



TRANSITION IN FOCUS



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Reflections from the desk of Dr. Stacy Dymond.

At the end of a school day, it can be easy to focus on everything that didn't go as planned. A staff member called in sick, a student had a challenging moment, or a lesson missed the mark...the list goes on. During my first year of teaching, a superintendent from another district shared a message that has stayed with me: the importance of noticing small successes. He encouraged us to end each day by asking one question: What are three things that went well today? Years later, I still return to that practice and encourage colleagues and students to do the same. Teaching and supporting students' transitions to employment and adulthood is hard work. Taking time to recognize what went well, reflect on what we learned, and identify one small change for tomorrow can help sustain our work.

In this issue, you'll find research, tools, and insights designed to support that same reflection and forward movement as we work to strengthen transition services and postschool employment outcomes across Illinois.

- Stacy Dymond

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THE TRANSITION LANDSCAPE

Key updates shaping transition practice across Illinois.

Transition services remain the most common area of Indicator 13 noncompliance, according to Dr. LaMetric Lane, ISBE Principal Consultant. ISBE guidance reminds teams that transition services must be:

- **Aligned to postsecondary goals** and include at least one service in employment, education/training, and independent living.
- **Specific and individualized**, based on the student's current needs and future goals—not a restatement of services elsewhere in the IEP or a list of general school activities.
- **Coordinated and purposeful**, ensuring the student is linked to needed post-school services, supports, or programs **before** leaving high school.

Dr. Lane suggests that strengthening this area of the IEP Transition Plan requires attending relevant professional development and using a train-the-



trainer approach to support sustainability within school teams. Relevant training opportunities are available through centers like ICTW. Educators can also find PD offerings on the [ISBE website](#).

RESEARCH YOU CAN USE

Translating recent studies and findings into actionable strategies.

New research from **Taconet et al. (2025)** underscores a persistent challenge in preparing students with the independent living skills needed for life after high school. Key findings from the study note a significant gap in independent living skills between students with and without IEPs. Key findings include:

- Students with IEPs rated themselves lower on every independent living skill measure compared to peers without IEPs, revealing gaps in skills essential for navigating both community and workplace environments.
- The greatest difference in skill ratings between students with and without IEPs occurred for using technology in daily life (e.g., banking apps, Google Maps). These skills are increasingly required in nearly all workplaces and for independent workforce participation.



Independent living skills are closely tied to college access, workplace readiness, and long-term employment success.

- Both students with and without IEPs rated themselves lowest on the independent living skills of volunteering in their community, participating in community activities, and knowing how to locate community services. These experiences often serve as early exposure to work roles and build social capital—key predictors of future employment.

Independent living skills are closely tied to college access, workplace readiness, and long-term employment success. As a result, Taconet et al.'s findings highlight an urgent need to **include independent living skills into the transition services section of the IEP transition plan.**

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

Emerging ideas and takeaways from ICTW's work with schools and agencies.

Across our fall regional workshops and board meetings, educators consistently raised questions about **Comprehensive Transition Programs (CTPs)**, an option many families and teams want to understand better. CTPs, defined under the Higher Education Opportunity Act, are college-based programs designed for students with an intellectual disability who want to continue learning academic, career/technical, and independent living skills in a college campus setting.

High-quality CTPs provide structured advising, access to inclusive coursework, and meaningful work-based learning, all aimed at preparing students for **competitive integrated employment**. Most programs span **2–3 years** and are **financial-aid eligible**, creating a more accessible pathway to college experiences and career preparation.



For teams seeking to deepen their understanding or locate programs, [ThinkCollege.net](https://www.thinkcollege.net) offers up-to-date resources and program profiles.

RESOURCE ROUNDUP

Noteworthy tools and materials to make transition planning easier.

This Resource Roundup features tools that offer concrete examples and strategies for building more coordinated, meaningful transition services within the Transition Plan section of the IEP.

[Coordinated Set of Needed Activities/Strategies](#)

A practical overview of coordinated activities that strengthen transition planning across instruction, community experiences, employment preparation, daily living skills, and functional vocational assessment.

[Transition IEP Activities: A Resource Document for Families and Students](#)

A family-friendly guide outlining example activities across key transition domains, from community experiences to adult living and daily living skills.

[Predictors for Post-School Success Across Age Group by Expect, Engage, and Empower](#)

This resource maps evidence-based predictors of positive postschool outcomes and offers examples of aligned student activities beginning in early childhood and continuing through postsecondary settings.

ON THE HORIZON

What's coming next for ICTW and the transition to work community.



2026 ICTW Symposium

Register now to hear keynote Valerie Mazzotti, a nationally recognized leader in transition and postschool employment outcomes.

[Learn More](#)



Ready to Work Together Spring Workshop

Join this interactive session focused on strengthening interagency collaboration to better support students with disabilities on their path to employment.

[Learn More](#)



Coming Soon: ICTW's Parent Engagement Guide

Sharing research-based strategies to help families actively plan for their child's postschool employment.

REFERENCES

Taconet, A. V., Rifenbark, G. G., Lombardi, A. R., Mazzotti, V. L., & Morningstar, M. E. (2025). Independent living skills and college and career readiness. *The Journal of Special Education*, 59(3), 137-147.
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