



## Tips for Parents: Preparing for ARD's from a Transition Coordinator's Lens

Denise Geiger, Transition Coordinator for Special Education, Leander ISD

Every ARD has the name of someone very precious on the paperwork, your child's. As you prepare for the ARD's this spring, it has always been my experience that the ARD's go much better when the child is **in attendance**, even as early as 3 years old. The use of a plan for how they are included is recommended. Start slowly at elementary level and then grow them into the person negotiating in the room and problem-solving effectively in High School.

The ARD Committees are there to make decisions that impact the child and help the child to make progress toward their goals in life. Coming from a Transition Coordinator's viewpoint, **it has been my experience that student involvement in the ARD is to the benefit of everyone involved and is the best tip that I have.** By including the student's in their ARD, the entire team is helping the student to have a true voice in their life and to learn and appreciate their **Strengths, Preferences, Interests and Needs (SPIN)**.

The student's involvement has been shown to help everyone to focus on what is important within the construct of the IEP process. Students can share a poster, a power point, read from a simple ARD agenda prepared ahead of time, video themselves as they go through the key points within the ARD or simply learn the fine art of coming to the meeting to introduce everyone, state the purpose and to tell the team their dreams in life.

**Another valuable tip** is for the student to have some sort of Transition Assessment done with them in a collaborative manner. Even from the age of 3, the child has areas from which good informal transition assessments can give valuable guidance for the ARD committee to look at and support as the child grows. Transition Assessments are often thought to just be for students at the Secondary Level, but the best time to start transition planning is at the age of 3.

By looking at these informal assessments, your ARD committee is looking at the areas of IDEIA-2004 which says that the team should be growing the areas of Social/Recreation/Leisure, Adult Living skills, Lifelong Learning and Employment skills with Community Integration being a focus within all of the 4 life domains. Some examples of Transition Assessments are as follows: Student Independence in the Classroom, Transition Decision-Making Matrix, Self-Advocacy Checklist, Social Skills Rating Checklist and High School Graduation Readiness Profile. Ask your district what transition assessment they use and advocate for them as early as possible.

By requesting one or more of these informal assessments, the parent is beginning the process of growing those skills that will support the child in sustaining a meaningful life upon outcome. Some of

### Texas Parent to Parent

1805 Rutherford Ln. ★ Suite 201 ☐★ Austin, TX 78754 ☐★ 866-896-6001 ★ 512-458-8600  
website: [www.txp2p.org](http://www.txp2p.org) ★ Email: [info@txp2p.org](mailto:info@txp2p.org)  
☐

the skills that I am referring to are as follows: organization, time management, self-initiation skills, passing of time, quality of work, self-advocacy skills, self-determination skills , problem-solving skills, goal setting skills, relaying accurate messages between home and school skill and so many other skills that are imbedded within the educational environment, but sometimes have to be deliberately focused on in order to make steady progress over the many years within the school system.

**A compliance tip** that helps in preparing for ARD's is for everyone to understand the impact of the statewide testing and how this impacts the post-secondary options. When a child is able to handle the general education curriculum at the standard set for all students, then that child is aimed at general education standard in High School at one of the following standards: Distinguished, Recommended or Minimum Program rigor. If a student is modified in their curriculum even at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, then it is so important for everyone to understand that this child will be headed to a Minimum Plan in High School and can access services from the public school system through the age of 21, if needed. So understanding the graduation options for your child even while in Elementary is important as the ARD committee plans for the current year. This information is found in the Texas Commissioner's Rules 89.1070 b (1) (2) (3) and (4).

**My last tip** is that every ARD committee actually sketch out an actual old-fashioned TIMELINE of how long each child could access services. I use this kind of timeline of the years from when the meeting is held to how long the child is eligible for services. Sometimes this very simple tool will allow the team to look gently and with true preparation to the time that is available and use the years with purpose.

The most powerful of all meetings is when the student's voice is heard and when the team uses transition planning as the compass. The courage that it takes to plan forward will be much easier when the focus is on the child. Supporting self-advocacy skills and self-determination skills within the ARD process from the time the child is 3 years old will propel the child forward to achieve possibilities that allow them to soar and achieve lives with meaning upon exiting the public school system.

## Texas Parent to Parent

1805 Rutherford Ln. ★ Suite 201 ☐★ Austin, TX 78754 ☐★ 866-896-6001 ★ 512-458-8600  
website: www.txp2p.org ★ Email: info@txp2p.org  
☐