Running Project 1: Transition Analysis for KIPP Austin Public Schools

KIPP Austin Public Schools is located in an urban setting serving students in the Austin area. KIPP Austin serves 4,490 students in the district and 627 students within KIPP Austin Collegiate High School (Texas Education Agency, 2016, p.1). 88.8% of students are eligible to receive Free and Reduced Meals (FARM) with 5% of the student population included in special education. The ethnic and racial composition is predominantly Hispanic, making up 97.1% of the student population, African American students comprise 1.8% of the population, White students are .5 % of the population, and Asian or students who identify with two or more races make up .03% of the population (Texas Education Agency, 2016, p.13). Three of the students I teach have moderate Autism, three have an intellectual disability and one of my students has a health impairment eligibility for Rett Syndrome which impacts her cognitive, speech and motor abilities. She is not able to communicate with words verbally but does make vocalizations that are meaningful and she has no planned motor abilities. She communicates via eye gaze for up to 4 answer choices. Each student has a different schedule-some participate in inclusion classes a majority of their day while others stay with me for all core content and participate in the general education setting through homeroom and electives. Our aim is to provide the least restrictive environment possible to best prepare students for post-secondary goals.

I am the founding special education teacher in a life skills program setting for the high school. Our program is called GAIN, Gaining Academics and Independence iNclusively. Although we have a life skills classroom, academics are the main focus for all students and supplementary instruction is given to develop transition skills such as activities of daily living, community learning, pre-vocational opportunities, and social skills. My job responsibilities include planning, teaching, and grading all content courses- math, reading, science, and social studies in addition to a life skills class. Science and social studies rotate on an annual cycle so that students will take Physics, Biology and Chemistry in sciences and World History, US History, and Government and Economics in social studies by their senior year. I also manage the paraprofessional and contracted nurse, as well as, case manage all students in my classroom. I meet with general education elective teachers quarterly to address any student supports needed.

There are seven domains that were assessed by the Quality Indicators of Effective Transition Services Needs Assessment (TQI) through the Transition Coalition. Ratings were assigned on a scale as not achieved, partially achieved, mostly achieved and completely achieved in regards to competencies within each domain. Ratings are then averaged out of a total of 4 possible points. A summary of KIPP Austin Collegiate’s transition programming rankings is as follows: Transition Planning 3.25, Transition Assessment 2.50, Family Involvement 2.50, Transition Focused Curriculum and Instruction 2.43, Student Involvement 2.0, Systems Level Infrastructure 2.0, and Interagency Collaboration and Community Services 1.20.

Transition Planning was a strength of KIPP Austin Collegiate scoring 3.25 out of 4 possible points. Strengths include starting transition planning early at the age of 14 rather than 16. Middle school teachers are also planning ahead to ensure a representative from the high school they matriculate into is able to attend the transition meeting. Transition plans incorporate a student’s interests, strengths and needs to make informed decisions about post-secondary goals. Areas of improvement include planning using a student-centered approach that is formed using an informal assessment tool to ensure the plan is holistic. Additionally, approaches to identify outcomes supporting students and family cultures are an area of growth. This is especially important given that our student population identifies as 98.9% non-white yet staff who support these students are predominantly white. There is likely room for growth to ensure that transition planning is culturally sensitive. Using informal assessments to promote student centered planning and increasing family collaboration can help improve in this area.

Transition Assessment scored 2.50 out of 4 possible points. Strengths include assessments for each student to gather information about strengths, needs, preferences and interest as well as providing a summary of performance upon exiting high school to transition to post-secondary options. Areas of growth are to ensure that the transition process is an ongoing part of the school year and linking post-secondary goals more strongly and explicitly to post-secondary goals.

Family involvement scored a 2.50 out of 4 possible points. A possible variable for this domain may be that there is a direct link to the teacher evaluation system, Teacher Career Pathway, used at KIPP Austin to ensure that family involvement is an important part of student growth. Strengths in this area are that family members are regularly involved in transition planning and IEP meetings. Teachers also take a considerable amount of effort to include family members by rescheduling meetings when there is a time or date conflict or finding alternate ways to include families such as attendance by phone. Opportunities for growth are providing more education and training to families about the transition process and post-secondary options. Pre-planning activities are not a regular part of meeting preparation and consistency can be improved to ensure that all families have an opportunity to share information prior to the meeting rather than during the meeting. Pre-planning allows parents time to observe behaviors and think about their child rather than feeling put on the spot and possibly providing inaccurate information.

Transition Focused Curriculum and Instruction was rated 2.43 out of 4 possible points. Strengths in this domain include programs in place to teach academic strategies. This is embedded into inclusion curriculum as well as addressed in study skills course to support development of learning strategies and executive functioning skills. Students also regularly self-advocate for accommodations in addition to inclusion teachers meeting weekly with general education teachers to provide support and feedback about student accommodations. Areas of growth within this domain have a common theme of lacking a developed program to address career development, independent living skills, and social/interpersonal skills. It could be argued that these supports are provided in study skills, however, there is not a specific scope and sequence or curriculum in place to support the development of these skills.

Student Involvement scored a 2.0 out of 4 possible points. Strengths include students having the opportunity to lead their IEP meeting and transition planning process. Areas to develop are providing parents with information and training to support student self-determination and self-advocacy. As noted above programming is lacking a tie to evidence based curriculum instruction. These things may be addressed but not in a systematic or consistent way in different teachers’ classrooms.

Systems Level Infrastructure scored a 2.0 out of 4 possible points. KIPP Austin Collegiate has procedures in place to provide the least restrictive environment possible and to include students in general education courses and activities to the maximum extent possible. Teachers are also provided with daily support in their classrooms from an inclusion teacher or paraprofessional as well as weekly support to go over student data, accommodations, modifications, and to identify learning strategies to support all learners. Two critical areas for KIPP Austin to develop are identifying at least one professional to provide transition services and to work with outside agencies. The district would likely say they are providing this support through the KIPP Through College program, however, this program and its staff are not trained on best practices to support students with special needs. Staff would also benefit from professional development related to transition to support the development of programming to include evidence based practices, a scope and sequence of how to develop transition related skills, post-secondary options, family involvement and training, and training for informal and formal methods of assessment to use when planning transition.

Interagency Collaboration and Community Services scored the lowest at 1.20 out of 4 possible points. Given that KIPP Austin Collegiate does not have a designated transition staff member, it is not surprising that this domain scored the lowest out of all seven domains. There is not currently a formal process in place for schools and agencies to determine anticipated service needs for students entering community services. There is also a lack of parent/guardian education about the range of community services available for students and their families. A relative strength in this domain was referrals to outside agencies are completed prior to graduation.

The area with the most critical need for support and development is Interagency Collaboration and Community Services. Not only was this the lowest scoring domain but it also has a large impact on the scores and outcomes of the other domains. Current transition practices and supports are provided by teachers at each school rather than by a designated transition specialist. There is currently no formal professional development for how to develop transition plans but rather this skill is developed when a teacher is hired and learns how to complete a transition outcome from their manager, usually the campus special education coordinator. KIPP Austin is also a fairly young district being established in 2002 and the high school has been open since 2008. Prior to 2014 there were not any students enrolled in the high school with significant disabilities. The district is now reaching a point where it needs to develop programming and staff to support transition services for these students that includes outside agency collaboration. It is imperative that if we are to improve transition planning within the school, we start by increasing interagency collaboration and making community resources available to students and their families.

References

Morningstar, M.E. Erickson, A.G., Lattin, D.L & Lee, H. (revised June 2012). Quality indicators of exemplary transition program needs, assessment summary [Assessment tool]. Lawrence, KS. University of Kansas, Department of Special Education. Retrieved from www.transitioncoalition.org

Texas Education Agency (2016). *Texas Academic Performance Report for KIPP Austin Collegiate High School.* Austin, TX: TEA. Retrieved from [www.tea.texas.gov](http://www.tea.texas.gov) on May 28, 2017.

Date: 2017-05-27 14:42:31

State: TX

**District:** KIPP Austin Public Schools Inc.

Role: Special Ed. Teacher

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| The score for each domain is an average (mean) of your total responses to each quality indicator statement in that domain. The highest average for each domain is 4 and the lowest is 1.   The higher the overall domain score, the more quality indicators you've achieved in that domain.   The low domain scores are the domains you may want to target for change.   The domain average can help you identify which area of transition might be the most critical for you, your district, or state to begin planning around or making changes. |

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| **QI Summary - overall score: 2.32** | SCORE |
| **Transition Planning Domain Score:** | **3.25** |
| 1.  Transition planning begins early in a student's educational experience (but no later than 16 years old). | 4 |
| 2. Progress toward a student's postsecondary goals are reviewed on an ongoing basis. | 4 |
| 3.  Transition planning incorporates student-centered approaches (e.g., MAPS, Personal Futures Planning | 2 |
| 4.  Postsecondary goals are based upon student strengths, interests, and preferences. | 4 |
| 5.  Postsecondary goals target postsecondary education/training, employment, and when appropriate independent living. | 4 |
| 6.  Transition services and a course of study are identified to assist the student to reach postsecondary goals. | 3 |
| 7.   Annual IEP goals addressing both academics and transition needs are identified. | 3 |
| 8. Approaches are used during transition planning to identify outcomes supporting student and family cultures. | 2 |
| **Transition Assessment Domain Score:** | **2.50** |
| 9. A wide variety of formal and informal transition assessments are available to use with students. | 2 |
| 10. Assessments for each student evaluate specific transition needs, strengths, preferences, and interests. | 3 |
| 11. The transition assessment process is ongoing throughout the year. | 2 |
| 12. Transition assessment results are shared with students, families and staff in a meaningful way. | 2 |
| 13. Student postsecondary goals are based on transition assessment results. | 2 |
| 14. A summary of performance with recommendations for meeting postsecondary goals is developed when student exits high school | 4 |
| **Family Involvement Domain Score:** | **2.50** |
| 15. Family members (including extended family, friends, or legal guardians) regularly participate in transition planning and IEP meetings. | 3 |
| 16. The family's needs and supports are taken into consideration during transit ion planning. | 2 |
| 17. Information and training are provided to families about transition. | 2 |
| 18. Pre-planning activities are in place so families can provide input prior to transition meetings. | 2 |
| 19. Family members are actively involved throughout the transition planning process. | 2 |
| 20. Supports are in place to involve family members in transition planning meetings (e.g., flexible time and location, language interpreter). | 4 |
| **Student Involvement Domain Score:** | 2.00 |
| 21. Decision-making skills are taught using evidence-based curriculum and/or strategies. | 2 |
| 22. Opportunities to make real-life, meaningful choices are provided to students. | 2 |
| 23. Goal setting skills using evidence-based curriculum and/or strategies are taught. | 2 |
| 24. Opportunities for students to learn about specific post-school options (e.g., postsecondary education and training, employment, independent living) are provided. | 2 |
| 25. Evidence-based curriculum and/or strategies are used to teach students to develop and lead their transition planning process. | 2 |
| 26. Students have the opportunity to lead their IEP and transition planning process. | 3 |
| 27. Parents are provided with information and training to support student self-determination and self-advocacy. | 1 |
| **Transition-Focused Curriculum and Instruction Domain Score:** | **2.43** |
| 28. Programs are in place to teach academic strategies (e.g., mnemonics, graphic displays, learning strategies, self-management). | 3 |
| 29. Accommodations are identified and implemented in the general curriculum. | 3 |
| 30. Effective instructional methods are in place to teach academic content (e.g., universal design for learning, cooperative groups). | 3 |
| 31. School-based programs are in place to teach career development. | 2 |
| 32. Work-based programs are in place for community employment and career experiences. | 2 |
| 33. Programs are in place to teach independent living skills. | 2 |
| 34. Programs are in place to teach social/inte rpersonal skills. | 2 |
| **Interagency Collaboration and Community Services Domain Score:** | **1.20** |
| 35. School-business partnerships exist to support career development activities. | 1 |
| 36. A process is in place for schools and agencies to determine the anticipated service needs of students who are moving from school to community services. | 1 |
| 37. Referrals to outside agencies are completed before students exit school. | 2 |
| 38. Accurate informati on about the range of community services is provided to students and families. | 1 |
| 39. Interagency agreements identify roles and responsibilities regarding exchanging information, sharing resources, and coordinating services. | 1 |
| **Systems Level Infrastructure Domain Score:** | **2.00** |
| 40. A comprehensive data collection system is in place that includes academic, behavioral, transition, and postsecondary outcomes data. | 2 |
| 41. Comprehensive data systems are used to evaluate secondary programs and transition services. | 1 |
| 42. The school district has at least one professional responsible for coordinating transition services and working with outside agencies. | 1 |
| 43. Dropout prevention programs are in place to support students to engage in school. | 2 |
| 44. Transition policies and procedures are communicated to all school personnel involved in transition planning. | 2 |
| 45. Procedures are in place for facilitating the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education programs, activities, and extra-curricular events. | 4 |
| 46. Teachers in core academi c and vocational courses are provided with assistance to adapt instruction to meet the diverse needs of students. | 3 |
| 47. Professional development related to transition is regularly provided to school personnel involved in transition planning. | 1 |