



MomsFightingAutism.com



**Colleen Harmon**

Colleen Harmon has worked for San Diego Unified School District for the past 25 years, teaching special education at the high school level for special education students in mild/moderate and moderate/severe classrooms. When transition was mandated Colleen helped create the first transition plan for the district along with the first transition curriculum. She currently is in her 20th year working as a Resource teacher for TRACE. She has also taught transition classes to prospective teachers.

## **Transition it starts early and is an ongoing process**

This webinar will focus on a wide variety of topics and issues related to transition. Many different aspects of transition are examined from a variety of different vantage points and perspectives. Transition planning is a life-long process but critical during the secondary years to insure that appropriate annual goals and IEP services are developed that will support the student's hopes and dreams. In other words, developing transition plans help the student, the family and the school stay focused on the future. The expected student outcome is demonstration of knowledge and awareness regarding major issues related to transition.

### **Start of transcripts.**

Chantal: Good morning and welcome back to the Autism and Transition to Adulthood Conference put on by Moms Fighting Autism in partnership with

Autism College. Moms Fighting Autism has been putting on a conference every year for the last five years, and so I'm really glad that I was invited to moderate and do this Moms Fighting Autism. It's a great resource for the community.

Today we have four more topics coming up and we're going to start off today with Colleen Harmon and the topic is going to be Transition: It Starts Early and is an Ongoing Process. Now yesterday I talked a little bit in the keynote about preparing students and preparing parents for the whole idea of transition into adulthood. Colleen's going to have more specific information for you. So I'm going to tell you what she's going to talk about and then I'm going to introduce you to her. So the topic is Transition: It Starts Early and is an Ongoing Process.

This webinar will focus on a wide variety of topics and issues related to transition. Many different aspects of transition are examined from a variety of different vantage points and perspectives. Transition planning is a lifelong process, but critical during the secondary years to ensure that appropriate annual goals and IEP Services are developed that will support the student's hopes and dreams.

In other words developing transition plans help the student, the family, and the school stay focused on the future. The expected student outcome is demonstration of knowledge and awareness regarding major issues related to transition. And today the person, the very experienced person who will be speaking on this topic is Colleen Harmon.

Colleen has worked for the San Diego Unified School District for the past 25 years teaching special education at the high school for special education students in mild and moderate, and moderate and severe classrooms. When Transition was mandated Colleen helped create the first transition plan for this district along with the first Transition curriculum.

She currently is in her 20th year of working as a resource teacher for TRACE. TRACE is the Transition Program in San Diego Unified School District. She has also taught Transition classes to perspective teachers. Welcome, Colleen. Thank you so much for agreeing to speak on this very important topic. It's really nice to have someone in the frontlines helping students with autism and disabilities or challenges to prepare for that very important transition to adult life. Thank you, Colleen, for being here.

Colleen: Thank you. I love what you were saying "experience". It sounds like I'm really ancient. [inaudible 00:02:52]

Chantal: [inaudible 00:02:54] ten.

Colleen: Pardon me?

Chantal: You started when you were ten-years-old, so you're really only 30, even though you have 20 years of experience.

Colleen: I did. But it's been exciting because it's been my love. I absolutely love Transition. I love working with the students and I also love working with perspective teachers and at conferences. So thank you.

I'll go ahead and start. And again, like Sherry said, you've pretty much got a vague idea of what we're going to be talking about. When people go through transition there are a lot of different feelings and I want to talk about that and I'll be going more into detail. People think transition starts at 16 for students in Special Ed. Transition starts very early on and transition is for everybody. Everybody on this conference call is probably still experiencing transitions in their life, even if it's being a grandma for the first time or for me, sending my kid to college for the first time. It never ends. But we all know the feelings, the stress, the excitement and this is how parents feel. But think about our students also.

So some of the feelings you might have are distress, excitement, exciting to dreams, to have choices, have planning ideas for the transition process. But the one thing I want is stress is it really does need to start early. It does not start at 16. It really should be starting as soon as we have kids. Start talking about the future. Try to teach them some independence. So the sooner the better we start, the better it is going to be parents, the family, the student.

Okay so transition is -- the Webster definition of course -- it's a passage from one stage, subject, or place to another. It's a change, a movement, a development, or evolution from one form, stage, or style to another. Transition has many times like I said earlier this presentation isn't just about the Mandated Transition Law at age 16. I want to give you guys some key points on transition throughout the education years of a student, a student especially if they're in Special Ed.

The critical time we have in education for transition is childhood to elementary, elementary to middle, middle to high, high to post- secondary. Then the critical players in the transition process are the students, the parents, and the teachers and I'm really going to talk about the students. Because we really do need to get the student involved and a lot of times people don't want to take the students through IEP until age 16. I really encourage -- let the students get involved early.

Let them start beginning to know the process of what an IEP is and let them have some input on it. Challenges and concerns for students in transition. This, again, can happen at any age, like elementary, leaving my family. They've been in that protected environment with their family and now they're getting on a bus so they have to be dropped off at school. Finding the bathroom, where is the bathroom? It sounds like such a simple thing, but these are the stresses that some of the students go through.

Being around kids involved with alcohol, hopefully that is only in middle school and high, but you never know these days. Being around kids involved with drugs, being physically hurt by others, getting lost, getting to class on time, handling stress, getting in trouble, peer pressure, gangs, having friends, classes being too hard, the school is usually bigger with more students. The students have different teachers for each subject, especially in high school and less individual attention by any one classroom teacher.

Students want independence and to express their individuality. Again, I know everybody here is probably on all different ages, but the bottom line is I really do believe that a student in today's age even has more stress with some of things that have been going on in schools.

Right now, if you guys can click there is a video I'd like you to participate in. It's about a two minute video and it shows the stress. Here it is a kid going off to kindergarten. I always love this video because I just experienced that last fall when my kid went to college. So again, it never ends. So if you could, just take two minutes to click on the video and watch the video.

[inaudible 00:07:59]

Okay hopefully everybody watched it and hopefully you don't need a Kleenex right now. But I really think it does show the stress that parents can go through. Because not just the kids going through all this stress when they start school, but us parents really can have a hard time with transition. But hopefully with some of the things that I'll be talking about we can make it a smoother transition for both the parents and the students.

Chantal: Colleen, I just wanted to remind people because I forgot to at the beginning. They can start typing their questions at any time and we'll be answering them at the end. You can type in questions as they come to you in that box on the screen that you're looking at, if you're following the webcast. Thank you.

Colleen: So challenges and concerns for parents of students in Special Ed. and Transition. Especially with a lot of cuts in education these last couple of years,

the insufficient staffing, class sizes. How can my student handle a class comprised of 30 students? Again bullying, a child not having friends, we all want our students and children to have friends, to be able to have a social life after and not just in school, getting involved with the wrong crowd, drugs, alcohol, child falling behind, not succeeding, a bad teacher, or a bad administrator.

Change is tough for everyone, but for a child with special education needs and commitment to routine transitions throughout school life can be overly stressful and daunting. So as parents, what are parents' concerns with IEP? Every year is a transition and a transition concerns should be addressed at all levels. So it's not just when they go from elementary to middle, from middle to high, even when they're in that elementary school we see it all the time.

Teachers are changing constantly. It doesn't seem like teachers are staying at the same school as long as they used to. So they could have a new teacher or they're going to a different classroom. So that can stress. I would say the transition is more complex when it involves moving from one school to another, especially from middle to high, or elementary to middle.

And working with more than one teacher when in middle and high school, the room's bigger with more students, more homework, and emphasis on grades. Peers become more important and students want their independence and the ability to express their individuality. They assume more responsibilities, lockers, gym clothes, carrying a variety of textbooks.

We did a survey of some of our coworkers when I was doing a thing for a class. We did an informal survey with middle schools. What were the students with IEPs their biggest concerns? Do you know what their biggest concern was? It was not being able to open that locker so just if we could go to the school -- and I'll talk about this -- earlier, before other students are there and let them practice opening their locker over and over again. So they then are relieved when they know they can do it, so when the first day of school starts they are able to open that locker. But to think that little, simple thing -- which is not simple for a lot of people -- that was one of their biggest stresses moving to high school was to be able to open a locker.

Coping strategies for the IEP. [inaudible 00:12:37] part of the IEP team helps and one thing I'm sure all of you know you can always call another IEP meeting. So if you have an IEP meeting, you don't like it, you can always request to have another IEP meeting. I know you guys know that. Before the end of the last year in elementary and middle-high, an IEP meeting should be held to discuss a plan for the transition to the new school.

At that IEP if they're moving from elementary to middle, from middle to high, it's critical to have that teacher or someone from that high school that they're articulating to or a middle school they're articulating to or middle or high. Because that way it does make the student feel more comfortable and the parent feel more comfortable.

That's where I like to encourage the students to be there, so is there at that IEP meeting, and yes, it's not mandated until age 16. But they're involved earlier and if we can have the critical people that are going to be at the school that they're articulating to, it will make the student feel more comfortable because they'll know a familiar face.

New assessments might be needed to ensure that students have identified needs and levels of performance are current. School staff from transition schools should attend the IEP. I just talked about that. Meetings to ensure that any important information is transferred to the new school and a new IEP is developed to meet the student's needs.

How and where the related services will be provided and then parents can maintain their involvement by communicating with staff by phone or email and parents may want to request or teachers may recommend interim reports each period. The most important part here is stay in touch with the teacher. Stay in touch with your son or daughter's teacher because that really can make a difference.

Accommodations, we all know accommodations should be marked on the IEP so let's make sure, especially when they're moving to a new environment. You might start seeing new stresses that your son or daughter or a student is relaying at home. So make sure that we're trying to come up with accommodations when we find that they're having a harder time taking tests, etc. Make sure that is when you do request a new IEP and ask for different accommodations.

But accommodations that can relate to agendas, plan books, test taking, breaking long-term projects into smaller parts, need to be discussed in school terms, and including IEP goals that teach study skills, such as memory strategies. Note taking, studying for tests, as well as keeping track of homework and other items. When I used to teach at the high school level, it really does help if they could have some kind of notebook, so they know what's coming up, a schedule.

And we say that, but some of the students are going to need help even creating that because they can't quite figure out "I've got this project due in one month," what the steps are. So these are things that really will help relieve some of the

stress that they have. If we have a big organized calendar for these students and then involving them more in the IEP process when appropriate.

What can teachers do? Hopefully I've got teachers online too, but one of the best ways to help these transitioning students is to foster peer acceptance. We all know a friend is really critical in school years. So if there is somehow we can even -- I know out here in California we've got a lot of different organizations, Circle of Friends, anything, peer tutors. Anything to start establishing some peer levels so the students do feel more comfortable.

Students who have difficulties with organizational skills may need additional strategies and accommodations that address disruption, at least initially. I already talked about maybe creating a notebook or something like that. The key to promoting a successful transition is keeping the lines of communication open between parent-child, and parent and teacher. The importance of collaboration is no less in the middle school and high, as it was in elementary school.

I think it's really critical that it's not just communication when something goes wrong. Let's always stay positive and just keep in touch with what's going on. I think the whole process will be a lot easier.

What can parents do? Parents can maintain their involvement by communicating with staff by phone or email and not just the IEP team, but get involved in the school. The other thing is parents should be talking to other parents. Sometimes they get the most information from other parents, so get involved in the school, if you can. It really can help with knowing what is going on in that school.

Parents may want to request or teachers may recommend interim reports each marking period to stay ahead of concerns and difficulties. This way if you do this, in case a student is really having a hard time in a class, you will know ahead of time before you get that report card that says the student is really not doing very well.

Parents and teachers can encourage special needs students to take advantage of any afterschool homework club or teacher review session. Not just that, but see if they're interested in any social things that are going on in the school. That way if they can get more involved in the social aspect of the school, they're going to probably create more friends and be more involved and feel a part of that community.

Moving on to high school tips for parents. Most people find this is the most stressful time is when the student moves on to high school. But make sure when the students are moving on, have a member of the high school special education staff attend student's eighth grade IEP. I already talked about that. If they can't

attend, make sure you talk to them and say you want to reschedule so you can have somebody from that high school there because that really will make it a lot easier of a transition for that student and the parents.

Then again, make sure your son or daughter attends the IEP. Encourage your son or daughter to bring a friend to this meeting and at future meetings. I do that a lot of times. I'm going to talk a lot about persons in our planning, but I really think it's very important that your son or daughter or a student have somebody else at that IEP that's their peer. Because we know as parents, we always think it's right, and we know what's best for students. But it's nice to have a peer at the IEP meeting, too. Visit the school, find out again, if it's lockers, where the lockers going to be.

How they can find out where the restrooms are. Try to get as much done before school starts visiting the school because it will make it a lot easier transition. If they can even go and find out where their classes will be because a lot of times students, even without special ed. get stressed over trying to find where their classes are. But we could somehow visit those schools before school starts it really would make the transition easier.

Then find out who'll be the initial contact at high school. Meet the principal. The principal a lot of times doesn't have a lot to do with special ed. students. But if you can have your son or daughter or the student meet the principal ahead of time, the principal then becomes more aware of the student. Then they hopefully will know them later on. Then again, attending the orientation meeting and open houses at the school.

I talked about this just a second and this could be a whole presentation itself. [inaudible 00:20:12]. Hopefully some of you know what person-centered planning is, but to me person-centered planning is a key, key part of transition in all ages. I've taught some college level classes and I am having people try to do person-centered planning at the elementary level, the middle level, and high school, post-secondary. Just FYI, if you don't know what person-centered planning is a person-centered planning approach provides a process and structure that can assist students in their goal planning and the development of a means to achieve those goals across life.

Person-centered planning is a vision for the future and a way to plan for that vision to become reality. If you're not aware of person-centered planning, person-centered planning is bringing key people, not just the IEP team, but key people that are important to that student and having a meeting around that student in a positive aspect asking what the students good at, what his dreams

and goals are. What he wants to do in the future. Where he might want to live and where he might want to work.

And start it earlier, because yes, especially in elementary and middle school, they're probably going to change their minds. But let's start having them start taking the initiative of them thinking of what they want to do. The other thing about person-centered planning -- I've done person-centered planning where the student has invited the custodian, the grandparents, the mailman, I mean it's just whoever they connect with and it's really just a meeting with everybody together.

Everybody's talking about the student and it's all about the student. And the student -- every time I go to a person-centered plan, they're so proud of it because most everybody is very positive. It's just a wonderful experience, and again like I said earlier, that's a whole presentation in itself. But I would really strongly encourage you guys to encourage all students regardless of what age, to start thinking and doing more of a person-centered planning process.

Now what I'm going to discuss is the mandated transition and I have a feeling you guys, it sounds like you got some of this yesterday. But this is usually when I go to conferences, etc. this is always discussed. It's what's mandated. But I really like to stress that transition starts very early and we need to be working towards transition for life because the earlier we start the better. So now what I'm going to do is really just talk about what is mandated by IDA.

Okay, of course, I'm sure most of you are familiar that the IDA was reauthorized in 1997 and again in 2004, but legislators wanted to stress the purpose of free, appropriate, public education to prepare students for their future. Even though transition planning is a lifelong process, it's critical during the secondary years to ensure the appropriate annual goals and IEP services they have developed will support their hopes and dreams.

In other words developing transition helps the students and family and the school stay focused on the future. Like my introduction, I've been doing transitions for many, many, many years. We've come a long way and I'm going to be honest. I still think we've got a ways to go. I sometimes think it's still very -- this is just my opinion -- they are paper driven, making sure that transition plan has the I's dotted and the T's crossed, but I'd really like to see what is actually happening to help that student after they graduate from public education.

That's one thing where I said person-centered planning, I know at my school we request everybody to have a person-centered plan because I think that's one of the best ways to drive the goals and everything that student wants to do. So the

person-centered plan then drives the transition plan which then I see some action really taking place and things happening. The legal mandates, just in case you don't know . . .

Chantal: You know what? Colleen, I did not go over any of this yesterday. I just briefly mentioned it in passing because I knew you were going to be talking about it today. So thank you. That's great.

Colleen: Okay. Transition service language must be incorporated through the student's IEP beginning at age 16. It's very critical that you need to make sure that at that IEP when your son or daughter or students turns 16, you have to have a transition plan in place. I know from history there are districts that . . . say your son or daughter, student is 15-and-a-half they do not write a transition plan. You must request and hopefully the teacher knows at that 16th birthday a transition plan must be written. So what I've seen before is "Oh, the IEP at 15-and-a-half."

So then they wait until 16-and-a-half to do the IEP with a transition plan. Wrong, we have to have a transition plan for a student at the age of 16. I will be honest with you, it used to be age 14 until the reauthorization. But I've also heard legislation being talked about that it might go back to 14, which I'd really love to see it go back to 14 because the earlier the better [inaudible 00:25:35]. The earlier we start working towards transition . . .

Chantal: Actually there are some people who have sent in comments already because even though the legal mandate nationally or federally is for 16, some states have it at 14.

Colleen: I'm hoping it goes back to 14, but I'm glad to hear that the years are often different in the states and some states are doing 14 because it really is, the sooner the better. But regardless, 16 has to be the case, and again, make sure it's done before that 16th birthday or on the 16th birthday that they have a transition plan. In the transition plan you have to include appropriate, measurable, post-secondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments.

Let me explain this a little bit more. Post-secondary -- I know as an educator when I do training of teachers sometimes they don't understand what post-secondary means. I just want to clarify it. Post-secondary is after the students leave public school. So it might be 18, if that student receives a diploma or it might be 22, when the student ages out or anywhere from 18 to 22. But it's after the student leaves public school the post-secondary goal is created.

Now it also needs to be based on age appropriate transition assessments. So every year that student must be assessed in transition areas. So right now I'm going to go over it. They need to be assessed because you need to have post-secondary goals and education or training and employment. So you have to have each student has to have at least, two post-secondary goals. Again, they need to be related to education or training and employment, and where appropriate independent living skills.

Like when I train teachers, I'm sorry but what student does not need a post-secondary goal for independent living skills? What regular ed. student does not need a goal for independent living skills? I am really a believer that all students really should have independent living skills and goals.

So again, I reiterate this on the site a few times, two post- secondary goals and the post-secondary goals even sometimes for teachers it gets very confusing. Because we as educators have always been taught in schools, by 2016 Johnny will be able to do something with this much percentage accuracy as measured by teacher data. A very long goal that's measurable.

A post-secondary goal is a will statement. The goals must be stated in terms that can be counted or as occurring. So the word will must be used. Words like hope to, plans to, might are not measurable. So the post-secondary goal has to have a will statement.

Just for example, for a post-secondary education goal will be something like, "John will enroll at a college or university. John will enter an apprenticeship program." That could be a training goal. "John will complete an on-the-job training." That is a post-secondary goal, a very short will statement. An employment goal: "John will work fulltime."

As a 16-year-old, a lot of them don't know what they want to do and so that's what's nice about the transition plan. It could be something as "John, will work fulltime." Then maybe by the time they're getting closer to graduating, John will know what kind of work he wants, so then you can change that goal to "John will work at a restaurant. John will become a cook at a restaurant." At the very beginning when students really don't know what they want to do, but they do know they want a job it'll be a simple, short statement.

Some examples for independent living could be, "John will live independently. John will live with family. John will live in a group home." Again, it's a very short statement and that is what a post-secondary goal is.

Chantal: Are these goals on the ITP and then they're broken down into shorter goals and objectives on the IEP, or are these goals on the IEP?

Colleen: Typically these post-secondary goals are in the Transition Plan and one thing I do want to reiterate because I've been hearing this from a lot of professors. A lot of people still call it ITP, but really I've been told it should be more of a Transition Plan within the IEP. Because I saw -- and I really did see this -- that ITP became almost a separate document from the IEPs because they write an IEP and "Oh, I've got to do this ITP." So it's really been stressed now that it's a Transition Plan within the IEP.

Because it is just an IEP, but at age 16 you now have a Transition Plan with transition language. So everybody has it different on their Transition Plan, but I have seen them sometimes written into the IEP. But depending on your district and how they write it, but regardless at age 16, somewhere in that IEP because again, it's one document there should be at least post-secondary goals. Hopefully that's clear?

Chantal: Go ahead, I want you to finish because it's a good discussion for later. It's really good.

Colleen: So then the annual goals are going to support the post- secondary goal. For example, just like our Transition Plan -- what we did -- we even have our annual goals numbered, one, two, three, four, and five to link to the Transition Plan. So if the post-secondary for employment goal is, "John will work in a restaurant," then the annual goals we have one, two, three, four, we have a line that says which annual goal is going to help John achieve that post-secondary goal.

You need to make that the annual goals then, that they're written to support the post-secondary goal, and of course, those are just done every year annually. So a lot of teachers when I do this presentation panic. Like, "Oh my, gosh. It's going to be all these other goals." But here's how I always explain it. Let's say John will work at a restaurant. One of his annual goals is going to be, do something in his math class. Well, that annual goal will support John in a restaurant because we all know having the skills of math and writing, those will help with the post-secondary goal.

But of course, if John needs to start getting some training, we here in San Diego, have a ROP Regional Occupation Program, so they can do some training classes. A good annual goal would be maybe "John will participate in a culinary arts class," if he wants to be in a restaurant. So that could be an annual goal. But again, the annual goals must support the post-secondary goal.

The other thing is identify school transition services and activities including course of study. This slide I'm going to break down a lot more in further slides.

But we do need to make sure there's a course of study and I'll just talk about that when I get to that slide. Then show evidence of community agency contact regarding future participation and responsibility. Those are your linkages because we all must have the student involved in the Transition Plan and link them to services that they can benefit from when they graduate.

In addition to developing post-secondary goals, the law also requires schools to provide transition services and/or activities based on the student's strengths, preferences, and interests that will support the annual IEP goal and the post-secondary goal. These services should include . . . okay when I just read that. It's "Based on the student's strengths, preferences, and interests" again, I keep going back. But this is a good example of a good PCP -- person-centered plan -- because a person-centered plan is getting all that information of what the student's good at, what they want to do. Of course, there are a lot of other assessments out there that people can use too.

But the person-centered plan can be used as an informal assessment because you are asking and doing those questions when you do a good person-centered plan. So again, what is mandated? Instruction which is course of study, related services, community experience, employment, other post-secondary living objectives, acquisition of daily living skills when appropriate, which hopefully, I think, everybody realizes all appropriate functional vocational evaluation, and then schools are also mandated to provide the student with a summary performance indicating his or her academic achievement and functional performance upon exiting the school system, both these students with a diploma and students who have exceeded the age of eligibility. I'm going to give you more information about all of this.

Now I want to go into detail of what is mandated? Instruction and course of study. The course of study defines the multiyear set of classes and topics of secondary schools. So in a way some schools call it a four-year plan, but you must have somewhere showing me how that student is going to reach his post-secondary goal through a course of study. So it cannot be a transcript because a transcript is what they've already taken, but it could be just if they're working towards their diploma, what are the courses they're going to take to achieve that diploma.

If it's going to be a certificate, what are the classes that are going to lead towards that certificate and what are the training programs that they might utilize to achieve that certificate. So it really is a four-year plan of what the student is going to be doing in the years from 16 up to achieve that post-secondary goal. So again, that is called course of study and that is also mandated.

Community experiences, I personally believe regardless if the student is getting a diploma or will not be getting a diploma and will be moving on to maybe a regional center program after the age of 22, all students should have some experience in the community. Like here in San Diego, even when our students are getting a diploma, some of them might not be driving. But do they know how to get around on the city bus because that's probably going to be there way of getting to a job. So I really do believe we need to be providing community experiences. This is best practice.

I know it's very hard in some schools because they're [A through G] they're trying to get their diploma and to take a class or to take some time to get some community experiences, it's hard when they have so many requirements. But best practices are if we are getting students some community experience. I think it needs to be done for all students, not just special ed. students. The more community experiences they can give a student, I think the better.

The next one is employment. We were talking about how that has to be a post-secondary goal and a lot of students have no clue what they want to do. So ideally best practice again while the student is in public education, let's give them some experiences. Let's give them lots of experiences so they can get an idea of what kind of job they might want. I'm a firm believer that if it's afterschool, weekends, a couple hours, we have a Work Ability grant in the state of California that gives kids experiences where they can get paid minimum wage and then also hopefully get hired by that business.

But the whole idea is to give the students lots of experiences. I know too many people unfortunately are so tied in to trying to get the diploma and it's already so hard to get that diploma, but can they when they graduate fill out an application, do an interview, and get the job? We need to be teaching those pieces. It's just as critical as a diploma that they can be able to get their own job.

Chantal: And little comment here, just like you made the comment before. They should be teaching all kids that. My daughter is at UC Davis and when she was in high school and she was going for part time jobs, she even had to work experience class, just because I thought, "Let her learn those practical things, like checkbooks, filling out an application," because AP English is wonderful, but my goodness, they don't teach them that in school anymore. Everyone wants to get all these high academics, but even the general education population, they're not learning these basic skills, and I just find that crazy.

Colleen: Oh, absolutely. That's the thing, all my kids they've all gone to UC schools, but I just hope my son trying to apply for summer jobs now they really are not. It's so sad. So again, I would really stress like we both said, it would be

great if all students can get it, but really students with disabilities let's get them as much experience as possible.

Independent living, yes, we know it's not mandated. It might be. I've heard that too, that they might mandate that there is an independent living goal. But again as we just said, what student does not need some independent living skills? Again, not even students in special ed. everybody needs to have some kind of independent living goal. So I strongly encourage that everybody still does write independent goals because it really can benefit them; the budgeting, the shopping, the cooking. Budgeting's the big one because a lot of them cannot budget their money.

So it's critical to include independent living. Then on the previous slide I told you about the other post-secondary living objectives. I'm a firm believer we need to be teaching student's self-advocacy. Too many times I've worked with students - - especially when they get older -- and ask them what to do. They really can't answer those questions because they've always relied on somebody. So we really need to be pushing self-advocacy. We need students that once they reach the age of majority of 18, but let's still start working towards this even when they're younger. Students have the right to know what their disability is and how it affects them, their learning, and so they can live independently. These are just some rights.

"Students have the right to participate in IEP meetings. Students have the right to have individuals who understand my disability serve on my IEP team. Students have the right to accept or refuse services. Students have the right to disagree with IEP and to receive help in writing any complaint requesting mediation." It would be cool, if not always just the family, if a student doesn't like that IEP let them do it.

"Students have the responsibility to ask questions until they are understood. Students have responsibility to attend all meetings and actively participate in planning for my adult life." So that's why it's critical that they're at these meetings. And it's a student's responsibility to follow through and be cooperative with any process that I request. This could go on and on and on and on. I just want to stress we need to be teaching students advocacy skills.

Because I had a student who got a job at a business and didn't disclose that they had a disability because she didn't want to. That's her right, but then she lost her job because she wasn't able to do the cash register. I think it was a good experience for her. It is okay to have a disability and that it's okay to disclose your disability because I think it would have saved her job. But the bottom line is that was her choice and I am a believer that we need to listen to the students.

But I do think she learned and the next interview we took her to she did disclose it, still got a job. So we just need to make sure that students with disabilities realize "It's okay to disclose it" and "It's okay to talk about it" and it's better if they do.

Chantal: The other thing too is it brings up a good point though, that it's okay if students fail at something and make mistakes and now's the time to do it, to have disappointments because they are going to have disappointments. It's better when they have disappointments when they're in high school in Transition when they have support of staff and family around them. To have their first disappointments before they're out in the real world. Because we all have disappointments so we can't always make it perfect for them. It's by failing and learning from mistakes that we actually grow.

Colleen: I totally agree. Too many times we're protecting them from those mistakes and then later on it's even worse. So I totally agree. We need to let them have those experiences.

Agency linkages, in California we actually have a really, really good rapport with Department of Rehab, Regional Center, so we're really fortunate. But we had to build that up. For years we really didn't have a good experience with some of those agencies. But now we really have a task force with each one of them. We meet all the time. I'm meeting with them Monday.

We really have a good rapport with them. But regardless, we need to be linking the students to services that they can get after public education. If there's a student who, and again, I know it's different in different states, but Department of Rehab is available for students who need help on the job. So even if they do go on to college, I still take my students down to the Department of Rehab so they know what services they can provide because that would be a link to help them get a job. They even do some of the training classes. They even help pay for some of their school. They can provide some services for students. So it's good to get them linked to them.

Now will DOR come into an IEP meeting? Honestly probably not. But we need to make sure that the family and the student is aware of their services. Regional Center, now I will say down in San Diego we do have most all of the Regional Center Service coordinators, they do come to IEP meetings. But again, if they don't we need as educators to make sure everybody is aware of the services they provide, because again, that is the linkages that the students are going to be hooked up to when they leave public education.

But again, most of these agencies will not provide services while the student is in public school. So the student is in school until age 22, most of those services will

not come in early to provide any services, because it is the obligation of the public school to provide those services. But again, regardless of that we still need to make sure that the families are very aware of these services so when they leave they're linked to these agencies.

Then an additional IEP mandate is the summary performance and summary performance I thought was a great idea. What summary performance is you're going to take the student's academic achievement and function performance, including recommendations, and how the student is meeting their post-secondary goals? It's a summary of their public education. It's a summary of their assessments. It's a summary of how they did on their IEP and what goals they achieved, what accommodations they need.

Because the idea of a summary of performance is the student is handed this packet with information about them on accommodations, about their assessments so they can take that packet to a community college or a college and so the college has information on the student and what was done in the public school system. I encourage students to do this, but I do know that unfortunately a lot of times I pass this on. I give it to them and I always tell them "You can come back." Because it never fails that they lose this packet and then they're not passing it on to the community college or college or training program.

But that is the point of summary of performance, is that it's a summary of what they did. So then when they move on wherever they're moving on to can look at everything and get an idea of what they have accumulated in their public school years. Then the back page is a bunch of resources, National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Centers, the second is a wonderful resource. It gives you examples. There's a section for parents, a section for teachers.

A lot of these are really great resources. So I hope this was enough information to give you guys a better understanding of transition and I know that there might be some questions. So feel free if you guys want to start talking about questions, etc.

Chantal: That's great. You'll leave that screen up so that if people want to they can be copying down information.

Colleen: Correct, yeah.

Chantal: So I'm going to go to the questions. But first I did want to say a few things. I think it's really wonderful the presentation you gave and it really nicely balanced out the transition that I was speaking about in the keynotes yesterday. I really loved that you brought in the whole self-advocacy bit, because that is so

important and self-advocacy starts when they're little just being able to choose what they want to eat in a restaurant, making decisions as little as that.

Because when they leave high school, if they're going to go to college or they're going to be at work, let's take the college for example, parents are not eligible or able after the age of 18 to be involved in college. So if they need accommodations, they need to be able to ask for them, themselves. So during the whole time at school in the IEP process, it's the opportunity for them to learn those self-advocacy skills that they're going to need to have when they get to the college campus.

So even someone as impacted as Jeremy who needed specific technologies to communicate and he has to have a support person to go to college with him. That support person is not there to do things for Jeremy. That person is there to help with the equipment to make sure he doesn't get lost on campus because of his vision challenges. But Jeremy is the one that had to request the accommodation.

So it's all this training that they did with IEP goals, you know what your accommodations are. Why do you have those accommodations and which ones will you need in college? All these things are so important. Then for work it's the same thing. If you have a problem on the job, who're you going to ask for help? All these kinds of things that mom and dad are not going to be standing behind you, so what I was talking about yesterday about the parents preparing themselves, this whole part of preparing your child is also preparing yourself, because you're not always going to be there.

I think that even in our society these days, even for general education parents, I call them helicopter parents. I'm just amazed at how parents of general education children seem to think that they're supposed to get involved or even impact their college years. But the point is you have to learn to let go because the kids have to learn to do what they need to do as adults. And that's what the high school and transition years are for then while your general education kids are at home too.

It's giving them those skills so that can be more independent and that we won't need to hover. And it's really hard when you're talking about kids with autism or other disabilities because we have to teach them so much that they don't pick up by osmosis and that they don't have the life experience. So it's really nice to hear Colleen talking about all those things. Gosh, I wish Jeremy was 15 years younger and was in your Transition Program.

Colleen: One thing that I want to bring up when you said with Jeremy went to college and he turned 18, a lot of the people don't realize. Let's say they stay in

public education until age 22, everything you just said also occurs when they turn 18 in public education. Because a lot of times parents think, "Okay they're still in public education." So the IEP is still pretty much driven by parents.

But do you know we can literally say if they're not conserved you can try to make it a team approach because it's very critical that everybody is at the table. But legally it's only the student that has to attend those IEPs after he's age 18. Yes, we make sure everybody's there, but legally they're adults. They're 18 and they are now the ones who are running that, unless they're conserved. So if the student doesn't want the parent at the IEP at age 18-19 we can't say "I'm sorry. Your son or daughter doesn't want you at this IEP."

It doesn't happen that often. We've had a few times. Bottom line is though, like she was saying, it really is once they're adults, they're adults, and they're running it unless they've been conserved.

Chantal: That's a really good point.

Colleen: Good ahead.

Chantal: That's a really good point. I'm glad you brought that up because I forgot to bring that up. But I wanted to ask you your opinion because I agree about students being involved in IEPs. But in some cases, there are situations where the IEPs are a bit traumatic because maybe the school district and the parents are not in agreement with a lot of things. I'm not just talking about discussion types of things that can be settled nicely in an IEP meeting because that's great when you have discussion.

But sometimes parents don't feel they want the students there if they think that they're not in that situation where everyone's working together. How do you think that should be handled?

Colleen: What we've done in the past, I really still want that student there, but maybe just at the beginning if we're talking about the person-centered plan that drives the goals for that IEP. I still like to see that student there at the beginning and then we all know it can be not everybody agrees on the team. But if we can just get the student there at the beginning to discuss some of the issues, so they start being a part of it.

But I agree we don't want students to be in a situation where it's not friendly. So still I think it would be nice if they could be there for a part of it. Or if it's just a part of the Transition Plan, educators, and parents, you get an idea of what you're going to disagree and agree on. So maybe if the students can be there at

the parts where everybody's going to probably agree on, I think it'd be very important to have that student there during that time.

Chantal: Okay I'm going to start asking you questions that have come in and I'm going to remind people that they can either write into the box on the screen if they're online and if you're on the phone, you can do a star two, and it's going to indicate to me who's on that wants to ask a question. So you might have to sit there and wait for a little bit. But do star two.

Okay so this is from Sharon in Boise. How can you make the school accountable for your child's learning on the IEP? I feel that my son's school does not take responsibility rather they have an aide or teacher write the correct answers for my son to copy and/or reduces expectations so low that he's able to meet those, but does not challenge him to strive for more.

Colleen: You're saying they're writing the son . . . okay, I'm assuming you're saying that the aide's doing classwork. I think that's what I understand.

Chantal: That's what it sounds like and maybe if Sharon is listening, she can write in another comment to clarify that.

Colleen: Are they writing the IEP and saying they accomplished -- I guess I'm a little -- if they're writing the IEP goals saying yes, he did it. Or are they doing his schoolwork for him, either way.

Chantal: Let's see if Sharon can write it back in, but go ahead and answer if you have something to say.

Colleen: Well, bottom line is they shouldn't be doing that. I mean we've got to, again, make sure the student is being involved in that. So if it is the schoolwork that you think the aide is completing for the student, hopefully the teacher sees that that is not acceptable. I can't imagine if your son or daughter has three or four teachers and there's an aide in the classroom that is doing all the work.

I am sure that out of those three or four they're not all going to let the aide do it. But I think at that point, you need to find a teacher who is really saying "We don't want the aide to be doing this," and seeing what they're doing to make sure that this student is doing the work.

And talk to them and say "How are you making it work out that my son is doing this work in your class, but then the other classes the aide's doing the work?" So talk to that one teacher where it might be working and then see if you can come up with strategies in that class. Then move it to other classes and I hope that's what the question was asking.

Chantal: Okay so there are a couple of comments here, so if Sharon wants to clarify she can go ahead and write in and we'll look at it later. There are a couple of comments in here from Chicago. I think we answered one or two of those. One of them said that in her area mandates the transition plan is at 14. She's commenting that it's not true about the 18-year-old thing because before 18 most people look at guardianship, and our district has a form to sign off on who they want to give educational decisions to.

Again, that's a state-by-state thing when you have conservatorship or guardianship. So for example, in the state of California there are I think eight different categories and so there's one that's educational. So I think we can't make big comments here, generalizations because every school district handles things differently.

But it's very true that if you don't have your child's conserved at the age of 18 when it comes to decision making, it has to be clarified who's making the decisions. It might be different in your area, but it's still exactly what Colleen is saying. It's that someone has to make that decision of who has the right at 18. Hold on a second here.

Again, Moe's asking or commenting. Maybe you can reply to this. Having a disability would not save someone a job. No one should have to disclose. That statement was not accurate, but requesting accommodations to complete the job. You should not be treated differently if you have a disability; however, if you request accommodations, that is good.

Colleen: Right. It's up to the student or the person if they want to disclose. But some people have disclosed and it's helped them. But again, you're right. They can just ask for accommodations, but a lot of times some people are wondering "Why the accommodations?" Really, it's up to the student if they want to disclose. There's no law that they have to, etc. but sometimes it can benefit for them.

Because like I said, I feel like in this one situation the student had just talked a little bit about some of the accommodations, what they need, they need help with us. They would've saved that job. But I think so many students are so worried to talk about accommodations, period, that it hurts them in the long run. So the more important thing is we need to teach them advocacy skills. Say "Hey, I need help in this." Hey, like me, I need help in math and I don't have a special ed. so we can teach them to ask for that help. So they'll be more successful.

Chantal: Right, but the point is that if you don't bring up -- unless the law has changed in the recent year -- unless you bring during a job application that you

have a disability or that you need certain accommodations, you cannot get hired and then say that you need these accommodations.

Because then they can fire you because you didn't disclose it. I think that's the point that you were making that she had this job. She didn't say anything about needing accommodations. She couldn't handle the cash register so she got fired. So it all has to do with whether you disclose or not. Whether you disclose accommodation need or you disclose a disability, but it has to be done before they're hired, otherwise they can let you go.

Colleen: Yeah, because they need somebody to be able to do that cash register. She could have asked for accommodations, but she never even said anything to them and just was fired because nothing was discussed.

Chantal: Okay, will you please address how transition plans vary when IEPs have focused on behaviors and mental health issues for students who are not Regional Center clients? You need me to read that again?

Colleen: Can you read that again?

Chantal: Yeah. How transition plans vary when the IEPs have focused on behaviors and mental health issues for students . . .

Colleen: Okay well, the transition plan really needs to then start looking more at 16 as those post-secondary education employment or independence. I mean it's mandated. So yes, behavior, mental health issues are going to have to still be addressed because for them to be successful in life, that has to be addressed. But at 16 you must be asking for those post-secondary goals. So now the mental health and behaviors have got to be infused so they can be successful as an adult. Does that make sense?

Chantal: Yes, it does. Here's a question, there are two questions that have to do with homeschooled individuals. So I'm going to read one and then after you answer I'll go to the next one. This is Barbara in Raleigh. Do you have any recommendations to help an older teen who's 18 transition? He has [Asperger's syndrome], has always been homeschooled and is not quite ready for college and does not receive any support from local public schools.

Colleen: He's homeschooled, but he definitely I'm assuming has some sort of disability?

Chantal: He has Asperger's syndrome. He's always been homeschooled and he's not quite ready for college and does not receive support from the local public school; any recommendations to help an older teen transition?

Colleen: Yeah.

Chantal: Well, it sounds like then you have to do the same kind of things at home.

Colleen: Right, another good place to start is and I'm assuming I don't know. All throughout this nation has disabled students services at the community college or college levels. Then maybe, this is just a suggestion, if even meet with they call it DSPS, Disabled Student Program Services. Every college typically has some kind of support for special ed. and here in San Diego we have a continuing ed. which is even a little bit below the community college level. That might be a good way to start the whole process of transition, getting more used to moving out -- not moving out -- but doing more than just being the homeschool. That's just a suggestion you could try there.

Chantal: Right. There are some areas that do have really community college programs which also have what you're talking about. So it really depends on the area you're living in. But I guess if they've been homeschooled it really will be a transition if they want to physically go to college. They're going to have to get used to all those things that need to be out in public, to interact, the same kind of self-advocacy skills as well.

Colleen: Yeah, with employment, all of that.

Chantal: This is from Teresa Farrell Ryan in New Milford. My son never had an appropriate Transition Plan. The district kept insisting he was extremely low cognitive functioning and we were teaching high school academics through the rapid prompting method. We were forced to homeschool. We are running out of time. My son wants to go to college, but we'll run out of time and money from the district before completing his high school diploma. By the way, he is very intelligent and wants to be an accountant. What do I do? Are you familiar with the rapid prompting method?

Colleen: Yeah, and the other thing is what I want to say is, we have a lot of students who do not get their diploma while they're in public education. But back to my previous answer, the community college actually does have -- at least out here -- and that's what I'm saying. I'd really look into your community colleges because a lot of them have some kind of diploma program for students.

We have two options here in San Diego. There's one in through the community college or we also have one -- it's a high school diploma program -- that is doing an independent study packet program for students who are still trying to achieve

their diploma. So yeah, because it does, it takes a lot longer for some of our students to achieve that diploma.

But that's where sometimes they've just got to get hooked up into the community college and see how many more credits they have and they can get assistance still in the community college with disabled student's services too. So I would first thing, check with the community college, and see if they have some kind of program for students with disabilities to finish up that diploma.

Chantal: Yeah, and there's a GED diploma which means you don't have to get it specifically through the high school and actually that's what we were aiming for with Jeremy because Jeremy always said, "I want to learn, I want to learn, I want to learn." So that was one of the goals besides work, was getting his GED.

Actually it was the school at an IEP meeting who said, "He has enough credits and he has to pass the California Exit Exam and he has to finish X number of credits." I felt well, "I don't know that he's going to pass the high school exit exam." They said, "Well, you get six tries." It's a proctored exam and he was able to do that. But the thing is, is that I had thought we would go through the GED process.

Seriously having a high school diploma was not a goal for me because I was more into all the functional things. But I have to say and I think things are different now -- Jeremy's 25 -- it was much harder for Jeremy to learn the functional things at school. He was learning them at home better because of his sensory motor challenges.

So what we did at school is again, when Jeremy started at school at 14, and he wasn't typing yet, the Work Ability person there at the school said that she didn't think that Jeremy was community ready which was amazing because my son's always been. That's the first thing I did. Put him out in the community. Because I work with people at Fairview State Hospital and we were training them to go live in group homes, and so that's the first thing we did, out in the community.

I think everyone can learn the skills they need to be out in the community if you teach them specifically. So the teacher who came from another high school, he was like "Yeah, why wouldn't Jeremy be able to have a job?" So we started these self-employment jobs at the school and Jeremy was so motivated to do some of this self-employment things that were really hard for him to physically.

This is how we used Jeremy's OT services is that the OT person came and saw what Jeremy wanted to do, like he wanted to sell flowers to peers. So he had to go shopping for the flowers. He had to put the flowers together and he had to put them in a little thing and all these little steps you have to do. And by golly,

that OT showed the staff how to help Jeremy step-by-step because of the motor issues.

And then Jeremy was very motivated because he was earning money to get his assistance dog. It wasn't for M&M's and it wasn't to go buy fries right away. It was he needed \$1000 and he understood that if he twiddled with the flowers and if he broke the flower that was \$3 bucks he wasn't getting in his pocket. So he stopped twiddling during that time and he learned the steps and it helped him with other things.

But the point is we couldn't work on too many different things because that's an enormous amount of time. But to get back to the academics, I realized that the school they were able to do the academic part which was a lot harder for me at home. Because they accepted they had success with Jeremy at school with the learning. So when you're homeschooling it is really hard because you're trying to find how you're going to have people learn the skills they need to learn.

And it's a shame that your school is having difficulty with . . . I don't know if there are assessments now that can be done with your son to make that easier for your school to understand what his level is. But I think it's a great idea to try with the community college to see if there are other specific programs. So I don't if that's really helpful, but just remember also that not everybody who went on to get a job has a high school degree.

Jeremy ended up going to community college for a bit part time and he ended up stopping, not because . . . he loved the classes. But he started having panic attacks and PTSD things because of things that had happened in the past and it was just hard in that environment. But he's still learning. He's learning in different ways and then he still gets his social environment in a different way than going to community college.

But it's looking at what's possible and reaching for that, but if it's not working out what can you do as an alternative, but still have them learning, I think. I don't know if that makes sense.

Colleen: I think so, yeah.

Chantal: I'm going to go look and see if there's someone on the phone while you answer this question. This is from Vinnie. My child is 14. How can I make school see the need for an ITP? The school can easily say that I have to wait until he's 16. Regional Center says we cannot give vocational training before 22. How can we get Regional Center to see the need to participate with resources before 22?

Colleen: That's very sad to hear that, to be honest with you. Yes, Regional Center will probably tell you they will not provide any services until age 22. They really can't because the public school system is. But they still should be able to talk about potential resources. Our Regional Center has a lot of resources that they can give to parents about the future. So they probably won't be doing any of the actual job skills, things like that, now.

But the school district should be. So at 14, you have a right to ask for a Transition Plan. You can just say "I would like a Transition Plan to be part of IEP so we can start talking about getting some vocational skills." Our district what we do is at age 14, we do a lot of job skills on school campus and they actually even get school credit for it, and they also get a stipend.

So it might be working in the cafeteria or it might be working . . . That's a good place to start. Because at 14, a lot of them this might be their first job, so maybe if they can even do something during the school year at the school to build that first job task. Then going out from there the Transition Plan that you write, that you want these jobs skills to occur, and then also, that they can maybe start doing community jobs the following year or what's best for your son.

But yes, you just need to ask and say "I am asking. I want a Transition Plan built within my IEP." Then maybe, ask if he could start getting some job experience. Because most schools really like having some of the students get some job experience. Again, it would be great if all students had that.

Chantal: Right. [inaudible 01:12:12]. I think most Transition Programs are improving everywhere. I know that it's different from place to place, like for example, in San Diego in your school district, Work Ability is run with the Department of Voc-Rehab, correct?

Colleen: No, well budget cuts. I do the Work Ability Program. I'm also the one who's in charge of the Work Ability Program. We had voc- rehab counselors, but unfortunately like I said earlier in the PowerPoint, budgets have really been cut in our district. So now we don't have voc-rehab counselors, but we do have assistance.

We call them School to Work Transition Assistance at every high school and they are taught to get 14-15-year-olds on school campus jobs, then from 16 and up jobs off campus through Work Ability. But again, that's our district. I really think as a parent still start talking because hopefully people will realize the importance of Transition Planning and we do need to start there. I really do think it can happen in any state, just ask for it. Hopefully they can understand the importance of it.

Chantal: Yeah, if you don't get it one way try it another way. Like for example as I said, when Jeremy first entered the school he was in, the Work Ability person was not very supportive at all. But his teacher was great, so he organized something and I supported it in any way I could what he was doing. But then there was a new Work Ability person and then things changed. So you might get a no, one way so you ask a different way or you find a different way to make it work. But asking for the ITP at 14 is really . . . you have the right to do that, so you should be doing that.

Maybe there are other ways of working things out of getting those work experiences, if you're not getting it directly with the Work Ability person. You never know. It all depends on who's there. That's why it's so good to always have an open mind so even though you might think you had one idea of what could work, if that's not working, think about "How else could I make this work?"

Because sometimes I know -- maybe I shouldn't say this -- but sometimes the teacher would do things and he would say "My theory here, my philosophy is to just do things and then when I get my hands slapped, to ask for forgiveness afterwards." But you can't always do that. I don't know if I was supposed to say that, Colleen.

Colleen: [inaudible 01:14:14]. It's true. The personnel changes all the time, too. If you don't get it from that person maybe talk to somebody else. And again as I said earlier, you were just saying the Work Ability person was great and the next year it was somebody different. It does change. So you've just got to find that right person who's going to really help you get some of these experiences for your son or daughter.

Chantal: Right. So someone, BJ in Burbank, Washington says, "Where can I find these services in Washington State? It's through school, if your child is under IDEA.

Colleen: Right and check out the website, the National Technical Assistance. That's a secondary that's national, gets nationwide information. So that's another way is if you're saying your school district isn't providing some of these services, go to that website. It's pretty much telling districts what you must be doing.

Maybe sometimes when they're seeing it from the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, you can give that to them and they're going to go that website and like, "Oh, man we should be doing this." Maybe you can get some resources from a different place and take it in, and that might help too, because yes, they should be providing it.

Chantal: Hello, can you hear me?

Colleen: Yeah, I can.

Chantal: Okay my phone just did a little weird thing. Here's another question. It's Sharon from Boise who we weren't sure what she was talking about when she was asking about the questions being written down under goals. So here's her clarification. "My son reports to me that he just copies the correct answers from what the aide puts down, but doesn't understand why that is the correct answer.

I feel that the school places his goals low enough that they know he can pass at that level, but do not challenge him to be able to do more. Therefore he reports that he is bored with school. Well, I'd be bored too if I didn't understand why an answer was the correct answer to be honest. I want to be sure I write Transition Goals to make the school more accountable."

Colleen: Yeah, and I definitely think, of course he's bored. He's not doing anything because someone else is doing the work for him. So I'm hoping, again like I said earlier, that there's somebody at that school, a different teacher that he's in that classroom and he's making him do some of the work. But if not, which I really hope that's not the case, I do think you need to then call an IEP meeting and discuss this. Just say "He's bored."

Kids that are bored, it could just get worse. We need to challenge these kids and so we need to maybe look at not having the tutor there the entire time and maybe he could work with a peer and maybe the peer will have him do more of the work. I mean these are just ideas, but we need to make sure that he is doing some of the work and he's being challenged because I'd hate to see him not being challenged and then who knows what could be happening next.

So I would definitely call an IEP meeting, discuss with the team, "My son is just copying the answers from the aide. I need to have him make sure that he can do it because what we're doing now is not teaching him the skills to be successful later on in life." That's what I would recommend. I don't know Chantal, if you have anything else to say. But that's what I would do.

Chantal: No, I think so. I think that's a great idea and making sure that he has some goals on there that are based on something he's interested in, so that he is going to be motivated to learn.

Okay here's another question. I'm going to tell people again that they can either star two or write in questions. We only have about ten more minutes.

Sandra in Austin, Texas is asking "Are these services only available to children in public schools? For several reasons we withdrew our daughters with autism from

public school and they've been taught in a private school. They are now 14 and we want to prepare for their future, be it if they want to go to post-secondary education or employment. Are we cut off from all of these services that children in public school are given?" That's really excellent question.

Colleen: Yeah, and I don't know how . . . I think you're from Boise or I forgot where. But really I know in our state, even if a kid is in a public school or a non-public school, the IEP is still written by the school district. So then we still need to make sure that the IEP is still being accountable at that school. So if the IEP has some post-secondary, we are responsible to make sure it's still happening at that private school.

Now of course, I don't know if that is the same in your state, but I know that's typically how we are in our state. So I would definitely maybe check with your school district and see if how it works at your district. That's what I would recommend.

Chantal: Good answer. Okay, no one else has a question, but I do. Not so much a question, I just wanted to give people a resource because you talked about person-centered planning tools which are really important. I just wanted to name a couple of them so people could look them up online and maybe have a better idea of what you're referring to.

One of them is called PATH, so it's P-A-T-H, and that's a creative process that works backwards. You start with the person's wishes for the future and you move forward to what first steps can be taken to go in that direction and then you identify who in the room there -- all the people that you've gathered together -- can help that person reach his goals. So that maybe they're doing one little aspect of that.

MATS -- M-A-T-S is another type of graphic planning tool and then there's another one called Essential Lifestyle Planning. So those are the kinds of things you might want to look up online if you want more information about person-centered planning.

Colleen: I'm glad you brought that up. I don't know why I forgot about that, because I do it in the other PowerPoint on that. Just I like the PATH, we think it's person-centered planning for students with disabilities. But I'll be honest with you, the PATH, we created a PATH just for my school. So it's not even just . . . it's really trying to reach your goals.

The whole idea about person-centered planning is we really come up with goals and we have an action plan on how to reach those goals. I mean yes, when you think about what I just said, that's the IEP. But I just feel like sometimes when

you get a bigger group of people surrounding that student, that really care for those students, you do see more success and there's some accountability.

Because all of these PCP, person-centered planning that you just mentioned have an action plan on the first step you're going to do to achieve that goal. The second step, so it's all in writing how to achieve those goals and it could be drawings. It could be just handwritten. Yeah, I would definitely Google person-centered planning or look at any of those three resources she just mentioned.

Because it really is a powerful tool and I really have seen student's lives change because of that and it can really drive that Transition Plan.

Chantal: I wanted to mention that even if you have students that have low communication skills, they're still very useful because you're gathering around people that know your child or your student in different environments. So the first time we did one for Jeremy he was communicating a little bit with pecks and he could say some words, so we knew a bit about him.

But when people have observed your child or spent time with your child in different environments, they know what makes them happy. They know what makes them unhappy. They kind of can figure out what he likes, what he's drawn to, and all of that kind of helps if someone can't really communicate what their thoughts and feelings are about their future.

Colleen: Yeah, it's a powerful tool and it works. I've seen it work. So I'd strongly recommend looking into it.

Chantal: I had a question for you because I loved your idea about preparing the kids. For example, learning how to open their locker and close their locker before the school starts. I always recommend to parents . . . and here in California it's a little easier because it's nice outside. School's usually have a quad and so you can actually -- if the school is locked up -- you could still go walk around the school and have the student be familiar.

So I always recommend to parents to take their kids on the weekends or in the summertime before school starts to the new school. So they can practice walking up to the door and here's the cafeteria or here's this or here's that. But the problem is a lot of times you can't have access to the school. How do you convince the school that this is something that needs to be planned for?

Because I know it's so hard, especially with budget cuts, school starts the end of August or the beginning of September and everybody's in a rush. How can you make that work? Do you have any suggestions?

Colleen: I really think almost all schools and I'm initially from Colorado so I totally understand. For all of you guys in the cold country our schools are closed in, and it's hard to get on. Because when I first moved out here I'm like, "Wow, this is weird. The locker rooms outside. Doesn't it rain?" Well, it really doesn't rain here. I know you've been hearing about that. So we don't have to worry about that too much. I wish it'd rain more.

But the admin are almost always there three weeks before the school year starts. Teachers usually always go back at least three to four days before school starts. But I really feel I have not seen that. Because I do encourage people to do this all the time just go talk to them. It's really the secretary that's at the front door.

I've never had anybody say because you're a parent and you've got your son or daughter with you, just go in and they'll have to be the custodian . . . I've always had good luck. I really have never had anybody say "No, we cannot do that." You might not get the principal or a teacher to take you around, but a lot of times they will allow you when you talk to somebody -- make sure you do talk to somebody -- to go in the front door and then to allow them to walk around.

I've never seen anybody say no. I really haven't because I really do encourage this. So I would just make sure that before school starts, the week before or two weeks before they do make that first phone call. "I really want to show my son or daughter the campus because they're very nervous about it." And I also know most schools have before school starts days where the students can come in and pick up their schedule and things like that, especially at the high school level.

Almost every school has them come in a little bit earlier. But even those days there are a lot of students on campus. It's nice to have the campus to yourself on a day that orientation is not happening. So I would just contact, call the main office, and like I said, I've never seen someone say no. Hopefully that doesn't happen to you, but that's what I would do.

Chantal: Good point. Okay do you mind if we go a few minutes over because there are now four comments that came in.

Colleen: Sure.

Chantal: Okay here's Julia from North Andover and I really like her comment. She says "Regarding the students whose aide is doing much of the work resulting in low expectations and he's bored, I'd strongly suggest that the student attend the IEP meeting at least to the extent that he can self-advocate and that he say that he wants to learn more and is willing to work hard to achieve that."

Colleen: Great idea, yeah.

Chantal: Somebody asked, "I missed the bulk of this presentation. Is there any way to hear it again today? Thank you very much for everything." I don't think there's a way to hear it today. But there are two things. It will be replayed sometime this week, but also you can click and order transcripts if you want to have transcripts. But if you're on the email list, you'll find out when there's a replay.

Mo, in Chicago says, "There's something called proportionate share in our state." So this is the state of Illinois. "The district provides a very small portion of services, however, the parent needs to go to her neighborhood school and get her legal IEP." So this is for the person who's in private school. "This IEP can also assist the private school with knowing what is required and there might be things that they could actually provide."

Well, thank you for that, Mo. Good to know. Collette, in Massachusetts, my daughter is 19-years-old. She had an IEP throughout school from kindergarten for communication difficulties. She graduated from a technical high school, started college in nursing, became overwhelmed, and took a leave of absence in the fall. How can I get her back in school and find out what she wants to do and be successful?

Colleen: Maybe the one way to start this is a person-centered plan to really get people around her like we were talking. Because maybe the goal isn't . . . I know as parents we like to see them all go to college, but it sounds like nursing maybe it was too overwhelming or is just what she doesn't want to do. But maybe start with a person-centered plan and really start talking about some of the goals and dreams that she wants to do, and include other people in her life. Maybe she'll be more comfortable with deciding what she wants to do.

Chantal: Yeah, and maybe it was just something that has to do with the school and not the actual career. So when you're doing that person-centered planning maybe it'll be revealing too about what was hard for her that she didn't want to go back. So that's all the questions we have. Are there any last comments or wise words of wisdom? You've really been wonderful, Colleen. I think you've been so informative and there have been a lot of people listening.

Colleen: Well, I just thank everybody. It's cool to see so many different states and to hear what other states some of your comments, too. But I really do appreciate it and it's exciting. Really how many times in education it's all about passing the test, doing good in school, but it's not about their future.

It's more academic and make sure they get that degree or diploma, but really not talk about what's going to happen after they leave public school. So I love Transition because it's starting people to think and talk about what really is going to happen with their son or daughter after they leave public school. So it's a really critical time and it's exciting. So I do appreciate you guys all being a part of this.

Chantal: Thank you, Colleen, for accepting to be on this show and for taking so much time out of your schedule. And for the other listeners, we'll be back on in half an hour and we will be talking about financial planning when you have a child with autism. Okay, thanks so much, Colleen.

Colleen: Okay, thank you.