Before the last bell rings

High school transition preparation should include real-world practice, not just another checklist.

TEN MOVES WORTH PRACTICING

1 Start with the student

Ask what the student wants to try in college, work, and daily life. Build goals around their interests, not an adult's preferred destination.

2 Make expectations visible

Read real syllabi, find office hours, decode deadlines, and practice asking what vague instructions actually mean.

3 Explain the legal shift

High school IEP services do not transfer automatically into college accommodations. Practice finding the college access office.

4 Let students lead meetings

Offer choices for speaking, slides, writing, or prepared questions. An invited student is not necessarily a participating student.

5 Practice a support request

Try asking for a clarification, or contact disability services about its process. Do not pressure students to disclose to classmates.

6 Test one task system

Choose one practical way to track tasks and start dates, try it on real work, and revisit whether it helped.

7 Visit the actual setting

Find a building, try the bus route, inspect a course catalog, or attend a public information session.

8 Practice recovering from errors

Let manageable mistakes happen, then plan the next step together. Do not rescue every missing assignment.

9 Include families, not takeover

Ask what the student wants help with. Practice family support that leaves the student in control.

10 Check real outcomes

Can students find help, ask questions, make decisions, and navigate surprises? Measure actions, not just the existence of a plan.

THE REAL TEST: Can the student use a skill in the place where it matters, with a level of support they actually choose?

A beautifully written transition plan is not the same as a practiced transition.

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Practice the next step

Use these examples to turn an IEP goal into something the student can really try.

THE SAME GOAL, TWO DIFFERENT APPROACHES

LESS HELPFUL

“You have a goal to attend college. We’ll handle the paperwork and tell you what you need to do.”

TRY THIS

“Which program interests you? Let’s explore the steps. You choose what to do first and where you want help.”

STUDENT-LED TRANSITION CHECKLIST

1. Choose one real college, training, or job option to investigate.
2. Find an entry requirement: deadline, prerequisite, fee, or location.
3. Practice an actual task: visit, email, call, or transit route.
4. Find the access office and identify questions to ask.
5. Decide which adult support the student wants, if any.
6. Review what worked, what did not, and what to try next.

ONE USEFUL SCRIPT

“When you get to college, you may need to request accommodations from the college’s office. Your high school IEP doesn’t automatically become a college plan. Want to look up the process and write down two questions for them?”

Ask afterward: “Which part could you do yourself next time, and where would help still be useful?”

WHAT THE RESEARCH ACTUALLY SUPPORTS

Federal IDEA regulations require transition goals in qualifying IEPs no later than age 16; college disability access generally operates under Section 504 and the ADA. Transition reviews emphasize planning, real-world practice, collaboration, and student voice. They do not prove that one universal checklist guarantees college success.

Read further: U.S. Department of Education, 34 CFR 300.320(b); OCR, Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education; Transitioning on from Secondary School for Autistic Students (2025).

Full guide: ttwnest.org/for/transition/ · Licensing inquiries: info@ttwnest.org

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