

Special Edition

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

Transition Planning

Transition is the process that prepares students for adult life after high school. Starting at age 14, the IEP focuses on a student's future career and educational plans. There are many factors to consider when transition planning, but it all starts with a dialogue between the student, parents, teachers, and case manager about student strengths, interests, and future goals. Some students plan transition to college or careers at age 18, and other students plan transition to careers or continued training at age 21. Some questions to ask when transition planning:



- What are my child's academic, communication, and daily living strengths?
- What academic skills or behaviors does my child still need to learn?
- What does my child express as their future career goal?
- Does my child plan to graduate from high school at 18 or 21?
- Where do I see my child living in ten years?
- Will my child be responsible for his or her own bills, medication, and transportation when they become an adult?

For more information: [Transition Information](#) and [NJ DOE Transition Resources](#)

Paramus Student Leads as Best Buddies Ambassador

Best Buddies International is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The organization serves individuals with special needs by helping them to form meaningful friendships with their peers, secure successful jobs, live independently, improve public speaking, self-advocacy and communications skills, and feel valued by society.

This past summer, Paramus High School's Jason Migatz attended the Best Buddies Leadership Conference at Indiana University, where he met other Best Buddies participants from around the country. Jason participated in the Ambassador track at the conference, and wrote a speech which he presented in front of his Ambassador group. According to Mike Wieliczka, Deputy Director, Expansion and Training for Best Buddies International "Jason was the heartbeat of the Expansion delegation with his enthusiasm, and he let everyone know who he was with all weekend, including Anthony Kennedy Shriver, the founder of Best Buddies." For more information about the Best Buddies organization, [click here](#).



Project Unify

The Special Olympics Project Unify club will be kicking off the year in October. The middle and high school aged students will begin soccer practices in the coming weeks, while our participants from the elementary schools will enjoy some fun fall activities at the Ridge Ranch Rec nights hosted by the club.

For more information about the program, or to get involved please contact [Jeanne Browne](#).

Making the Jump to College

Starting at age 14, transition planning drives the IEP. Begin having discussions with your child about goals after high school. Choose challenging courses and show improvement in grades over time. Discuss your child's learning style. **Some questions for students to consider:** How would you explain your learning difference to a teacher who did not know you? Advocate for yourself, and start determining which accommodations work best for you. What are your **Executive Functioning** Skills? What do you need to improve while you are still in high school?

Accommodations at College: There are no IEPs at the college level, only 504 plans. Section 504 is an anti-discrimination law that requires colleges to level the playing field for students with disabilities. It does not outline specific accommodations that colleges must provide, so services vary greatly from school to school. The goal of most colleges is to promote independence and maintain the integrity of their curriculum, so accommodations will be given accordingly. Students must choose to disclose their disability, and advocate for accommodations themselves at the college level. Students can choose to submit their high school IEP/504 plan and request accommodations after admission. Colleges require educational and psychological evaluations within 2 years of graduation. Medical documentation may also be required.



For More Information: [NJ College Transition](#)

Transition Terms and Abbreviations

 **CLICK** to learn more!

DDD: Division of Developmental Disabilities, provides services post age 21

DVRS: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, provides job assistance after graduation

DCF: Department of Children and Families, provides services before age 21

SSI: Supplemental Security Income

Medicaid: Health insurance provider for all DDD funding recipients

NJ CAT: NJ Comprehensive Assessment Tool, determines DDD funding

504 Plan: Federally controlled document that provides accommodations in college and jobs

Alternatives to a Four Year Degree

Many students believe that after high school, the only option is attending college to earn a bachelor's degree. For many students, there are other post-secondary options that might be a better fit for their career goals and individual needs. Some examples:

-Community College: Many community colleges offer degree and certificate programs in specialized areas such as surgical technology, culinary arts, and event planning. They also offer flexible schedules for working students and support services for students with disabilities. Traditional universities accept associate degrees from community college should the student wish to transfer later.

-Trade School: Trade schools have changed with new technology needs. In addition to the traditional building trades, there are now many programs for health care workers, computer technicians, and office administration

-Apprenticeship or Career: Some students choose to get experience in their chosen field before or during their post-secondary education. DVRS is available to support these students (see sidebar)

October Resource Calendar

- 6 - **Autism Spectrum and Sexuality- What You Need to Know:** (12:00 - 1:00PM) In this webinar participants will learn how to begin a discussion with an individual about sexuality, what topics to cover and how that information can be taught in their daily lives. [Register here](#)
- 10 - **Parent to Parent Exchange Meeting:** (7:00PM) Parenting support group for families with children age 14 and up. Free. BCSS Education Center, 540 Farview Ave, Paramus. [Register here](#)
- 10 - **DDD Webinar on Fee for Service:** (1:00PM) Free webinar for parents on accessing fee-for-service programs for adults with disabilities. [Register here](#)
- 11 - **Understanding Team Evaluations:** (6:30PM) Binder Autism Center presents a workshop for parents on understanding evaluations and how they impact the IEP. Free, St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center 703 Main St, Paterson. [Register here](#)
- 12 - **Improving Mental Health:** (7:00PM) Karen Ranzi, MA will speak about the correlation between nutrition and mental health and the impact for students with autism and other disabilities. FSOBC, 0-108 29th St, Fair Lawn. [Register here](#)
- 16 - **Positive Parenting:** (7:00PM) Addressing common behavioral issues in children of all ages. Free series presented by the Family Support Organization of Bergen County. Mondays in October. Free to attend, and babysitting available. FSOBC, 0-108 29th St, Fair Lawn. [Register here](#)
- 17 - **Parenting in the Age of Technology:** (7:00PM) Thomas Kersting, LPC will present on the link between social media use and mental health issues, how to talk to your children about safe tech use, and the dangers of too much screen time. Free. East Brook auditorium, Paramus.
- 18 - **Ridge Ranch Project Unify Rec Night for Grades 2, 3, & 4:** (6:30-8:00PM) Come join the students from Project Unify for a fun night of creating a fall sensory bottle and participating in inclusive sports events
- 19 - **Coffee Connections:** (7:00PM) Paramus Police Dept presents on student safety. Paramus HS room T8
- 25 - **Ridge Ranch Project Unify Rec Night for grades K & 1:** (6:30-8:00PM) This Spooktacular event will include making a fall sensory bottle, a sports activity and we are asking that students and parents dress up as their favorite Disney character! Contact [Jeanne Browne](#) for Rec Night information
- 26 - **NJ DVRS:** (7:00PM) Parent information session on DVRS services available to students with disabilities. Free. BCSS Education Center, 540 Farview Ave, Paramus. [Register here](#)

Coffee Connections

Coffee Connections was initiated to provide support and engage parents, staff members, and the Paramus community in discussions about issues related to the special needs population. Professionals from various fields associated with special education and health care are invited to share their knowledge and experiences in a lecture-style or round-table discussion. Come for coffee, tea, and to share information with your fellow parents. Meetings are held at Paramus HS in T8 (Art Gallery)

This month the topic will be the **Disabled Resident Identification Program** presented by the **Paramus Police Department**. The program will review tips for keeping children with special needs safe. Using personal identification will be discussed as a safety strategy. Personal safety is an important subject for any child, but it can be especially vital for those with special needs.