



FAQ: December 2020 Webinar Parent Perspectives

FAQ 1

As each of you looks back on your individual experiences, what do you wish you had known earlier with respect to transition for your students?

Jennifer: "George had 2 ASD-like diagnoses as a preschooler but there was a long gap between 4 years old and 14 years-old. We often wonder whether things would be different now if he had been diagnosed earlier. We might have been more prepared as parents and George might have been more prepared to move into the teen years, which can be hard even for neurotypical teens. Since George does not have an IEP (it's in the process now), he wasn't involved in any transition services besides what was offered to all students in terms of course selection and guidance counselor offerings."

Libby: "We are still in the transition process with Bryce. When I think back, I wish that we had had more opportunities to try different types of jobs. Ideally, I think it would be beneficial for students to try something new each semester or quarter until they find joy in a particular job."

FAQ 3

Do you have suggestions for parent friendly transition assessments? And transition assessments appropriate for students across the spectrum?

Jennifer: "I know it takes time on a teacher's part or on the IEP team's part but getting to know the individual and the family, meeting them where they are at, has been important to us. Please try not to let the diagnoses define who the young person is and what they might be capable of doing in the future. As I mentioned during the webinar, we really appreciated this assessment on the ATTA website [here](#)"

FAQ 5

I am a first-year special education teacher. I am teaching middle school at a therapeutic day school and I am the one introducing the transition plans to parents/students. Is there anything you suggest to help aid in the stress of that introduction? Especially when parents say they haven't even thought about it before?

Jennifer: "This might sound silly and is cliché but the days feel long but the years feel short. Thinking ahead can also lessen the stress of having this sneak up on families and feel overwhelming when you are on the verge of the transition."

Libby: "The cliché is true. I would acknowledge that you understand that they are overwhelmed and that is why we are talking about it at age 14 1/2 so the whole team has time to work together on this student. I also think it is truly important to know that Autism is a 24/7 experience for families. **School is not respite.** As educators you only see a small snapshot of what life is like for families. I think it is also important to acknowledge that the parents attending the IEP are the ones sitting at the table who didn't choose Autism or special education as a career. Every IEP is a highly anxious moment for parents, especially when there are behavior problems with the student. Lastly, feel free to pause during the IEP meetings to ensure that the parents understand what is being said and can be prepared to answer their question or provide clarification."

FAQ 7

What do each of you feel is the most important thing that educators and support teams can do to help families heading into transition?

- Be understanding
- Take time to know the student and customize the advice and guidance. One size does not fit all.
- Share as much information as you have. It can be overwhelming, but we would rather know about the resources and the homework we need to do as parents rather than to be lost in the wilderness.
- I would add that handing parents' information written or emailed is better than just verbally sharing it. There is so much for parents to process. Please follow up with parents a week later asking if they have any questions

FAQ 2

Will your children with ASD be their own guardian at 18, or will they continue with parent guardianship?

Jennifer: "This is something we literally just learned about this week. We are seriously looking into it because of George's mental health history and his current declarations that he intends to drop out when he turns 17 next month"

Libby: "My husband and I have obtained guardianship of Bryce when he turned 18. Every child is unique, and each family needs to make their decision together. I think that it is crucial for the schools to educate families on the process and to ensure that they understand the timeline to begin the process. Paperwork needs to be completed and turned in weeks in advance."

FAQ 4

What advice would you give to teams that are supporting students with severe autism and are creating a transition program? These students may be nonverbal and require life skills programming. They would also be attending a private school that supports these types of students.

Jennifer: "I can't speak to this question since George is a high-functioning autistic individual"

Libby: "This is a tough one for me to answer, because Bryce does not fit in this category. I would start at the basics and find what the student enjoys and begin to build on those skills to create a job for them particularly. Each child whether high functioning or severe with autism needs to have a purpose in life. Some families have been able to create businesses based on their children's joy"

FAQ 6

How much did the student participate in the transition process starting at 14?

Jennifer: "George does not have an IEP yet, so he has not participated in the transition process yet. This [booklet](#) is from our district and has been helpful to outline post-secondary choices. I also shared the slides from our high school's post-secondary planning evening for students with 504/IEPs. I think there was a lot of valuable information in those slides, including information about the differences between IDEA and ADA services and supports."

Libby: "Many schools are starting student led IEP meetings. Bryce took part in that in middle school, and we are working on it now as we go into his last IEP. I think it is important for them to attend the meetings, however he did not help us write his goals."

FAQ 8

Where is the Penguin Project? How do kids get connected with them?

Libby: "There are currently 43 chapters of The Penguin Project across America. You can find more information about them at www.penguinproject.org"