## Special Education Program Review Tool

### Essential Features of a High-Quality Special Education Program

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<tr>
<th>Program features</th>
<th>Examples from a program demonstrating the highest standard</th>
<th>Examples from a program demonstrating an acceptable standard</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERTISE</strong></td>
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| 1. Highly qualified staff | - Staff hold full credentials/licensure and advanced degrees in content area.  
- Staff are experts in working with children and adolescents with and without disabilities.  
- Staff collaborate with specialized instructional support personnel as needed. | - Most staff hold full credentials/licensure and advanced degrees in content area, with a small percentage holding temporary credentials.  
- Staff schoolwide demonstrate a commitment to increasing knowledge of research, evidence-based and promising practices, and models of collaboration. | - A high percentage of staff have not met licensure requirements and/or do not have content expertise.  
- Instructional and educational practices are not evidence based.  
- Instructional staff rarely or never collaborate among themselves.  
- Special education teacher serves as classroom aide.  
- Related services personnel are disconnected from the academic environment. |
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| 2. Expert knowledge of policies and regulations | • Special and general education staff and administration demonstrate high level of knowledge about implementing effective programs for students with disabilities.  
• Program reflects understanding of how state and local policies and regulations support quality programs for students with disabilities. | • Administration and special education staff demonstrate knowledge of regulations, policies, special education process, and individualized education programs (IEPs), and meet essential timelines. | • Staff rely heavily on special education administrator and special education teachers to meet compliance requirements.  
• Focus is on policies and procedures rather than connections to student learning. |
| 3. Staffwide expertise in social-emotional and behavioral needs | • Staff and administration receive specialized training in how to respond to mental health issues, including how to respond in non-academic settings and/or during out-of-school time.  
• Specialized instructional support personnel are present to facilitate delivery of instruction and supports. | • Administration and school staff are aware of connections between mental health, physical health, and school success, and they work to address needs of students.  
• Supports include academic, social-emotional, and behavioral health. | • Supporting student mental health is responsibility of staff according to their respective role (e.g., school psychologist, school counselor, school nurse, social worker).  
• Strategies are not aligned to support physical health and mental health. |
| 4. High-quality professional learning | • Administration prioritizes professional learning (PL) through effective scheduling.  
• PL activities meet the needs of staff in their roles.  
• PL activities are embedded and include classroom observations, peer observations, and self-check inventories.  
• Training is provided on working in partnership with families.  
• PL is aligned with evidence-based and promising practices, and with state mandates. | • PL activities are embedded and meet needs of staff in their roles.  
• PL is available for staff and related service providers on effective ways to work with families. | • PL focuses primarily on recertification and credential renewal and does not include embedded activities.  
• Focus of PL is on roles and responsibilities connected to position (e.g., special education teacher, general education teacher, school psychologist). |
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| 5. Student access to the general curriculum | • All students have access to rigorous curriculum, with full continuum of services, in general education setting.  
• All students have access to co-curricular activities, with supports as needed. | • IEPs include goals to increase amount of time students spend in general education settings.  
• Some students with disabilities are involved in co-curricular activities. | • Students with disabilities are mostly served in pullout settings, that is, outside the general education setting.  
• Students have little or no access to co-curricular activities.  
• Programs are not meaningfully individualized; students are expected to fit to available program rather than provided access to programs designed to meet their individual needs.  
• Basic compliance is the standard. |
| 6. Positive learning environment | • Evidence-based practices are implemented.  
• Positive behavioral supports are in place.  
• Schools implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with high level of fidelity.  
• School leadership and all school staff are invested in success for all students.  
• Families are partners in schoolwide programs. | • Administrative guidelines and policies related to behavior are implemented with fidelity.  
• Responsibility for positive learning environments is shared with families. | • Different behavioral expectations exist for students with IEPs compared to those for the majority of the student body.  
• Relationships with families are minimal and are not collaborative. |
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| 7. Student engagement | • All students are included in all school activities.  
• All students are held to high expectations for regular attendance.  
• All students, with or without disabilities, have embedded opportunities to interact in academic and non-academic settings  
• PL and training about student engagement are available for staff, families, and community, aimed at reducing likelihood of students dropping out of school. | • Students with disabilities are generally engaged in schoolwide activities.  
• All students are held to minimum attendance expectations.  
• Dropout prevention strategies are implemented by staff in a variety of roles.  
• Staff advocate for student inclusion and engagement opportunities | • Exclusionary practices exist for co-curricular activities  
• A high rate of absenteeism appears to be acceptable for students with disabilities  
• No strategies are in place to increase engagement of students with disabilities and to reduce their likelihood of dropping out of school. |
| 8. Family support and engagement | • Staff communicate and work effectively with parents.  
• Staff support families through child's transition between grade levels.  
• Families are included in development of school materials, with attention paid to language and culture.  
• High percentage of families of students with disabilities are active in the parent-teacher organization.  
• Parent input and needs are collected through a variety of data-collection tools. | • Parents receive required notifications and invitations, and they attend meetings.  
• Staff are skilled in communicating effectively with families about their child's disability.  
• Parents of students with disabilities are involved with the school community activities.  
• Families of students with disabilities are involved with the parent-teacher organization. | • School staff do not recognize families as essential partners in education programs for children.  
• No collaboration exists between school staff and families on school programs and activities.  
• There is little or no transparency in school decision-making.  
• Families are not supported when they have questions about policies, rules, expectations, or administrative decisions.  
• Few families of students with disabilities are involved with the parent-teacher organization. |
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| **9. Data-driven decision-making** | - Evidence of data-based decision-making is apparent to all stakeholders.  
- Programs and practices reflect data-driven decisions.  
- Data come from multiple sources, including comparative data generated through use of universal screening tools.  
- IEP meeting notes reflect data-driven decisions. | - Student data are used to support development of and changes to student IEPs.  
- Benchmark data and continuous progress monitoring provide timely information for decision-making.  
- Families and students understand basis of decisions. | - Students' information is gathered by using tools and data that are outdated and misaligned with intended practices.  
- The lack of transparency about the basis of decisions leaves family and student without sufficient information. |
| **10. Effective secondary transition** | - Transition planning and exploration of postsecondary opportunities begin when students enter high school, if not earlier.  
- Multiple providers are involved in transition planning.  
- There is evidence of enrollment in postsecondary education or training, employment, and independent living.  
- Families are provided the support they need to connect their children to appropriate transition services. | - All students with disabilities have a plan for postsecondary experiences, including further education or training, employment, and/or independent living.  
- Students have opportunities to explore interests.  
- Families receive information about and support in connecting with appropriate transition services. | - A transition plan is part of the IEP, but family is expected to follow up on opportunities without support (e.g., family is given a packet of information with little or no offers of assistance to make connections with appropriate transition services).  
- There is limited evidence of successful participation in postsecondary education or training, employment, and/or independent living. |
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• Translation and interpretation services are available to all non-English speakers.  
• All families feel welcome at school.  
• Staff are representative of the community's cultural diversity.  
• Administration and staff actively support LGBTQ students and families.  
• All staff receive PL for meeting special culture-based needs of students and families.  
• Staff proactively track data and monitor for disproportionality in disciplinary actions. (This program review tool uses the term disproportionality to refer to the over- or under-representation of any student group compared to that group's presence in the overall student population—in special education and/or in disciplinary action.) | • School staff are actively engaged in welcoming diverse students and families through outreach and availability of interpreting services.  
• Some schoolwide activities honor cultures within the school community.  
• School staff and administration are aware of the potential for disproportionality when implementing and reviewing disciplinary policies and procedures. | • There is little or no systematic approach to welcoming and assimilating diverse students and families.  
• Disproportionality in disciplinary practices and/or identification of students with disabilities is evident, and there is no plan to address the issue. |
<p>| <strong>12. Effective early childhood transition from part C to part B</strong> | • Family members are coached in ways to engage their child in development of self-determination attitudes and skills when the child is very young. | • Families, community providers, and school staff work together to support the child's transition to school. | • Professionals lead families through transition from early childhood services to school-age services rather than facilitate families' abilities to manage their child's transition. |</p>
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<td>TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION</td>
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<td><strong>13. Authentic team approach</strong></td>
<td>• Students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other school staff all have input into how IEPs will ensure that students receive supports. • Administrators are integral to the team. • Families and students are respected as essential team members. • Team members include those in non-mandated roles (e.g., employer of student in work setting transition activities).</td>
<td>• The team is composed of all required members, as well as individuals in roles that will support implementation of the student's IEP. • Families and students receive some preparation and support for being team members. • The administration supports team recommendations and assists in providing adequate resources for programming.</td>
<td>• The school takes a top-down approach, and the team does not include all roles essential to IEP implementation. • Paperwork and IEP implementation are the sole responsibility of the teacher of record. • Families and students receive little or no preparation or support for being team members.</td>
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<td><strong>14. Creativity</strong></td>
<td>• Programs are developed to meet the needs of individual students. • Students receive academic and non-academic support in the least intrusive ways. • Special education services are integrated into general learning activities. • An effective problem-solving process is in place.</td>
<td>• IEPs reflect student interests, abilities, and preferences. • Supports and accommodations are available in general learning activities. • Problems are addressed on a case-by-case basis as they arise.</td>
<td>• Services are provided based on labels and disability categories. • Many IEPs are similar to one another, with goals and accommodations that are not truly individualized. • Programs are not customized for students' abilities, interests, and preferences. • There is no flexibility or willingness to look at alternative approaches to address needs. • Problems are not anticipated, and there is no process for addressing them.</td>
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<td><strong>SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS</strong></td>
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<td>15. Community partnerships (e.g., with child- and family-serving agencies, businesses)</td>
<td>• All students have access to opportunities for volunteer work, internships, employment, and recreation programs.</td>
<td>• A program is in place for students to connect with the community to extend classroom learning and participate in community service and outreach.</td>
<td>• Only students with IEPs are provided with services, and most job opportunities are limited to the school/campus.</td>
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<td>• Students with disabilities are engaged in service learning/community-based instruction that is linked to the general curriculum and classroom instruction.</td>
<td>• Interagency collaboration exists among community agencies and schools.</td>
<td>• Access to community-based learning experiences is very limited or non-existent.</td>
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<td>• Community agencies are partners in planning and implementing community-based programs for students.</td>
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<td>• Community agencies rarely if ever collaborate with each other or with schools.</td>
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<td>16. Adequate funding of special education programs</td>
<td>• Administrators take proactive steps to coordinate funding of special education services within the larger school program.</td>
<td>• Funding for special education is understood to be an integral part of the whole school budget.</td>
<td>• Funding special education is seen as separate from funding general education.</td>
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<td>• Community outreach and activities educate the public on school programs and student successes.</td>
<td>• The community is informed about school programs and student activities.</td>
<td>• Special education is considered to be a financial burden that creates a hardship on general education programs.</td>
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<td>• Staff have necessary resources for effective instruction.</td>
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<td>• Resources and materials are outdated and not developmentally appropriate.</td>
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<td>• The school is seen as separate from the community, resulting in diminished support for school budgets and capital projects.</td>
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### SUMMARY SHEET

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition Planning</th>
<th>Domain Score:</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Priority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Transition planning begins early in a student's educational experience (but no later than 16 years old) and continues throughout a student's school career.</td>
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<td>2. Transition plans are based upon person-centered planning approaches in which the student's strengths, capabilities, interests and preferences are identified.</td>
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<td>3. Transition IEP outcomes and postschool goals are based upon student strengths, interests and preferences.</td>
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<td>4. The transition IEP identifies postschool goals using appropriate transition assessments related to postsecondary education and training, employment and independent living skills.</td>
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<td>5. The transition IEP identifies needed transition services and courses of study to assist the student in reaching his or her postsecondary goals.</td>
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<td>6. Post-school outcomes data is collected for students who have exited school to track postschool success and the effectiveness of the school-based transition planning process.</td>
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### Family Involvement | Domain Score: | Score | Priority |
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<td>7. Family members (including extended family, friends and others if appropriate) regularly attend all transition planning meetings</td>
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<td>8. Transition planning takes into consideration the impact of transition upon the family as a whole and not just focus exclusively on the needs of the student.</td>
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<td>9. Family members are involved in all decisions that are made by the transition team.</td>
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<td>10. Accommodations are made to involve family members in the planning process (e.g., time and location of transition planning meetings are flexible) and to include extended family members in meetings.</td>
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<td>11. A process is in place so that family members, students and professionals reach consensus regarding transition outcomes and services, including the courses of study.</td>
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<td>12. Information is provided in a variety of formats to families about transition planning, services and the IEP.</td>
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### Student Involvement | Domain Score: | Score | Priority |
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<td>13. Students are taught decision-making skills using research-based curricula beginning as early as possible but no later than upon entering middle school.</td>
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<td>14. Students are provided with opportunities to make real-life meaningful decisions so that they possess the skills necessary to make informed choices about their future.</td>
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<td>15. Students are invited to and attend transition planning meetings and are active participants in the planning process.</td>
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16. Students are given opportunities to learn about and/or directly experience an array of postschool outcomes (e.g., postsecondary education and training, community jobs, etc.)

17. Students are actively involved in developing their own transition IEP and are supported to lead their IEP meeting (e.g., self-directed IEP meetings).

18. Parents are provided with information about the importance of self-determination and self-advocacy for transition.

**Curriculum and Instruction**  
**Domain Score:**

19. Appropriate academic instruction is provided to prepare students for functioning in their community, including attending post-secondary education.

20. Appropriate vocational instruction is provided, including community-based vocational experiences, to prepare students for community employment.

21. Appropriate instruction and opportunities to engage in independent living is provided to prepare students for functioning as young adults in the community.

22. Appropriate social/interpersonal and recreational skills instruction and opportunities to establish social relationships with peers is provided.

23. Teaching takes place in natural and age-appropriate settings including community settings. This would include post-high school (e.g., postsecondary) settings for students aged 18-21 still receiving special education services.

**Inclusion in School and Access to General Curriculum**  
**Domain Score:**

24. Specific strategies exist for facilitating the social inclusion of students with disabilities into regular school programs, activities, and extra-curricular activities.

25. Teachers in regular academic and vocational courses are provided with assistance of special education services to adapt their instruction and curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students.

26. A process is in place and used by IEP teams to make decisions about each student’s educational program that takes into account both unique student learning needs and access to the general curriculum.

27. Accommodations for supplemental services to support students in the general curriculum are identified on the IEP and used in an ongoing basis within the general curriculum.

28. Appropriate accommodations are included in the IEP in order for students to fully participate in state and district-wide assessments.

**Interagency Collaboration and Community Services**  
**Domain Score**

29. School-business partnerships and linkages exist and promote effective employment opportunities for students.

30. A process is in place for schools and agencies to determine the anticipated service needs of students in transition from school to adult and community services.

31. Services and supports are available to facilitate formal and informal natural support networks and community connects for students with disabilities.

32. Accurate information about the range of community services exists and is
available to students and families.

33. Agencies develop written interagency agreements to identify roles and responsibilities regarding exchanging information, sharing of resources and coordinating services.

34. The school district has at least one professional responsible for coordinating transition services, and in particular, working with outside agencies to identify barriers to effective services and to plan for improving transition and community services.

**Transition Assessment**

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35. Formal and informal assessment measures are available to school staff in order to develop transition plans that target postschool goals and outcomes (e.g., employment, postsecondary education, independent living).

36. Transition assessment procedures are customized for each student so that specific information is collected regarding student needs, postschool goals and individual preferences and interests.

37. Assessment procedures and methods are matched to the learning and response characteristics of each student.

38. Assessment procedures include multiple and ongoing activities and methods that sample critical transition behaviors and skills.

39. Procedures are in place to present transition assessment results to students, families and staff and to incorporate critical information throughout the transition planning process.

40. For students graduating or exiting special education services, a summary of academic achievement and functional performance with recommendations for meeting postsecondary goals is developed and shared.
Weiss, Lopez, and Rosenberg (2011), these conditions include initiatives that are systemic, integrated, and sustained with diverse funding streams and school leadership. Initiatives should be a critical element of school and district improvement plans with the capacity-building efforts integrated into school structures and processes. These include not only training and professional development but also recruitment and mechanisms for assessment and evaluation. Finally, district leadership must view parent engagement as systemic and be able to coordinate parent engagement strategies as part of the overall plan for school improvement. Additional research also focuses on the importance of school-level leadership and teacher beliefs and efficacy on parent involvement (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010).

School leadership. School leaders often set the school climate and have the power to encourage or discourage school practices, including parent involvement (Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010). The foundation for parent involvement in the proposed model relies on school leaders who (a) know and understand the importance of parent involvement in promoting students’ in-school and post-school success, (b) value parents as partners in education, (c) believe that parents want the best for their students and manifest their support in various ways, (d) effectively communicate values to school staff and support ongoing professional development and support for parent involvement, and (e) initiate and/or actively support parent involvement programs (Campbell-Whatley & Lyons, 2013).

Teacher beliefs and efficacy. In addition to school leaders, it is also important to have teachers who support parent involvement. There is consistent evidence in general education that teacher attitudes and invitations they extend to parents to be involved in their child’s education are important influences on parents’ decisions to become involved (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Simon (2004) found parents who perceived more outreach from their child’s high school (e.g., school contacts about their child’s academic program, contacts with information about how to help children with homework or specific skill development) were more involved. This increased involvement included more parent–child discussions about post-school goals, school activities, and homework completion, and greater levels of attendance at school activities.

Given the potential impact of invitations for parent involvement, it is important that teachers make it an integrated part of their teaching practice. Integrating parent involvement into practice requires belief that it is important (Pajares, 1992). School staff who do not support parent involvement (e.g., believe that it is too much trouble) have been found to actively discourage parent involvement (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). In addition, teachers who held
male assessments of their ability to affect changes in levels of parent involvement were less likely to believe that forming partnerships was important for promoting parent involvement than teachers with a more positive perspective on parents (Landmark, Roberts, & Zhang, 2013).

**School Interventions**

A school culture that values parent involvement provides the foundation for parent involvement programs and initiatives (Mapp & Kuttner, 2014). Traditional forms of involvement include volunteering at the school, attending parent-teacher conferences, open houses, and school activities, as well as participation in the schools' Parent Teacher Association, and supporting homework completion (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). However, most of these activities along with school structures and norms are most responsive to "middle-class, U.S. born, able-bodied, standard English-speaking parents" (Goodwin & King, 2002, p. 5). In an effort to provide culturally responsive involvement opportunities, several strategies have been offered, such as schools (a) creating and clearly communicating their commitment to culturally responsive parent involvement, (b) obtaining parental perspectives through surveys or interviews, (c) providing flexible meeting and activity times so that more parents can attend, (d) offering seminars and parent-teacher team building activities, (e) assigning a parent liaison, (f) creating a cultural resource binder, and (g) providing a family space or room within the school (Goodwin & King, 2002).

In addition to the aforementioned activities, some parents, such as parents of youth with disabilities, play distinct roles in their children's education that may require extra training and support. For example, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) proposed a model of parent involvement that identified factors thought to affect parents' decisions to become involved in their child's education (i.e., parental role construction, parental skills and knowledge, and parental efficacy). Not present in the Hoover-Dempsey model but included in this model are parent expectations, which have been demonstrated to influence parent involvement behaviors (e.g., Doren, Gau, & Lindstrom, 2012). This conceptual model proposes that school interventions should be aimed at increasing these three constructs in the five roles that parents play in secondary school and transition planning, as well as in assisting parents in forming high and reasonable expectations for their youth.

**Parental role construction.** Parental role construction is simply parents' beliefs about what they should do as parents in relation to their child's education. Based on role theory (Biddle, 1986), Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) defined it as "parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their child's education and the patterns of behavior that follow these beliefs" (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005, p. 107). Parents' beliefs about their role in their child's education are influenced by culture (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001) and socioeconomic status (Lareau, 2003) and can lead to different types and levels of parent involvement. For example, several studies have identified Latino immigrant families as holding the belief that teaching academic skills is the role of the school; therefore, they often take a more passive role in school- and home-based involvement (e.g., Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). These findings have also been replicated with low-income families (Lareau, 2003). Role construction is also shaped by parent beliefs about child development and effective parenting practices (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Although there is currently no research that assesses the impact of parental role construction on parental involvement in secondary school and transition planning, research supports the importance of role construction in shaping parent involvement practices for parents of elementary (Sheldon, 2002) and secondary students (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005).

**Knowledge, skills, and parental efficacy.** Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) suggest that the particular skills and knowledge parents possess will influence their forms of involvement. For example, if parents feel knowledgeable about writing but less confident in their math abilities, they are more likely to help their student with writing tasks. Extended to transition activities, if parents feel more confident in their ability to create resumes or look for jobs than connecting with resources in the community, they are more likely to help their child find a job rather than pursue community support services. However, possessing knowledge and skills to support a child in academics or transition does not guarantee that the parent will indeed become involved. Parents must also have a sense of efficacy for helping their child succeed.

Grounded in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), self-efficacy is a construct that refers to one's belief that their efforts will positively affect outcomes (Bandura, 1997). It is important to note that self-efficacy is distinct from skills and knowledge as it refers to the "beliefs about what one can do with the sub-skills one possesses" (Bandura, 1986b, p. 368). In regard to parent involvement in secondary school and transition planning, parental efficacy refers to parents' beliefs that their efforts will positively affect their child's in-school and post-school outcomes. Previous research has demonstrated that parental efficacy is linked to parent involvement. Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1992) found that parents with higher parental efficacy were more likely to be involved than parents with a weaker sense of self-efficacy.

**Parent expectations.** For students in general, parent expectations have been linked to academic achievement (Chen & Gregory, 2010), school engagement (Simons-Morton & Chen, 2009), and college attendance (Crosnoe, Mistry,
& Elder, 2002). Parent expectations have also proven to be significant for students with disabilities. Recent studies have found that parents of youth with disabilities who held high expectations of their children tended to have better post-school outcomes in employment and post-secondary education (e.g., Doren et al., 2012).

Although there are not currently any research-based practices for raising parent expectations, several studies indicate that parent expectations are dynamic and influenced by the parents' perception of how their child is doing in school (Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001) and teacher expectations (Lereau, 2003), suggesting schools could potentially affect parent expectations. Parent expectations are also influenced by knowledge of available services. Francis, Gross, Turnbull, and Parent-Johnson (2013) found that parent training on competitive employment options for people with disabilities through the Family Empowerment Awareness Training (FEAT) increased parent expectations for competitive employment. A follow-up survey found that parents reported accessing competitive employment resources following the trainings with nearly one fifth reporting competitive employment outcomes for their son or daughter (Francis, Gross, Turnbull, & Turnbull, 2014).

**Expanded Parent Involvement Roles in Secondary Education and Transition**

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) suggest that the beliefs underlying parental role construction are based on experience with their own parent's school involvement, observation of their friend's involvement in child's schooling, and expectations for involvement held by groups to which parents belong, including schools. Parents of youth with disabilities may not have family or peer groups to observe and model or who share similar experiences (e.g., attending transition planning meetings). The school, however, can develop parent involvement roles and expectations and communicate these to parents. For parents of secondary students with disabilities, these roles extend beyond attending meetings and helping with homework. These roles include decision maker and evaluator, collaborator, instructor, coach, and advocate (described below). Schools should provide parents with knowledge and skills to enable them to effectively fulfill these roles and develop their efficacy for supporting their child.

Parent training has been effective at increasing parent knowledge, skills, and efficacy. For example, theirspeels and Rivero (2001) reported that parents' role construction evolved as they gained new information through attending six 90-min training sessions focused on how to interact with teachers and support their child's academic success at home. Results indicated increases in parent-initiated communication, more positive and supportive interactions with their child at home, and more engagement in teaching activities at home. Parents also demonstrated an increase in advocacy at school, as they pressed to see their child's records and understand more about the child's progress. These behavioral changes reflect a shift in role construction as parents learned the importance of an active role in education.

Although each model previously reviewed discussed the importance of parent involvement in education, models addressed parental roles and forms of involvement in slightly different ways. To adequately address parent involvement in secondary education and transition planning, it is necessary to consolidate roles from the literature and expand traditional definitions of parent involvement to reflect roles parents assume during school-age years and the future. Expanding these roles will also provide a new lens through which teachers can view parents. Geenan, Powers, and Lopez-Vasquez (2001) found that professionals reported relatively low involvement for CLD parents in both home-based and school-based transition planning. CLD parents also reported low levels of school-based involvement but indicated relatively high levels of transition planning activities at home. Oftentimes, parents who do not participate in traditional school-based activities are thought to be uninvolved, which contributes to the assumption that the families who are often "of color, poor, economically distressed, limited English speakers, and/or immigrants" (Mapp & Hong, 2010, p. 346) are uncaring and "hard-to-reach" (Mapp & Hong, 2010). Expanding the role of parents and forms of involvement may also help educators to become aware of and appreciate many of the invisible strategies CLD families use to support their children's education (e.g., Delgado-Gaitan, 1994).

Parents as decision makers and collaborators. IDEA mandates parents of students with disabilities are part of the IEP team and considered partners in educational decision making. Having adequate information about their child's course of study and activities while in high school can affect the ability to be fully informed decision makers and advocates. For parents to be partners in decision making, they must be aware of options and potential consequences of decisions. The impact of educational decisions on a youth with a disability significantly affects future options and post-school outcomes. For example, Blackorby, Hancock, and Siegel (1993) found that students with disabilities who participated in general education academic courses were more likely to be engaged in post-school education, employment, and independent living, findings that have been replicated across other studies (e.g., Davis, Denney, Baer, & Flexer, 2011). Obtaining a high school diploma also influences post-secondary enrollment (Harvey, 2002).

Inclusion in general education and diploma status are not the only relevant school-based decisions that affect student outcomes. Parents need to be knowledgeable
about nonacademic courses (e.g., Career Technical Education), work experiences, and availability of structured school-to-work and transition programs (i.e., predictors post-school success; Rowe et al., 2014; Test et al., 2009). It is important for parents to understand all educational options available for their child and be informed of the impact that their child’s educational path and experiences may have on options and outcomes in the future. It is only with this crucial information that parents can make informed decisions on how to best support and advocate for their child.

Studies of parents of young adults with disabilities during and after the transition from high school to adult service delivery systems reveal that the role of parents is complex and multifaceted. Timmons et al. (2004) described parents as “linchpins” who acted not only as parents and providers, but also as service coordinators, case managers, and advocates. Bianco et al. (2009) found that for parents of young adults with disabilities, establishing collaborative partnerships with adult service agencies and direct service providers was critical in filling service gaps to ensure that the young adult’s needs were met. As with schools, informed decision making can be elusive in the adult service system if parents and youth are unaware of their options. Although the school is not responsible for assisting parents in navigating the adult service system after their child leaves high school, providing information about and connection to pertinent community resources to pursue should they need support could help pave the way for a smoother transition.

Without understanding the different factors that influence post-school outcomes and awareness of availability of programs and resources in school, parents can hardly be called partners in educational decision making. Making decisions or supporting those made by schools without having adequate knowledge inhibits parents’ ability to make informed decisions.

Parents as instructors. Lightfoot (1978) states that in parent-school partnerships, “there must be a profound recognition that parents are their child’s first teacher and that education, deeply rooted in the values, traditions, and norms of family culture,” begins before formal schooling (p. 42). In fact, parents continue to act as instructors through the transmission of socio-cultural values, a form of involvement often overlooked by traditional models of parent involvement (Geen et al., 2001). Although this role of instructor may change as children age, parents continue to influence their child’s growth and development. By recognizing this important and ongoing role of parents as instructors, teachers can collaborate with parents to integrate teaching moments into the daily lives of families to support students in their in-school and post-school goals in academics, daily living skills, and social skills.

academics. Families can manifest their support for education in the home and at school in multiple ways, including assisting with homework. Despite benefits of parental involvement with homework, parents report that helping with homework can put tension on the parent-child relationship (Baumgartner, Bryan, Donahue, & Nelson, 1993). Providing parents information (e.g., appropriate monitoring for their child’s needs and phrases for providing feedback) can increase parents’ effectiveness and influence student motivation for completing homework.

Adapting work from Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001), Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, Whetsel, and Green (2004) described two categories of activities in which schools can invite parent involvement. The first category is focused on activities most families can enact that contribute to student motivation and performance, for example, making sure that parents understand homework policies and expectations through accessible written materials, and assisting parents in establishing physical and psychological structures to support homework completion. Suggestions may be general (e.g., “convey value and expectations of homework completion”) to specific (e.g., “if the child is easily distracted, make sure the phone, music, and TV are turned off”) depending on the child’s developmental needs. Last, schools can encourage all parents to monitor homework and support parents in providing specific positive feedback on homework performance.

Self-determination. Several studies highlight the importance of parents and relationships in self-determination. For example, Lindstrom, Doren, Metheny, Johnson, and Zane (2007) found that students with highly involved families who acted as advocates and provided opportunities for exploration, decision making, and self-determination skill development had better post-school independent living and employment outcomes. Some parents report that passing off more responsibility to their child, nurturing self-determination, and self-advocacy happened later, after high school (Bianco et al., 2009), indicating that this is an evolving process. There are many opportunities for parents to support their child in developing self-determination skills in high school and beyond, including advocating for services on their own or providing feedback to personal care providers.

Several strategies for involving parents in supporting student self-determination can be adapted from strategies for practitioners outlined by Rowe et al. (2014). Teachers can work with parents first to establish the importance of students developing self-determination skills, making the direct connection to how these skills will support the student in achieving their post-school goals. Then, schools can employ parents to assist in developing these skills at home through a range of options requiring little time to more intensive efforts. For example, “expect and support students...
to make many routine choices for themselves throughout the course of a school day” (p. 9). Teachers can help parents examine routines at home and identify opportunities to provide choice (e.g., the order in which to complete chores, selecting dinners for the week, etc.).

Daily living. Daily living skills are activities one is expected to do throughout the course of the day across settings like home, school, work, and community. These include activities such as those involving how to maintain a home, personal hygiene routine, and navigating the community. The extent to which a student with a disability is able to manage daily living activities may affect post-school options. In fact, those students who had high self-care skills were more likely to be engaged in post-school education, employment, and independent living (e.g., Blackorby et al., 1993). Rowe et al. (2014) identified ways schools can support the development of daily living skills including providing instruction based on assessment. These same strategies can be used to support the development of the skills at home. Parents may be open to ideas or suggestions for assisting their child in developing critical life skills (e.g., grocery shopping, household chores such as laundry, cleaning, or cooking).

Social skills. Caldarella and Merrell (1997) outlined five dimensions of social skills, a predictor of post-school success (Testa et al., 2009), which include peer relations skills, self-management skills, academic skills, compliance skills, and self-management skills. Students with high social skills on exit from high school were more likely to be engaged in post-school employment (Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997) or post-secondary education, and to have an improved quality of life as measured by independent living status (Roessler, Brolin, & Johnson, 1990).

In addition to teachers, parents are also important models of social skills (Johns, Crowley, & Guetzloe, 2005). Utilizing families as instructors to assist students in developing skills in these other areas is also important because families have unique opportunities to provide instruction and skill development that are unlike those at school. Rowe et al. (2014) suggested schools provide parents “information and training in supporting age-appropriate social skill development, taking into consideration the family’s cultural standards” (p. 10). Teachers can also assist parents in using routine activities at home as teachable moments (e.g., providing support to students to use problem-solving skills when difficult social situations arise).

Advocates. The roles of parents of youth with disabilities as system change agents and advocates are not new. Historically, special education law includes efforts of both parents and advocacy groups in American courtrooms and legislatures working to ensure equal educational opportunities for students (Yell, Rogers, & Rogers, 1998). However, it is clear that not all parents are able to fulfill these roles in relation to secondary school and transition planning. Multiple barriers exist to parent involvement, including lack of pertinent information (Landmark, Zhang, & Montoya, 2007) and negative professional perceptions both of CLD parents (Geenan, Powers, Lopez-Vasquez, & Bersani, 2003) and parents who advocate for their children as being perceived as difficult (Kim & Morningstar, 2005).

Despite these barriers, advocacy skills are critical for parents while students are in school and remain important once students leave the school system. When Timmons et al. (2004) asked parents to identify the most helpful and effective strategies they utilized in managing adult systems, parents noted advocacy skills as being important in overcoming barriers and accessing services for their child. Bianco et al. (2009) found similar sentiments with parents of young adults with disabilities who reported that establishing collaborative partnerships with adult service agencies and direct service providers was critical in filling service gaps to ensure the young adult’s needs were met. Parents also noted the usefulness of connecting with other parents of children with disabilities and sharing experiences, advice, and support (Timmons et al., 2004). These informal networks of support were noted as relieving some pressures associated with ongoing self-advocacy.

Research has demonstrated the benefits to students when parents are involved in their education. Knowing the importance of advocacy in fulfilling this role both while the students are in high school and once they leave, schools have a responsibility to provide parents opportunities for knowledge and skill development. There is a range of ways schools can connect families with each other and provide parents support in developing these skills. These can include informal events and more structured peer mentoring, such as a monthly parent—teacher led support group, a reading club to explore relevant topics in special education and transition, parent nights, and parent matching (Ripley, 2009).

Although not all parents may want to act as peer mentors for other families, parents have noted the need for support from peer mentors and models for assistance navigating their roles (Bianco et al., 2009).

Implications for Research
This article presents a conceptual model for parent involvement in secondary school and transition planning. Building on existing models of parent involvement, this model expands the role of parents and includes a focus not only on the roles they play in high school but also on the continued role they often play once their child leaves high school. Several areas for future research emerge from this. Acknowledging the expanded roles parents play beyond attending IEP meetings, school activities, and assisting with homework is an important first step in being able to
Transition Curriculums

1. Next Up
2. LCE Curriculum
3. Skills to Pay the Bills
4. Attainment Company – Curriculum
5. Project Discovery: Job Ready. Life Ready – Curriculum
NextUp for Students

To be eligible, students must be at least 16 years old at the start of the program and not yet 21 years old. The NextUp program includes the following features: peer support, job skills training, and access to job opportunities.

Students are provided with:

- Job interview skills
- Professional development
- Assistance with job search
- Network through social media
- See Sample Video Lessons

[View Video]
## What Students Will Learn:
**Scope and Sequence of Life Centered Education’s Curriculum Content**

### Domain: DAILY LIVING SKILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies:</th>
<th>Sub-competencies:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing Personal Finances</td>
<td>• Count money and make correct change • Make responsible expenditures • Keep financial records • Calculate &amp; pay taxes • Use credit responsibly • Use banking services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting and Managing a Household</td>
<td>• Select adequate housing • Set up a household • Maintain home exterior and interior • Use appliances and tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for Personal Needs</td>
<td>• Obtain, interpret, and understand health information • Relate physical fitness, nutrition, and weight • Exhibit proper grooming and hygiene • Dress appropriately • Demonstrate knowledge of common illnesses, prevention, and treatment • Practice personal safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrating Relationship Responsibilities</td>
<td>• Understand relationship roles and changes with friends and others • Understand relationship roles and changes with family • Demonstrate care of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying, Preparing, and Consuming Food</td>
<td>• Plan and eat balanced meals • Purchase food • Store food • Clean food preparation areas • Prepare meals and clean up after dining • Demonstrate appropriate eating habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying and Caring for Clothing</td>
<td>• Wash and clean clothing • Purchase clothing • Iron, mend, and store clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibiting Responsible Citizenship</td>
<td>• Demonstrate knowledge of civil rights and responsibilities • Know nature of local, state, federal governments • Demonstrate knowledge of the law and ability to follow the law • Demonstrate knowledge of citizen rights and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing Recreational Facilities and Engaging in Leisure</td>
<td>• Demonstrate knowledge of available community resources • Choose and plan recreational activities • Demonstrate knowledge of the value of recreation • Engage in group and individual activities • Plan recreation and leisure activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing and Accessing Transportation</td>
<td>• Demonstrate knowledge of traffic rules and safety • Demonstrate knowledge and use of transportation modes • Get around in the community • Drive a car</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Domain: SELF-DETERMINATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies:</th>
<th>Sub-competencies:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Self-Determination</td>
<td>• Understand personal responsibility • Identify and understand motivation • Anticipate consequences of choices • Communicate needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Self-Aware</td>
<td>• Understand personal characteristics and needs • Identify needs: physical, emotional, social, and educational • Identify preferences: physical, emotional, social, and educational • Describe others' perception of oneself • Demonstrate awareness of how one's behavior affects others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>• Demonstrate listening and responding skills • Establish and maintain close relationships • Make and maintain friendships • Develop and demonstrate appropriate behavior • Accept and give praise and criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with Others</td>
<td>• Communicate with understanding • Distinguish subtleties of communication • Demonstrate assertive and effective communication • Recognize and respond to emergency situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Good Decisions</td>
<td>• Solve problems • Identify and set goals • Develop plans and attain goals • Self-evaluate and use feedback • Develop and evaluate alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Social Awareness</td>
<td>• Develop respect for the rights and properties of others • Recognize authority and follow instructions • Demonstrate appropriate behavior in public settings • Understand the motivations of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Disability Rights and Responsibilities</td>
<td>• Identify and understand disability rights and responsibilities • Identify and appropriately access needed services and supports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Domain: EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies:</th>
<th>Sub-competencies:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowing and Exploring Occupational Possibilities</td>
<td>• Identify personal values met through work • Identify societal values met through work • Identify remunerative aspects of work • Locate sources of employment and training information • Classify jobs into employment categories • Investigate local employment and training opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring Employment Choices</td>
<td>• Identify major employment interests • Identify employment aptitudes • Investigate realistic job choices • Identify requirements of desired and available employment • Identify major employment needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking, Securing, and Maintaining Employment Skills</td>
<td>• Search for a job • Apply for a job • Interview for a job • Solve job-related problems • Differentiate between meeting and exceeding job standards • Maintain and advance in employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibiting Appropriate Employment Skills</td>
<td>• Follow directions and observe regulations • Recognize importance of attendance and punctuality • Recognize importance of supervision • Demonstrate knowledge of workplace safety • Work with others • Meet demands for quality work • Work at expected levels of productivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meets All WIOA Requirements!

WIOA Pre-Employment Transition Services

Required Activities you can do right now!

#1 Job & Career Exploration
✓ Invite local business owners to speak to your class
✓ Attend a career or job fair with your students

#2 Work-based Learning Experiences
✓ Have your class volunteer at a local community organization
✓ Have students conduct informational interviews

#3 Post-Secondary Training
✓ Have students take a learning style assessment
✓ Invite a speaker from your local armed services office

#4 Workplace Readiness
✓ Have students develop a resumé
✓ Teach soft skills

#5 Instruction in Self-Advocacy
✓ Bring peer mentors into your classroom
# Curriculum Wish List

## Career Development

### Beginning System
- Let's Discover Banking
- Let's Discover Construction
- Let's Discover Creative Arts
- Let's Discover Health Services
- Let's Discover Engineering Technology
- Let's Discover Human Services
- Let's Discover Aircraft Mechanics
- Let's Discover Medical Careers
- Let's Discover Business
- Let's Discover World of Business
- Cleaning Maintenance
- Filing
- Greenhouse Work
- Grocery Clerking
- Hair Care & Styling
- Mail Handling
- Table Service
- Child Care

### Intermediate System
- Advertising & Editorial Design
- Animal Care
- Autobody Repair
- Caregiver
- Carpentry
- Consumer Services
- Drafting
- Food Services
- Graphic Artist
- Medical Emergency Services
- Medical Patient Care
- Health & Nutrition
- Retailing
- Sewing
- Skin & Nail Care
- Trucking
- Upholstery
- Wallcovering

### Advanced System
- Accounting & Bookkeeping
- Banking & Credit
- Biotechnology & Laboratory Science
- Construction Trades
- Dental Care
- Electricity
- Food Technology
- Law Enforcement
- Management
- Masonry
- Medical Records
- Meteorology
- Plumbing
- Printing Processes
- Sales Representative
- Small Engine Repair
- Writing Careers

## Skills Training

### Beginning System
- Basic Reading
- Basic Math
- Basic Computers
- Basic Organization

### Intermediate System
- Sentence Writing
- Grammar
- upholstery

### Advanced System
- Advanced Math
- Advanced Computers
- Advanced Science

## Lifelong Learning

### Life Skills
- Health & Nutrition
  - Planning Healthy Meals
  - Healthy Snacks
- Healthy Meals on a Budget
- Food Labels
- Active Recreation
- Passive Recreation
- Dangers of Tobacco
- Basic First Aid
- Basic Hygiene
- Dangers of Alcohol

### Job Preparation Skills
- Planning Career Goals
- Looking for a Job
- Developing a Resume
- Completing a Job Application
- Interviewing for a Job
- Positive Attitudes in Getting a Job
- Your Appearance in the Interview
- Verbal & Non-Verbal Communication
- Written Communication
- Your Appearance on the Job
- Positive Attitudes in Keeping a Job
- Maintaining Regular Attendance
- Following Directions
- Workplace Literacy
- Expectations on the Job
- On the Job Skills
- Managing Your Money

## Self-Confidence & Social Interactions
- Cyberbullying
- Bullying
- Internet Safety
- Problem Solving
- Conflict Resolution
- Self-Esteem
- Friendship Basics
- Teamwork
- Service Learning
- Social Skills
- Showing Respect
- Diversity Awareness
- Self-Determination
- Workplace Bullying

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**Education Associates**

P.O. Box 23308, Louisville, KY

800.626.2950 Fax: 502.244.9144

ILoveProjectDiscovery.com
Self-Determination Guiding Principles

CLS believes all individuals should have the FREEDOM to determine what is meaningful in their lives and that they have the AUTHORITY to control their services and make decisions about their lives. We also believe people should have life enhancing and meaningful SUPPORT and have a RESPONSIBILITY to wisely use funds and recognize the contribution they can make in their communities. CLS also wants to provide CONFIRMATION to individuals with disabilities and support them in the important role they take in redesigning the human service system.

Person-Centered Planning has a strong community-based focus, “getting great services” is obviously not the goal for people with disabilities, it is...

GETTING A GREAT LIFE!

What it means to have an Independent Supports Coordinator work for you:

YOU have the control to interview and chose the ISC that is the best fit for you. If you do not want to do interviews, we can help you find an ISC based on your preferences.

ISCs provide on-going support that goes ABOVE and BEYOND traditional work week hours; your ISC is available to you when you need them. Flexible scheduling is available to meet your needs.

ISCs carry the philosophy of Community Living Services within their work and are committed to promoting community-based, self-determined lives.

Executive Director: Annette Downey
Program Manager: Sarah Crayne
scrayne@comlivserv.com
P.O. Box 6710
Grand Rapids, MI 49516
(616) 430-8388
www.comlivserv.com
Who We Are

Community Living Services, Kent County Division (CLS Kent) is a non-profit organization that promotes community inclusion, full citizenship, personal empowerment, and a self-determined life for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

We have a high level of expertise in Person-Centered Planning, Self-Determination, and community focused services. We don’t believe in limiting people to the service models that have historically been in place. Tell us what your hopes and dreams are for your future, or the future of your loved one, and we’ll make it our job to partner with you to help you accomplish your personal hopes, wishes, and desired accomplishments.

Our top priority is to meet the needs of the people we serve through individualized supports and flexible scheduling. We are not tied to a Monday through Friday day time schedule; we are flexible. We also will go to you, you do not need to drive to meet us. We will meet you wherever you are most comfortable to help you craft positive life outcomes.

For more information please
(616) 430-8388

CLS Kent believes in:

- Promoting the principles of Self-Determination and assisting people to achieve a happy, healthy, and productive life in their community.
- Family preservation and proper family support.
- Promoting the importance of community.
- Flexible services and scheduling.
- Partnerships that actively include individuals, their families or other allies, providers, and funders all working together for the benefit of the person served.
- Introducing new ideas and approaches for providing unique and creative methods of support.
- “Nothing About Me, Without Me” – There is nobody’s opinions or preference more important to us than that of the person we serve.
- We will do everything we can to make you glad that you chose us as your provider agency.