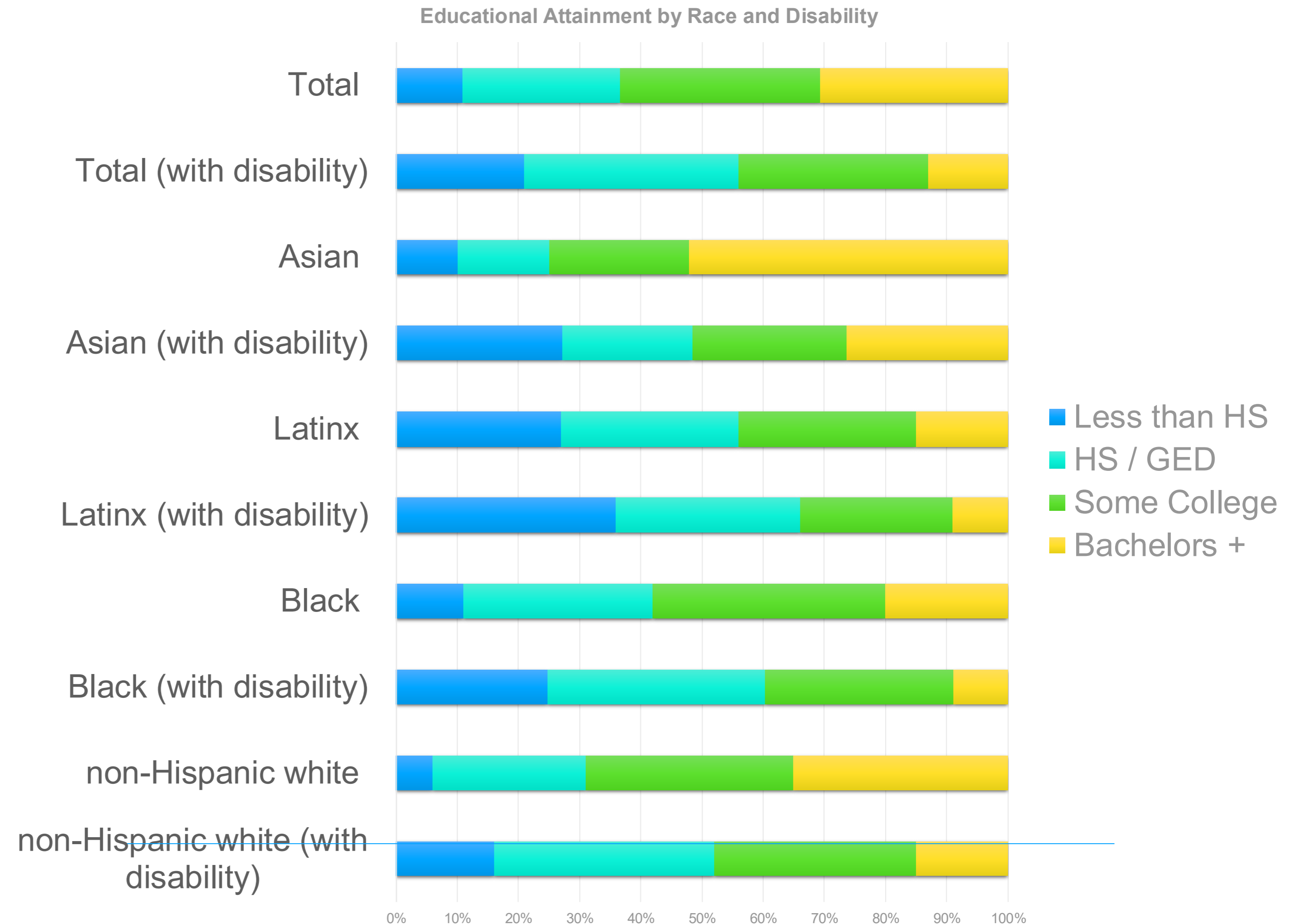
Historically, students and youth with identified disabilities DO NOT experience the same postschool outcomes as their peers without disabilities.

(e.g., National Council on Disability, 2012 ; Newman et al., 2011; US DOE, 2020)



Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities

- Educational attainment varies by race and disability
- Persons with disabilities tend to have **lower** levels of education than those without a disability
- Historically marginalized **People of Color with disabilities are more likely** to have a high school education or less



Source. Data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (2015-2021).

Employment Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities

2024 Annual Youth Labor Force Participation Rate and Unemployment Rate

2024 Youth Labor Force Participation Rate

Age	Disability	No Disability
Age 16 to 19	27.6%	37.4%
Age 20 to 24	46.9%	73.1%

2024 Youth Unemployment Rate

Age	Disability	No Disability
Age 16 to 19	23.9%	12.3%
Age 20 to 24	13.3%	7.1%

Employment Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities

2024 Annual Labor Force Statistics by Disability Status and Race/Ethnicity

Persons with a Disability, Aged 16-64, 2024

Labor Force Statistic	Hispanic	White	Black	Asian	Other	Total
Labor Force Participation Rate	40.8%	43.0%	32.0%	42.3%	38.4%	40.7%
Employment-Population Ratio	36.9%	39.9%	28.5%	39.0%	34.2%	37.4%
Unemployment Rate	9.5%	7.1%	10.8%	8.0%	10.8%	8.1%

Persons without a Disability, Aged 16-64, 2024

Labor Force Statistic	Hispanic	White	Black	Asian	Other	Total
Labor Force Participation Rate	75.6%	79.7%	76.1%	75.5%	74.5%	77.9%
Employment-Population Ratio	71.9%	77.3%	71.6%	72.9%	70.1%	74.9%
Unemployment Rate	4.9%	3.0%	5.9%	3.5%	6.0%	3.9%

Interagency Collaboration Is a Key Component in Secondary Transition

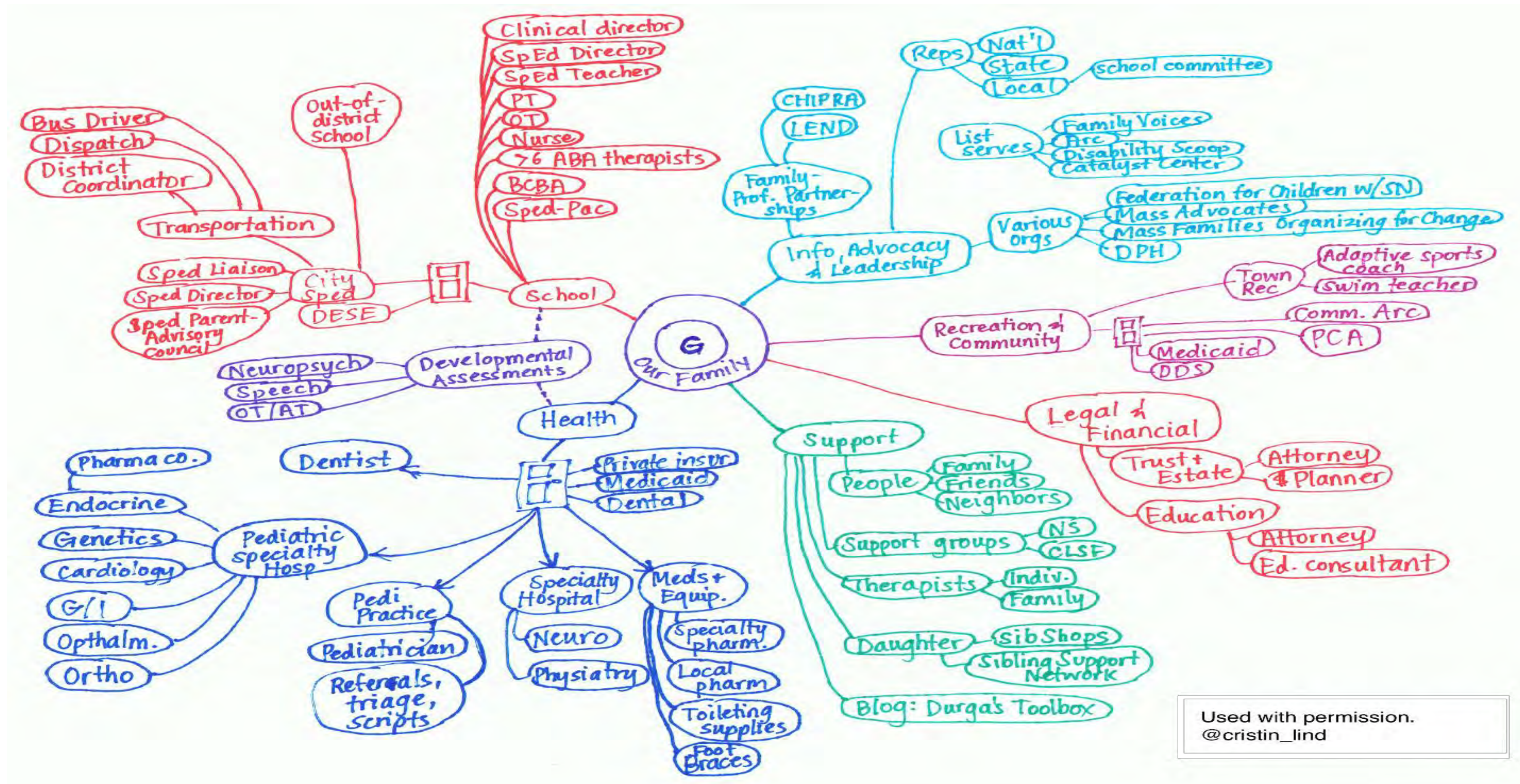
When students with disabilities access collaborative services during high school, they are more likely to experience positive post-school outcomes in the areas of EMPLOYMENT (but other areas too).

(Test et al. 2009; Mazzotti et al., 2021)

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A Day in the Fragmented System



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Successful Collaboration Helps Ensure...



- Value for all Partners
- Commitment from Leadership
- Focus and Purposeful
- Structure
- Outcome Driven
- Evaluation

(Mazzotti & Rowe, 2015; Mazzotti et al., 2023)



Considerations for Your Partnerships



- Who are you partnering with?
- What does each partner bring to the table?
- What shared outcomes have you identified?
- How do you include students and families as partners?
- How do you include general education, school counselors, and/or career technical education as partners?



Aspects of Life

Partnerships

 Health	Hospitals • Clinics • Mental Health Services
 Family	Parent Networks • Support Groups • Family Services
 Work	Local Agencies • Businesses • Chamber of Commerce
 Living	Housing Authorities • Care Providers
 Friendship	Social Clubs • Peer Mentoring • Interest Groups
 Spirituality	Churches • Synagogues • Faith-Based Organizations
 Recreation	Parks & Recreation Department • YMCA
 Personal Growth	Educational Classes • Libraries • Leisure Programs
 Community	Public Transportation • Adult Service Providers

Identifying Roles and Responsibilities

- Engage families
- Work directly with students
- Create work and other experiences
- Partner with other agencies
- Conduct community events and activities
- ...other roles or responsibilities needed to meet student outcomes and provide seamless transition



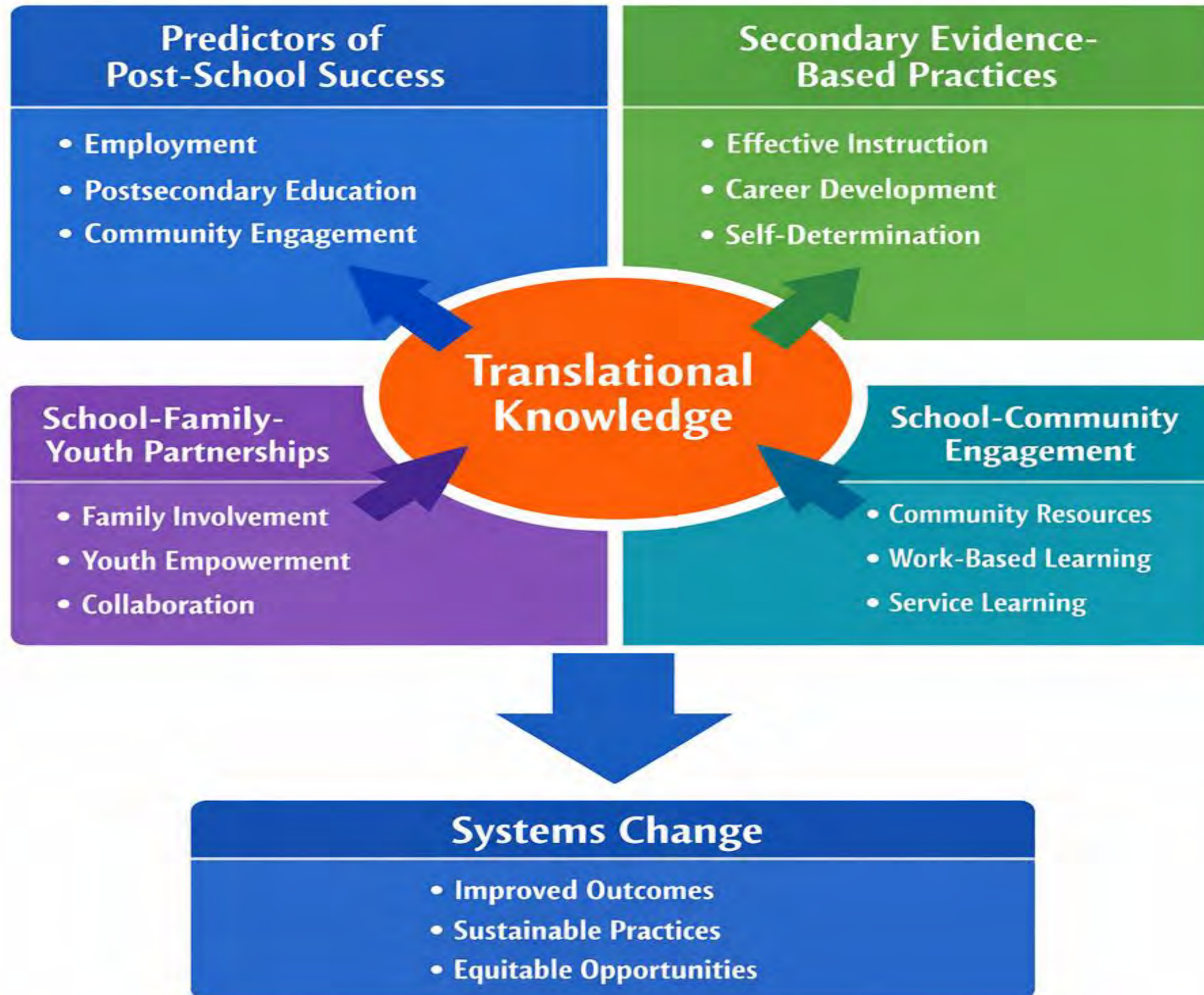


Outcomes of Collaboration

- Aligned resources and decreased duplication of service development and delivery
- Increased family engagement in transition planning
- Alignment of IEP and IPE goals
- Increased student led IEP meetings and enhanced self-advocacy skills
- Increase in students achieving a competitive intercollegiate employment after high school
- Increase in students participating in postsecondary training and education



Bridging Research to Practice



Secondary EBPs & Predictors to Support Post-School Success



In-School Predictors of Post-School Success

What Are Predictors?

Research suggests youth with disabilities are less likely to experience positive outcomes compared to peers without disabilities. Identification of in-school predictors of postschool success can provide educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors with information to design, evaluate, and improve transition programs.

Source: [Secondary Transition Predictors of Postschool Success: An Update to the](#)

Research Base



Predictors/Outcomes	Education	Employment	Independent Living
<input type="checkbox"/> Career Awareness	Promising	Promising	
<input type="checkbox"/> Career Technical Education (was Vocational Education)	Research-based	Evidence-based	
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Experiences		Promising	
<input type="checkbox"/> Exit Exam Requirements/High School Diploma Status		Promising	
<input type="checkbox"/> Goal-Setting	Research-based	Research-based	Research-based
<input type="checkbox"/> Inclusion in General Education	Research-based	Research-based	Research-based
<input type="checkbox"/> Interagency Collaboration	Promising	Promising	
<input type="checkbox"/> Occupational Courses	Promising	Promising	
<input type="checkbox"/> Paid Employment/Work Experience	Research-based	Research-based	Promising
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent Expectations	Promising	Research-based	
<input type="checkbox"/> Parental Involvement		Promising	
<input type="checkbox"/> Program of Study	Research-based	Research-based	
<input type="checkbox"/> Psychological Empowerment (new)	Promising	Promising	Promising
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Advocacy/Self-Determination	Research-based	Research-based	Promising
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Care/Independent Living	Promising	Promising	Research-based
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Realization (new)		Promising	Promising
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Skills	Promising	Promising	
<input type="checkbox"/> Student Support	Promising	Research-based	Promising
<input type="checkbox"/> Technology Skills (new)		Promising	

Interagency Collaboration is a Predictor of Positive Outcomes!

Operational Definition:

- a clear, purposeful, and carefully designed process that promotes cross agency, cross program, and cross disciplinary collaborative efforts leading to tangible transition outcomes for youth.



(Rowe et al., 2015)



Interagency Collaboration: Program Characteristics

- Develop an agreed upon vision and mission of transition services and programs.
- Develop an organizational structure that includes a process for identifying membership (e.g., criteria for membership), terms of services, procedures for replacing members, orientation for new members, and web-based and print membership directories.
- Coordinate the development of policies and procedures for service delivery and sharing of resources by both school and community agencies.
- Develop procedures for shared problem-solving to address needs of students with disabilities and the barriers they may face during transition process.

Paid Employment/Work Experience is a Predictor of Positive Outcomes!

Operational Definition:

- **Work experience** is any activity that places the student in an authentic workplace, and could include work sampling, job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, and paid employment.
- **Paid employment** can include existing standard jobs in a company or organization, or customized work assignments negotiated with the employer, but these activities always feature competitive pay (e.g., minimum wage) paid directly to the student by the employer.



(Rowe et al., 2015)

WORK-BASED LEARNING



Paid
Employment/Work
Experience:
Program
Characteristics

- Provide opportunities to participate in job shadowing, work-study, apprenticeships, or internships.
- Provide instruction in soft skills (e.g., problem solving, communicating with authority figures, responding to feedback, promptness) and occupational specific skills (e.g., clerical, machine operation).
- Provide transportation training, including the use of public transportation and jobsite and community safety.
- Conduct job performance evaluations by student, school staff, and employer.

Strategies for Teachers, Schools, and
Community Service Providers:
Focus on Implementing the Employment
Predictors of Postschool Success



CIRCLES[©]

Building Collaborative Partnerships

A Research-Based Model of Interagency Collaboration

So... Why **CIRCLES**

Interagency collaboration is a predictor of positive post-school outcomes (Test et al., 2009; Mazzotti et al., 2016, 2021)

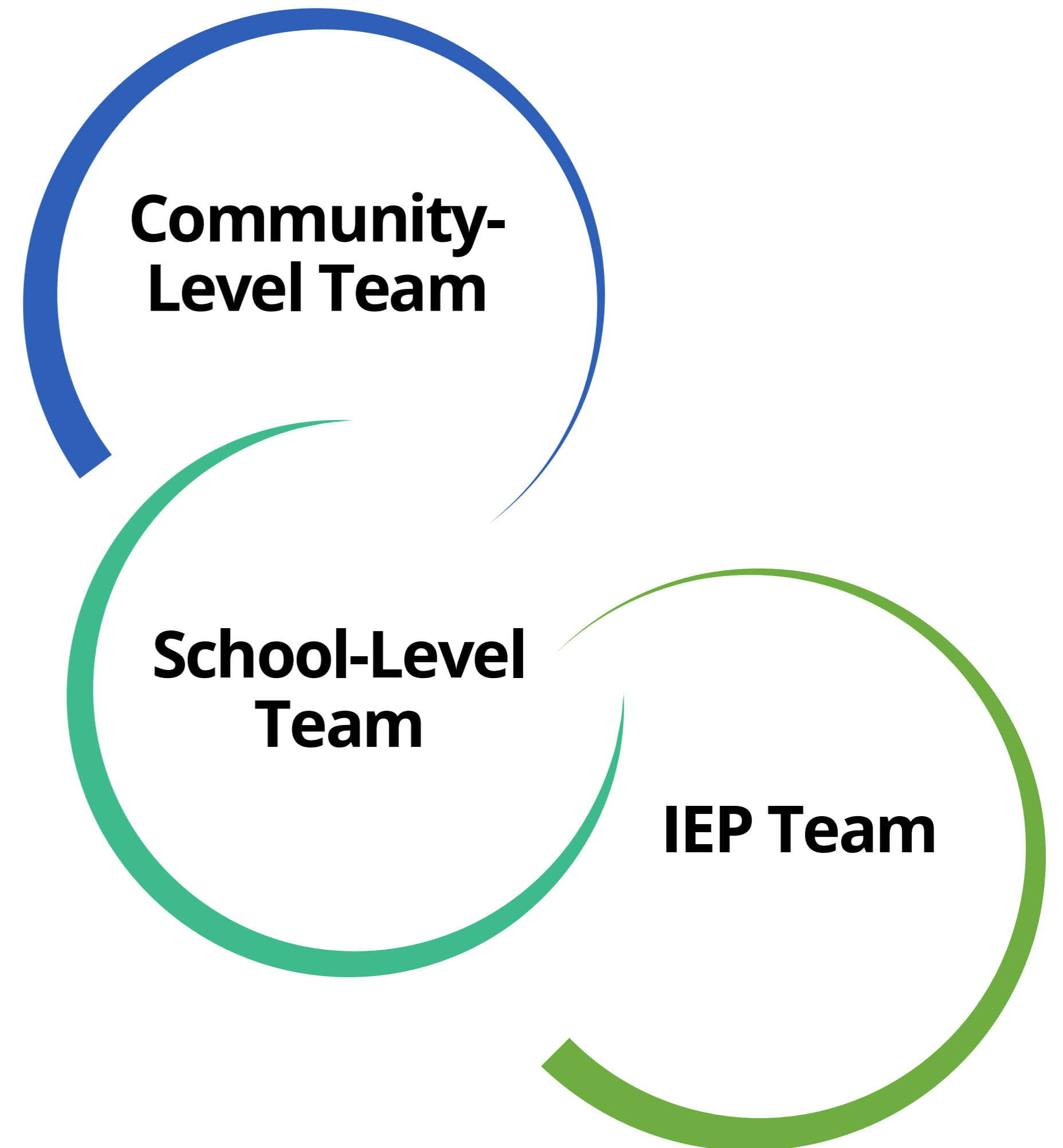
The only research-based model to facilitate interagency collaboration (Rowe et al., 2021)

Supports transition services under IDEA (2004) and Pre-ETS under WIOA (2014)

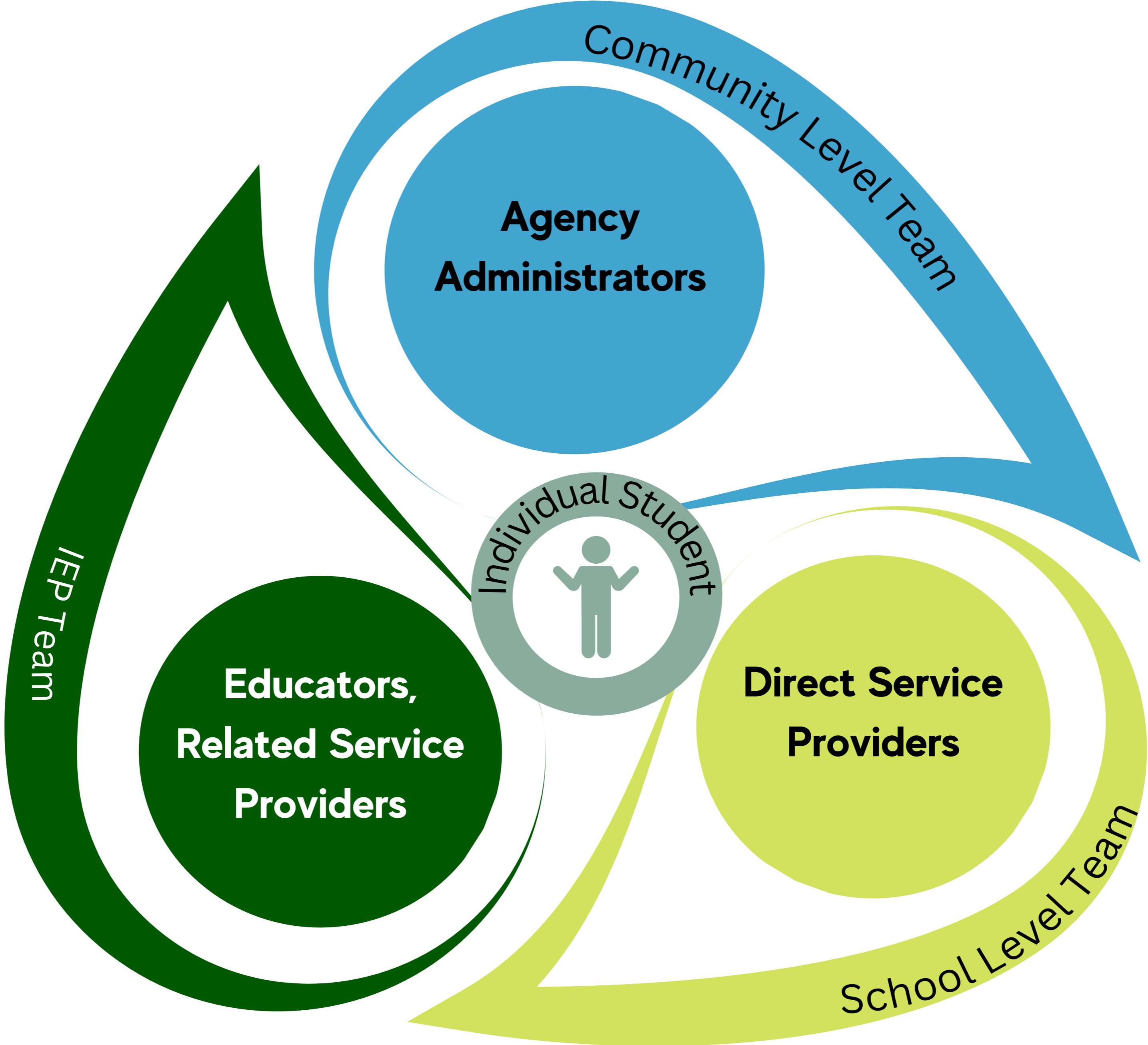


Three-Team Model of Interagency Collaboration to Support Transition Planning

Enhancing Postschool
Outcomes for Students with
Disabilities



The CIRCLES Model



Perspectives on CIRCLES from Our School Partners

“We've seen skills and positive outcomes carry over into the school setting for our students after participating in CIRCLES and Film Camp that we hadn't been able to get to before.”

“None of this would have happened if it was not because of the CIRCLES SLT because when everyone starting seeing her potential that's when all the possibilities started happening. It made her realize that she could go after what her heart desired.”

“Minds started to open because of CIRCLES. We had a student who was interested in graphic design and because she was connected with Pulaski Tech during the SLT, she is now taking courses to work towards a degree in graphic design.”

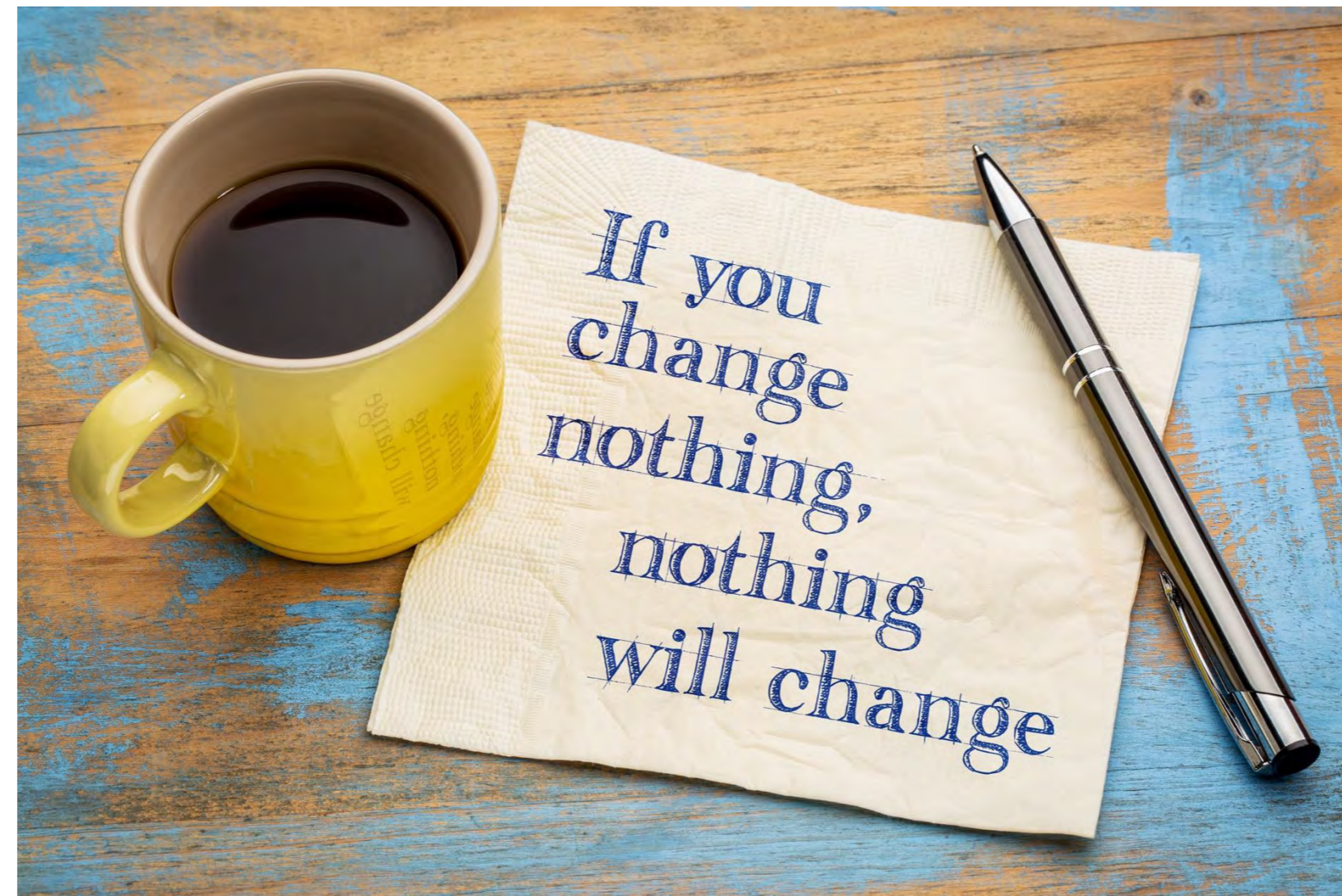
“Through CIRCLES and our Wolfe program...she began to focus on her love of food service...another connection made because of her connection with CIRCLES”



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Resources

- Circles.ku.edu
- [NTACT: C](#)
- [NTACT:C - Effective Practices](#)
- [Transition Coalition](#)

QUESTIONS?



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Thank you!

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