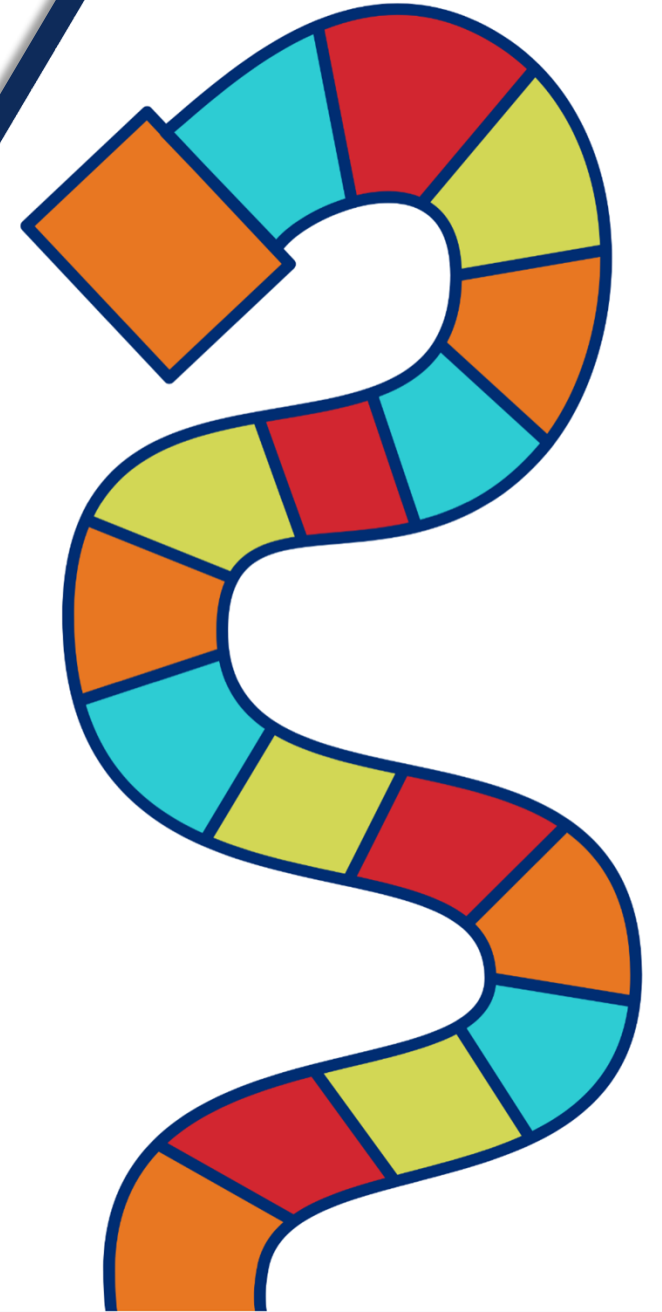




# A Journey Through Special Education for Educators

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# Tennessee Technical Assistance Network (TN-TAN)

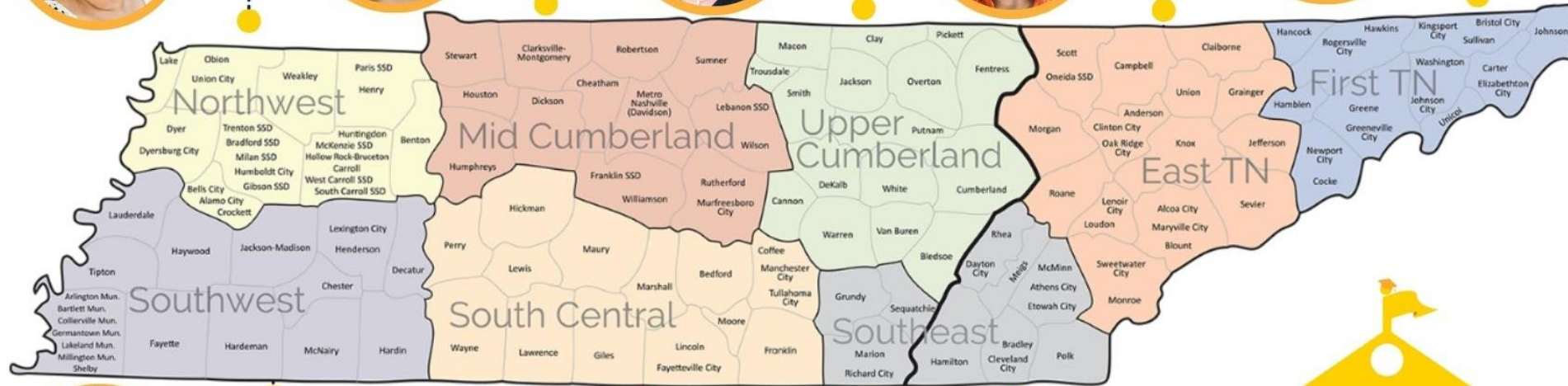
TN-TAN provides school districts, administrators, educators, and families access to free high-quality training, resources, and supports designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, ages 3–22. See below for our areas of support and the partners who lead the specific support areas:

- **Assistive Technology:** Assistive Technology Project for Education (ATP)
- **Autism Supports:** TRIAD at Vanderbilt
- **Family Engagement:** The Arc Tennessee
- **Intensive Behavior:** TRIAD at Vanderbilt
- **RTI<sup>2</sup>-A+B:** Tennessee Tiered Supports Center
- **Secondary Transition:** Transition Tennessee (TransitionTN)

Visit the [TN-TAN website](https://tn-tan.tnedu.gov) for more information: <https://tn-tan.tnedu.gov>.



# Regional Family Engagement Specialists



**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT  
IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**



[Family Engagement Website \(https://familyengagementtn.com/team/\)](https://familyengagementtn.com/team/)



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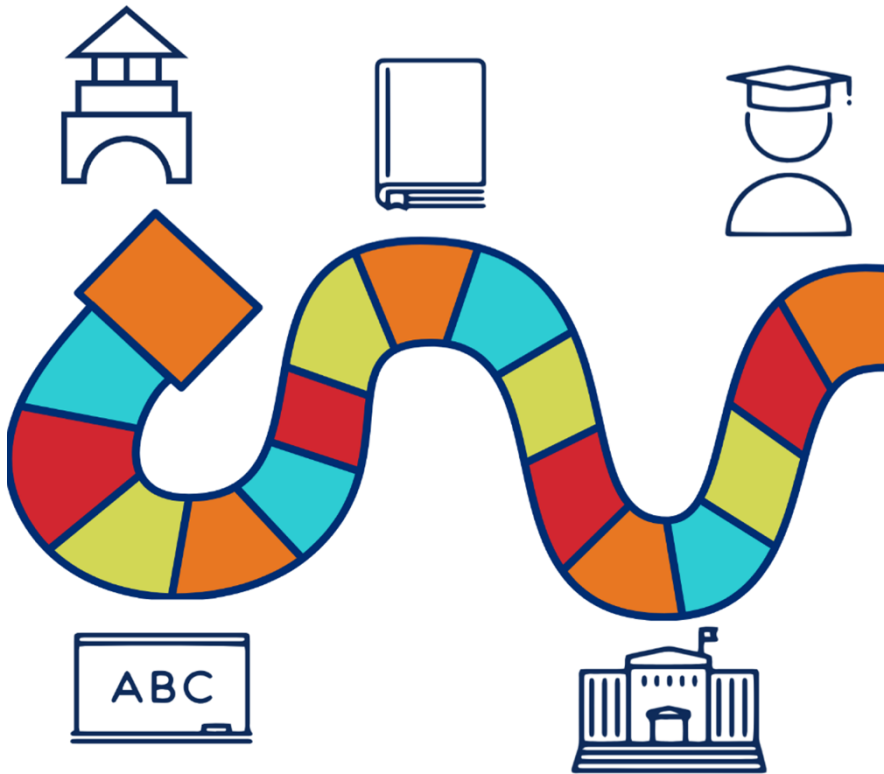


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# A Special Education Journey



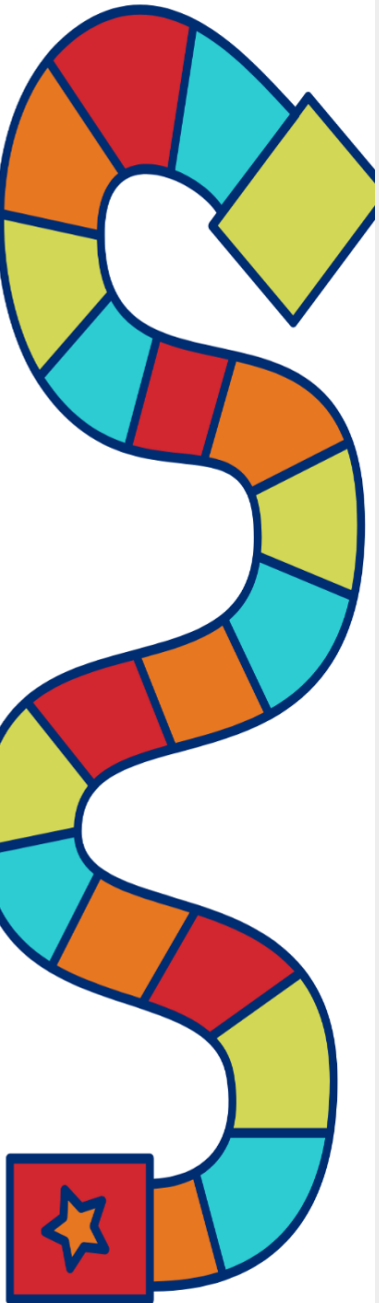
## Agenda

- **Introduction**
- **Session 1: Early Childhood**
  - Breakout Sessions 1
- **Session 2: Elementary**
  - Breakout Sessions 2
- **Lunch**
- **Session 3: Middle School**
  - Breakout Sessions 3
- **Session 4: From High School into Postsecondary Plans**
- **Closing**

# Introduction

Beginning with the End in Mind





# Beginning with the End in Mind (1 of 4)

“To begin with the end in mind means to start with a. clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you’re going so that you better understand where you are now so that the steps you take are always in the right direction.”

-Stephen Covey, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*

# Beginning with the End in Mind (2 of 4)



Source: [How to set children with disability up for success at school | ABC News – YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4S8LnHZuuE)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4S8LnHZuuE>)



# Beginning with the End in Mind (3 of 4)

- Help the student and family consider what they want life to look like after high school.
- Start early conversations about future goals – such as college, employment, or independent living.
- Ensure educational planning is purposeful and aligned with the student's aspirations.



# Beginning with the End in Mind

## (4 of 4)

### Use Goals to Guide the Individualized Education Program (IEP)

- Develop ambitious, student-centered goals.
- Use these goals to direct instruction and services.
- Identify supports and experiences that prepare the student for adult life.

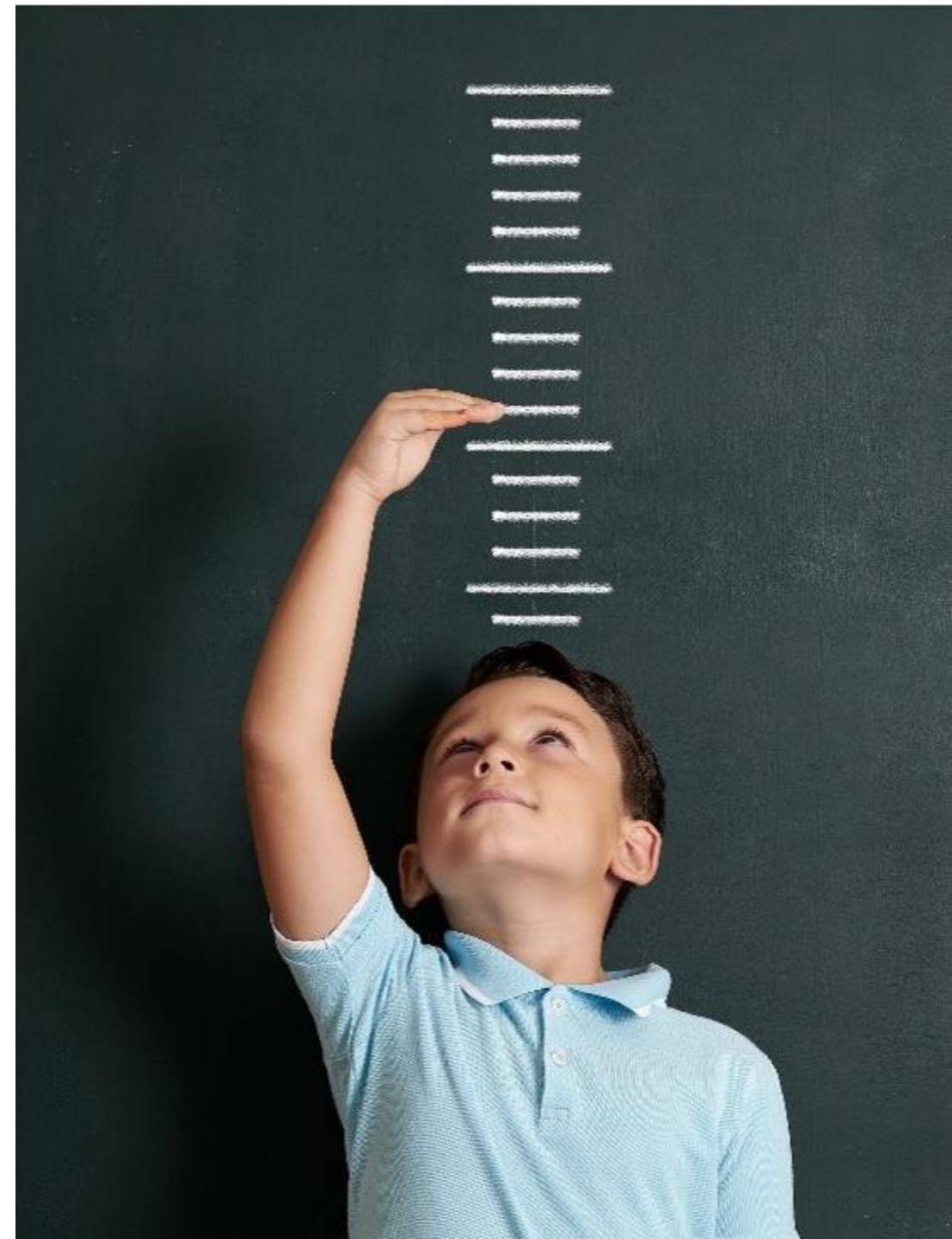
### Keep the Long-Term Vision in Focus

- Connect each goal, support, and service to meaningful postsecondary outcomes.
- Monitor progress to ensure alignment with the student's long-term goals.



# Measuring Success

- How will we know that we are successfully “beginning with the end in mind?”
- How will we measure success?
- What tools can we use to determine if we are serving our students effectively?



# State Performance Plan (SPP) / Annual Performance Report (APR)

- The State Performance Plan (SPP) for Tennessee, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is a document outlining how the state will improve special education services and meet targets for performance indicators.
- It includes 18 compliance-based and results-based indicators.
- The Tennessee Department of Education, in collaboration with stakeholders, sets targets for these indicators and reports annually on progress through the APR.



## Annual Performance Report

### Local Determinations Quick Reference Guide

Division of Performance and Evaluation | Tennessee Department of Education | October 2024

# APR Local Determinations

## How Performance is Measured:

- Local education agencies (LEAs) earn points for each APR indicator by meeting state targets or showing year-to-year improvement.
- Some indicators are weighted more due to their impact on key outcomes like graduation and postsecondary readiness.
- The overall score is a percentage based on total weighted points earned.

## Local Determination Matrix Includes:

- an overall determination level (e.g., meets requirements, needs assistance),
- a summary of performance on all 14 indicators, and
- identified strengths and areas for improvement.



# What does Family Engagement do?

- Family Engagement in Special Education is a collaborative project between The Arc Tennessee and the Tennessee Department of Education.
- The Family Engagement Project helps support APR Indicators 8 and 14.
  - **Indicator 8:** percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that the school facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.
  - **Indicator 14:** post-school outcomes after one year for students who had an IEP when they exited public school.



# Indicator 8: Parent Involvement

Indicator 8 focuses on the percentage of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.

| Number of parents reporting facilitated involvement | Total number of respondent parents | FFY 2022 Data | FFY 2023 Target | FFY 2023 Data | Status              | Slippage    |
|---|------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 5823  | 6778                               | 85.66%        | 90.78%          | 85.91%        | Did not meet target | No slippage |



# Indicator 14: Post-School Outcomes

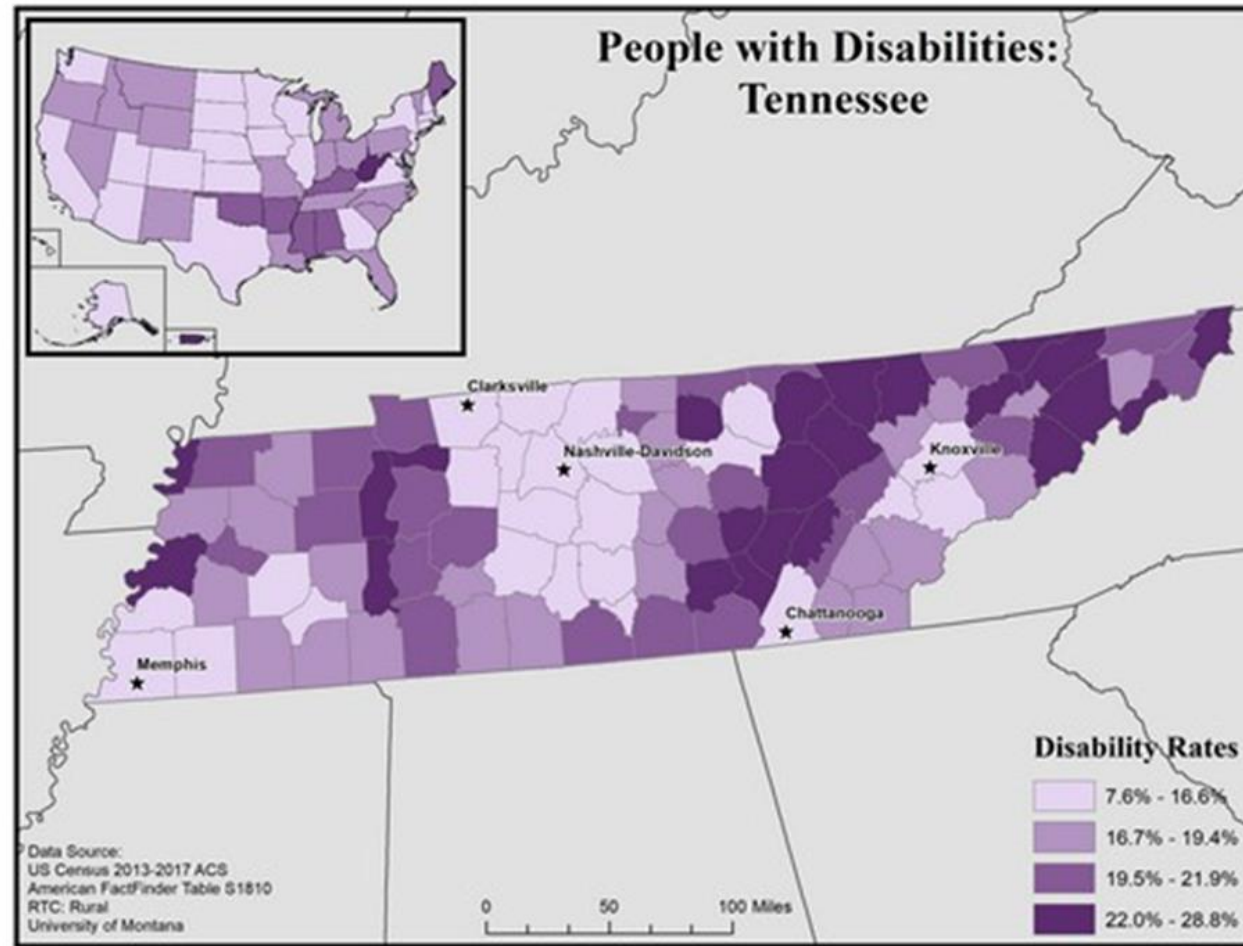
| Measure   | Number of respondent youth | Number who are no longer in secondary school and had IEPs in effect when they left | FFY 2022 Data | FFY 2023 Target | FFY 2023 Data | Status              | Slippage    |
|---|----------------------------|--|---------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------|
| A. Enrolled in higher education (1)   | 1,323                      | 5,233  | 23.41 %       | 28.11%          | 25.28 %       | Did not meet target | No slippage |
| B. ...or competitively employed within one year (1+2)   | 3,352                      | 5,233  | 60.05 %       | 64.83 %         | 64.06 %       | Did not meet target | No slippage |
| C. ...or in some other postsecondary program or competitively employed in some other employment (1+2+3+4) | 4,170                      | 5,233  | 76%           | 76.37 %         | 79.69 %       | Did not meet target | No slippage |

# Data

Let's look at some current data as it pertains to individuals with disabilities and why planning for our students' future outcomes is so important.



# Disability Rate



Source: [University of Montana: Rural Disability Research](https://tinyurl.com/ytjbs2y9)  
(<https://tinyurl.com/ytjbs2y9>)



# Tennessee Graduation Rates Comparison (2024-25 School Year)

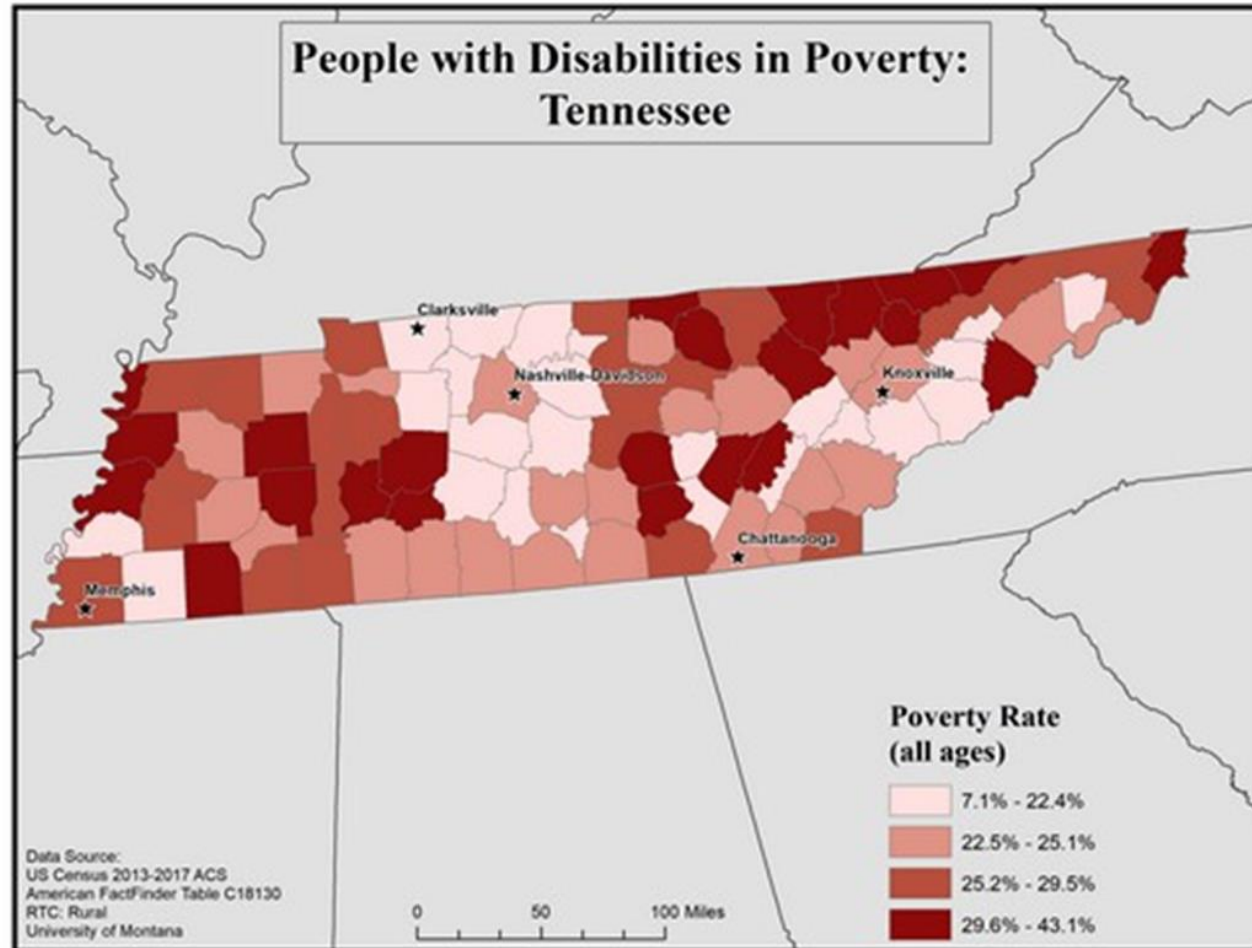
| Student Group              | 2023-24 Rate | 2024-25 Rates |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| All students               | 92.1%        | 92.3%         |
| Students with Disabilities | 81%          | 84%           |

Source: [Tennessee Department of Education: TDOE Releases 2024-25 Graduation Rate Data](https://tinyurl.com/4udx862w)

(<https://tinyurl.com/4udx862w>)



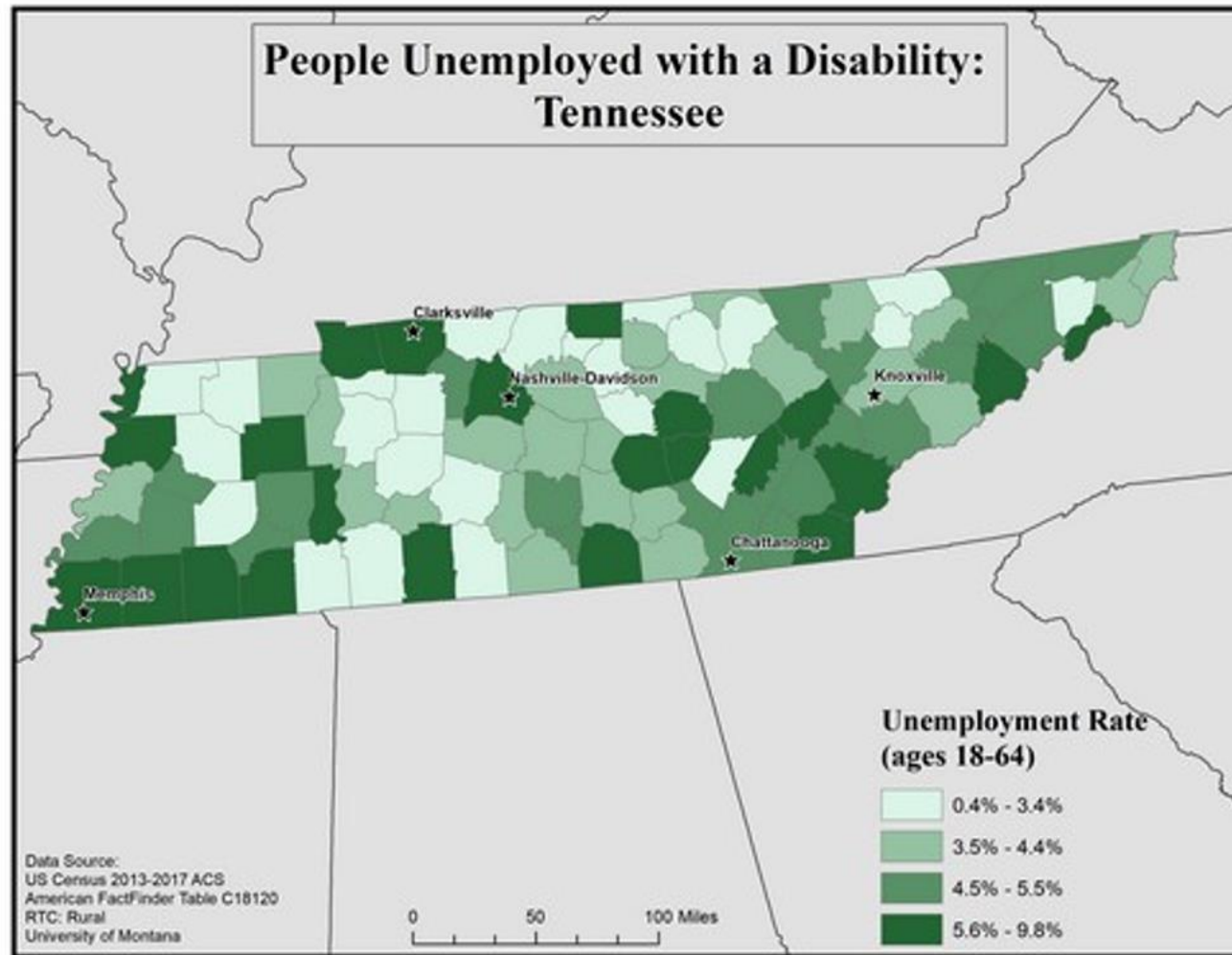
# Poverty Rate



Source: [University of Montana: Rural Disability Research](https://tinyurl.com/yd3jd7je)  
(<https://tinyurl.com/yd3jd7je>)



# Unemployment Rate

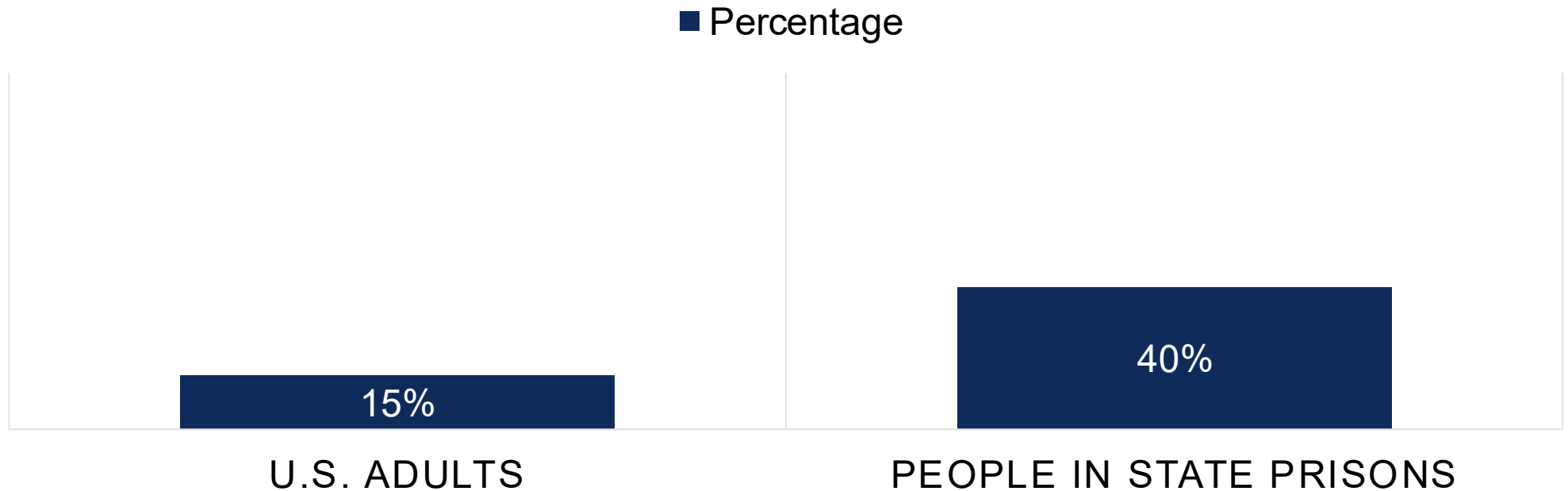


Source: [University of Montana: Rural Disability Research](https://tinyurl.com/ythnrxzz)  
(<https://tinyurl.com/ythnrxzz>)



# Incarceration Rate

## PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AMONG INCARCERATED VS. NON-INCARCERATED ADULTS



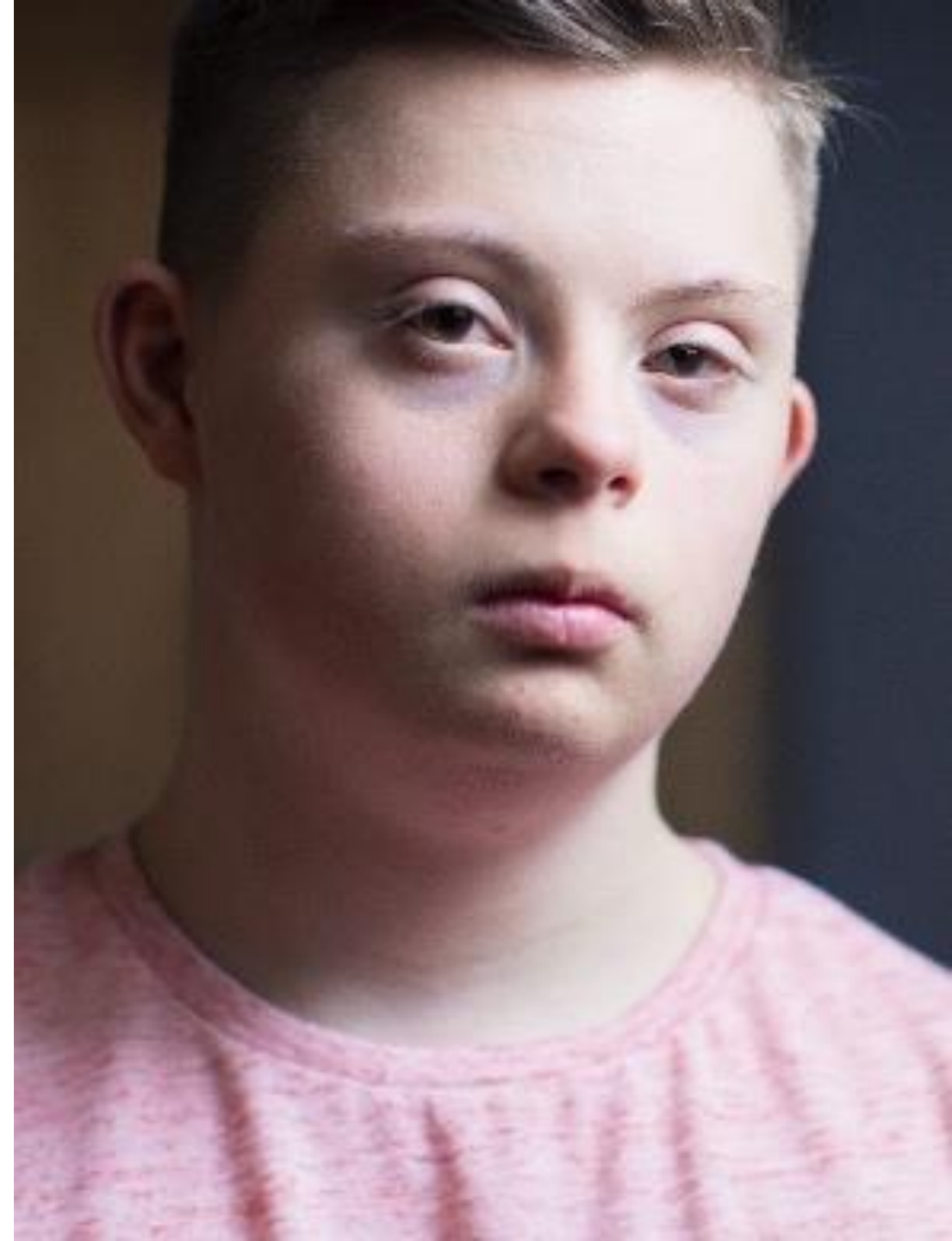
Source: [Prison Policy Initiative](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/chronicpunishment.html#disability)  
(<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/chronicpunishment.html#disability>)



# How can we help?

These statistics highlight a very concerning trajectory for our students.

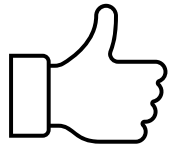
How can we help improve outcomes for our students with disabilities?



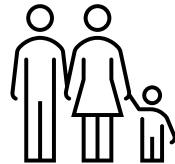
# Five Key Factors to Improving Outcomes

Research and practice have demonstrated that several factors are necessary to significantly improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Students should receive meaningful instruction and services based on these key foundational elements:

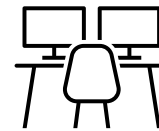
High expectations



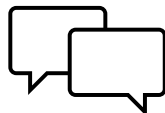
Family involvement



Least Restrictive Environment



Communication strategies



Life after high school



# “Every Kid Needs a Champion”



Source: [Every Kid Needs a Champion](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFnMTHhKdkw)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFnMTHhKdkw>)



# Session 1

Early Childhood



# Session 1 Agenda

- Objectives
- Transition considerations
- Key factors
  - High expectations
  - Family involvement
  - Least restrictive environment (LRE)
  - Communication strategies
  - Life after high school
- IEP activity





# Session 1 Objectives

By the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

- identify unique support considerations when a child transitions to elementary school and the critical decisions that impact a student's future; and
- utilize the five key factors for improved outcomes.



# Transition Considerations for Early Childhood (1 of 2)

Whenever a special education student is changing schools or grade bands, we need to consider the impact transition can have on the student's success. Here's why it matters:

- adapting to changes in environment and expectations;
- ensuring continuity of services and supports;
- addressing individual needs and readiness;
- encouraging family involvement and collaboration; and
- promoting long-term success.

Focusing on transitions isn't just about moving from one building to another- it's about making sure students feel supported and equipped to succeed in their next environment.

# Goals of Transition from Early Childhood to Elementary School

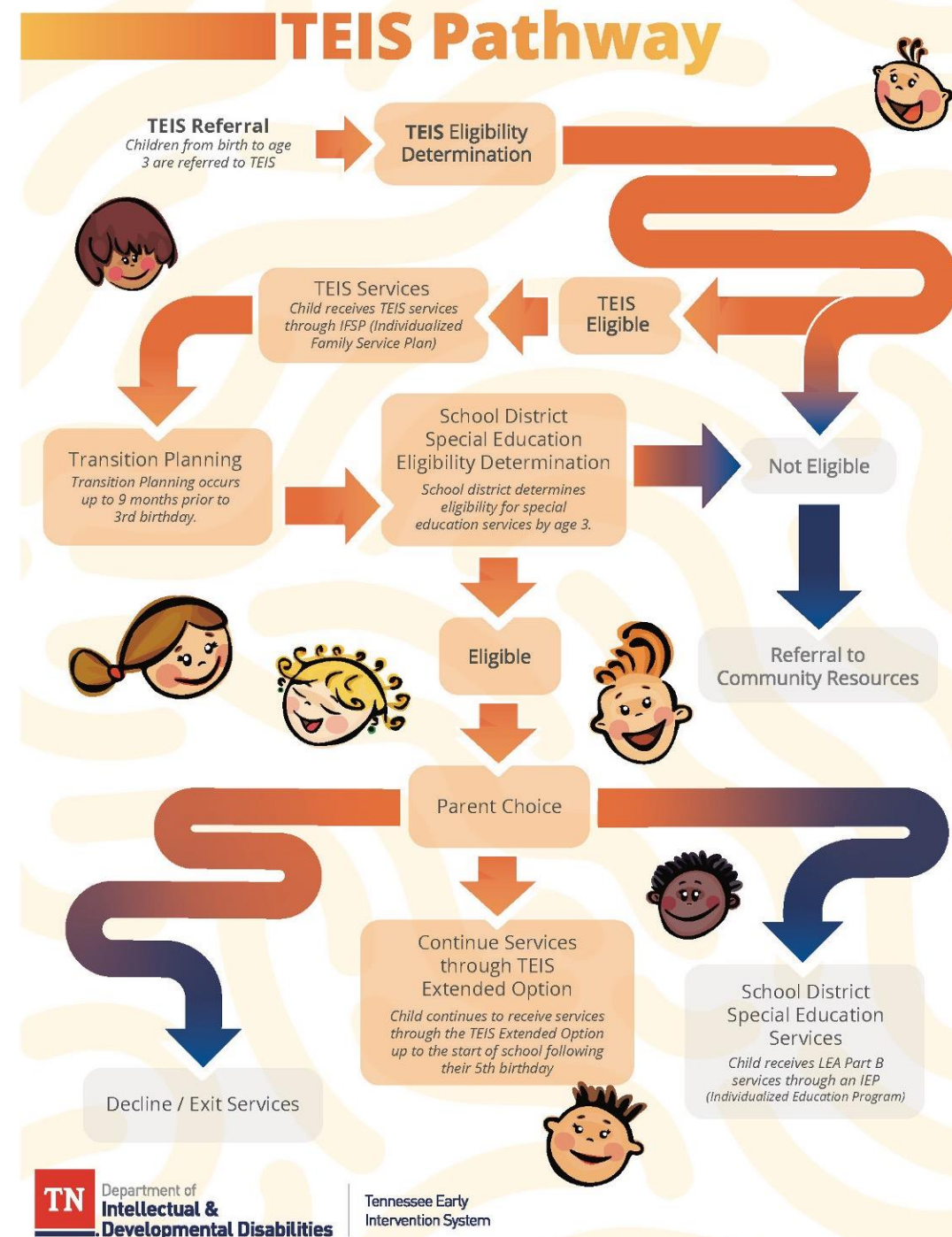
Goals help create a **coordinated, child-centered process** that sets the foundation for long-term success in school.

- Ensure continuity of services
- Promote school readiness
- Support family involvement
- Establish clear communication
- Develop an IEP
- Promote positive adjustment
- Provide professional collaboration and training



# Transition Considerations for Early Childhood (2 of 2)

- At age three, families of children eligible for IDEA Part B can choose between entering the school system or continuing extended Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS) services until the child's fifth birthday with the option to exit at any time.
- This choice will impact the full educational journey for a student with disabilities.
- What are some possible outcomes for a student who stays on Part C versus moving to Part B?



# Early Intervention to Preschool



Source: [TEIS to Preschool](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZS3Fzpwwl8)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZS3Fzpwwl8>)



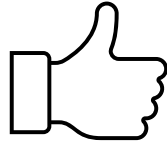
# High Expectations in Early Childhood

“You can accomplish anything with students if you set high expectations for behavior and performance by which you yourself abide.”

-Harry K. Wong, The First Days of School



# Initial Evaluations in Early Childhood



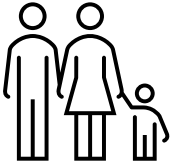
Why should teachers prepare parents for initial evaluation meetings?

- Build trust and collaboration.
- Empower families to participate.
- Reduce confusion and anxiety.
- Promote better outcomes.

In short, initial evaluations are the gateway to ensuring students receive the right support at the right time, and preparing parents helps make the process more collaborate, informed, and student-focused.



# Family Involvement in Early Childhood

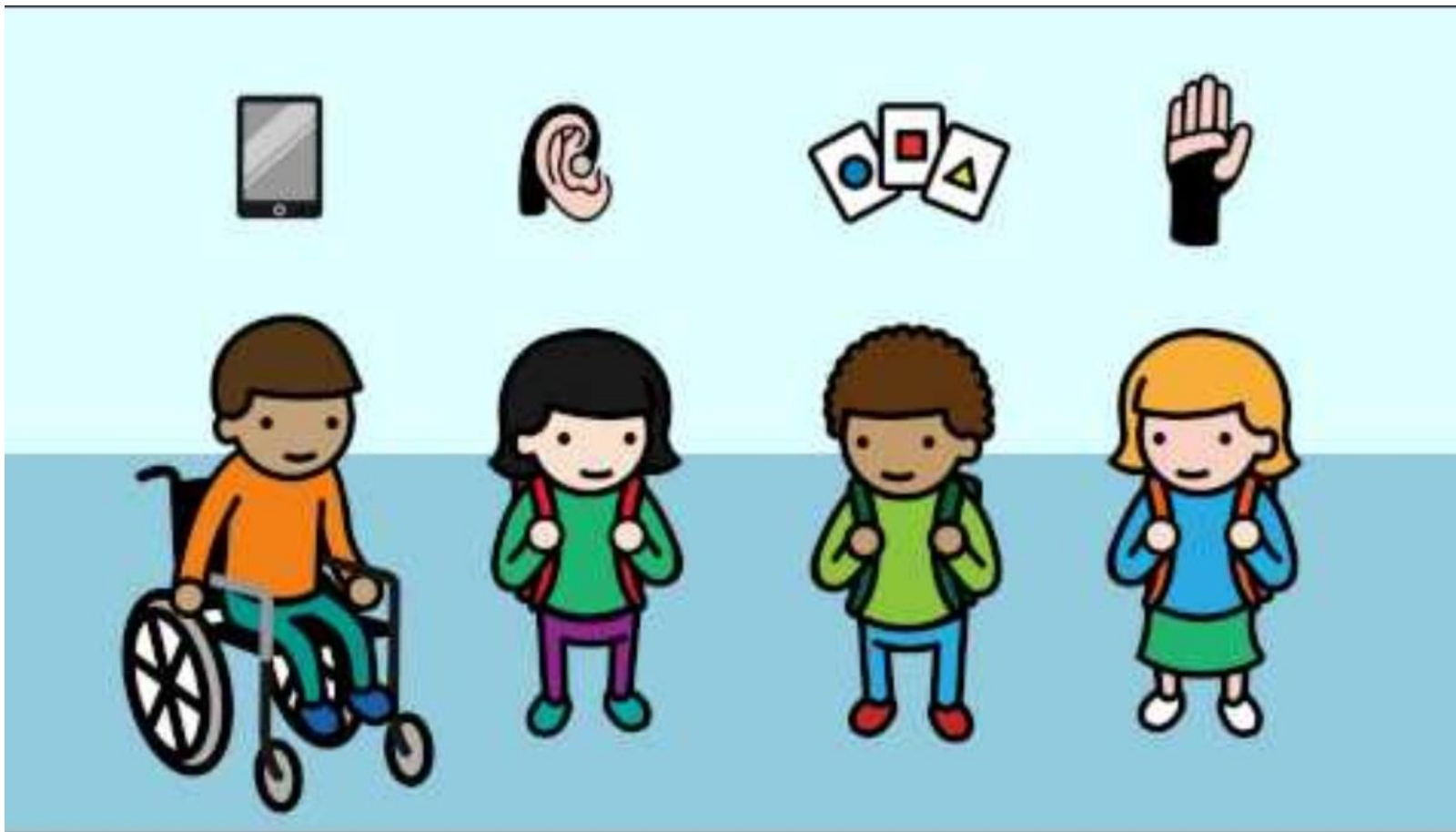
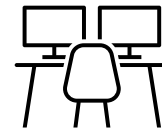


## Evaluations and Eligibility

- Be transparent with families from the beginning of the referral process and clarify the purpose of evaluations.
- Discuss long-term requirements like annual IEPs and re-evaluations and clarify that current eligibility does not guarantee future eligibility.
- Share evaluation standards and explain why the school suspects a disability and the need for special education.
- Provide evaluation reports to families.
- Outline the process, including testing, timeline, and parent input opportunities.
- Connect testing objectives to school performance.
- Use visuals to explain score types.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms when communicating with families.
- Highlight the student's strengths alongside areas of need.



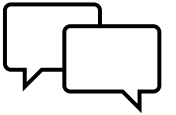
# Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)



Source: [Least Restrictive Environment Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYIktSTIIQY)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYIktSTIIQY>)



# Communication Strategies in Early Childhood



What can educators do to ensure a successful outcome?  
Explaining IEP Meetings to Families:

**Before** the IEP meeting

**During** the IEP meeting

**After** the IEP meeting





# Life After High School For Early Childhood

- Begin with high expectations.
- Support parents in understanding how decisions made at this age can impact the trajectory of the student throughout their educational journey.



# IEP Activity: Prior Written Notice

Prior Written Notice (PWN) is a critical legal requirement under IDEA that ensures transparency and protects the rights of students and their families. Here's what you need to know:

- When is PWN required?
- What must be included in a PWN?
- Why is PWN important?
- What are best practices?

By understanding and correctly implementing PWN, educators can foster trust with families, maintain compliance with federal law, and ensure that students receive appropriate educational services.

# Wrap-Up for Early Childhood

We discussed:

- having high expectations for students,
- supporting families in IEP meetings,
- supporting TEIS transition and entry into kindergarten,
- encouraging families to provide input for collaborative planning,
- ensuring services are provided in the LRE, and
- the importance of an accurate PWN.



# Questions?

## Early Childhood



# Session 1: Early Childhood

Partner-led Breakout Sessions



# Partner-Led Breakouts: Session #1

**[Partner Name]**

***[Name of Breakout Session]***

[Description of breakout session]

**[Partner Name]**

***[Name of Breakout Session]***

[Description of breakout session]

**[Partner Name]**

***[Name of Breakout Session]***

[Description of breakout session]

# Session 2

Elementary School



# Session 2 Agenda

- Objectives
- Transition considerations
- Key factors
  - High expectations
  - Family involvement
  - Least restrictive environment (LRE)
  - Communication strategies
  - Life after high school
- IEP activity



## Session 2 Objectives

By the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

- identify unique support considerations for elementary-aged students and the critical decisions that impact their future; and
- utilize the five key factors for improved outcomes.



# Kindergarten Transition Considerations

Less than half of U.S. preschoolers with disabilities receive special education in inclusive settings, limiting their participation in general education kindergarten, according to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

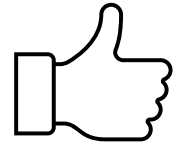
Starting a student in a more restrictive setting can limit long-term opportunities for inclusion, growth, and independence. While sometimes necessary, these placements should be carefully considered, temporary when possible, and include a clear plan for increasing inclusion.

Source: [U.S. Department of Education, OSEP Fast Facts: Children 3–5 Served Under IDEA Part B, Section 619](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/osep-fast-facts-children-3-5-20)

(<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/osep-fast-facts-children-3-5-20>)



# High Expectations in Elementary School



Research from the Journal of Educational Psychology shows that promoting the belief that all students can succeed and be held to high expectations is linked to better academic performance, higher engagement, and fewer behavior issues.

Source: Bergold, S., & Steinmayr, R. (2023). *Teacher judgments predict developments in adolescents' school performance, motivation, and life satisfaction. Journal of Educational Psychology, 115(4), 642–664.* <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000786>



# The Pygmalion Effect

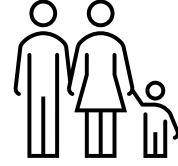


Source: [Pygmalion Effect](#)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjbL7zW-Wig&t=134s>)



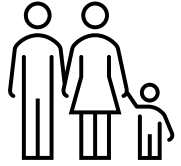
# Family Involvement in Elementary School (1 of 3)



**Encourage parents to use input statements** to share their unique insights, ensuring the IEP accurately reflects the child's needs and maximizes the school support.



# Family Involvement in Elementary School (2 of 3)



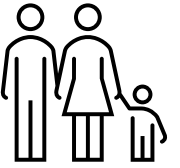
Educators should encourage this because it:

- captures a full picture of the student,
- builds trust and partnership,
- ensures the IEP reflects family priorities,
- supports better decision-making,
- promotes advocacy and engagement, and
- meets IDEA requirements.



# Family Involvement in Elementary School

## (3 of 3)



- A “Parent Input Statement” can be an invaluable resource for parents navigating the IEP process, especially for the first time.
- It provides a structured way for parents to share insights about their child’s strengths, challenges, and learning preferences, as well as any concerns they may have.
- This form can help ensure that parental perspectives are fully considered in the development of the IEP.

Source: [IEP Meeting Parent Input Statement](https://tinyurl.com/m2jt4h77)  
(<https://tinyurl.com/m2jt4h77>)



### INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) MEETING: PARENT INPUT STATEMENT



You are an important part of your child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. Your input helps us understand what your child needs to succeed. Please take a few minutes to fill out this form so we can create the best plan for your child.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

IEP Details: \_\_\_\_\_

Please share at least 3-5 of your child’s current strengths:

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Please share at least 3-5 of your child’s current interests:

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Please share at least 3-5 of your child’s current needs:

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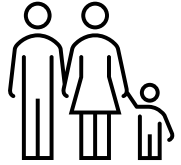
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[specialeducation@theartn.org](mailto:specialeducation@theartn.org) • 833-596-1553 • [familyengagementtn.com](http://familyengagementtn.com)



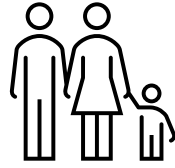
# Idea Drop



1. Take a few moments to consider the following question:
  - Using the case study on Evie, how would you help Evie's parents prepare their parent input statement?
2. Please type your response into the chat.
3. Click the like/heart on the ideas you agree with or find most helpful.



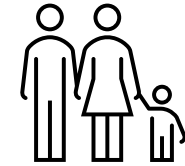
# Evie's Parent Input Statement (1 of 3)



Read Introducing Evie



# Evie's Parent Input Statement (2 of 3)



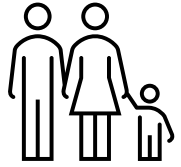
## Terms used in the video –

- Augmentative and alternative communication device (AAC)
- Applied behavior analysis (ABA)

**Note:** Video shared with parent consent.



# Evie's Parent Input Statement (3 of 3)

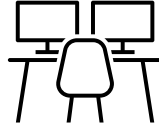


How would the Parent Input Statement, written by Evie's parents, benefit you as an educator in the IEP process?

- Offers a holistic view of the student
- Identifies strengths and interests
- Clarifies challenges
- Shares effective strategies
- Provides context for behavior
- Helps set realistic goals
- Encourages collaborations
- Advocates for the child



# Least Restrictive Environment in Elementary School



Access to non-disabled peers and inclusionary practices support the learning and social growth of students with disabilities.

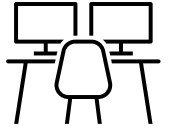
What are the consequences of exclusion?

- Hindered academic progress
- Increased risk of school dropout
- Reduced social and emotional growth
- Lowered self-esteem
- Increased risk of mental health issues





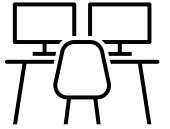
# Inclusive Education



“When inclusive education is fully embraced, we abandon the idea that children have to become ‘normal’ in order to contribute to the world. We begin to look beyond typical ways of becoming valued members of the community, and in doing so, begin to realize the achievable goal of providing all children with an authentic sense of belonging.”

—Norman Kunc

# Inclusion and Belonging

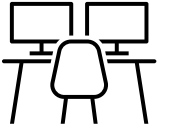


Inclusion and belonging lead to postsecondary success. Students who feel a sense of belonging:

- have fewer absences.
- show greater academic gains,
- exhibit fewer problematic behaviors,
- have higher self-esteem, and
- gain communication skills.



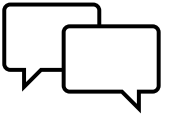
# Are you really ready for inclusion?



Source: [What is Inclusion?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VMz06iVzqs&t=50s)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VMz06iVzqs&t=50s>)



# Communication Strategies in Elementary School



- Provide clear and frequent communication to help families—who are often new to special education—build trust.
- Explain key parts of the process in simple, friendly language (e.g. IEPs, evaluations, PWN, progress data, functional behavior assessment (FBA), or behavior intervention plan (BIP)).
- Use communication to guide families as partners and help them feel confident in the IEP process.



# Life After High School for Elementary School



“The purposes of this chapter are—(1)(A) to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes public education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.”

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act,  
20 U.S.C. § 1400(d)(1)(A) (2004).

- IDEA says special education should help students prepare for further education, employment, and independent living.
- This goal starts in elementary school, even though students are still young.
- Early skills such as reading, communication, behavior, independence are the foundation for success later in life.

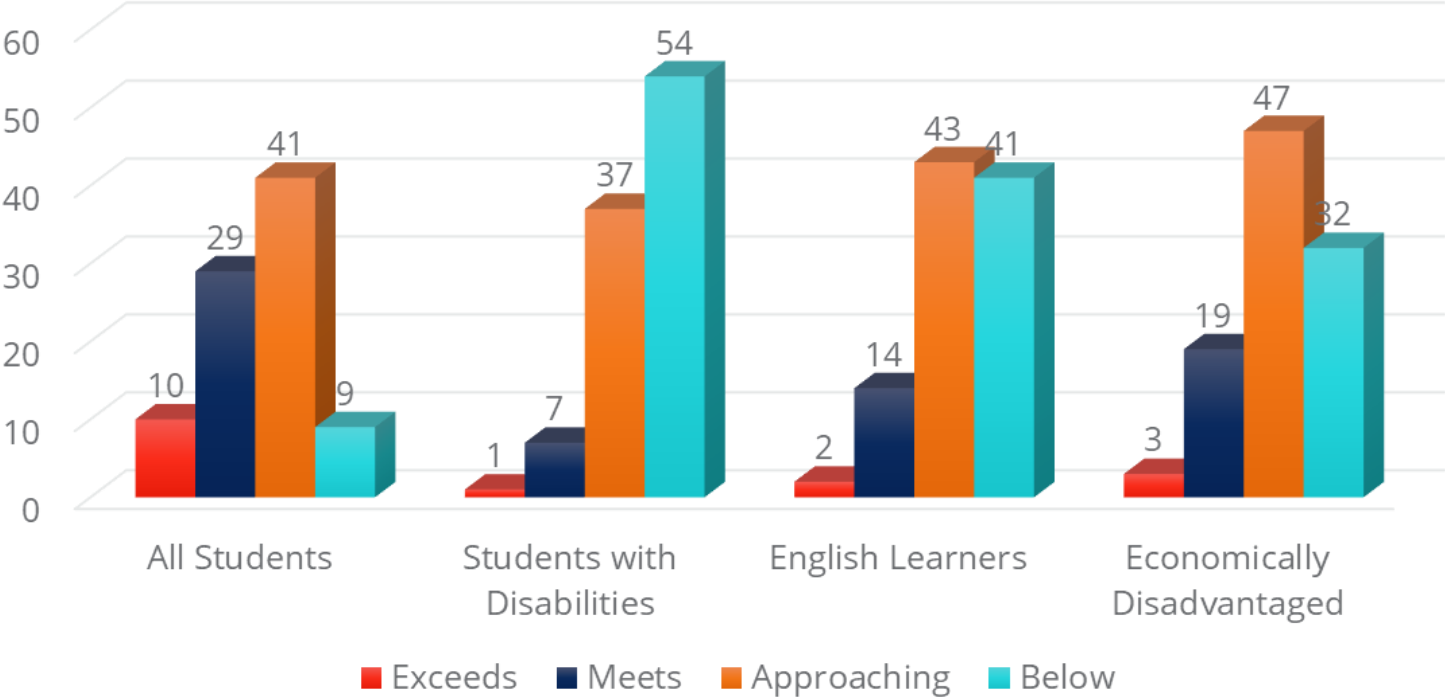
Source: [U.S. Department of Education, IDEA Statute, 20 U.S.C. § 1400.](#)

(<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-i/1400>)



# IEP Activity: Our Student Data

## 2024 ELA TCAP Data Grades 3 - 12



Most students scored at the “approaching” level on the 2024 ELA TCAP. Students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students had lower proficiency rates and higher percentages below expectations.

# IEP Activity: Alternate Assessments (1 of 2)

Alternate Assessments are:

- designed for students with significant intellectual or developmental disabilities (about 1% of the student population),
- structured around students' disabilities, and
- created to allow students to participate and answer questions as independently as possible.



**Key information:** The IEP team, including parents, should be aware that participation in the alternate assessment means that the student is on a pathway that does not lead to a traditional high school diploma.

# IEP Activity- Alternate Assessments (2 of 2)

Who decides if a student will take an alternate assessment?

How many students should take alternate assessments?

What kind of postsecondary options are available to students who take alternate assessments?

# Wrap-Up for Elementary School

So far, we have covered:

- considering placement during transition,
- emphasizing the importance of maintaining high expectations,
- understanding the importance of parent input.
- creating an environment of belonging, and
- utilizing alternate assessments appropriately.



# Questions?

## Elementary School



# Lunch



# Session 2

Partner-Led Breakout Sessions



# Partner-Led Breakouts: Session #2

**[Partner Name]**

***[Name of Breakout Session]***

[Description of breakout session]

**[Partner Name]**

***[Name of Breakout Session]***

[Description of breakout session]

**[Partner Name]**

***[Name of Breakout Session]***

[Description of breakout session]

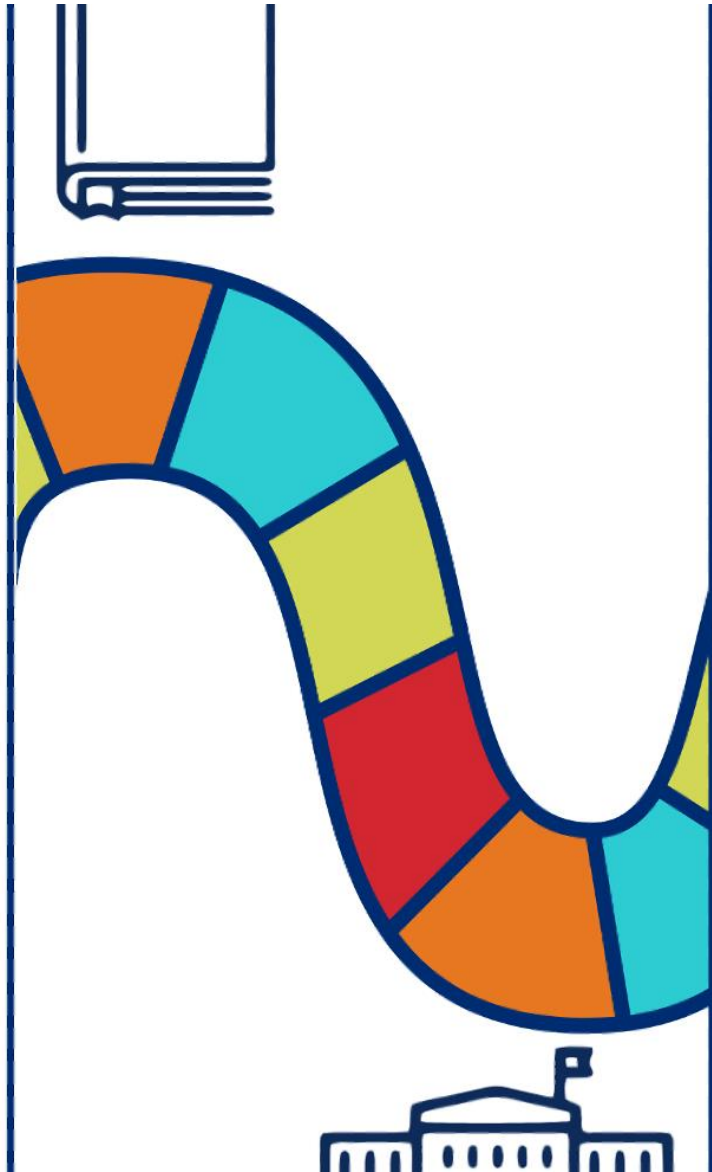
# Session 3

Middle School



# Session 3 Agenda

- Objectives
- Transition considerations
- Key factors
  - High expectations
  - Family involvement
  - Least restrictive environment (LRE)
  - Communication strategies
  - Life after high school
- IEP activity



# Session 3 Objectives

By the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

- apply support to special education students in middle school; and
- utilize the five key factors for improved outcomes.



# Chatterfall

Take a few moments to consider the following question:

- What are some things that should be considered for Evie during the transition from elementary school to middle school?

When I say, “Go,” please type your response into the chat.



# Transition Considerations for Middle School

- Campus changes and accessibility needs
- Class transitions and locker use
- Organizational demands
- Teacher expectations
- Social and academic pressures
- Increasing independence
- Developmental changes
- Less-structured downtime
- Current accommodations and modifications



# Middle Versus Elementary Expectations

Key differences of inclusion in middle school versus elementary school include:

- academic rigor and independence,
- multiple teachers and classrooms,
- social and peer interactions,
- increased focus on transition skills,
- specialized supports and services, and
- behavioral and emotional supports.



Supporting a middle school student's inclusion in general education demands greater coordination, independence, and focus on future readiness while ensuring access to the curriculum and social interaction.

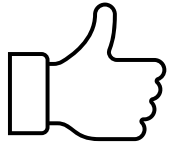
# Accommodations and Modifications

What we can do for effective transition to middle school:

- Review and update the IEP, if needed, for new academic demands.
- Maintain continuity to match increased independence and multiple classes.
- Implement accommodations and modifications consistently.
- Promote self-advocacy by teaching students to use and request supports.
- Know the difference between accommodations (how they learn) and modifications (what they learn).
- Coordinate across teachers to ensure consistency and effectiveness.



# High Expectations in Middle School

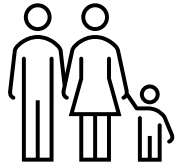


## Executive Functioning (EF) Skills

- Middle school is a critical time for students with challenges. Educators who understand and support these EF skills help students build independence, confidence, and success both in and beyond the classroom.
- Evie, like many middle school students with disabilities, often struggles with EF skills.
- EF skills are cognitive skills that are essential for planning, organizing, and managing tasks, and they often require targeted instruction and support.



# Family Involvement in Middle School

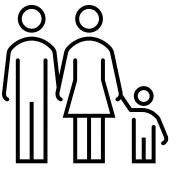


Ask for parent and student input.

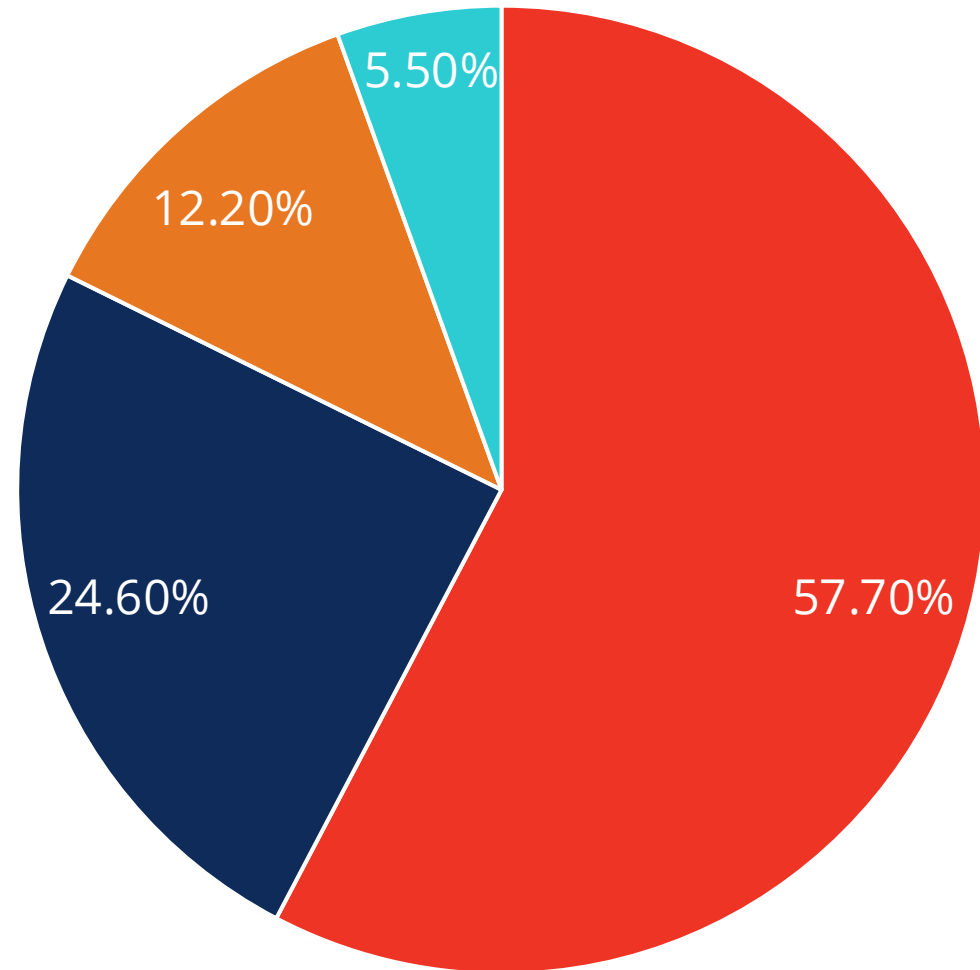
- What are the student's short- and long-term goals?
- How do we know we are meeting these goals in and outside of school?
- What skills are important to the parent and student?
- What skills result in socially significant change?
- What strategies have worked or not worked in the past?



# Student Involvement in IEP Meetings



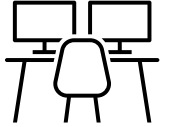
- Attend Meetings, provide little or no input
- Attend meetings; provide significant input; take a leadership role in planning process
- Do not attend meetings; provide no input
- Attend meetings; provide some input



Source: IRIS Center-Secondary Transition  
<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/transcp/cresource/q1/p01/>



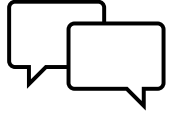
# Least Restrictive Environment in Middle School



- Middle school students move between many classes and teachers, so LRE decisions look at the student's needs, not the bell schedule.
- A student may need different levels of support in different subjects, based on strengths and needs.
- Teams should consider which services and accommodations need to follow the student across the entire day, and which may not.
- Ongoing data helps the team make sure the student is in the least restrictive environment where they can learn and make progress.



# Communication Strategies in Middle School



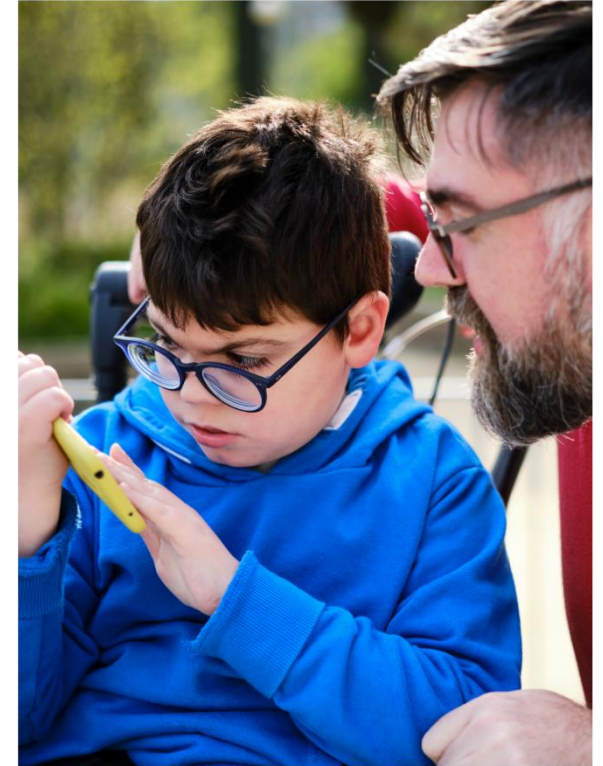
- Meet with families and students in advance to tour the school and discuss the upcoming transition.
- Determine preferred communication methods that balance home-school collaboration with growing student independence.
- Address social relationship changes and plan for developing new social skills.
- Encourage self-advocacy and student voice to build confidence and prepare for high school.
- Establish a primary school contact for the family and student.



# Life After High School for Middle School



- Explain diploma options early so families understand how middle school decisions impact graduation and adult service eligibility.
- Begin person-centered planning to identify student strengths, interests, and future goals that will guide long-term planning.
- Begin career exploration and interest inventories to guide transition planning.
- Use transition planning within the IEP (required by age 14) to align academic, functional, and life goals.
- Emphasize to families that transition planning has lifelong implications.



# IEP Activity: Student Involvement in IEP

Evie is now a sixth grader in middle school.

Middle school is a great time to start including the student in their IEP team meetings. They must be invited at age 14 but can attend and participate at any age.

Share some ways you could help Evie get involved in her IEP team meeting?

What are some ways you have successfully involved students in their IEP team meetings?



# Wrap-Up in Middle School

We discussed:

- considering key factors during the transition to middle school,
- reevaluating accommodations and modifications,
- setting high expectations for students,
- involving parents and students in IEP meetings,
- teaching students in the LRE,
- maintaining open lines of communication with families,
- preparing proactively for upcoming transitions, and
- exploring the use of student-led IEP meetings.

**How can applying this knowledge help Evie begin with the end in mind?**



# Questions?

## Middle School



# Session 3

Partner-Led Breakout



# Partner-Led Breakouts: Session #3

**[Partner Name]**

***[Name of Breakout Session]***

[Description of breakout session]

**[Partner Name]**

***[Name of Breakout Session]***

[Description of breakout session]

**[Partner Name]**

***[Name of Breakout Session]***

[Description of breakout session]

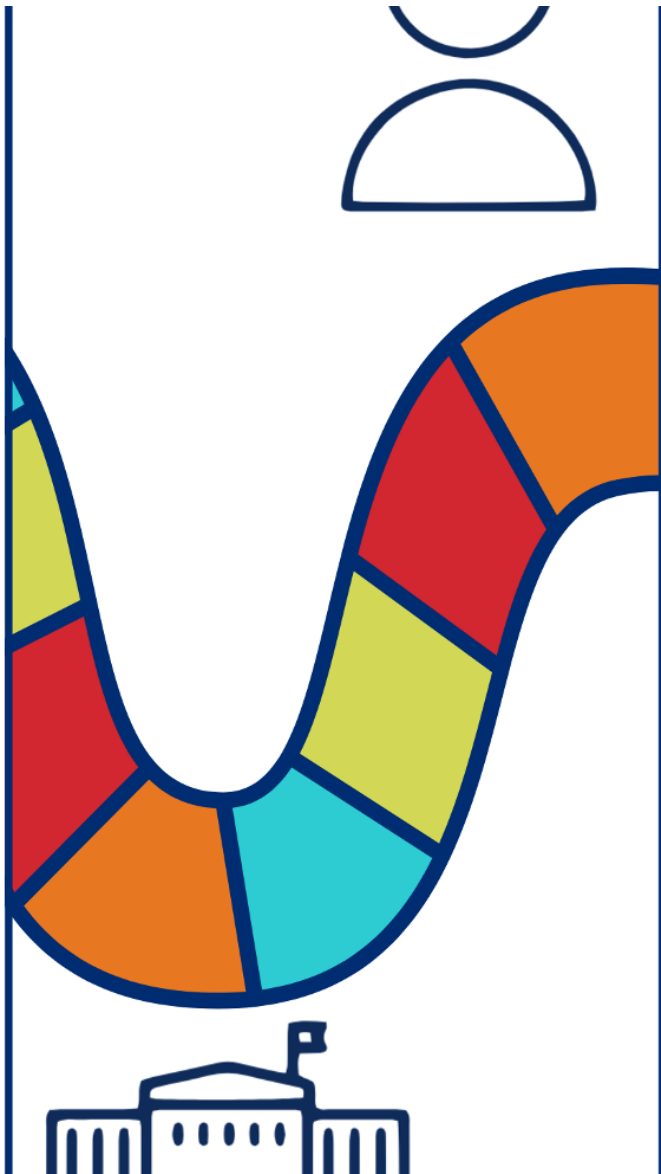
# Session 4

From High School into Postsecondary Plans



# Session 4 Agenda

- Objectives
- Transition considerations
- Key factors
  - High expectations
  - Family involvement
  - Least restrictive environment
  - Communication strategies
  - Life after high school
- IEP activity





# Session 4 Objectives

By the end of the presentations, participants will be able to:

- Apply support to special education students during the transition from high school through postsecondary plans.
- Utilize the five key factors for improved outcomes.



# Word Cloud Activity

## Thinking back to Evie.

What skills do we need to begin building now so she can enter high school ready for success?

Please type one word or short phrase into the Word Cloud when the prompt appears.



# Transition Considerations: Entering High School



Key transition considerations for students with special needs **entering** high school:

- managing increased academic demands,
- understanding Tennessee's four graduation pathways and how they affect course selections and postsecondary opportunities.
- developing an effective transition plan,
- building self-advocacy and independence.
- providing social and emotional support,
- navigating the new school environment and expectations,
- using assistive technology and accommodations, and
- maintaining ongoing family engagement and communication.



# Transition Considerations: Exiting High School



Key transition considerations for students with special needs **exiting** high school:

- reviewing graduation pathway progress and required documentation including the Summary of Performance;
- completing the transition plan with clear postsecondary goals;
- building self-advocacy and communication skills for college, work, or training programs;
- connecting with adult agencies;
- ensuring access to needed assistive technology after graduation;
- preparing for independent living skills and daily routines;
- understanding changes in legal rights at age 18; and
- supporting families in planning for the shift out of school-based services.

# High Expectations in High School



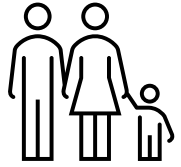
- Hold high expectations across academics, social development, and adult-life skills so students are prepared for adult living.
- Build self-advocacy so students are prepared to communicate their needs in future jobs, schools, etc.
- Honor students' interests and strengths and guide their courses and supports so they can reach their postsecondary goals.
- Help students learn and be accountable to use the skills necessary for future education, employment, and independent living.



**Let's remember Evie. The high expectations we set for students in elementary school become the foundation for the expectations in high school.**



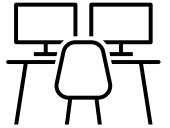
# Family Involvement in High School



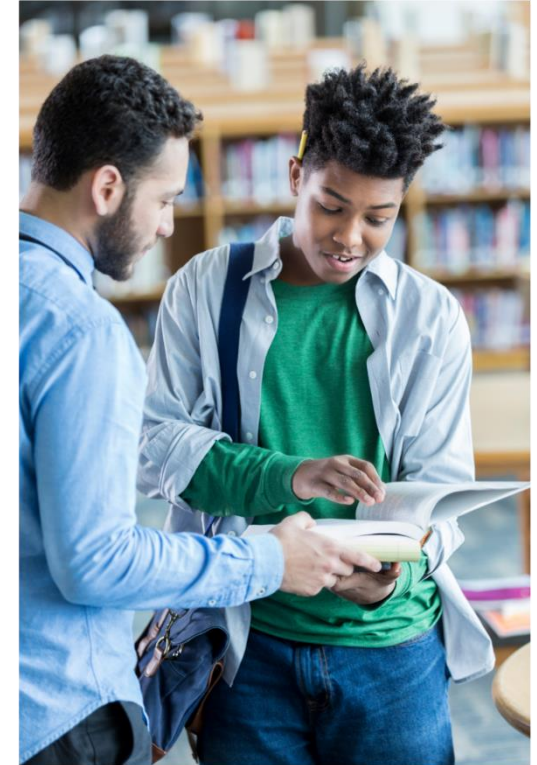
- Include families and students as key partners whose voices guide the transition plan.
- Use clear communication to explain graduation pathways and important decisions.
- Work together to align the plan with the student's goals for education, employment, and independent living.
- Avoid assuming that parents understand the options or decisions for postsecondary success.



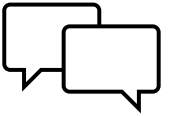
# Least Restrictive Environment in High School



- At the high school level, LRE becomes more complex due to scheduling, course content, credit requirements, and postsecondary planning.
- LRE isn't just about where the students are placed—it's about ensuring meaningful participation, access to grade-level content, and preparation for life after graduation.
- Educators must individualize decisions while holding high expectations and maximizing inclusion wherever appropriate.



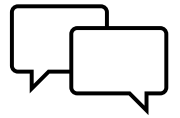
# Communication Strategies in High School



- Personalize transition conversations based on each student's strengths, interests, and support needs.
- Have honest, ongoing conversations to help students set meaningful and achievable goals.
- Share resources and support families in connecting with adult agencies and community supports.
- Empower parents to hold high expectations while supporting student independence.
- Share and celebrate student successes to build confidence and encourage continued growth.



# Communication Strategies: Self-Advocacy



Source: [Youth in Transition: Self-Advocacy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsv3Z9Xpz00&t=30s)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsv3Z9Xpz00&t=30s>)



# Life After High School



- Include students in all transition conversations to ensure their goals and preferences guide decision-making.
- Share transition resources and events such as fairs, counseling nights, and agency introductions to prepare families for next steps.
- Identify key points of contact at the school who can support both the student and family throughout the transition process.



# IEP Activity: Transition Plans

Your school has completed appropriate transition assessments (interests, independent living, strengths/needs, work behaviors, skills). But you do not yet have meaningful family input or student voice. The transition plan feels incomplete.

## Meet Aaliyah

- **Age:** 16 years old
- **Disability:** specific learning disability in reading
- **Interests and strengths:** enjoys hands-on work, food/cooking, and animals, benefits from executive functioning and self-advocacy support
- **Participation:** quiet in meetings and the classrooms; rarely shares preferences
- **Family involvement:** family has not provided input recently



# Session 4: Chatterfall

Take a few moments to consider the following questions:

- What is one question you would ask the family to fill in the missing pieces?
- What is one questions you would ask Aaliyah to draw out her voice?
- How could this input change or strengthen her transition goals and services?

When I say, “Go,” please type your response into the chat.



# Wrap-Up for High School

## We discussed:

- considering key transition considerations and graduation pathways,
- holding high expectations for academics and adult life,
- elevating student and family voice in the transition plan,
- building self-advocacy and independence skills,
- applying LRE and strong communication across high school settings, and
- aligning IEP goals and services to life after high school.

**How can applying this knowledge help Evie begin with the end in mind?**



# Questions? High School



# Closing



# Final Wrap-Up

- We discussed transition considerations from TEIS through postsecondary plans.
- We examined the key factors to improve outcomes:
  - high expectations,
  - family involvement,
  - least restrictive environment,
  - communication strategies, and
  - life after high school.
- We applied what we learned.
  - We helped Evie and her family prepare for future education, employment, and independent living.

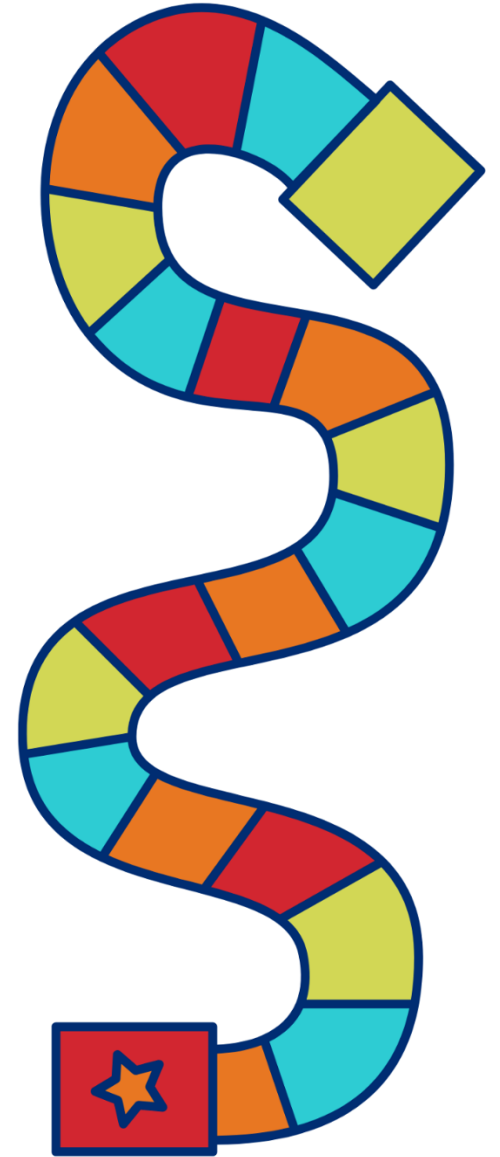


# Beginning with the End in Mind

Beginning with the end in mind when planning for Evie ensures that all decisions and strategies are purpose-driven, aligned with long-term goals, and tailored to Evie's unique needs.

This approach fosters clear objectives, promotes collaboration among educators and families, and maximizes Evie's potential for success by focusing on meaningful outcomes.

By envisioning the desired result, educators can create a roadmap that is both inclusive and effective, ensuring every step supports Evie's journey toward achieving her full potential.





“ *The best way to predict your future is to create it.* ”  
-Abraham Lincoln

”

# Closing Questions?

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# A Journey Through Special Education for Educators: Resources

Access resources on [Wakelet](https://wakelet.com/wake/7h3Z8xQKT217-qiwf2DLC).

(<https://wakelet.com/wake/7h3Z8xQKT217-qiwf2DLC>)



# Family Engagement Website



Home Resources ▾ Events Special Education Help TN-TAN Partners Accessibility Tools Contact 🔍   



## FESPED-TN: Family Engagement in Special Education – Tennessee

Building a bridge between families involved in special education and schools across Tennessee.

Meet The Team

English ▾

[Family Engagement Website](https://familyengagementtn.com/) (https://familyengagementtn.com/)



# Office Hours for Educators

- Have questions about Family Engagement in Special Education (FESPED) training?
- Want to connect with a specialist to talk about increasing family engagement to improve outcomes for students with disabilities?

Join FESPED's office hours on the first Wednesday of each month from 3 - 4 p.m. CT.

To join the Zoom scan the QR code or use the [Office Hours Zoom link](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87197083693) (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87197083693>).





# Connect with us!



(800) 835-7077



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