

Policy Update

Summer 1994

Goals 2000: Educate America Act

Implications for Youth with Disabilities As They Transition from School to Work and Adult Life

On March 31, 1994, President Bill Clinton signed into law the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Goals 2000 is established on research and lessons learned from more than a decade of trying to improve schooling. The ten titles in the Act represent a broad consensus on how American education must change if we are to reach the National Education Goals and move every child toward meeting high academic standards. The implications of the Act are far reaching and clearly impact the provision of secondary and transition services for youth with disabilities in the United States. The purpose of this Policy Update is to familiarize you with specific provisions of the law which directly influence the experiences of high school-age students with disabilities as they prepare for the transition from school to work and adult life.

M Purposes of the Act

The purpose of the Act is, in part, "to provide a framework for meeting the National Education Goals by supporting new initiatives at the federal, state, local, and school levels to provide equal educational opportunity for all students to achieve high educational and occupational skill standards and to succeed in the world of employment and civic participation." One of the key aspects of the law is the development and adoption of a voluntary national system of skill standards and certification to serve as a cornerstone of the national strategy to enhance workforce skills. The statute calls for creating a "unified" system of standards for all students, rather than separate sets of standards for different groups of students.

Section 3(a) of the Act defines the terms *all students* and *all children* to mean—

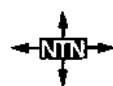
(1)... *students or children from a broad range of*

backgrounds and circumstances, including disadvantaged students and children, students or children with diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, students or children with disabilities, students or children with limited English proficiency, school-aged students or children who have dropped out of school, migratory students or children, and academically talented students and children.

There are clear implications for secondary-aged students with disabilities. These all center on the development of high school academic and work-skill standards, as well as initiatives by states to establish specific graduation or exit criteria. It is further implied in the purpose of the Act that initiatives will need to be undertaken to provide *all* students with opportunities to meet high standards. It will become critically important for professionals, parents, advocates, and youth with disabilities to monitor the development of standards to ensure that such standards adequately encompass and address the needs and interests of young people with disabilities.

• National Education Goals (Title I)

Eight National Education Goals are declared in Section 102 of the Act. These include:



The National Transition Network is a collaboration of the University of Arkansas; Colorado State University; University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; University of Minnesota; PACER Center; Technical Assistance for Parent Programs; and the University of Vermont. Its headquarters are at the Institute on Community Integration (UAP), University of Minnesota, Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Dr. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455, (612) 626-8200.

- (1) *SCHOOL READINESS* — By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.
- (2) *SCHOOL COMPLETION* — By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
- (3) *STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND CITIZENSHIP* — By the year 2000, all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation's modern economy.
- (4) *TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT* — By the year 2000, the nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.
- (5) *MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE* — By the year 2000, United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.
- (6) *ADULT LITERACY AND LIFELONG LEARNING* — By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills to compete in a global economy, and exercise rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- (7) *SAFE, DISCIPLINED, AND ALCOHOL-AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS* — By the year 2000, every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.
- (8) *PARENTAL PARTICIPATION* — By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

While each of these National Education Goals is intended to address the needs and interests of all students and children, several particularly concern secondary-age students with disabilities. These include:

National Education Goal 2: School Completion

Section 102(2)(B)(i) states that "the Nation must dramatically reduce its dropout rate, and 75% of the students who do drop out will successfully complete a high school degree or its equivalent." It is important that professionals, parents, advocates, and students with disabilities communicate the importance of this National Education Goal for students with disabilities. The National Longitudinal Transition Study (1988-1993) commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, has verified that the national dropout rate for students with disabilities is higher than other national rates typically reported. Only slightly over 55% of students with disabilities complete school (graduate or receive a certificate of attendance); others drop out (32%), are suspended or expelled (4%), or reach age limitations (7%). Students with emotional disabilities and students with learning disabilities (who account for nearly 60% of all students with disabilities) are the most likely among those receiving special education services to drop out of school. These facts and findings need to be shared with federal and state officials to ensure that the school completion difficulties of youth with disabilities are fully addressed by National Education Goal 2.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA - P.L. 101-476) of 1990 stresses the importance of early intervention and planning with students to reduce their risk of dropping out. Section 300.346 of the IDEA regulations requires that "the IEP for each student shall begin no later than age 16 (and at a younger age, if determined appropriate)." Although this regulatory language does not mandate transition services for students earlier than age 16, the provision of transition services for students beginning at age 14 or younger could have a significant positive effect on reducing the dropout rate among special education students. This point was addressed in the *Report of the House Committee on Education and Labor on P.L. 101-476*.

National Education Goal 4: Teacher Education and Professional Development

Section 102(4)(B)(iv) stresses that "partnerships will be established, whenever possible, among local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, parents, and local labor, business, and professional associations to provide and support programs for the professional development of educators." An important aspect of this training should be to familiarize educators as well as employers, human service professionals, parents, youth with disabilities, and others, with the transition service requirements (as well as other pertinent requirements) of Part B of the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990. Further, collaborative joint training initiatives between general education, special education, vocational rehabilitation, vocational education, employers and others should be promoted in an effort to broadly address the specific secondary and transition needs of youth with disabilities for work, independent living, participation in postsecondary education, and other facets of community life.

National Education Goal 6: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Section 102(6)(B)(ii) states that "all workers will have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills, from basic to highly technical, needed to adapt to emerging new technologies, work methods, and markets through public and private educational, vocational, technical, workplace, or other programs." This should include providing youth with disabilities in-school and community-based learning experiences that assist them in developing the competence to adapt to emerging new technologies, work methods, and markets, through equal access to public and private postsecondary education and training programs. Transition planning, included in the individualized education plan (IEP) requirements of Part B of IDEA, provides an important framework for planning and decision-making to ensure that students with disabilities are afforded these learning opportunities.

Section 102(6)(B)(iv) of Goals 2000 states that "the proportion of qualified students, especially minorities, who enter college, who complete at least two years, and who complete their degree programs will increase substantially." It is important to share the information with federal and state officials that students with disabilities are presently entering postsecondary training institutions at lower rates than any other students, and that concerted efforts are needed to increase these rates. The recently completed National Longitudinal Transition Study (1988-1993) found dramatically low levels of participation among young adults with disabilities in postsecondary education programs. Fewer than 17% of these youth enter formal postsecondary education training upon completion of their high school programs.

Considerable improvement must be made to afford individuals with disabilities equal access to postsecondary education and training programs to ensure their employabil-

ity in the nation's workplace. This will require that public and private postsecondary education and training programs provide these individuals with support services and instructional accommodations needed to successfully complete postschool programs of employment preparation. Such concerns are similarly addressed in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act of 1990.

National Education Goal 8: Parental Participation

Section 102(8)(B)(i) states that "every State will develop policies to assist local schools and local educational agencies

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act will—

- **Set in law** the original six National Education Goals—school readiness, school completion, student academic achievement, leadership in math and science, adult literacy, and safe and drug-free schools—and add two new goals related to professional development and parental participation.
- **Develop and adopt**—for the first time—challenging national performance standards that define what all students should know and be able to do in core subject areas such as science, math, history, and the arts, to name a few, and support local reform efforts to make those standards a reality in every classroom.
- **Strengthen and improve** teacher training, textbooks, instructional materials, technologies and overall school services so that students will have the tools to achieve higher standards.
- **Encourage the development** of innovative student performance assessments to gauge progress.
- **Establish a National Skills Standard Board** to promote the development of occupational skill standards that will define what workers will need to know and ensure that American workers are better trained and internationally competitive.
- **Increase flexibility for** states, school districts, and schools by waiving rules and regulations (other than IDEA) that might impede local reform and improvement.

to establish programs for increasing partnerships that respond to the varying needs of parents and the home, including parents of children who are disadvantaged or bilingual, or parents of children with disabilities." It is critically important that parents of children with disabilities become familiar with the intent and purposes of National Education Goal 8. These parents have a high stake in federal, state, and local efforts to plan and implement the policies, programs, and services described within the Act.

Parents can be encouraged to participate on committees and contribute important perspectives on the implications of proposed state plans in serving students with disabilities. Further, parent participation, as required under Part B of IDEA, provides an important basis for parental participation when the needs and interests of students with disabilities are being considered.

• National Education Reform Leadership, Standards, and Assessments (Title II)

It is the purpose of Title II of the Act to build national consensus for education improvement and establish voluntary content standards, student performance standards, and opportunity-to-learn standards. States who choose to participate in Title II must address each of these activities.

Section 3(a) of the Act clarifies what is meant by the terms *content standards*, *opportunity-to-learn standards*, and *student performance standards*. As defined in the Act, the terms:

(4) "Content standards" means broad descriptions of the knowledge and skills students should acquire in a particular subject area.

(7) "Opportunity-to-learn standards" means the criteria for, and the basis of, assessing the sufficiency or quality of the resources, practices, and conditions necessary at each level of the educational system (schools, local education agencies, and states) to provide all students with an opportunity to learn the material in voluntary national content standards or state content standards.

(9) "Performance standards" means concrete examples and explicit definitions of what students have to know and be able to do to demonstrate that such students are proficient in the skills and knowledge framed by content standards.

The application of these standards to youth with disabilities is a critical and complicated issue. Readers are referred to *NCEO Policy Directions* (Vol. 2, 1994) for a more in-depth discussion.

Parts A and B of Title II establish a national panel and review board to initiate and guide the development of these standards. The National Education Goals Panel is to be a bipartisan group which will build a national consensus for education improvement, report on progress towards achieving the National Education Goals, and review the standard and certification criteria certified by the National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC).

The National Education Standards and Improvement Council will be established to certify and review national and state standards as well as certify state assessments. Further discussion of these two groups is provided below.

Part A - National Education Goals Panel

An 18-member National Education Goals Panel will be established in 1994. Members of the Panel, as identified in Section 202 of the Act, will include: two appointed by the President; eight members who are governors (three of the same political party as the President), appointed by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the National Governors'

Association; four members of Congress, appointed by the Majority and Minority Leaders of the House and Senate; and four members of the state legislatures, appointed by the President of the National Council of State Legislators (no more than two may be of the same political party as the U.S. President).

Further, to the extent feasible, the Panel must be geographically representative and reflect racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. No specific requirement is made regarding the Panel's knowledge and familiarity with the needs and interests of students and families. Professionals, parents, advocates, and people with disabilities nationally, must share and provide information to the National Education Goals Panel concerning the status and needs of youth with disabilities involved in secondary education and transition services.

The National Education Goals Panel will, as identified in Section 203:

(1) report to the President, the Secretary, and the Congress regarding the progress the Nation and the States are making toward achieving the National Education Goals . . . ;

(2) report on the State opportunity-to-learn (OTL) standards and strategies and the progress of States that are implementing such standards and strategies to help all students meet State content standards and State student performance standards;

(3) submit to the President nominations for appointment to the National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC)...

(4) (A) review the criteria developed by NESIC for the certification of State content standards, State student performance standards, State assessments, and State OTL standards;

(B) review voluntary national content standards, voluntary national student performance standards and voluntary national OTL standards certified by NESIC, except that the Goals Panel shall have the option of disapproving such criteria and standards by a two-thirds majority vote . . . ;

(5) report on promising or effective actions being taken . . . to achieve the National Goals;

(6) help build a nationwide, bipartisan consensus for the reforms necessary to achieve the National Education Goals.

National Report Card (Section 203):

The Goals Panel will annually prepare and submit a national report card that will report on the progress of the U.S. in achieving the National Education Goals, identify actions that should be taken by all levels of government to enhance progress toward the Goals and to provide all

students with a fair opportunity to learn, and report on state OTL standards and strategies and the progress of states that are implementing such standards and strategies to help *all* students meet state content student performance standards. Implied in this is that the national report card will fully include assessments of the progress made by students with disabilities in the achievement of National Education Goals.

Part B - National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC)

The NESIC, as described in Section 211, will assume responsibility for certifying voluntary national and state content standards, student performance standards, and opportunity-to-learn standards, and assessment systems submitted by states on a voluntary basis. In regard to state assessment systems, NESIC will, for example, certify such assessment systems if they include *all* students and provide for the adaptations and accommodations necessary to permit the participation of *all* students with diverse learning needs.

As described in Section 212, the NESIC will be composed of 19 members, including: five professional educators (including teachers, preschool educators, and other school-based professionals, local district or state administrators, related service personnel, and other educators); four representatives of business and industry and postsecondary educational institutions; five representatives of the public (including representatives of advocacy, civil rights and disability groups, parents, civic leaders, and local and state educational policymakers); and five education experts (including experts in measurement and assessment, curriculum, school finance and equity, and school reform).

To the extent feasible, the membership of the Council shall be geographically representative of the United States and reflect the diversity of the U.S. with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, and disability characteristics. Not less than one-third of the members will have expertise or background in the educational needs and assessment of children who are from low-income families, minority backgrounds, have limited English proficiency, or have disabilities. It is important that representatives appointed to the Council to represent individuals with disabilities are knowledgeable concerning the secondary and transition needs of youth with disabilities for meaningful high school preparation, as well as postschool employment, postsecondary education, community living, and other facets of community life.

Title II also provides grants to support the development of voluntary model opportunity-to-learn standards as well as assessment systems aligned with state content standards. At least one-third of each consortium that will receive grants will be persons with expertise in the educational needs of children who are from low income families, minority backgrounds, have limited English proficiency, or have disabilities. It is essential that opportunity-to-learn standards

as well as state assessment systems reflect criteria and content that address the secondary and transition service needs of youth with disabilities.

Part C - Technology in Education

Under the Act, the Secretary is authorized to develop and publish a national long-range plan on the use of technology in education. The Secretary will provide assistance to states to enable states to plan for the use of technology in all schools. An Office of Educational Technology in the U.S. Department of Education is established to focus on uses of technology in education.

One important development is the intent to provide assistance to support research and development on the use of technologies in education that enhance student learning and staff development. This will provide an important opportunity to address the assistive technology needs of students with disabilities as they participate in school and community learning environments. A further implication is the potential to examine the applications of assistive technology in facilitating the adult literacy, lifelong learning, and employability of students with disabilities who have exited public school settings."

• **State and Local Education Systemic Improvement (Title III)**

The purpose of this Title is to "improve the quality of education for all students by improving student learning through a long-term, broad-based effort to promote coherent and coordinated improvements in the system of education throughout the Nation at the State and local levels." Title III is a state grant program to support, accelerate, and sustain state and local improvement efforts aimed at helping *all* students reach challenging academic standards.

Section 301(9) states that "State and local systemic improvement strategies must provide all students with effective mechanisms and appropriate paths to the workforce as well as to higher education." It is important that recent follow-up information from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (1988-1993), as well as other state-level findings from similar follow-up activities, be communicated systematically to underscore the need for students with disabilities to be assisted in the transition from school to work.

It should further be emphasized that the transition service requirements of Part B of IDEA provide a meaningful mechanism and structure for assisting youth with disabilities in undertaking appropriate paths to the workforce as well as to higher education. IDEA also strongly encourages student and parent participation in the development of transition plans, and the collaboration of schools and community service agencies in assisting students in making

needed connections to postschool employment, training, and other services. These supports, as well as others, are viewed as essential in assisting students with disabilities in making the successful transition from school to postsecondary education, training, and employment across the nation.

State Improvement Plans (Section 306)

Section 306 requires that a state submit a State Improvement Plan in order to qualify for federal funds. The Plan must address several issues, including:

- A process for developing or adopting state content standards and state student performance standards for *all* students.
- A process for developing and implementing nondiscriminatory and reliable state assessments (which provide for the adaptations and accommodations to permit *all* students to participate).
- A process for providing appropriate and effective professional development.
- The establishment of standards or strategies for providing *all* students with an opportunity to learn (the standards or strategies will include such factors as the state deems appropriate).
- The involvement of parents and the community in its reform efforts.
- The improvement of governance and management.
- The system-wide nature of the improvement.
- The promotion of bottom-up reform.

The Plan will be developed by the State Panel, in cooperation with the SEA and the Governor, and forwarded to the SEA. The SEA will submit the Plan, along with explanations of any changes, to the U.S. Secretary of Education. The Secretary will review the Plan for approval, with the assistance and advice of such individuals as: state and local policymakers, educators, related services personnel, experts on educational innovation and improvement, parents, children's advocates, and representatives of diverse student populations, such as children with disabilities.

A peer review process will be used to review the State Plans and offer guidance to the State Planning Panel. Opportunities should be created for individuals and groups representing students with disabilities and families to provide input on State Plans. It is important that representatives within states knowledgeable about the needs and interests of youth with disabilities as they prepare for and transition from secondary education participate in the review process.

LEAs can apply to the state for Goals 2000 funds to develop or implement a Local Improvement Plan one year after the state plan is approved. LEAs will encourage and

assist schools in developing and implementing reforms that best meet their particular needs. The Local Plan would include strategies for ensuring that *all* students meet the academic standards developed by the states. The development of Local Improvement Plans should provide broad-based opportunities for professionals, parents, and advocates for students with disabilities to directly participate in the planning process. It will be important to identify, through the SEA, individuals who will assume responsibility for establishing local planning teams. This will become an important level of participation in influencing the future direction of educational services, including secondary and transition services for youth with disabilities.

Education Waivers (Section 311)

The Secretary is authorized to waive certain statutory or regulatory requirements for a SEA, LEA, or school, to aid in education reform efforts. The programs included under the waiver provisions include Chapter I, Chapter II, the Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Education Act, the Emergency Immigrant Education Act, the Drug-Free Schools and Community Act, and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990.

The Act specifies certain statutory and regulatory requirements that may not be waived, including civil rights regulations (e.g., IDEA). The waivers provide an opportunity, however, to experiment and explore innovative and flexible alternatives to the delivery of current educational programming. This may, depending on local circumstances, aid secondary-aged students with disabilities in participating in a variety of alternative educational experiences in schools, workplaces, and communities.

• Parental Assistance (Title IV)

As described in Section 401 of the Act, the purpose of this Title is:

(1) to increase parents' knowledge of and confidence in child-rearing activities, such as teaching and nurturing their young children;

(2) to strengthen partnerships between parents and professionals in meeting the educational needs of children aged birth through five as well as parents of children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools; and the working relationship between home and school.

Parental Information and Resource Centers (Section 401)

Parental Information and Resource Centers are authorized under the Act. The Secretary of Education is authorized to make grants to nonprofit organizations to provide

training and information to parents of children aged birth through five years and children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools and to those who work with parents. Grants will be for programs to encourage a more efficient working relationship between parents and professionals in meeting the educational needs of children.

This provides an opportunity for existing parent centers and organizations established across the nation to address the needs of children and youth with disabilities to become involved. Many of these parent centers and organizations are currently addressing the secondary and transition needs of youth with disabilities. Their participation in Title IV of the Act will help to improve and increase the participation of parents of secondary-aged students with disabilities.

• **National Skill Standards Board (Title V)**

This Title creates a National Skill Standards Board "to serve as a catalyst in stimulating the development and adoption of a voluntary national system of [occupational] skill standards and of assessment and certification of attainment of skill standards that will serve as a cornerstone of the national strategy on workforce skills." The Board will be responsible for identifying broad clusters of major occupations in the U.S. and facilitating the establishment of voluntary partnerships to develop skill standards based on broad occupational skill clusters. The Board will endorse those skill standards submitted by the partnerships that meet certain statutory prescribed criteria.

For each of the occupational clusters, the Board will encourage and facilitate the establishment of voluntary partnerships to develop a skill standard system. Partnerships are eligible for grants under this Title. The partnerships will include representatives from non-governmental organizations with a history of protecting the rights of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, women, individuals with disabilities, and older persons.

Here, too, representation of professionals, parents, and advocates of students with disabilities of secondary school age on partnerships is essential. This is important to ensure that youth with disabilities are afforded opportunities to participate within each of the broad occupational clusters to be identified. Special expertise and knowledge from professionals representing secondary and transition services would help to facilitate an important understanding of the capacity of young people with disabilities to meet specific occupational skill standards.

• **Miscellaneous (Title X)**

Funding for IDEA (Section 1012)

It is the sense of Congress that the Federal Government provides states and communities with adequate resources under IDEA as soon as reasonably possible, through the reallocation of non-education funds within the current budget constraints. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was established with the commitment of 40% federal funding, but currently receives only 8% federal funding. This funding shortfall is particularly burdensome to school districts and schools in low income areas which serve higher than average proportions of students with disabilities and have fewer local resources to contribute.

Action Steps for Insuring the Inclusion of Youth with Disabilities in Goals 2000

- **Monitor** the development of educational and occupational skill standards to ensure that they adequately encompass and address the needs and interests of young people with disabilities.
- **Communicate** the importance of school completion (National Education Goal 2) for students with disabilities.
- **Share** facts and findings on school dropout rates for students with disabilities with federal and state officials.
- **Familiarize** educators, employers, human service professionals, parents, and youth with disabilities with the transition service requirements of Part B of IDEA.
- **Promote** collaborative joint training initiatives between general and special education, vocational rehabilitation, vocational education, employers, and others in an effort to broadly address the specific secondary and transition needs of youth with disabilities for work, independent living, participation in postsecondary education, and other facets of community life.
- **Inform** federal and state officials that students with disabilities are presently entering postsecondary training institutions at lower rates than any other student.
- **Encourage** parents of students with disabilities to become familiar with the intent and purposes of National Education Goal 8—Parental Participation.
- **Share** and provide information to the National Education Goals Panel concerning the status and needs of youth with disabilities involved in secondary education and transition services.