



# TRANSITION AHEAD

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*A bi-monthly newsletter  
for teachers and administrators involved  
in the special education transition process.*

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ment of Education.*

Dear Friends in Education:

Greetings and welcome to another exciting year! The first few days are filled with such anticipation, apprehension, and excitement, aren't they? My kindergartner was experiencing these emotions recently as he prepared for school. I'm sure some of our older students feel these same emotions as they wonder what their next step in school and life will be. These transition periods can be stressful –for students and parents alike. Our transition coordinators along with support from MRS and Riverwood counselors strive to lessen this stress for students, parents, and teachers during this period by educating and supporting them extensively. Some exciting initiatives and events for Transition this school year include: a pilot program –Off to College –with 20 sophomores meeting monthly in the evenings at LMC; continued partnership with MRS counselors meeting in schools with students; an initiative with a Riverwood intern to help support student independence; transition classes offered to high school students; and more! As always, our transition coordinators will be there to help teachers and administrators with transition questions relative to their student's IEP...ensuring the IEP is not only compliant for SPP-13 but also accurate and attainable for students to acquire necessary vocational and life skills to assist them in securing a meaningful job in this challenging economy. Have a great year!

-Craig A. Blasko, Supervisor Ancillary Programs and Services, Berrien RESA



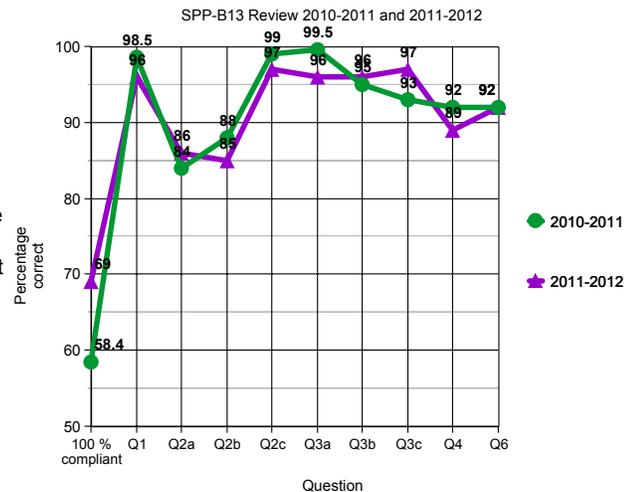
## Compliance Corner

As you know, all special education students have transition plans when they are 16 yrs. old; they are updated annually as part of the IEP process. Students are given a transition assessment each year, which is the basis for transition activities. The activities allow students, families and teachers to work together to prepare the student for life outside of school. Transition plans were once vague, but now are specific. The federal government sets the criteria of SPP-B13 at 100 percent compliance for all transition plans.

The checklist looks different from last year; however, the information we look at and gather for SPP-B13 file review is the same [http://www.berrienresa.org/downloads/\\_acct\\_/00/00/01/94/spp\\_13\\_checklist\\_20101112\\_085954\\_16.pdf](http://www.berrienresa.org/downloads/_acct_/00/00/01/94/spp_13_checklist_20101112_085954_16.pdf). During the spring 2012 file review we asked each teacher to do a pre-file review as a result, our overall data improved. (See the above chart for results.)

An initial review of SPP-B13 file review results show that we had more 100 percent compliant transition plans this year – 69 percent this year versus 58.4 percent last year (based on 216 files reviewed in 2011-2012 and 212 files reviewed in 2010-2011). Berrien County continues to be strong on several areas of the SPP-B13 file review: students receive invitations, academic achievement, functional performance and transition related needs appear in most transition plans. Further, the IEP identifies at least one measurable annual IEP goal aligned with the post-secondary vision. In each of these areas, transition plans are over 90 percent compliant. One area of on-going concern is documenting and documenting initial and updated ESTR's.

Transition plans are more important than ever as we face different high school completion options. Students, families and teachers need to think and plan for the future. If you feel you would benefit from additional training, let your Transition Coordinator know, she is more than willing to work with you.



## Looking Back on the Road:

### Summer MRS Employment Initiatives

Over the summer, two programs were conducted to support student employment and independent living skills.

#### 1. Step-Up

Transition interagency funds were used to underwrite a four-week program for vocational assessments, employability training, and an on-the-job evaluation which took place at Gateway in Berrien Springs. The program consisted of one week of vocational assessment, one week of employability skills training, and two weeks of on-the-job evaluation. This was a paid work experience for the students and generated a detailed report. Transportation was provided. Their MRS counselor will use the information to further the student’s goals in their IPE (Individualized Plan for Employment).

#### 2. Disability Network/RESA/MRS Summer Employability Skills Class

During the summer, two classes were conducted for transition-age students in Benton Harbor at the Michigan Works! Facility. The class included work experience at 6 Degrees resale store. The first group met from June 18 to July 13. The second group met from July 23 to Aug. 17. Group I had school diagnoses of EI or LD, and was facilitated by Jenny Wyly, Independent Living Specialist with Disability Network. Group II students were all on the ASD spectrum, and were facilitated by Kathy Hickok, RESA ASD consultant.

*“It has been observed that many of today’s youth preparing to go into the workforce significantly lack in “soft” or applied skills- such as teamwork, decision-making and communication-that will help them become effective employees. We did many activities that illustrated not only the importance of communication skills but what that looks like, what it means. We really dove in and got specific and instead of just lecturing concepts we were able to give them something more concrete: what strong communication skills look like versus poor communication skills. And then we gave strategies on how to improve any given soft skill that may not have been their strongest. We also discussed and illustrated team work, enthusiasm, networking, hygiene, dress, interviews, social media, strengths, weaknesses (and how to turn them around), punctuality, reciprocal conversation, body language or non-verbal communication, and disabilities.”* Jenny Wyly-Disability Network.

### Transition Club

During the 2011-12 school year, a Transition Club was started at Niles High School. The membership welcomes any Niles student with an IEP from 9th-12th grades. Julie Isabel is the sponsor teacher. The Club is a partnership project between Julie Isabel of NHS, Ben Ackerson of MRS, Jackie Curtis of Disability Network, and Sandy Asmus, Transition, Berrien RESA. The first meetings of the club were in April and May. Students prioritized a list of transition-related issues they would like to learn more about. Ben was the speaker for the May meeting. His topic was career discovery. Every meeting has an ice-breaker, some token prizes, and of course, food! The students were enthusiastic and participated well with the adult leaders and each other.

This year’s goals will be to continue to encourage positive group dynamics, and to model group meetings structure, so the students can take control of their club. This will support growth in leadership skills, socialization, self-awareness, appreciation of talents, citizenship, community participation, and career planning. This year’s club meetings will begin in October for Niles High School, and two more possible clubs are in the works at other schools. Stay tuned to learn more!

## Click It! LearnPort Users

We’re excited to announce that Michigan LearnPort has partnered with SimpleK12 – a leading provider of online professional development for K-12 teachers around the world. SimpleK12 hosts fun, interactive, and engaging free webinars that cover all of the latest education trends and topics. SimpleK12’s presenters are some of the world’s most forward-thinking experts who are excited to present, connect and share their unique experiences with you. Webinar Topics Include ... Common Core, iPads® in Education, Google, Interactive Whiteboards, Special Education, Mobile Learning, Teacher Tools and Classroom Resources, Virtual Teaching and Learning, Social Media in Education, Student Safety and Digital Citizenship and so many more. New webinars are added all the time... Check back often to see what’s new!

Sign-in and Search for “Webinars” Now: <https://mi.learnport.org/Kview/CustomCodeBehind/Customization/Login/MILPLogin.aspx>

## Caution Ahead: Off to College

The kick-off meeting for the first cohort of Off to College students was held on September 11. Twenty high school sophomores from around the county are participating in the three-year experience that will help students prepare for college. Off to College participants and their parents came together at Lake Michigan College (LMC) to learn more about college life from Clint Gabbard, LMC Vice President of Student Services, a visit from the new LMC mascot, Red Hawk, and a college tour. We will ask for nominations of a second cohort of curious, hard-working, future-focused students in January. Please be looking at and talking with your freshman class to identify future Off to College participants. More information is available at: [www.berrienresa.org/offtocollege](http://www.berrienresa.org/offtocollege).

### RESA –MRS Monthly Visit Schedule

Day of the Month	8:00 to 11:00 a.m.	12:00 to 3:00 p.m.
1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday	Countryside (Klaer/Daye) Berrien Springs (Asmus/Ackerson)	Bridgman (Klaer/Ackerson)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday	Lakeshore (Klaer/Daye) Niles (Asmus/Ackerson)	Southside (Asmus/Ackerson)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday	Dream Academy (Hume/Daye) River Valley (Klaer/Ackerson)	Benton Harbor (Hume/Daye) New Buffalo (Klaer/Ackerson)
4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	Coloma (Hume/Daye) Brandywine (Asmus/Ackerson)	Watervliet (Hume/Daye) Buchanan (Asmus/Ackerson)
1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday	Lighthouse (Hume/Ackerson)	Eau Claire (Asmus/Ackerson) St. Joseph (Klaer/Daye)



## Cruise Control: Using Assistive Technology

Submitted by Berrien RESA Assistive Technology Specialist, Rosanne Burden

As we start a new school year it’s good to think about some tools that could help students become more successful and independent in their learning. In a previous issue of this newsletter, I wrote about using the “Quizlet” website at [www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com) to download or make your own flashcards for any subject. There is a Quizlet app in the iPad® App Store which gives access to any of the cards that you or your students make. It also allows for the downloading of any other flashcard stacks that have been created by other teachers and students. Many of the stacks come with audio so this is a definite plus for students with reading difficulties. Also check out the “StudyBlue Flashcards” app which is related to the [www.studyblue.com](http://www.studyblue.com) website. Both have fairly similar features so teachers/students can decide which best fits their style. Both apps are FREE so there’s no excuse not to study hard! Remember, if you don’t have an “idevice” you can still use both of these web sites.

Students, take charge of your school schedule and put “iStudiez Pro” to work for you! This is said to be one of the best planners/agenda apps for the iPad and gets great reviews. Take advantage of the easy navigation, set alerts to remind you of due dates, keep track of your grades, and organize your assignments so that you are always up to date. Check out the description and reviews in the iPad’s App Store (on sale for a limited time at \$.99).

One more tip—if you want to search Google Images quickly for pictures use the “HD Backgrounds Wallpapers Pro by ImagePro”. It’s only \$.99 and makes it a snap to find the pictures you might want to import into other apps or documents.

