

Dear Ms. Atkinson,

The Virginia Council of Administrators of Special Education (VCASE) appreciates this opportunity to provide the Virginia Commission on Youth (CoY) information and perspectives regarding the considerations by the CoY *Advisory Group: Transition Process for Students with Disabilities Regarding Records and Services at the Age of Majority*. Our President, Dr. Lynn Clayton Prince, is pleased to serve on the Advisory Group, and our VCASE Chair of Policy and Legislation, Dr. Mike Asip, has participated in discussions with the Advisory Group. VCASE values this collaboration with the Commission and other agencies as we seek to improve essential transition services for our students with disabilities across Virginia. VCASE membership includes over 300 administrators of special education from across Virginia who have responsibility for local divisions' delivery of special education services for the more than 170,000 Virginia students with disabilities.

As Dr. Asip indicated at the last Advisory Group meeting, the VCASE Policy and Legislative Committee provided a survey regarding policy and legislation issues to attendees at our May, 2022 VCASE conference. VCASE wishes to forward to you this summary of the transition-related recommendations from our members as you consider future recommendations for improving transition services for students with disabilities in Virginia.

The following summary statements emerged in reviewing comments from the May 2022 VCASE survey addressing improvements for postsecondary transition services:

- Increased funding is needed targeted toward adding secondary school local division transition specialist positions as Standards of Quality (SOQ) support positions.
- Increased funding is a need for the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services (DBHDS), the Department of Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), local Community Services Boards (CSBs), and other agencies. If we are to really have successful student outcomes, these agencies will require additional funding to provide more staffing and support during the transition hand-off from special educators.
- Additional funding for job coach positions and for evidence-based long term internship models such as Project Search that are successful with competitive employment placements are needed.
- Increased resources and training are required for teachers for earlier transition considerations in elementary and middle school.
- Differential funding should be considered for transition services in small and rural divisions, with consideration of regional supports where appropriate.
- Greater statewide dissemination of transition resource availability for students, families, and staff would greatly benefit student transition services.

- Critical staffing shortages affecting special education teachers, related services staff, and support staff will have an adverse effect on the availability of qualified staff to implement highly effective transition services.

We attached the entire document of comments submitted by members so that you can see the variety of suggestions for improvement from over 100 local special education leaders. Local special education leaders provide a critical perspective that we hope will be included in any future planning to improve Virginia transition services for students with disabilities in Virginia.

While we realize that there is more that Virginia can do, VCASE believes that there is not a shortage of special education mandates for transition services, but a shortage of funding, resources, and training designed to facilitate interagency coordination of transition services. Transition services are highly specialized services requiring a great deal of research and communication involving students, parents, local special education case managers, multiple agencies, employers providing internships, etc. While many school divisions have specially trained and skilled transition coordinators, many smaller rural school divisions do not staff a dedicated transition coordinator. VCASE advocates for funding to provide and train skilled transition teachers in every Virginia High School, along with a division transition specialist/coordinator position as an SOQ support position.

VCASE understands that other Virginia agencies involved in the transition process require additional funding and personnel to continue the required case management needed for successful transition. Our hope is that future budgets could include greater funding to support transition for agencies such as the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services (DBHDS), the Department of Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), local Community Services Boards (CSBs), and others who may be involved. Effective transition case management requires a greater number of skilled personnel in multiple agencies to optimize post-secondary services.

VCASE looks forward to collaborating with the Commission on Youth, VDOE and other agencies in developing prioritized needs and advocating for resources to strengthen the implementation of quality, outcome-based transition experiences for Virginia's students with disabilities and their families.

Regards,
Dr. Lynn Clayton-Prince
VCASE President
Dr. Sheila Bailey
VCASE Executive Director

VCASE Survey - Recommendations for Improving Post-Secondary Transition

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| A list of agencies and the populations they support along with contact information |
| Additional accommodations for standard diploma that include alternative work skill based assessments to SOLs |
| Additional project search. Accessible CTE programs. Community based instruction for elementary |
| Additional resources for rural areas |
| Additional training opportunities |
| Adjust graduation requirements and add funds to support students with disabilities accessing votech education, sometimes these classes are not held in the high school and makes it hard to provide supports in remote |
| Allow more funding to hire transition specialists |
| Begin the transition process in earlier grades/elementary school Ensure that elementary teachers get transition |
| Better relationships and more consistency with DARS. |
| Bigger focus on life skills at the elementary level |
| Career readiness curriculums and intensive co-op opportunities should be implemented. |
| Clearer guidance. |
| College partnerships |
| Continue to explore and discover community based support and opportunities. Continue and expand collaboration |
| Continued collaboration with TTAC. |
| Create more opportunities for vocational training in high schools. |
| DARS resources |
| Deeper dive in progresses already in place and how we can assist student with disabilities participate fully! |
| Definite need for intentional follow up with adult students after aging out or graduating and collaboration with community agencies, colleges and employers |
| Early awareness of outside agencies and resources pertaining to post-secondary transition is crucial. |
| Engage students and parents so they have ownership on their process |
| Ensure that families have options after graduation. Families need to know their student can be successful and how to access resources to make that belief a reality. |
| Expand options for funding and training of vocational coaches to identify job sites and provide support to students |
| Facilitated training for staff with regional technical assistance supports |
| Focus on early intervention |
| Follow up |
| Funded adult services, continued improvement in pre-ets |
| Funding and training for more job coaches more opportunities for job exposure and/or coops |

VCASE Survey - Recommendations for Improving Post-Secondary Transition

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| Funding for additional positions as well as training for individuals around increasing their knowledge in the importance of transition planning. It is critical for our student \sand should be treated or seen as such. |
| Funding for in- school or community based instruction that allows for more staff. Time in the school day to do this and less credit hours in order to accomplish this |
| Funding for transition specialists at division level, additional funding for outside agency support such as DARS |
| Funding is needed to staff positions to support and expand programs such as Project Search, community based instruction and CTE (including students on all diploma tracks). |
| Funds so local directors can hire transition specialists. |
| getting more connected within the community, more electives offered in the school buildings, demonstrate value for the cause, be consistent with the need of transition activities, |
| Have more resources available in the small rural divisions |
| Have students focus on job skills not just academics |
| Have voteck options more accessible |
| Improve DARS resources so they can effectively serve these students. More staff needed to serve as job |
| Focus needs to be on competitive employment, as well as on student interest, not existing programs. |
| I'd rather focus on behaviors... these will ultimately negatively impact our youth once they leave school |
| If there was a statewide repository of community resources available for our students and families that we could share upon their entry into high school as well as more PERT spots for divisions and fewer barriers to training services through the WWRC, upon graduation, we could be more proactive in our encouragement for families to take advantages of the resources offered - even if they move out of our area. |
| Improve course options for CTE electives |
| In more rural areas, we need more outreach and resources to provide for our students. |
| Increase support from Transition Specialists earlier in student's planning (middle school), increase access to job increased partnerships at the collegiate level |
| Instructional programming including workplace learning skills, developing independence, communication skills and functional skills must occur from the minute students are found eligible to the day they leave! |
| Make it an SOQ position |
| Many transition best practices are expensive for school divisions (work-based learning, paid work experiences). If special educators & career and technical educators worked more collaboratively, there could be more options for |
| More funds to address these needs |
| More inclusion; family engagement |
| More information on assessment options for students with significant needs (adapted curriculum) and on what's |
| More preparation in high school through a community based curriculum |
| More vocational opportunities |
| Our students in rural areas need more access to things outside of our area |

VCASE Survey - Recommendations for Improving Post-Secondary Transition

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| Our teachers are spread so thin already, we need another body |
| Parents and local businesses need to be more involved in the process |
| Pilot a program or initiative in rural southside Virginia! Pittsylvania County would be thrilled to participate |
| Provide technical support for positive transition outcomes for low incidence disabilities |
| Providing more support and assistance from the community to help those students with transitioning. |
| Providing students with detailed information and brief interactive sessions to educate them of their of |
| Regional training centers for rural localities |
| School based training |
| Set higher expectations |
| Start earlier with the end in mind instead of waiting for 13. |
| Start early. Offer employment tracks and discontinue the practice of all students taking the same classes. |
| Strategies to get actual data on post-school outcomes beyond Indicator 14, which only collects data on students who respond to help inform programs, services and instruction for ALL students with disabilities K-12 |
| Students and families need more information and training to prepare for life after graduation. |
| Teacher training |
| Teachers do not understand the resources, process or even how to write a transition goal. Resources made available such as the course through VCU was wonderful (I participated) but it is not something most teachers take advantage of (not enough time and can't put anything else on their plate) |
| There should be a required department dedicated to post-secondary transition. This would include a District Supervisor/ Admin. in this area. Also, the staff under this department could work in coordination with guidance & |
| This is much more difficult for rural areas as the opportunities are limited. Training for rural areas would be helpful |
| We need a full funded SOQ position of transition coordinator to facilitate transition assessments and surveys, work internship/externships/placements, as well as funding for fully funded work based job shadow facilitator for high need students that need on the job, direct, scaffolded training and job placement in the work environment. |
| We need increased funding to retain teachers in special education. There is so much involved with being an efficient and effective special educator. We cannot get people trained before they leave the profession. |
| We need more training and consistent DARS reps |
| We need more training for parents on the family's role in transition and we need more options for students headed |
| We need more varied and comprehensive tools for transition assessments. |
| We need to improve employment outcomes and retention for students entering the workforce |
| We would like to see more support on completing this with fidelity and emphasizing the importance of these with Gen Ed Teachers and school principals. |
| Website with best practices, examples, and regional training |