



ACTS
ABILITY CENTERED TRANSITION SYSTEM

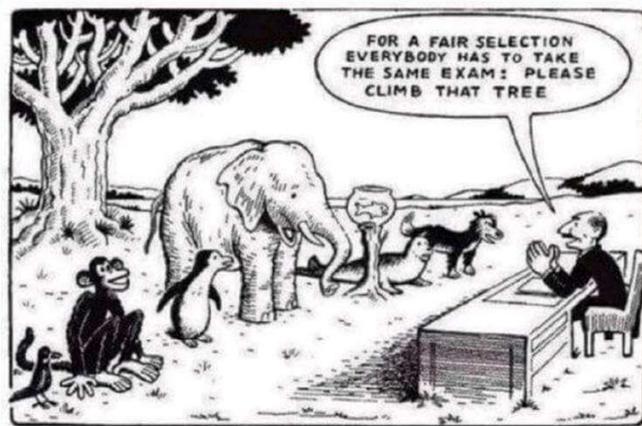
Helping youth pursue the futures they are destined for.

CARS+
February 9, 2019

1



2



Our Education System

"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a ^{student} fish by its ~~disability to climb a tree~~, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

- Albert Einstein

3

Meet Johnathan Mooney



4

"I was the kid that believed because I was different, I was deficient. I was the stupid, crazy, and lazy kid."

"They've been doing deep intel on me my whole life, it ain't good news in that file (IEP)."

"A foundation of my journey of change was a deep commitment to not just fixing kids problems, but finding, scaling, and celebrating their strengths...its all about finding that thing that they are good at."

"I want to spend my time celebrating the potential of those kids who learn and live differently. Every single human being has a strength, talent, or interest, that you can find and that you can build a life on."

"Find your strengths, and compensate for your weaknesses."

recent transfer student



5

Meet Aren



"Early on, we decided that our mission as parents was not to focus on his disabilities. We would not dwell on or be limited by the things he couldn't do. Rather, we agreed to seek out and develop Aren's unique strengths while scaffolding his weaknesses in a way he could understand and embrace. We vowed to be open to exploring his talents, even where he started out with marked deficits."

<https://sites.ed.gov/osers/2018/07/the-many-roads/>



6

- ACTS -

The Philosophical Underpinnings



1. Every student has a unique VISA (values, interests, skills, abilities) that make them an ace/expert at something.
 - ▶ Multiple-Intelligences
 - ▶ Personality tests
 - ▶ Observation of young children

2. When adults are working in careers and living out life goals that align with those abilities, their personal fulfillment and community contribution are maximized.
 - ▶ Johnson-O'Conner research foundation
 - ▶ Highlands Co.
 - ▶ Those in mis-fit jobs have poor health, higher turn-over, lower self-happiness scores, lower pay
 - ▶ Those in ability-aligned jobs have better health, higher work efficiency, higher life satisfaction scores, and higher pay

3. Education should be a results-driven (or transition-focused) process that works to help students identify, grow, and pursue their abilities.
 - ▶ Referred to as the "humanistic" approach in recent educational research & writing
 - ▶ "Transition-focused education" starting to emerge as a school-wide approach.

7

The IDEA Transition mandate gives us the open door and legal justification to build IEPs that are ability-centered and transition-focused.



8



9

-Building the concept -

- ▶ What does the law require?
 - ▶ Age-appropriate assessments, every year starting at age 15, to measure post-secondary goals, interests and needs related to transition skills across Education, Employment, and Independent Living (if appropriate).
- ▶ State and LEAs share responsibility to build and define their own transition programs.
 - ▶ "Currently, there are no federal definitions of age-appropriate transition, functional vocational evaluation (FVE), or suggested methods for students with high- and low-incidence disabilities. Rather, it is largely left to State and LEAs to determine how they conceptualize and provide age-appropriate TA. In fact, special educational personnel often serve as the decision makers for when, where, and how they will implement TA for students with disabilities." (Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, 36(2) 72-83).
- ▶ Special Education teachers are responsible for transition assessments and planning, yet we are not trained.
 - ▶ "Studies have revealed that special education teachers lack of knowledge of transition competencies and that this hinders their abilities to implement effective transition practices"
 - ▶ "Less than half of special education programs offer a stand-alone course in transition"
 - ▶ "Most special educators are not aware of transition information, nor do they receive it in their pre-service special education programs" – CEC
- ▶ [Essential Life Skills for All Teens](#)

10

So what does research tell us?

Which of the “Essential Life Skills” have the highest correlation to post-secondary success for SWD?



11



Definition: "Self-determination is a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one's strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have a greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults."



POSITION PAPER:

Field, S., Martin, J., Miller, R., Ward, M., & Wehmeyer, M. (1998). Self-determination for persons with disabilities: A position statement of the division on career development and transition. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 21, 113-128.

"The concept of self-determination has been emphasized as a result of several factors, including a changing view of disability, legislation, research finding and advances in teaching technology. Self-determination is highly important to the career development and transition process and it needs to be encouraged throughout the lifespan. It is important for all students, with and without disabilities, including those with the most severe disabilities."

"During the past decade, research and practice in self-determination has shown that systematic instruction in self-determination improves post-school outcomes of youth with disabilities.

"Adopting a self-determination perspective in IDEA implementation can lead states and LEAs to interventions and strategies that help students identify their preferences and interests so that they may choose self-directed courses of study. This will, in turn, more likely lead to better post-secondary outcomes and to meeting the true spirit of the legislation."

An updated DCDT position paper will be published soon reinforcing the concept further.

12




NTACT is a Technical Assistance and Dissemination project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Cooperative Agreement Number H326E140004. NTACT is funded from January 1, 2015 until December 31, 2019.

NTACT's purpose is to assist State Education Agencies, Local Education Agencies, State VR agencies, and VR service providers in implementing evidence-based and promising practices ensuring students with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, graduate prepared for success in postsecondary education and employment.

Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction the only practice supported and rated as "Evidence Based."



The I'm Determined project, a state-directed project funded by the Virginia Department of Education, focuses on providing direct instruction, models, and opportunities to practice skills associated with self-determined behavior. This project facilitates youth, especially those with disabilities to undertake a measure of control in their lives, helping to set and steer the course rather than remaining the silent passenger.

13

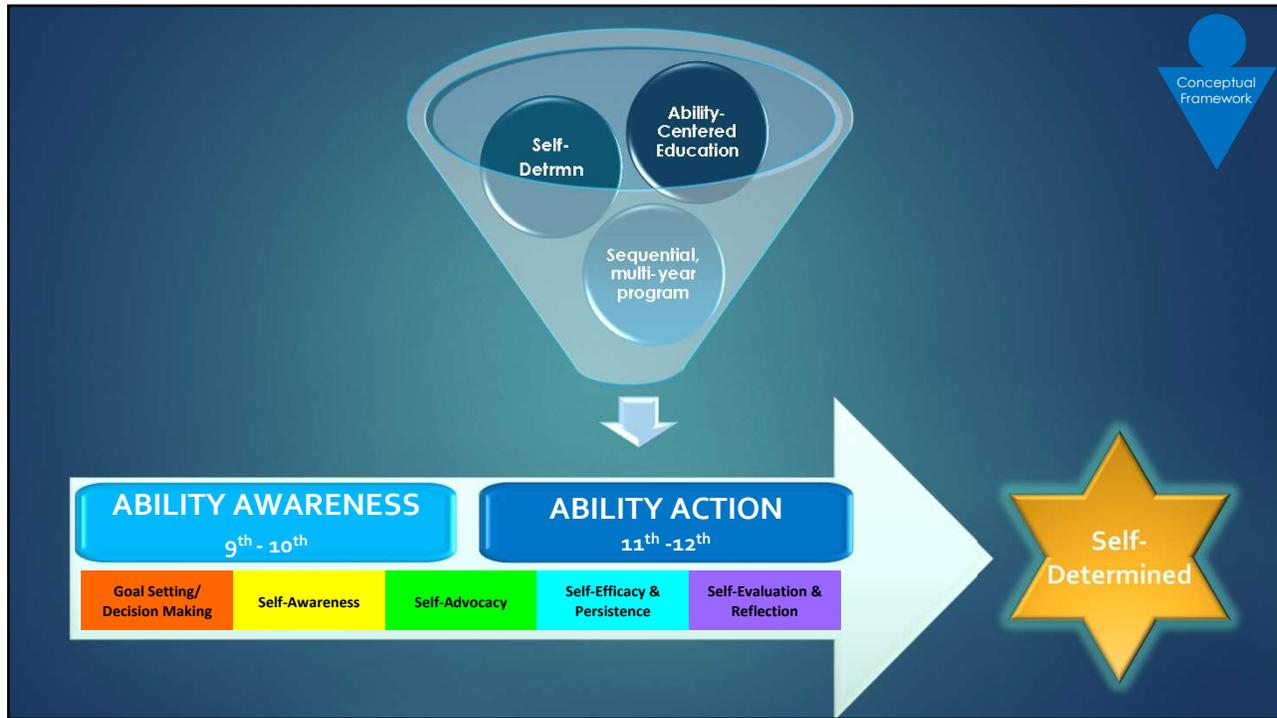



➤ **Mission:** "The Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment facilitates successful secondary and postsecondary educational, vocational and personal outcomes for students and adults with disabilities. ZC faculty, staff, and students do this through self-determination oriented evaluation, research, development, transition education instruction, and dissemination of best educational and support practices."

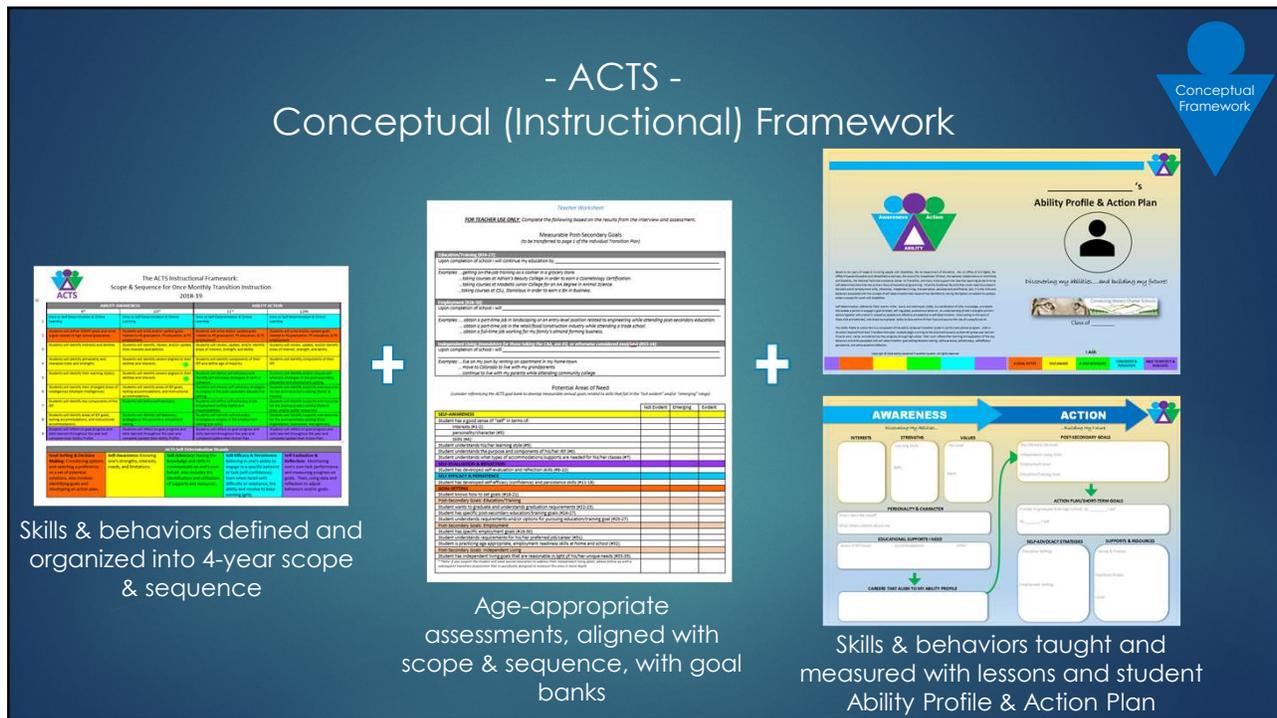
➤ **Transition Assessment & Goal Generator (TAGG)** Martin, J., Hennessey, M., McConnell, A., Terry, R., & Willis, D. (2015). *TAGG technical manual*. Retrieved from <https://tagg.ou.edu/tagg/>

- "Studies have been conducted to find numerous teaching practices, programs, services, and placements associated with postsecondary education and employment, but none of the studies identified associated student behaviors."
- Behaviors Associated with Self-Determination:
 - Knowledge of Strengths and Limitations,
 - Persistence,
 - Employment,
 - Utilization of Resources.
 - Actions Related to Strengths and Limitations,
 - Proactive Involvement,
 - Self-Advocacy,
 - Disability Awareness,
 - Goal Setting and Attainment,
 - Supports, and

14



15



16

What about your program?

- ▶ **ACTS:** still in development and fine-tuning phase. Email Rachel@AbilityEducation.org to stay up-to-date with program development and availability.
 - ▶ Provided through ACES (Ability-Centered Educational Services) - to be launched 2019-20 school year as a Non-Public Agency certified by CDE to provide Special Education services.

- ▶ **DIY:** Organize a "Transition Committee" and define the transition skills & behaviors appropriate for your student population. Then develop corresponding assessments and curriculum.

- ▶ **Other:**
 - ▶ Life Centered Curriculum - offered by Council for Exceptional Children - \$\$
 - ▶ ME! Lessons & Bell-Ringers – Zarrow Center (University of Oklahoma) - FREE
 - ▶ ChoiceMaker Self-Determination Curriculum – Zarrow Center (University of Oklahoma) – FREE
 - ▶ The Transitions Curriculum – offered by James Stanfield - \$\$

17



18

Using ACTS to answer the Transition Mandate

Organizational Framework

IDEA Mandate:

Starting when student is 15 and updated annually thereafter, use age-appropriate transition assessments to identify:

- 1) Post-Secondary Goals
- 2) Strengths & Interests
- 3) Needs

with regards to Post-Secondary Education, Employment, and Independent Living

Based on assessment results, provide a coordinated set of activities" (courses of study, instruction, related services, community experiences) to "facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities."



19

Using ACTS to answer the Transition Mandate

Organizational Framework

IDEA Mandate:

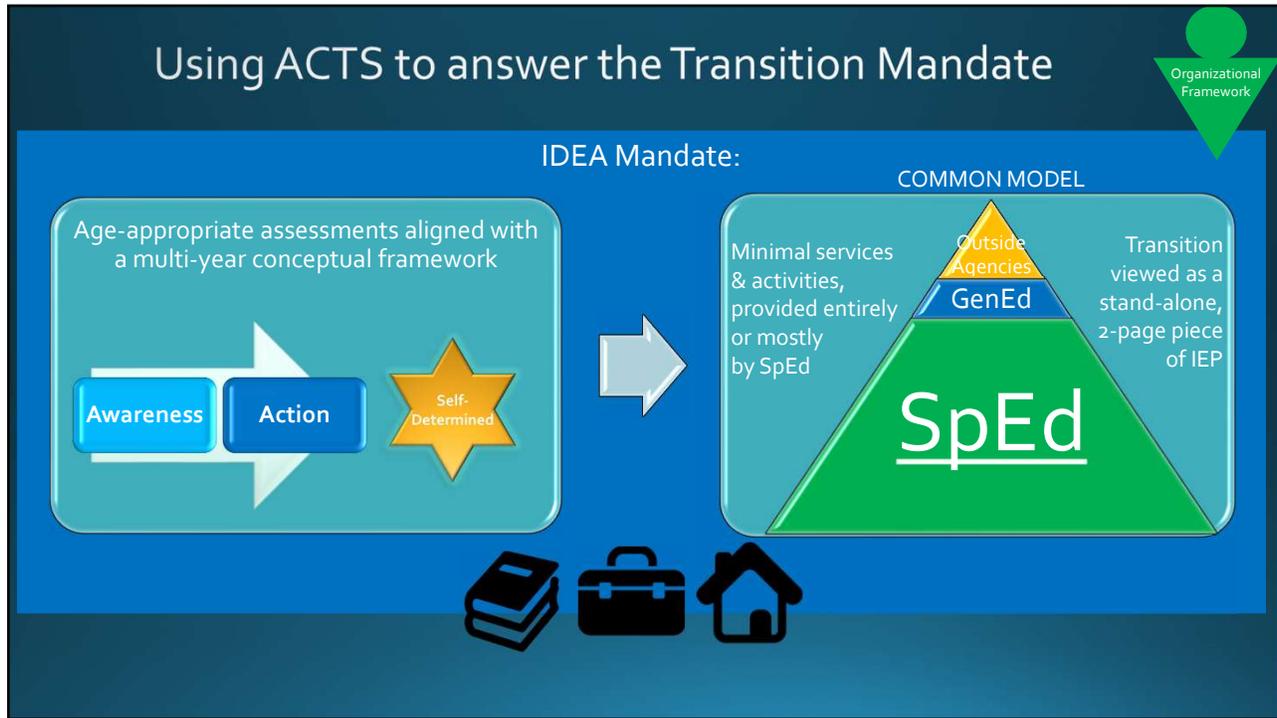
Age-appropriate assessments aligned with a multi-year conceptual framework

Awareness → Action → Self-Determined

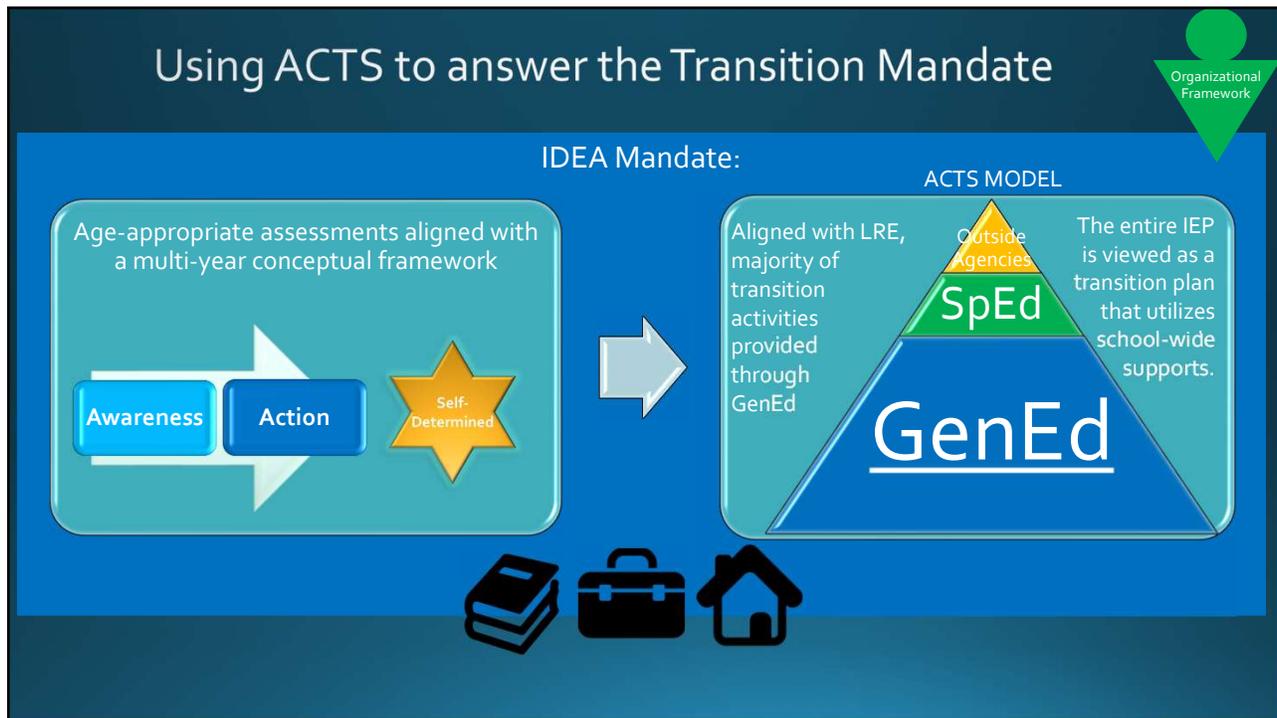
Based on assessment results, provide a "coordinated set of activities" (courses of study, instruction, related services, community experiences) to "facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities."



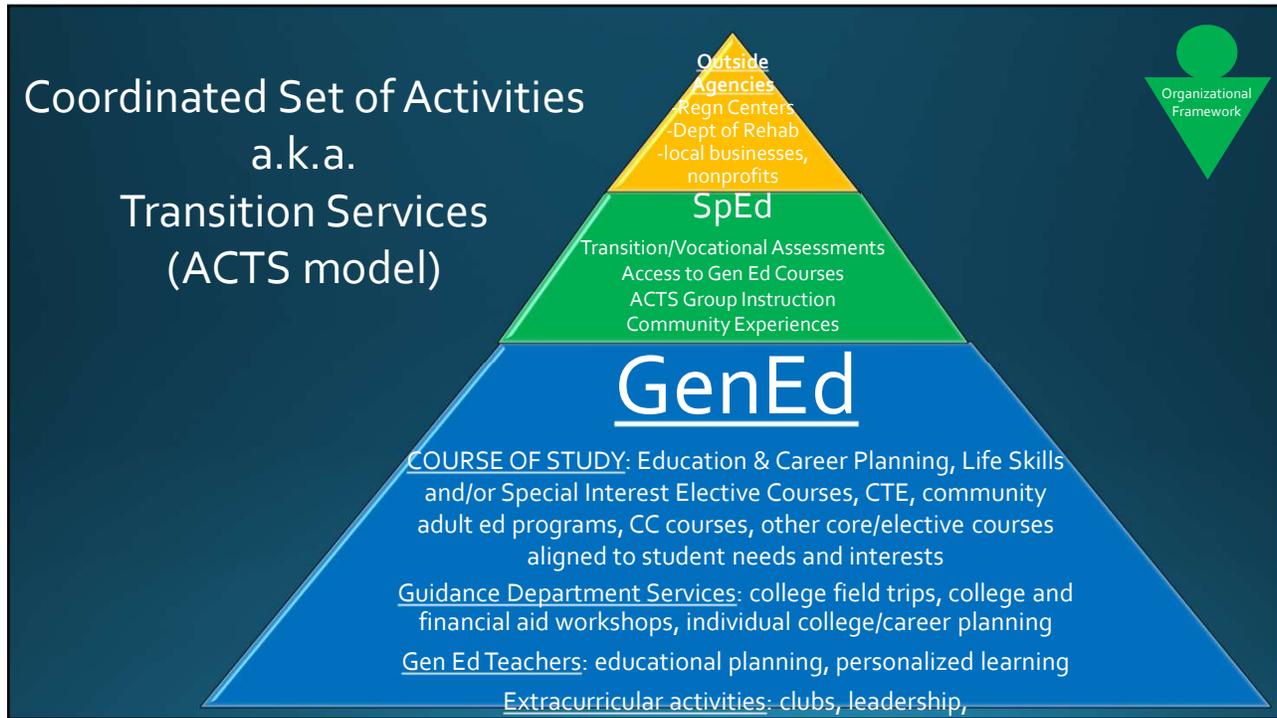
20



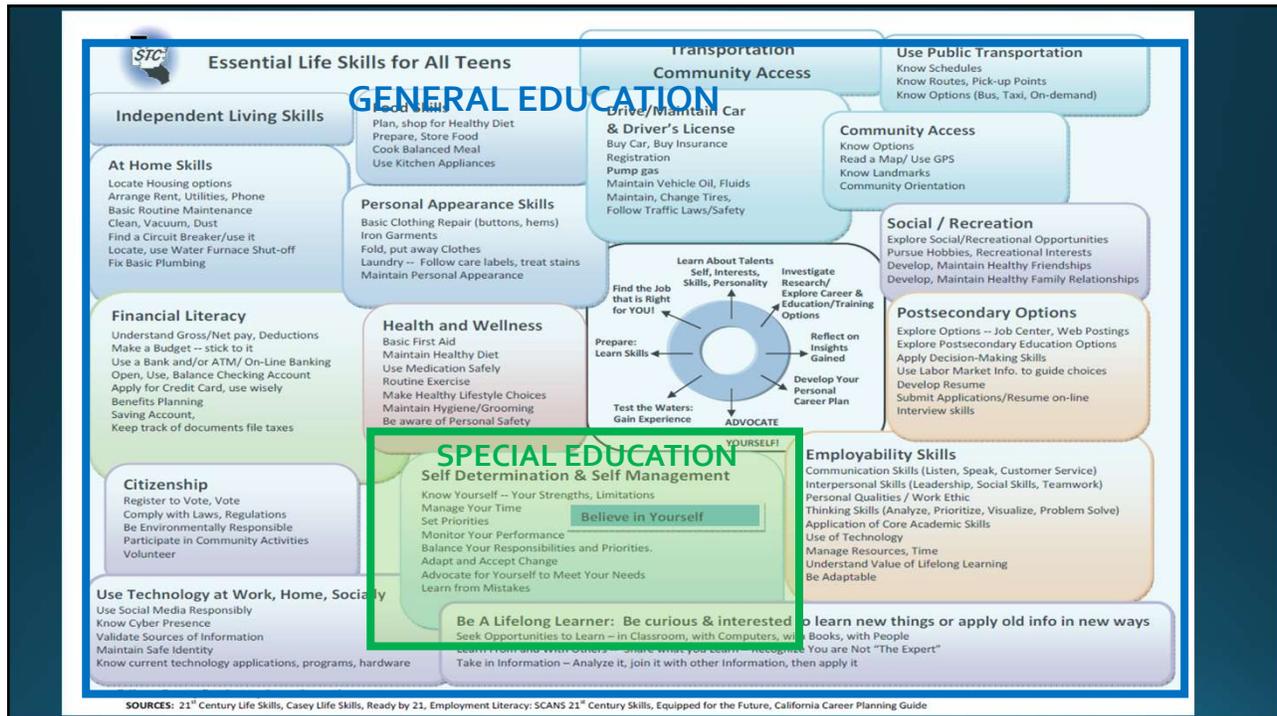
21



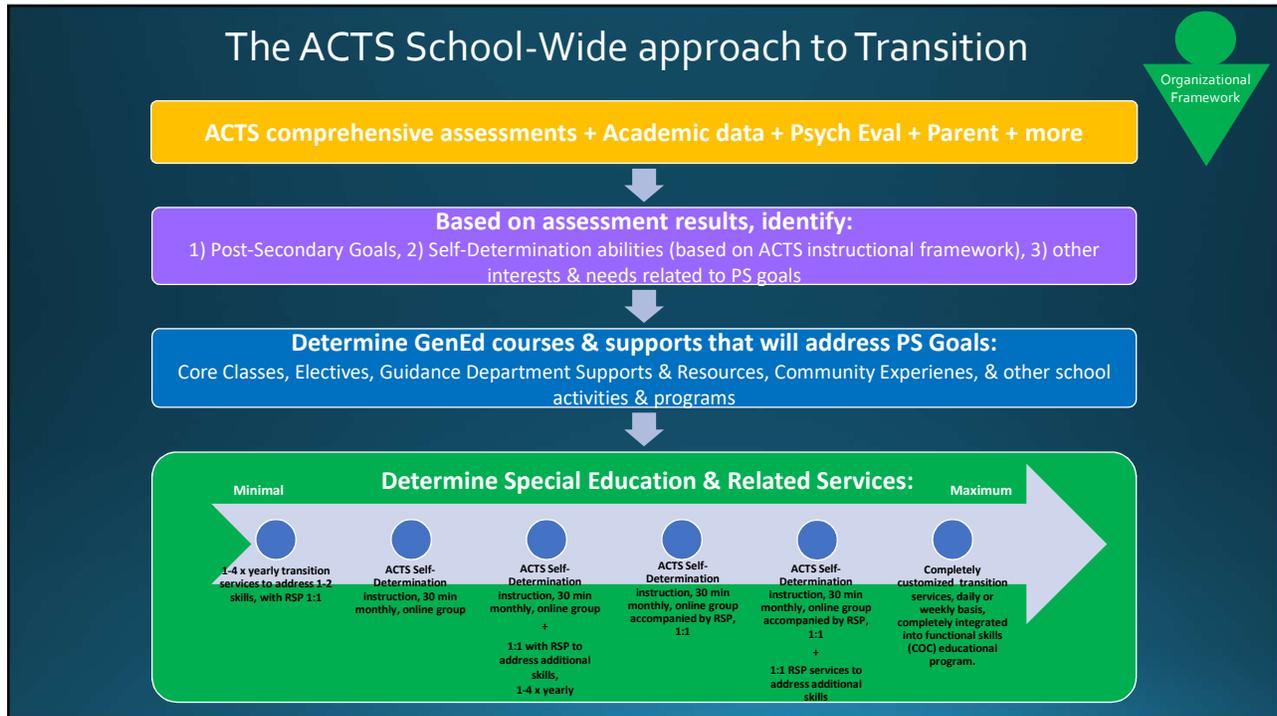
22



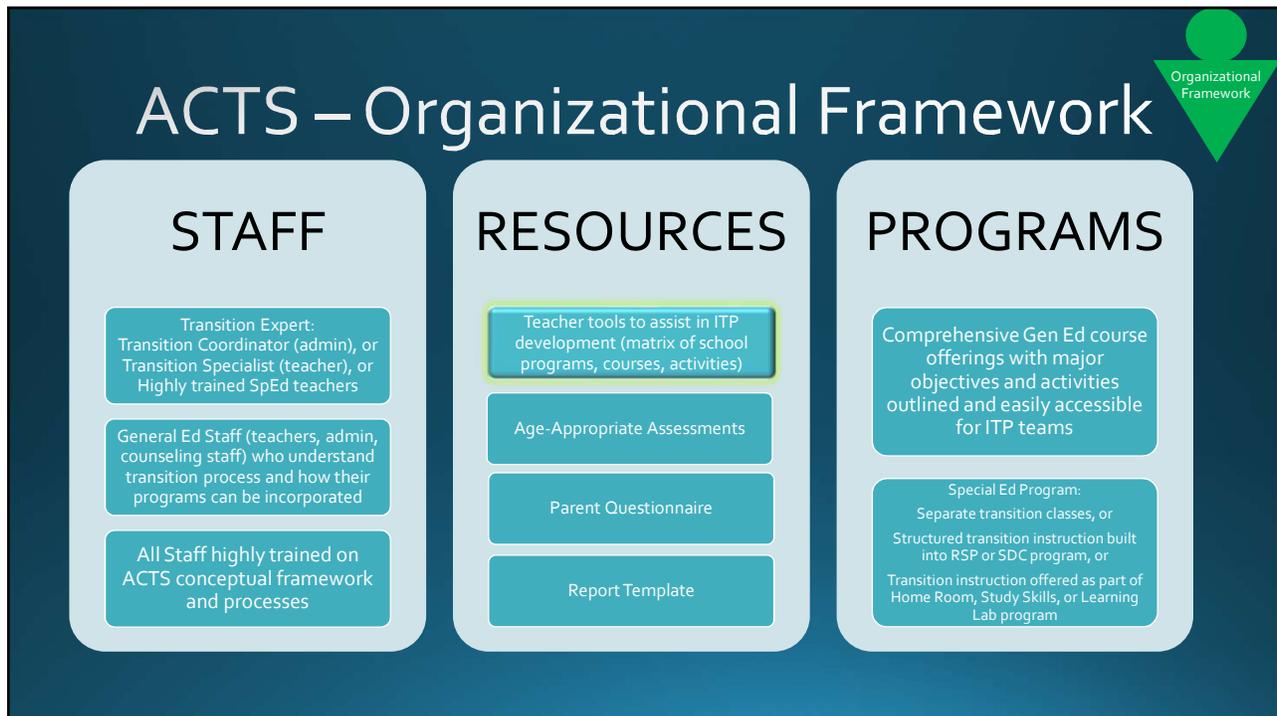
23



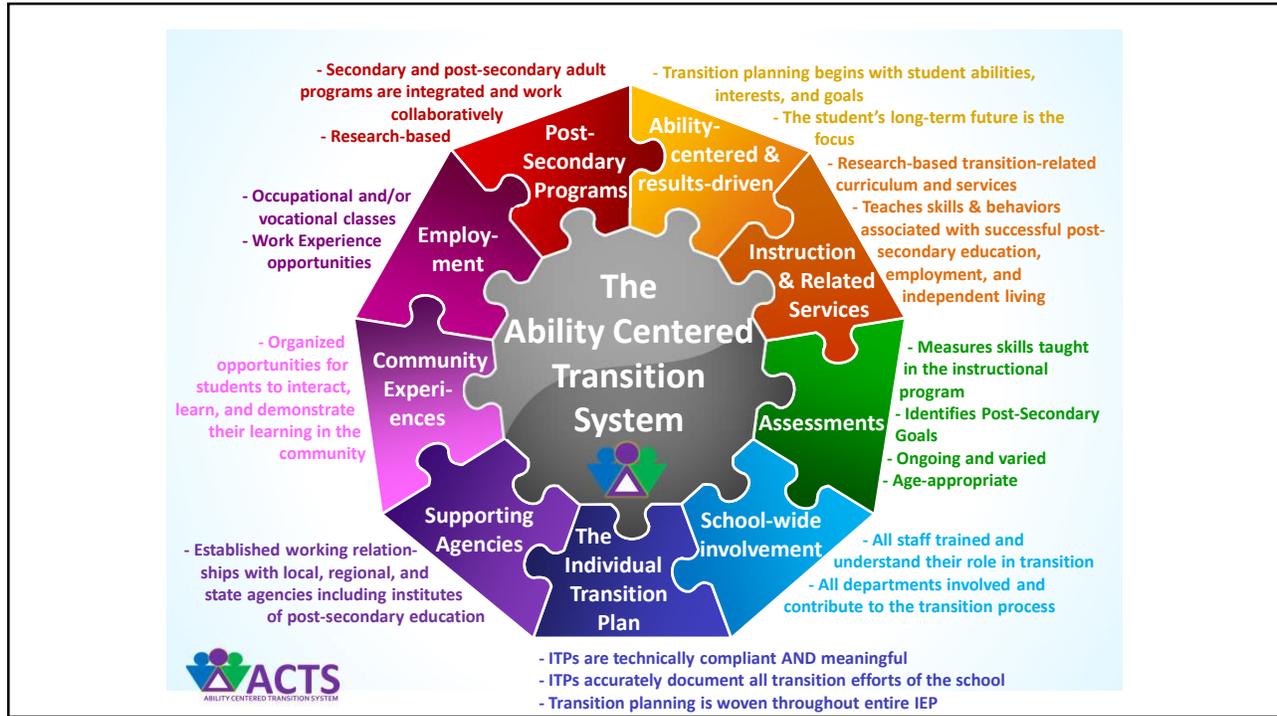
24



25



26



27

Thank YOU!!

ACTS
ABILITY CENTERED TRANSITION SYSTEM

Rachel@AbilityEducation.org

28