



# VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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# AGENDA ITEM

**Agenda Item:** D

**Date:** October 20, 2022

**Title:** Final Review of the Proposed Adoption of Board Guidance on the Applied Studies Diploma

**Presenter:** Dr. Samantha Hollins, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Special Education and Student Services

**Email:** [Samantha.Hollins@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Samantha.Hollins@doe.virginia.gov) **Phone:** (804) 786-8079

**Purpose of Presentation:**

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

**Executive Summary**

During the 2021 legislative session, the Virginia General Assembly passed [HB2299](#) and [SB1288](#) requiring the Virginia Board of Education (Board) to adopt guidance for the statewide requirements for earning an Applied Studies Diploma for implementation at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year.

The Applied Studies Diploma is a state recognized diploma outlined in the *Code of Virginia* (§ [22.1-253.13:4](#)) and the Board's *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* ([8VAC20-131](#)). This option is available to students identified as having a disability who complete the requirements of their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and meet certain requirements prescribed by the Board pursuant to regulations, but do not meet the requirements for any named diploma. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has developed an Applied Studies Curriculum Map based upon national research analysis and stakeholder input to meet the needs of students with disabilities more effectively and to align instruction to ensure student success over a variety of skill domains. The flexibility provided by current regulatory language is key as students eligible for this diploma often have unique and individualized needs and goals that are best captured at the individualized education program level. This guidance will ensure the structure for rigorous high quality instruction and supports while recognizing the unique needs of the student population and the ability to be responsive to changes in research based practices and development of high-quality supports.

This guidance and accompanying materials have been in use in the field, and the VDOE has supported targeted division-level pilots of the utilization of the materials across multiple school divisions during both the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. This support includes targeted technical assistance as well as professional development that will continue with the adoption of this Board guidance. The VDOE is aligning actions around the development of the Statewide Strategic Plan for Transition and ongoing studies such as the Virginia General Assembly's Commission on Youth's study on the transition process for students with disabilities. Annual data is also reviewed alongside assessment participation for students with significant cognitive disabilities to ensure alignment between early decisions regarding diploma options and corresponding instructional and assessment decisions and to inform federal program monitoring in special education.

Adoption of this guidance 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.

The Board's adoption of this guidance will emphasize high expectations for all students with disabilities. The Department will rely on federal guidelines, technical assistance, monitoring and utilization of the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) to ensure that all students with disabilities have access to high-quality instruction, materials, supports and the opportunity to pursue all diploma options available to non-disabled students.

The Department will ensure school divisions continue to prioritize the individualized assessment of student needs and monitor school division implementation of this guidance to ensure all students with disabilities have equal access to high-quality educational opportunities. The Department will work with school divisions and partners to ensure that parents are involved, well-informed, and included in all decision-making related to diploma options for students with disabilities.

Since First Review, no changes have been made to the Applied Studies Curriculum Map and supporting materials.

**Action Requested:**

Final review: Action requested at this meeting.

**Superintendent's Recommendation**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education approve the Applied Studies Curriculum Map and supporting materials.

**Previous Review or Action:**

**Date:** September 15, 2022

**Action:** First Review

**Background Information and Statutory Authority:**

The Applied Studies Diploma is a state recognized diploma outlined in the *Code of Virginia* (§ [22.1-253.13:4](#)) and the Board's *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* ([8VAC20-131](#)). This option is available to students identified as having a disability who complete the requirements of their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and meet certain requirements prescribed by the Board pursuant to regulations, but do not meet the requirements for any named diploma. The flexibility provided by current regulatory language is key as students eligible for this diploma often have unique and individualized needs and goals that are best captured at the individualized education program level. This guidance will ensure the structure for rigorous high quality instruction and supports while recognizing the unique needs of the student population and the ability to be responsive to changes in research based practices and development of high-quality supports.

The purposes of the Applied Studies Diploma and the accompanying Curriculum Map are as follows:

1. To provide statewide guidance to IEP Teams to develop goals and objectives that will a. supplement instruction on state standards (Virginia Standards of Learning or Aligned Standards of Learning) and address real life application of skills; b. provide the student with instruction that directly address deficits leading to their post-secondary goals; and c. provide a mechanism for linking skills back to state standards.
2. To improve communication of skills and provide a common planning resource to a. increase student participation, self-determination and motivation; b. inform parents/guardians/advocates of critical skills; and c. assist with long-term planning beginning as the student enters transition age.
3. To promote the incorporation of evidence-based practices and predictors into student programs to a. support opportunities for instruction in real-life scenarios; b. provide resources related to evidence-based practices and data-based decision making; and c. increase the use of authentic assessment.

The [Applied Studies Curriculum Map](#) (PDF) consists of a [Guide](#) (Word) and six domains that outline skills and competencies that IEP Teams can use to identify the need for additional

instruction to assist students in meeting their postsecondary goals. The domains include the following:

- [English](#) (Word)
- [Mathematics](#) (Word)
- [Science](#) (Word)
- [History and Social Science](#) (Word)
- [Employment](#) (Word)
- [Independent Living](#) (Word)

The skills outlined are not standards required to earn an Applied Studies Diploma but are intended to provide guidance to teams in aligning the student's postsecondary goals with annual IEP goals. The Applied Studies Curriculum Map provides a guide that teachers, students, families, and other team members can use to identify skills that will have a direct impact on the student achieving their postsecondary goals.

The VDOE has also created additional support resources including a document titled, [Understanding the Applied Studies Diploma](#), to assist families with understanding everything they need to know related to this specific diploma option. The VDOE website also hosts a four part asynchronous webcast on the Applied Studies Diploma that includes: an overview; a review of the curriculum map guide and competencies; a module focused on instruction including evidence-based practices and predictors for post-school success; and a final module detailing planning and reporting in order to ensure successful student outcomes.

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**

Upon Board approval, the Guidance on the Applied Studies Diploma will be submitted to Town Hall for a 30-day public comment period, pursuant to the requirements of the Administrative Process Act.

**Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:**

No significant fiscal or human resource impact is expected for school divisions or the VDOE. VDOE staff members will provide technical assistance to school divisions through website documents, training events, and continued implementation support to local school divisions.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**

# APPLIED STUDIES CURRICULUM MAP

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# Applied Studies Curriculum Map

The mission of the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Department of Special Education is to, “provide children with disabilities the knowledge and skills they need to live, learn, work, and participate in communities of their choice with the maximum amount of independence as possible.” The VDOE has developed an Applied Studies Curriculum Map based upon national research analysis and stakeholder input to meet the needs of students with disabilities more effectively and to align instruction with this mission.

The Virginia Board of Education’s adoption of this guidance emphasizes high expectations for all students with disabilities. The Department will rely on federal guidelines, technical assistance, monitoring, and utilization of the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) to ensure that all students with disabilities have access to high-quality instruction, materials, supports, and the opportunity to pursue all diploma options available to non-disabled students.

The Department will ensure school divisions continue to prioritize the individualized assessment of student needs and monitor school division implementation of this guidance to ensure all students with disabilities have equal access to high-quality educational opportunities. The Department will work with school divisions and partners to ensure that parents are involved, well-informed, and included in all decision-making related to diploma options for students with disabilities.

## Purpose

The purposes of the Applied Studies Diploma and the accompanying Curriculum Map are as follows:

1. To provide state-wide guidance to IEP teams to develop goals and objectives that will
  - a. supplement instruction on state standards (Virginia Standards of Learning or Aligned Standards of Learning) and address real life application of skills;
  - b. provide the student with instruction that directly address deficits leading to their post-secondary goals;
  - c. provide a mechanism for linking skills back to state standards.
2. To improve communication of skills and provide a common planning resource to
  - a. increase student participation, self-determination and motivation;
  - b. inform parents/ guardians/ advocates of critical skills;
  - c. assist with long-term planning beginning as the student enters transition age.
3. To promote the incorporation of evidence based practices and predictors into student programs to
  - a. support opportunities for instruction in real-life scenarios
  - b. provide resources related to evidence based practices and data-based decision making;
  - c. increase use of authentic assessment.

## Statewide Assessment

Students working toward or earning an Applied Studies Diploma are required to participate in statewide assessments. The skills in the curriculum map are in no way designed to replace the standards in Virginia’s Standards of Learning or the Virginia Aligned Standards of Learning. Instead, the skills and competencies are designed to enhance instruction and provide guidance for the application of skills.

## Criteria for Earning the Applied Studies Diploma

The Applied Studies Diploma is available to all students with an Individualized Education Program. The *Code of Virginia* (8VAC20-131-50 D) states that, “*In accordance with the requirements of the Standards of Quality, students with disabilities who complete the requirements of their Individualized Education Program (IEP) and do not meet the requirements for other diplomas shall be awarded Applied Studies Diplomas.*” This diploma is available to all students with an IEP. Students with an IEP who pursue a Standard Diploma but do not meet the criteria are still eligible to earn the Applied Studies Diploma.

Students may work on skills outlined in the Curriculum Map while pursuing a standard or Advanced Studies Diploma. The skills outlined may be supplemental to the academic standards and goals set for the student and may contribute to the development of the IEP. A decision to work toward the Applied Studies Diploma is a significant decision that will have an impact on the remainder of the student’s high school experience as well as their postsecondary life. If the IEP team decides that the student will stop pursuing a standard diploma, a further analysis of the student’s skills should be conducted to facilitate a more personalized and comprehensive plan. A decision to work toward the Applied Studies Diploma is essentially choosing to stop pursuing a Standard Diploma. Before making this very important decision, several factors should influence and guide the team when making this decision.

1. **Present Level of Performance** – Beyond the student’s academic performance, IEP teams should base decisions on the student’s performance on goals outlined within the curriculum map.
2. **Postsecondary Goals** – The student’s postsecondary goals will provide additional guidance to the IEP to facilitate the development of meaningful goals. Additionally, the student’s postsecondary goals may require the student to attend college. This postsecondary goal becomes more likely with a standard or advanced studies diploma.
3. **Learning Trajectory and Remaining Time in School** – Students require different levels of support and take varied amounts of time to master skills. Previous educational records can provide information regarding the student’s skill acquisition rate. The IEP teams should use that information to make decisions regarding the student’s course of study and school experiences.
4. **Level of External Support** – If the student requires a degree of external support in the form of another individual to assist with completing tasks or activities, it is critical to consider the development and use of alternative forms of support. Visual supports and assistive technology are critical in helping students develop independence. Specialized instruction may be required to teach the student to utilize supports when needed.



# Curriculum Map

The curriculum map includes a coordinated set of skills for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, and integrated, competitive employment. Also included are supported employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation. School divisions should use the Applied Studies Curriculum Map as a resource for developing sound curricular and instructional programs for individual students. This map should guide but not limit the scope of instructional programs. Additional knowledge and skills that can enrich instruction and enhance students' understanding and application of skills should be included as part of quality learning experiences.

The curriculum map has a specific hierarchic structure. In each domain, each section is more specific than the next.

1. **Domains** are the content area of functioning. Domains within the curriculum map include, English, Mathematics, Science, History and Social Sciences, Independent Living and Employment.
2. **Competencies** are a combination of skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to perform a specific task.
  - **Levels** address the depth of understanding within each competency. Skills are differentiated by level. Level 1 skills are designed to provide a foundation of knowledge while Level 4 skills are focused on the application and generalization of skills.
3. **Skills** are a general statement of expected learner achievement upon exiting the school program at graduation or at age 22. Skills provide the most specific language within the framework.

Skills and competencies within each domain outline specific abilities that can result in students living as independently as possible. This may include teaching fundamental communication skills, as well as basic behavioral repertoires to facilitate future learning. Communication skills that focus on receptive and expressive language skills, reading and writing are embedded within each domain. When developing instructional programming and activities, teachers should be aware of long-term goals associated with the skill development. When teachers address fundamental and foundational skills, rather than only focusing on isolated skills, the students are more likely to generalize skills in new environments, under new contingencies. These critical skills will facilitate generalization and life-long application of skills.

## Organization of the Curriculum Map

Within each domain are a set of competencies that outline broad skill areas, within these competencies, individual skills are labeled first by level (1-4) then by skill letter. For example:

- The English skill, "Use search engine or other resources to select needed text material" is labeled,

Within each domain, a focus is placed on personal management, critical reasoning skills, problem solving, and decision making to insure that our students acquire 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Also included are skills that enable students to work proficiently with computers and emerging technologies.

# Domains

## English

Reading, writing and language skills are addressed in this domain. Skills were selected based upon the necessity of mastery for successful transition into the workplace and community. The reading component assists students in developing skills needed for decoding and comprehending essential information leading to literacy. Competencies outline skills required to search, comprehend, and use a variety of texts, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables, and drug or food labels. Writing instruction emphasizes both comprehension and formulation of written information to seek postsecondary opportunities including skills related to document creation and various forms of text communication.

## Mathematics

This subject teaches functional math concepts needed for successful employment and independent living. Content standards include basic math skills such as numerical operations, decimals, and fractions; geometric concepts; and calculator and computer skills. Students are taught to use a calculator for more complex mathematical operations. The Curriculum Map also includes skills required for personal management tasks such as budgeting and banking; managing a household and independent living; and basic employment math operations, such as measurement and time management.

## Social Studies

Social studies instruction will help students develop the knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to become effective citizens” (NCSS Task Force on Revitalizing Citizenship Education, 2001, p. 319). History, geography, civics and economics are incorporated into this domain. Skills to be developed and applied include ones related to community orientation, mobility, basic geography, governmental concepts, and the individual's role as a citizen. Instruction in consumer responsibilities will prepare the student to demonstrate basic principles of prudent personal management, including paying taxes and saving for a planned, secure future.

## Science

Science instruction is utilized to teach students to make informed decisions taking into account utilizing a process for decision making, the use of scientific reasoning and logic, respect for living things, and personal responsibility. Students will learn to apply scientific concepts to everyday experiences including identifying settings and supports necessary for their own success. Scientific dispositions including curiosity, demand for verification, attention to accuracy, precision, and patience and persistence underscore instruction. Students will utilize technology in a variety of settings to access and present information. Students will explore science-related careers and interests.

## Independent Living

Independent Living includes teaching students about their disability and understanding their strengths and needs, identifying personal goals, knowing their legal rights and responsibilities, and communicating these to others. The ability to self-advocate is important for students to learn in order to be successful at all stages of their lives. Independent living addresses self-management, hygiene and grooming, goal setting, leisure, community participation, planning (meals, social and work appointments, multi-step tasks and projects), travel and mobility, and household maintenance. This domain includes personal health care skills, which, if not addressed, will become employment barriers for individuals with disabilities.

## Employment

During the time that students are enrolled in school, the school setting can be used to teach foundational skills that have a direct relationship with successful em-

ployment. These skills include punctuality, following directions, following rules and standards, effective workplace communication and social skills, job readiness skills (following schedules and multi-step directions, working independently, time management). As students progress through high school and the curriculum map, providing instruction outside of the typical school setting will provide real-world experience and opportunity to apply their skills.

## Competencies

Within each Domain, the content is organized by competencies. A competency is “a combination of skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to perform a specific task” (U.S. Department of Education 2001). Each competency provides a brief phrase of general expectations within the Domain regarding the knowledge and ability to demonstrate functions of the associated competency. Competencies are identified based upon their relevance and application in workforce and community. For example, Time, Task and Resource Management Competency is comprised of skills that range from identifying numbers to creating a schedule to plan for, participate in, and follow academic, work-related, and leisure activities.

## Skills

Skills include the most specific information in the Curriculum Map. A skill is a statement of expectations about student knowledge and skill for each of four levels of complexity. Skills outlined in the curriculum framework are not exhaustive of all the skills that students will need as they enter the postsecondary world. However, the skills outlined have been identified as important by a group of stakeholders and educators. Students may or may not master, or need to master each skill to have a positive post-secondary outcome. Decisions about what skills to address are determined by the student and other members of the IEP team. Many students will require supplemental instruction to address skills outside of the curriculum map. Instruction should be provided using evidence based practices and tailored to a path guided by student interests and strengths. The incorporation of assistive technology in the instruction and long term planning for the student is critical in ensuring success.

Each skill has been assigned a letter label for quick identification of skills.

# Levels

As levels increase, the complexity of skills increases. Levels provide flexibility and a pathway for students with varying prerequisite skills to work toward deeper understanding and application of skills. Levels are numbered and are based on the application and generalization level for each skill.

## Level 1 - Recognize and Recall

Students working on level one skills may require systematic instruction to develop a basic behavioral repertoire that may include attending to stimuli, basic response categories (matching, pointing), imitation and development of motivation for learning. These skills should be addressed by utilizing age appropriate and domain specific vocabulary and materials.

## Level 2 - Identify and Comprehend

Students working on level 2 skills will have developed a strong set of response skills and are able to work with a greater level of independence. Level 2 skills will focus on the acquisition of new knowledge and skills that will further facilitate lifelong learning. Targeted learning will include building vocabulary related to identified skills, employment and independent living.

## Level 3 - Interpret and Understand

Level 3 skills will incorporate the knowledge acquired in level 2 to utilize skills in further applications of the skills. Students will bring out the meaning of previously learned knowledge through performance and execution of skills.

## Level 4 - Apply and Generalize

Students are independently applying skills in a variety of environments and under varying contingencies. Students are able to independently apply skills and knowledge in novel circumstances as evidenced by demonstration of complex problem solving skills and creation of new applications in workplace environments.

Students' IEP teams will determine the level students are working on for each domain and competency annually. Students may work on different levels from year to year dependent on the student's present level of performance and IEP team consensus. Additionally, student may work on different levels for individual competencies and skills.

Skills within each level will provide general content for instruction. Students' IEP team will determine which skills from the Curriculum Map are addressed by creating goals to address the targeted skills. The student's instructional team will determine how skills are taught and applied to meet the student's individual educational needs. Additionally, the student's IEP team will need to assess and determine what foundational skills may be required for further mastery and application of skills.

## Workplace Readiness Skills

In 2010, the Virginia Board of Education adopted the [\*21 Workplace Readiness Skills for the Commonwealth\*](#). These skills were developed to better prepare students for employment. This list of skills, developed by the [Career and Technical Education Resource Center](#) outlines a set of skills that Virginia's employers seek in the labor market. These skills have also served as a foundation for, and are referenced within the curriculum map. Within the curriculum map, these skills are referenced by the letter "WRS," followed by a number to indicate which skill is addressed by the competency. For example, in the English domain, *WRS-9* is listed in the Community Literacy competency. This indicates that upon mastery of the competency, students will have skills that will allow them to "Read and interpret workplace documents and write clearly."

## IEP Development

The skills outlined in the curriculum map constitute a set of skills that IEP teams may wish to address as part of long term planning. IEP teams are responsible for developing goals and objectives that

1. align with the students interests and long-term goals;
2. are appropriate to the student's ability;
3. will be meaningful to the student after graduation; and
4. include meaningful mastery criteria.

Additionally, educational teams are responsible for developing

1. teaching strategies and supports that will ensure long-term retention and application of skills; and
2. an instructional program that provides ample time to address student specific goals and objectives.

The curriculum map provides a guide for teams to utilize when developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The skills outlined provide a description of skills that may be necessary for students to be successful after graduation. The curriculum map does not list every skill a student will need. It will be up to the IEP team to determine:

1. What skills will be addressed.
2. How the skills will be addressed.
3. How the student will demonstrate mastery of the skill.
4. How instruction will prioritize individual skills.
5. What accommodations and supports may be used to teach the skill and how those supports will fade to foster independence.

Some students may require more than one IEP goal or objective to address a specific skill, while other students may have goals that address more than one skill. When developing IEP goals and objectives, teams will use existing data to identify deficits and strengths to guide the identification of skills in the curriculum map. It is not expected that each student will be assessed each year on each skill within the curriculum map. However, as the team plans and develops a course of study for the student, skills that align with postsecondary goals should be addressed and assessed.

### Example:

#### - **Independent Living: Home Living/Management (IND-HOME 4a)**

- Organize home and work space in a functional way.

#### Example IEP goals

1. Student **A** will, when given new materials, utilize organizational strategies to appropriately store and maintain the materials by successfully completing 80% of his daily checklist in 4 of 5 opportunities.
2. Student **B** will arrive to class with all appropriate and/or required materials for 5 consecutive days.
3. Student **C** will follow daily arrival routine to place personal items in designated areas and retrieve items before leaving in 4 of 5 consecutive days.
4. Student **D** will independently complete 90% of a workplace organization routine including getting the supervisor's approval before moving to the next activity in 4 of 5 opportunities.

### IEP Considerations

1. **Student Centered** – IEP goals and objectives should directly address goals outlined in the student's transition plan and relate to student preferences. Interest inventories, previous experiences, etc. will guide the IEP team's discussion.
2. **Present Level** – When addressing skills in the present level of performance (PLOP), it is important to be specific about how the student demonstrates the skill or part of the skill. The setting(s) and conditions in which the skill is demonstrated is important information in deciding how additional skills will be addressed or how mastery will be measured.
3. **Accommodations** – Students utilize accommodations for a variety of reasons and many are critical in helping students succeed. As students prepare to leave high school, it is critical to teach students what those supports are and how to ask for them. Additionally, accommodations should be developed and utilized in such a way that allows for maximum student independence. Independently requesting, accessing, and utilizing accommodations may be a topic that IEP teams discuss and may be goals for the student.
4. **Assistive Technology** – When planning for the use of assistive technology, it is critical to assess the student, the environment and the activities in which the student will participate. Planning activities that emulate real world scenarios, will assist the student with accessing and utilizing assistive technology in targeted environments. Additionally, this planning will assist the team in anticipating the student's future needs related to assistive technology so that instructors can plan instruction accordingly.

# Teaching Strategies

## Authentic Assessment

The purpose of the curriculum map is to provide educational teams with an outline of skills that will help an individual lead an independent life. To help facilitate the application of skills in real-world settings, assessment of skills needs to mirror the conditions under which the student may be expected to perform the skill. Beginning with the performance task and planning backwards allows the IEP team to plan for factors including where the student will need the skill, under what conditions is the student likely to need the skill, what supports will the student need to complete the skill, and what level of mastery is appropriate for the student.

## Instructional Protocol for Authentic Assessment

Adapted from Virginia Association for School Superintendents Conference (March 2016). *Considering Assessment Practices that Enhance Learning*, McTighe, Jay.

1. Present the Authentic Performance task as *the* learning goal.
2. Plan backward from the task to assess knowledge skills and understandings.
  - a. Break the skill down into component parts (task analysis).
3. Pre-assess student to find out prior knowledge and skills.
  - a. What knowledge and skills does the student already possess?
  - b. What areas will require additional instruction?
4. Provide direct instruction to develop needed knowledge and skills.
  - a. The use of evidence-based practices to provide instruction addressing deficit areas
  - b. What supports and instructional methods have been successful in the past?
  - c. What supports can be utilized to enhance student independence?
5. Differentiate as needed.
  - a. Incorporate needed accommodations and/or modifications. Ensure that when accommodations/modifications are utilized in instruction that (a) there is a plan to fade/modify the level or type of support provided or (b) that accommodation or modification is available in the setting in which the individual will be using the skill.
6. Provide models for students to emulate.
  - a. Creating and sharing rubrics with students that include anchor points
  - b. Provide examples at each level of the rubric
7. Engage students in mini-tasks to simulate the demands of the final task.
  - a. Creating environments and conditions that are similar to the environments in which the student will be required to perform the task will (a) help the student learn the skill in a realistic environment and (b) provide strong evidence of the student's ability or inability to perform the task in real life scenarios.

# Incorporating Predictors of Post-School Success

The predictors of post-school success are components of secondary transition programs that are empirically linked to improved post-school outcomes. These predictors are highly customizable and can be used to develop, expand, or evaluate secondary transition programs. These predictors can help IEP teams develop goals and service delivery options that will help students achieve their goals. Each of these predictors should be considered in the development of annual IEP goals and when planning instructional activities. Individuals can find more information and resources through the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) or through the Ohio Employment First Transition Framework Evidence Based Predictors Tool.

1. **Career Awareness** - Career awareness is learning about opportunities, education, and skills needed in various occupational pathways to choose a career that matches one's strengths and interests.
2. **Community Experiences** - Community experiences are activities occurring outside of the school setting, supported with in-class instruction, where students apply academic, social, and/or general work behaviors and skills.
3. **Exit Exams/ High School Diploma Status** - Exit exams are standardized state tests, assessing single content area (e.g., Algebra, English) or multiple skill areas, with specified levels of proficiency that students must pass in order to obtain a high school diploma. Diploma status is achieved by completing the requirements of the state awarding the diploma including the completion of necessary core curriculum credits.
4. **Goal Setting** – The essential characteristics of this predictor have not yet been identified in the manner that other “predictors” have been operationalized by Rowe et al., 2014.
5. **Inclusion in General Education** - Inclusion in general education requires students with disabilities to have access to general education curriculum and be engaged in regular education classes with peers without disabilities.
6. **Interagency Collaboration** - Interagency collaboration is a clear, purposeful, and carefully designed process that promotes cross agency, cross program, and cross disciplinary collaborative efforts leading to tangible transition outcomes for youth.
7. **Occupational Courses** - Occupational courses are individual courses that support career awareness, allow or enable students to explore various career pathways, develop occupational specific skills through instruction, and experiences focused on their desired employment goals.
8. **Paid work Experience** - Work experience is any activity that places the student in an authentic workplace, and could include: work sampling, job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, and paid employment. Paid employment can include existing standard jobs in a company or organization or customized work assignments negotiated with the employer. These activities always feature competitive pay (e.g., minimum wage) paid directly to the student by the employer.
9. **Parent Expectations** - Expectations include parents and families planning and articulating an expectation that their child will participate in integrated postsecondary education and be employed in integrated settings in the community after high school.
10. **Parental Involvement** - Involvement means parents/families/guardian are active and knowledgeable participants in all aspects of transition planning (e.g., decision-making, providing support, attending meetings, and advocating for their child).
11. **Program of Study** - A program of study is an individualized set of courses, experiences, and curriculum designed to develop students' academic and functional achievement to support the attainment of students' desired post-school goals.



12. **Self-Advocacy/Self Determination** - Self-determination is the ability to make choices, solve problems, set goals, evaluate options, take initiative to reach one's goals, and accept consequences of one's actions.
13. **Self-Care/Independent Living Skills** - Self-care/independent living skills are skills necessary for management of one's personal self-care and daily independent living, including the personal management skills needed to interact with others, daily living skills, financial management skills, and the self-management of healthcare/wellness needs.
14. **Social Skills** - Social skills are behaviors and attitudes that facilitate communication and cooperation (e.g., social conventions, social problem-solving when engaged in a social interaction, body language, speaking, listening, responding, verbal and written communication).
15. **Student Support** - Student support is a network of people (e.g., family, friends, educators and adult service providers) who provide services and resources in multiple environments to prepare students to obtain their annual transition and post-secondary goals aligned with their preferences, interests, and needs.
16. **Transition Program** - A transition program prepares students to move from secondary settings (e.g., middle school/high school) to adult-life, utilizing comprehensive transition planning and education that creates individualized opportunities, services, and supports to help students achieve their post-school goals in education/training, employment, and independent living.
17. **Travel Skills** - The essential characteristics of this predictor have not yet been identified in the manner that other "predictors" have been operationalized by Rowe et al., 2014.
18. **Vocational Education** - Vocational education is a sequence of courses that prepares students for a specific job or career at various levels from trade or craft positions to technical, business, or professional careers.
19. **Work Study** - A work study program is a specified sequence of work skills instruction and experiences designed to develop students' work attitudes and general work behaviors by providing students with mutually supportive and integrated academic and vocational instruction.
20. **Youth Autonomy/Decision Making** - The essential characteristics of this predictor have not yet been identified in the manner that other "predictors" have been operationalized by Rowe et al., 2014.

Figure 1 aligns the evidence-based predictor with areas of improved student outcome. (NTACT, 2013)

Predictor/Outcomes	Education	Employment	Independent Living
Career Awareness	X	X	
Community Experiences		X	
Exit Exam Requirements/ High School Diploma Status		X	
Goal-Setting	X	X	
Inclusion in General Education	X	X	X
Interagency Collaboration	X	X	
Occupational Courses	X	X	

Predictor/Outcomes	Education	Employment	Independent Living
Paid Employment/ Work Experience	X	X	X
Parental Expectations	X	X	X
Parental Involvement		X	
Program of Study		X	
Self-Advocacy/ Self-Determination	X	X	
Self-Care/ Independent Living	X	X	X
Social Skills	X	X	
Student Support	X	X	X
Transition Program	X	X	
Travel Skills		X	
Vocation Education	X	X	
Work Study		X	
Youth Autonomy/Decision-Making	X	X	

## Evidence Based Practices

Evidence Based Practices (EBPs) are instructional methods and strategies that have been shown to be effective through research to teach specific transition-related skills (Ohio Employment First). These practices can be used in a variety of settings including classrooms, work sites, community environments, social settings, etc. They are useful to teach a variety of skills and tasks including employment, daily living, communication, academics, job routines and tasks, independence and workplace behavior. The utilization of evidence-based practices is critical in providing effective and efficient instruction.

### Importance of using EBPs

1. Ensuring effective and efficient instruction – EBPs provide a methodology that has been demonstrated to be effective through research studies. Evidence based practices can be modified to meet individual student needs but should maintain the core principles outlined.
2. Identifying effective practices for future instruction – When an EBP has been identified as being an effective methodology for teaching a student a specific skill, the same methodology can be employed to similar skills in the future. This can help the teacher develop plans more quickly and gives the student a sense of consistency in their lessons.
3. Providing a Foundation – EBPs are specific approaches to teaching a variety of skills. Training a variety of individuals on the use of EBPs can help ensure that the quality of instruction across settings remains consistent. Additionally, when staff develop and understanding of how to use specific evidence based practices, they also develop and understanding of the underlying principles including reinforcement, shaping, and providing consistent predictable feedback to students.

## Identified Evidence Based Practices for Transition Aged Youth

The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) has identified evidence-based practices based on high quality research. Evidence Based Practices provide teachers with information about the teaching practices have been effective in helping student with disabilities learn specific skills. When addressing skills outlined within this framework, teachers should choose one or more evidence-based practices to teach the skill. Practice summaries listed below are provided by Ohio Employment First Transition Framework Evidence Based Practices Tool unless otherwise noted.

1. **Chaining (Backward, Forward, Total Task)** - Chaining strategies are a way to teach individuals to perform a sequence of tasks or steps. The job coach, teacher, or trainer first analyzes the task to be performed, identifying each smaller step necessary to complete the task. This is known as task analysis. The teacher or trainer then guides the youth to learn each step. The goal is to have the youth successfully, accurately, and independently complete the entire activity.
  - a. **Backward** - Backward chaining is defined by all behaviors identified in the task analysis initially completed by the trainer, except for the final behavior in the chain. When the learner performs the final behavior in the sequence at the predetermined criterion level, reinforcement is delivered and the next-to-last behavior is introduced (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007).
  - b. **Forward** - Behaviors identified in a forward chaining task analysis are taught in their naturally occurring order. Reinforcement is delivered when the predetermined criterion for the first behavior in the sequence is achieved then the next step in the task analysis is taught (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007).
  - c. **Total Task** - Total task chaining is defined as a variation of forward chaining in which the learner receives training on each step in the task analysis during each session (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007).
2. **Community Based Instruction** - Community Based Instruction is training, teaching or coaching that takes place in the community in the location where the skills are expected to be performed. Community venues such as banks, grocery stores, post offices, etc. are ideal locations for teaching skills needed to access everyday services.
3. **Computer Assisted Instruction** - Computer assisted instruction offers an interactive format that can provide examples and feedback to youths, while including multiple components such as graphics, photographs, audio, and video.
4. **Extension of Career Planning Services** - Services extended beyond graduation include any individualized services focused on postsecondary achievement provided after a student completes the secondary program. Services included vocational assessment, agency contacts, IEP meetings, vocational training, employability counseling, job club, job interview assistance, job development, and job coaching. (NTACT)
5. **Mnemonics** - Mnemonics are memory devices or aids that help youth and adults recall larger pieces of information, especially in the form of lists, like characteristics, steps, stages, parts, phases, etc.
6. **One-More-Than Strategy** - The One-More-Than Strategy is defined as teaching individuals to pay one more dollar than requested. It is also referred to as “next dollar,” “counting on,” or “dollar more” strategy. (NTACT)
7. **Peer Assisted Instruction** - Teaching using peer assistance includes strategies such as:
  - a. **Peer tutoring** - the delivery of academic instruction by another student, either older or the same age as the tutee (Scruggs et al., 1985).
  - b. **Cooperative learning** - groups of students of different ability, sex, or ethnicity work together to achieve mutual goals (Tateyama-Sniezek, 1990).

- c. **Peer instruction** - students are given specific roles to assist other students in completing an activity or teaching of a lesson (Hughes, Carter, Hughes, Bradford, & Copeland, 2002).
- 8. **Self-Monitoring and Self-Management** - Self-monitoring and self-management interventions provide youth the strategies to become less dependent of ‘in-person’ assistance, such as aides and coaches. Such strategies provide the youth with skills to become aware of their own needs and level of performance.
- 9. **Video Modeling** - Teaching specific behaviors or skills using a video recording to provide a visual model of the targeted behavior or skill. Video Modeling can be effectively implemented in home and school settings, according to the studies that serve as the foundation for the evidence base. This practice may be useful anywhere there is learner access to viewing equipment.
- 10. **Prompting** - Any assistance given that supports learning or initiates the use of a specific skill. Prompts are given before or as the youth attempts to use a skill. Effective prompting is deliberate in the way it is planned and implemented. This means determining a prompting hierarchy, selecting the appropriate type of prompt and deciding when to use prompts.
  - a. **Least to Most** - A system of least-to-most prompts is a method used to transfer stimulus control from response prompts to the natural stimulus whenever the participant does not respond to the natural stimulus or makes an incorrect response. Least-to-most prompts begin with the participant having the opportunity to perform the response with the least amount of assistance on each trial. Greater degrees of assistance are provided with each successive trial without a correct response (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007).
  - b. **Most to Least** - A system of most-to-least prompts is a method used to transfer stimulus control from response prompts to the natural stimulus whenever the participant does not respond to the natural stimulus or makes an incorrect response. Most-to-least prompting starts with physically guiding the participant through the performance sequence, then gradually reducing the amount of physical assistance provided as training progresses from session to session (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007).
  - c. **Response Prompting** - Response prompting is defined as using a stimuli that later functions as extra cues and reminders for desired behavior. Response prompts can be visual, auditory, textual, or symbolic (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007).
  - d. **Simultaneous Prompting** - Simultaneous prompting involves the “presentation of a task direction followed immediately by the presentation of a controlling prompt (i.e., a prompt that ensures a correct response).” Once the instructional session is conducted, daily probe sessions are conducted immediately prior to instructional sessions on subsequent days so the instructor can determine when stimulus control, or acquisition of the target skill, has occurred (Morse & Schuster, 2004).
- 11. **Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction** - Self-advocacy and self-determination skills are related skills sets that provide the means for youth to take charge of their own lives. A person with a disability may call upon the support of others; however, the individual is entitled to be in control of their own resources and how they are directed. All people have the right to make life decisions without undue influence or control by others.
  - a. The [I’m Determined](#) project, a state directed project funded by the Virginia Department of Education, focuses on providing direct instruction, models, and opportunities to practice skills associated with self-determined behavior. This project facilitates youth, especially those with disabilities to undertake a measure of control in their lives, helping to set and steer the course rather than remaining the silent passenger.
- 12. **Simulations** - Simulation uses materials and situations in instructional settings that approximate the natural conditions and the expected responses associated with applying performance skills and behaviors expected in community and work settings.
- 13. **Time Delay (Constant and Progressive)** - Time delay is a prompting procedure that uses variations in the time intervals between presentation of the

natural stimulus and the response prompt. Time delay transfers stimulus control from a prompt to the natural stimulus by delaying the presentation of the prompt following the presentation of the natural stimulus.

- a. Constant time delay is implemented by presenting several trials using a 0-second delay between the presentation of the natural stimulus and the response prompt. The trials that follow the simultaneous prompt condition apply a fixed time delay (e.g., 3 seconds or 5 seconds; Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007).
- b. Progressive time delay is implemented by presenting a trial with a 0-second delay between the presentation of the natural stimulus and the response prompt and then gradually and systematically extending the time delay, often in one second intervals (e.g., 0 sec to 2 sec to 3 sec; Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007)

14. **Visual Supports** - Visual Supports and displays are tools used to represent the complexity of the mental and physical world in which we live to help people function more efficiently, effectively and independently. Everyone uses visual supports and displays in daily life and work. They are so routine in today's world that they should not be considered a 'crutch' but instead a valuable tool for independence, efficiency and productivity.

While most educators are familiar with these terms and have an understanding of what these practices entail, the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition provides comprehensive resources for implementing these practices with fidelity. Consistent implementation of these practices across settings and teachers is critical for maximizing learning and independence and ensuring that the intervention is having the desired effect on the students' behavior.

For more information on Evidence Based Practices and Predictors, visit the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition at <http://transitionta.org> and/or Ohio Employment First Transition Framework, you will find various resources including EBPs organized by the type of skill taught.

## Measurement and Reporting

Virginia Regulations, (8 VAC 20-81-110 G. 8), require that each child's IEP must include a "statement of...when periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals will be provided; for example, through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards, and at least as often as parents are informed of the progress of their children without disabilities.

Reporting on skills outlined in the curriculum map differs slightly from customary reporting on IEP progress. The IEP progress reporting provides codes for signifying if the student has mastered the goal or objective, or the likelihood of the student mastering the goal or objective within the term of the IEP. Reporting on skills outlined in the curriculum map provides a snapshot of the student's progress that does not take into account the student's learning trajectory, only their proficiency at that given time. This information can provide supporting evidence in reporting on IEP goals as well as informing the present level of performance.

The purpose of reporting in this manner is to provide consistent language across classrooms, schools, and divisions. Clear reporting criteria will help communicate important information to the student, other teachers, parents, internship supervisors, mentors, potential employers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and others.

**Performance Accuracy** - Performance accuracy incorporates several pieces of data, including

1. The student's knowledge of the content or skill,
2. The student's proficiency with demonstrating the skill,
3. The environments and conditions under which the student is able to display the skill,
4. The student's ability to utilize the skill in new or novel situations, and

5. The number and types of errors made.

By assessing each of these pieces of information, a teacher can determine if the student is able to perform the skill in one of four categories.

- Consistently – The student demonstrates a thorough understanding or proficiency of content and skills taught nearly all of the time and across multiple people, settings, and opportunities. The student makes NO major errors or omissions.
- Usually – The student demonstrates a general understanding of content or general skill proficiency most of the time, across multiple people, settings, or opportunities. The student makes few major errors or omissions.
- Sometimes – The student demonstrates a partial understanding of content or partial skill proficiency some of the time, across some people, settings, or opportunities. The student makes some errors or omissions.
- Not Yet – The student demonstrates emerging to developing skills but is unable to complete critical components.

### **Level of Support**

The level of support is a critical factor in reporting student skills because many students may require additional support when entering the workplace, or living independently. Accurately reporting on the level of support that a student requires allows the teachers and/or IEP team to plan around either building new skills, fading the level of support needed, or both. When planning for independence, it is important to consider what environmental factors are influencing the student's behaviors.

***When the presence of an authority figure or adult is required for the student to be successful, the IEP team should consider instructional practices and supports that reduce the need for the presence of additional person. (See Evidence Based Practices)***

- Independent (3) - When students use supports such as graphic organizers, checklists, timers, etc. they should be considered independent in demonstrating the task as long as the student is able to recognize the need for, initiate the use of, and independently utilize the support.
- Some Support (2) - When students require external assistance or support to complete some portions of a skill or task, or require support to access their accommodations they should be considered needing “some support.”
- Full Support (1) - If the student is unable to complete the critical components of a particular skill without external support, they are considered needing “full support.”

## Reporting Key

Performance Accuracy	Level of Support
<p><b>Consistently</b></p> <p>Demonstrates a thorough understanding or proficiency of content and skills taught nearly all of the time and across multiple people, settings, <b>and</b> opportunities. Makes NO major errors or omissions.</p>	<p><b>3-Independent</b></p> <p>The student self-manages task completion from beginning to end. Self-management includes use of visual prompts, schedules, assistive technology, or other cueing systems or accommodation that supports independent functioning when the student is able to recognize the need for, initiate the use of, and independently utilize the support.</p>
<p><b>Usually</b></p> <p>Demonstrates a general understanding of content or general skill proficiency most of the time, across multiple people, settings, <b>or</b> opportunities. Makes few major errors or omissions.</p>	<p><b>2-Some support</b></p> <p>External support required for portions of task completion. May include the use of visual supports, schedules, assistive technology, or other cueing system or accommodation that is initiated, prompted, or manipulated by another person.</p>
<p><b>Sometimes</b></p> <p>Demonstrates a partial understanding of content or partial skill proficiency some of the time, across some people, settings, <b>or</b> opportunities. Makes some errors or omissions.</p>	<p><b>1-Full support</b></p> <p>External support necessary for task completion.</p>
<p><b>Not Yet</b></p> <p>Emerging to developing skill demonstration</p>	

## Report Generator

In an effort to facilitate consistent reporting across the Commonwealth, teachers may choose to utilize the online report generator. This tool allows teachers to report on student performance for individuals working on skills outlined in the Curriculum Map.

The report generator provides space for the teacher to report on both skill proficiency as well as the level of support needed. The report generator also provides an option for additional notes that may help inform the team regarding the student's progress. Teachers may choose to input data related to relevant activities and experiences that the student engaged in during that reporting period. For example, if the student participated in some job sampling activities during the reporting period, and was able to demonstrate targeted skills in new environments, the teacher may provide additional information related to those experiences. Teachers have the option of saving and/or printing the report as either a PDF or Microsoft Word document.

This tool will not store or use any personal data related to the student. Due to privacy and confidentiality concerns, teachers will need to save the document each time skills are reported. The person reporting is responsible for entering identifying information as well as any pertinent data related to the student's performance.

The report generator can be found on TTAC Online. <https://ttaconline.org/Applied-Studies-Curriculum>

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# Understanding the Applied Studies Diploma



## Limitations of Applied Studies Diploma

- Not equivalent to a Standard Diploma.
- Difficult to change to other diploma options once pursued.
- May not qualify a child for higher education, federal financial aid and some employment opportunities.
- Eligible for FAPE through the age of 22.

## Available only for children with disabilities:

- Complete the requirements of their IEP.
- Do not meet requirements for Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma.

## When Should I Begin Thinking About Diploma Options?

- Start thinking about diploma options as soon as child enters school.
- Chose diploma option that best meets goals for life after high school.
- Plan to achieve highest diploma option necessary to meet goals.

## Key Curriculum Point Modifications vs Accommodations

### MODIFICATIONS

- Expectations are different from other children.
- Content or task may be reduced in depth and complexity.
- Participates in VAAP assessment.

Diploma Options:  
Applied Studies Diploma

### ACCOMMODATIONS

- Expectations are same as other children.
- Adaptations are made that support access to the general curriculum.
- Participates in SOL tests.

Diploma Options:  
All diplomas

## Testing Decision Options

- Determined by IEP Team.
  - Documented in IEP.
- Assessment Participation Options:**
- Standards of Learning (SOL) test with no accommodations.
  - SOL test with accommodations.
  - Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP)

## Career Planning

Important People: School Counselor & IEP Team  
Elementary & Middle School Activities:

- Explore Career Clusters and Pathways (CTE Career Clusters) and
- Create an Academic and Career Plan (Road map to goals) and
- Receive instruction in Career Investigations

## Questions to Ask IEP Team

- How do the decisions that we are making in elementary school about a child's participation in state assessments relate to the diploma options that will be available?
- What are the key factors to consider in making decisions about diploma options?
- When is the latest point at which I will be able to change my mind about my child's diploma option?