

SPECIAL EDUCATION

SPRING 2020 | BRIEF 3

WHO IS THIS LEARNER?

There are 37,609 transition-age students with a disability (ages 14-21) in Oklahoma. Of these students, 38% are juniors and seniors with a disability who are just a year or two away from graduating high school and going out into the real world.

The graduation rate for students in Oklahoma with disabilities is 76.43%, compared to 83.10% for all Oklahoma students. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, young adults with a disability are less likely to graduate on time and to be employed than those without a disability. The disparity in employment between those with or without a disability continues for those who attend college. In addition, young adults with disabilities were less likely to have enrolled in postsecondary programs (60% vs. 67%) and had lower completion rates in postsecondary programs than were their peers in the general population (41% vs. 52%).

WHY IT MATTERS

- By 2025, three of four Oklahoma jobs will require education or training beyond high school.
- Aligning postsecondary opportunities with students' postsecondary goals ensures that students participate in coursework and experiences that enhance their likelihood for success after high school, whether they pursue a technical field, college or military service.
- Oklahoma's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan outlines the 8-year strategic goal that 100% of ALL students in grades 6-12 engage in meaningful Individual Career Academic Planning (ICAP). ICAP equips students with the awareness, knowledge and skills to create their own individualized, meaningful exploration of college and career opportunities.
- Oklahoma's accountability system is guided by the belief that all students can grow and all schools can improve.
- Life beyond high school requires different and ever-changing competencies. Points earned under the Postsecondary Opportunities Indicator in the Oklahoma School Report Card are based on the percentage of high school juniors and seniors successfully completing at least one of the approved indicators (Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate, or IB; concurrent enrollment; Career Technology Education, or CTE; and internships).
- Despite this belief, only 25.4% of students with disabilities participated in one of the approved Postsecondary Opportunities compared to 49.3% of students without disabilities, according to the 2018-19 Oklahoma School Report Card.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Provide students with disabilities access to postsecondary opportunities to achieve their goals and reach their full potential. Students with disabilities who participate in CTE have better college and career readiness outcomes. Research indicates that students with disabilities who engage in a concentration of CTE courses in high school: (a) have fewer unexcused absences, (b) are more likely to graduate high school on time and (c) are more likely to be employed after high school than students with disabilities who are enrolled in few or no CTE courses.

Provide students with disabilities work-based learning opportunities (including apprenticeships and internships). Research studies suggest that work-based learning, including internships, may increase school attendance, decrease dropout rates, reduce school suspensions and increase school engagement. In addition, students gain career readiness skills, including the “soft skills” that employers look for in entry-level workers.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How many students with disabilities in my district are participating in Postsecondary Opportunities? If participation rates are low, what changes can we make to increase opportunities for students with disabilities?
- How does my school provide the transition services required under the IDEA for our students with disabilities?
- How do we measure the success of our transition programs/services?
- How can we improve our transition programs/services?

ATTENDING TO EQUITY

- **Examine** school district policies and procedures.
- **Analyze** data to make informed decisions.
- **Ensure** that students with disabilities and other special populations have access to postsecondary opportunities.

Postsecondary Resources:

CTE Quick Guide: <https://transitionta.org/node/1668>

NCWD for Youth: <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/innovativestrategy/engaging-youth-in-work-experiences-an-innovative-strategies-practice-brief/>

OSDE Office of Accountability: <https://sde.ok.gov/accountability-assessments>

