



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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December 18, 2023

The Honorable Louise Lucas
Chair, Senate Education and Health
PO Box 700
Portsmouth, Virginia 23705

The Honorable John Avoli
Vice-Chair, House Education
PO Box 1942
Staunton, Virginia 24402

Dear Madam and Sir:

As required by Senate Bill 1288 (Chapter 452, Acts of Assembly 2021 SSI) and House Bill 2299 (Chapter 451, Acts of Assembly 2021 SSI), Code of Virginia - § 22.1-214.4 (4.), the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) submits the attached statewide plan for improving (i) its ongoing oversight of local practices related to transition planning and services and (ii) its technical assistance and guidance provided for post-secondary transition planning and services.

If you have any questions or require additional information relative to this report, please do not hesitate to contact the Assistant Superintendent of Special Populations, Dr. Samantha Marsh Hollins, at Samantha.Hollins@doe.virginia.gov , or at (804) 750-8738.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lisa Coons

SMH
Enclosure



STATEWIDE PLAN TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY TRANSITION PLANNING AND SERVICES

Interim Report

Presented to:
General Assembly of Virginia
Chairmen, Senate Committee on Education and Health and
House Committee on Education

December 19, 2023

STATEWIDE PLAN TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY TRANSITION PLANNING AND SERVICES

Interim Report

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LEGISLATIVE DIRECTIVE

This report has been prepared and submitted to fulfill the requirements of Senate Bill 1288 (Chapter 452, Acts of Assembly 2021 SSI) and House Bill 2299 (Chapter 451, Acts of Assembly 2021 SSI) from the 2021 Special Session I of the Virginia General Assembly which required the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to develop and maintain a robust statewide plan for improving (i) its ongoing oversight of local practices related to transition planning and services and (ii) its technical assistance and guidance provided for post-secondary transition planning and services. At a minimum, such plan shall articulate how VDOE will reliably and comprehensively assess the compliance and quality of transition plans and services for children with disabilities on an ongoing basis and communicate findings to local school division staff and local school boards.

The VDOE shall, no later than December 1 of each year, update the Chairmen of the Senate Committee on Education and Health and the House Committee on Education on its progress in implementing such plan.

Improvement Plan Update

Over the past year, the VDOE and its collaborative partners have implemented a plan to ensure effective local implementation of secondary transition planning and services. Progress has been attained on the following strategies in an effort improve transition planning and services in Virginia:

- Beginning December 2022 through October 2023, the VDOE and its partner agencies provided 50 trainings and/or resources to build awareness of and knowledge about transition planning and services.
- On January 12, 2023, and October 16, 2023, the VDOE received additional support and technical assistance, as needed, from professional organizations and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs funded centers, such as the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: Collaborative (NTACT:C).
- On February 18, 2023, training and technical assistance efforts focused on supporting school counselors in being equipped to support all students in their transition planning and services and supporting school division leadership in ensuring policies and procedures was provided to support school counselors in these efforts.
- On February 8-9, 2023, and April 21-23, 2023, stakeholder groups explored innovative ways to continue to promote self-determination as well as ways to measure self-determination to monitor progress and outcomes. The VDOE also sponsored meetings of youth leaders with disabilities to inform project development and management between January 11 and October 3, 2023. I'm Determined Youth Panel and Presentations were also executed on various dates and occasions from January-September of 2023. Echo events were also supported across interested local school divisions to support capacity building for transition and self-determination skills and support across the last year.
- On June 14-16, 2023, and July 16-18, 2023, the VDOE supported school divisions in updating policies and procedures to ensure all staff is responsible for supporting

transition and confirming processes are documented to ensure staff turnover does not affect implementation fidelity.

- On February 21, 2023, and October 19, 2023, the VDOE partnered with its regional Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTACs) and the Virginia Assistive Technology Network to ensure assistive technology is being considered by all teams to ensure access to classroom instruction and as an imperative part of transition planning and services to ensure the student has access to and can engage in transition opportunities as independently as possible.
- Beginning December 2022 through October 2023, the VDOE, in partnership with other stakeholders on 16 opportunities, developed and/or disseminated a variety of resources available to students, educators, families, and the community that address a wide range of topics regarding transition planning and services including writing effective transition plans; considering all areas of transition for all students in transition planning; transition assessment; specially designed instruction for transition services; youth voice; engagement in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS); and establishing work-based learning opportunities, postschool completion planning, and community resources.

Progress has not been attained on the following strategies with explanations included:

- The VDOE will convene a workgroup with a variety of stakeholders to explore secondary transition strategies, from research and high-performing states in the area of transition, that can be adopted and/or applied in the State of Virginia.
 - Status: A formal workgroup was not convened. The VDOE personnel queried and reviewed a variety of resources from multiple states September through October 2023. During the next year of implementation, a formal workgroup will be coordinated to address the development of this resource.
- A workgroup will develop a coordinated professional learning plan to ensure that educators, families, and community members have the knowledge and understanding of transition planning and services and have the ability to successfully implement transition services and drive meaningful postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities.
 - Status: December 2022 through October 2023, NTA:CT and the State leadership team convened 10 times to discuss inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes, which include activities toward improvement. However, a formal coordinated professional learning plan has not been developed. During the next year of implementation, a formal workgroup will be coordinated to address the development of this resource.
- The VDOE will also convene a workgroup with a variety of stakeholders, including technology specialists, to explore a community mapping platform for Virginia's community resources and transition services and opportunities.
 - Status: During the next year of implementation, a formal workgroup will be coordinated to address the development of this resource.
- The applied studies diploma has limited value helping recipients access post-secondary opportunities, because it previously did not have any required standards or curriculum. Most notably, neither Virginia's community colleges nor four-year higher education

institutions recognize the applied studies diploma as a high school diploma or equivalent certificate. Students with an applied studies diploma who are interested in pursuing further education from a community college generally must obtain their GED before they can enroll and receive financial aid (sidebar). Similarly, USDOE considers the applied studies diploma to be a certificate, not a diploma, and does not allow VDOE to include the applied studies diploma in its annual report on graduation rates among students with disabilities. During its meeting in October 2022 the Virginia Board of Education adopted guidance to local school divisions to support the implementation of statewide requirements for earning an Applied Studies Diploma will encourage high expectations for students with significant disabilities while ensuring maximum flexibility of IEP Teams to support students as they pursue this diploma option.

- Status: As a result of this work and to further respond to the field the VDOE will explore the use of the Applied Studies diploma through the Special Education Work Group as well as investigate options to ensure meaningful diploma options for students with disabilities.
- Training and technical assistance, including coaching, will be provided to support school divisions in building practices around data, including the implementation of a school division transition self-assessment, the development of a data system, collecting data to monitor progress, and analyzing data to make informed decisions from the individual student to the division level. The VDOE will partner with its regional TTACs and the Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS) to ensure alignment and integration within the school division’s established Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).
 - Status: Progress toward this goal was attempted intermittently but has been limited due to VDOE staff vacancies. A VTSS Specialist job announcement was posted September 12, 2023. Upon onboarding new staff, during the next year of implementation, coordination of this goal will be ensured as a strategy for improvement.

The VDOE would like to reassess the following strategy, as written:

- The VDOE will explore the Indicator 14 Survey to identify what criterion eliminates individuals who are working from being counted as having “competitive employment” as well as students with disabilities in higher education.
 - Explanation: The VDOE utilizes the federal definition of competitive employment; therefore, the goal should be revised.
 - Proposed revision: The VDOE will provide an awareness of the federal definition of competitive employment to ensure the understanding, interpretation, and impact on Indicator 14 data.

CONCLUSION

The VDOE will continue to build, promote, and advance practices to improve effective teaching, student learning, and achievement with a focus on transition planning and services for students with disabilities at the secondary level and expansion of practices at the elementary level. This work will be informed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction’s Special Education workgroup which began meeting in September of 2023. The workgroup will continue

to meet to discuss priorities in special education one of which has been identified as post-secondary transition for students with disabilities. The workgroup will inform the development of the 2024 Special Education Roadmap and will collaborate across the VDOE including in the areas of work-based learning and innovation to ensure students with disabilities transition with success following their high school career. This work and collaboration will support meaningful graduation pathways and implementation of activities that will assist youth with access to employment; postsecondary education; training and independence within the community; and continuous improvement with secondary education indicators (graduation, dropout, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) requirements, and postschool outcomes).