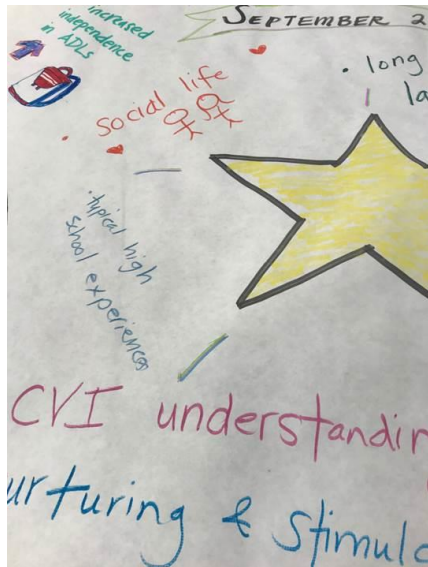


IDEAs on Person-Centered Planning

The transition to high school can be daunting for many students. A new school environment with unfamiliar people and expectations is disruptive and concerning for students, particularly those with multiple disabilities. But, using a person-centered planning approach can help relieve much of the anxiety.



Person-centered planning is an approach to assisting people with disabilities plan for the future. It can be used across the lifespan and is especially helpful at times of transition. This process focuses on the whole person with an emphasis on their strengths and unique gifts to develop a vision for the future. Through meaningful discussions, a plan is developed which identifies opportunities, accommodations and resources available to the individual to help them to achieve their dreams. [Click here to learn more about person-centered planning.](#)

At P.G. Chambers School, we've been using person-centered planning to help our middle school students and their families transition to high school programs in the community. From our experience and the research on the topic, here are some of the things we've learned.

Create a "circle of support"- Participating students invite important people in their lives (family, friends, teachers and related service providers) to participate in the planning sessions. This group of people becomes dedicated to supporting the student on their journey to the high school years and is known as a "circle of support".

Plan the initial session - During the initial session, the circle of support gathers to discuss:

- What they admire about the student
- What makes for the best/worst day?
- What positive routines help the student throughout their day?
- What are their expectations for high school?
- What are their hopes/fears for high school?

The student has an opportunity to accept or reject the information shared, and slowly a vision for the ideal high school experience begins to emerge. This vision sets the stage for the follow-up discussion in which a specialized plan is developed to help the student make the vision a reality.

Map the plan – The student’s plan, often developed with creative symbols and pictures, includes:

- Imagining what the future will look like
- Developing goals which will describe what has changed for the student
- Describing the present (where we are now) in relation to their vision
- Enrolling family, friends and team members to help along the journey
- Identifying capacities to develop in working towards the vision
- Breaking down the goals for into manageable steps to aid in successfully achieving the vision

The process also provides natural opportunities for the student’s school district case managers to connect students and their families to resources within their home communities. Often, the information discussed during the transition planning provides valuable information which can be used in the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) in planning for pre-vocational activities and possible higher education when appropriate.

We welcome comments about your experiences with person-centered planning.

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