

Seamless Transition from School to Career



“National, State and District, data shows 5 years out of high school IEP and 504 students career outcomes are significantly lower than their peers”

The Challenge

Students and Parents Need...

- a clear pathway to college and career

Students need a mentor, a vision or a dream into what they might be good at before they graduate from high school. To find the motivation towards pursuing a career, it takes asking the right questions and setting short and long term goals.

- information on how to access services

Often, parents and students don't know what is available to them. In addition, once the student turns 18 they are responsible for disclosing their disability status. This is a significant barrier if students don't know how best to advocate for themselves. In order to be involved in the process of advocating for their child's resources, parents need to be invited to the conversation by the student.

- documentation to determine eligibility

Understanding all the documentation that is required can be complicated. Parents and student need to be able to navigate getting to the different requirements of post high community services available to students in furthering their career or education.

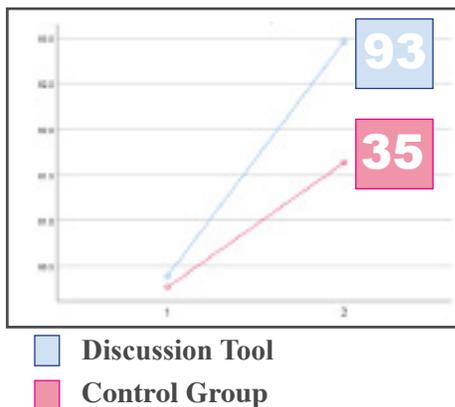


Discussion Tool Inspires Students to Take Charge in Career Planning

Findings: One Year Study using ACTNow Survey Tool

198 High school students with an IEP or 504
6.15 Average meetings per student

ActNow Students Were 3Xs as Likely to Connect with Transition Services



When students worked with mentors on their ACTNow Survey, they were **nearly 3Xs as likely** to connect with transition resources than the participants who did not

What is the ACTNow Discussion Tool?

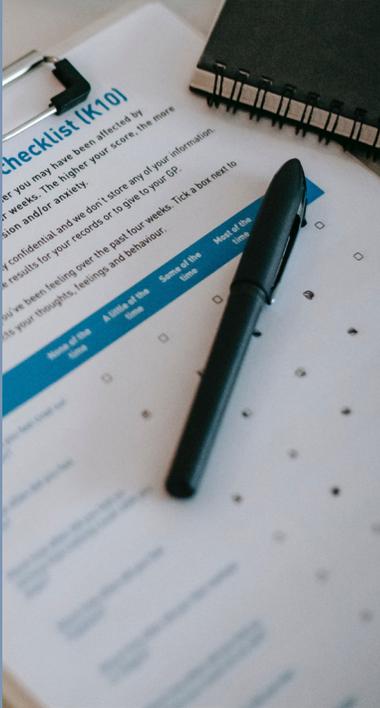
The discussion tool supports goal and career planning, assessment, self-determination, IEP development, and transition success across multiple service tiers. These are critical skills for students with disabilities who are transitioning to employment and into their community after high school. ActNow is a valid and reliable measure for high school students.

“ This is a strong tool to open up conversations that I didn’t even realize needed to be had! It really helps clear a pathway to a realistic future rather than a ‘one day’ I could see myself using this tool in applied skills class, as well as through mentoring we do at my school... I like how it is ongoing rather than a one-time survey. I can see this project being of great value to teachers, students, parents, and admins once it’s implemented! I’m excited to see where this goes next!”

Brian Walker, Special Educator

Before the ACTNow Tool

Before the ACTNow tool, we did not have a systematic way to gather data and share the findings with teachers, counselors, staff, students, and family. Because of this tool, we have shared data, resources, and a way to support students at all levels.



What the Tool Does for Students

- Provide a script to help students interact with others
- Provides baseline data for shared conversations between teachers, students, and staff helping direct career exploration in students.
- Helps students advocate for themselves.

How ACTNow Supports Teachers, LEAs & Counselors

- Reduce the number of people doing the same thing and increase their ability to work together
- Students and staff have baseline data so we know who needs extra support
- Students determine short- and long-term goals for future careers
- Students are empowered, know what supports apply to them, and how to access those resources

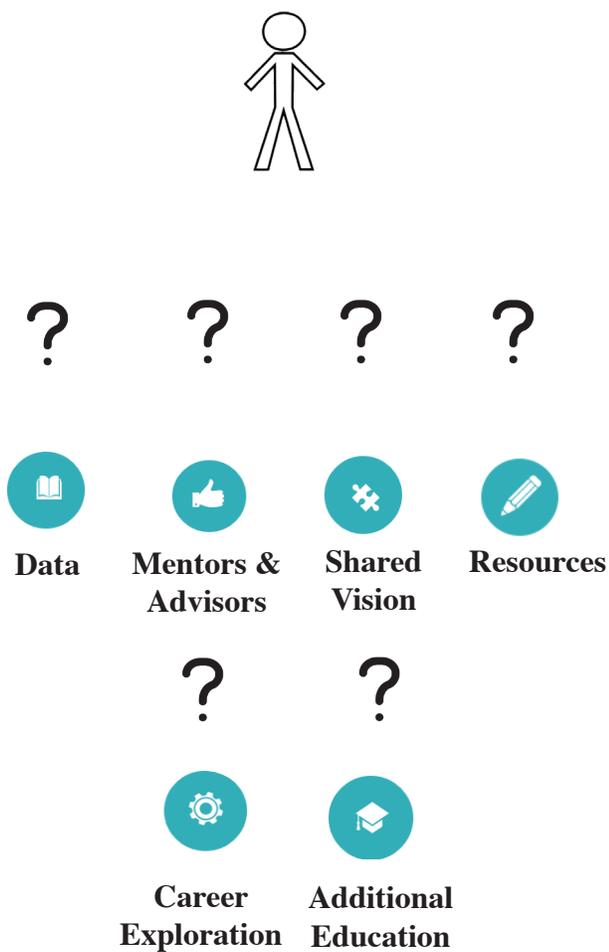
What's Next

We know the ACTNow discussion tool benefits students with an IEP or 504 and helps them identify what supports they need. We assume it will have the same benefit for our general student populations, we need to identify ways it may be adapted. Other action items might include:

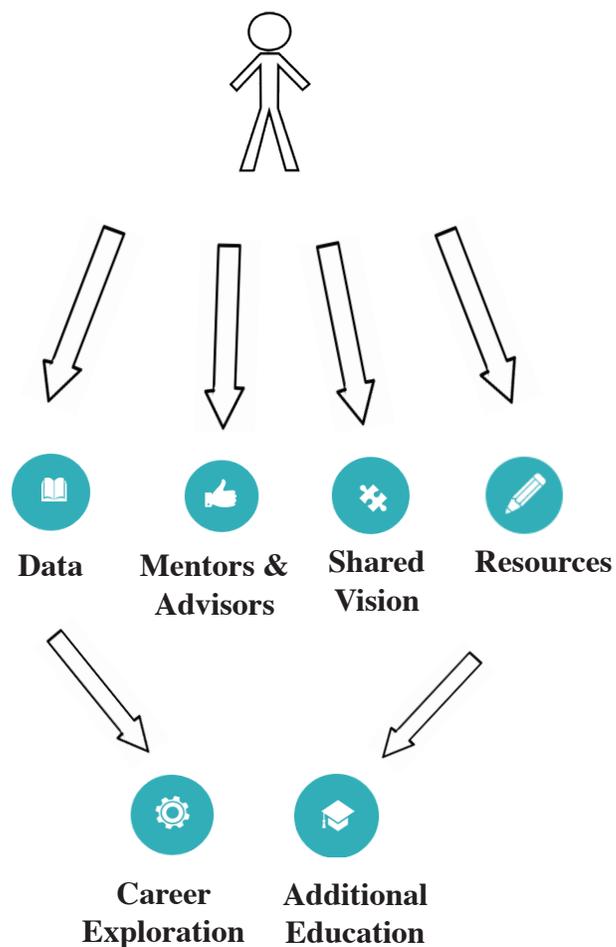
- ACTNow Inventory needs to be converted from Excel and Qualtrics to more interactive (perhaps with AI potential, the ability to change based on the end user to support special population needs)
- Apply for grants that might measure CTE or special populations
- Continue to reinforce concepts of access and equity
- Participate in Lunch and Learns, applied skills classes, and career fairs
- Create email drip campaigns, websites, and conference presentations
- Follow up with district and state stakeholders

How ACTNow Fits the Big Picture

Student **without** ACTNow Discussion Tool



Student **with** ACTNow Discussion Tool



“My success as an adult was absolutely dependent on these conversations. The future is unavoidable and every student with a disability has to find their place after high school . . . This is why having the open, honest and respectful conversations were so imperative.”

Melanie Stokes, Former Student

Frequently Asked Questions



Why would we begin this as soon as 7th grade?

Studies show the earlier career exploration begins, the better the outcomes. Using this tool also gives students more opportunities to take more classes and to figure out what they want to do as they get closer to their career.

When to use the Online career exploration inventory?

The inventory takes about 15 minutes. It can be used 7th-12th grade. New students can be added at anytime. The inventory is given at the beginning and end of the year. Based on a career exploration inventory, administrators of the ACTNow tool decide who needs further support.

What is involved in the in-person tool?

Students identified as needing extra support connect with career coaches to explore 12 questions and discuss answers and options that might work best for next steps in their career exploration. The additional sections are about 30 minutes because they may involve more discussion, guest speakers or course descriptions of pathways they are interested in.

The survey can be given as often as each term or just once a year. You should anticipate using the tool more frequently as the students get closer to graduation. Students or facilitators enter their answers in the form. Students set realistic goals to be accomplished within 30 days. By breaking the action plan into manageable steps the student is willing to take, it provides them with a vision and script to help define their future career.

“We don’t have enough time for what we need to do the way we are currently doing it. This gives us a way we can address transition once a term. – We need the 30 day follow-up this has– We can tie it to a class or grade, do the follow-up for accountability. This works better for the time that we have.”

Stephen Bachelor, Special Educator

Frequently Asked Questions



Who will administer the Tool?

From here, the tool helps provide ideas for additional interventions and is given by a teacher, counselor, or trained facilitator in a classroom, small group or on an individual basis. A teacher, counselor, or para coach can be trained to administer the tool. The ACTNow support team will provide in-person and Online support to implement the tool in your school.

What do the teachers, LEAs, and Counselors do?

Based on what the students' needs are, they might direct them to supports in the schools or help them plan for courses and resources available in the school and in the community. Working with the student in these ways gives them an active plan for students regarding careers/post high education.

Individuals connected to the student in the school system can share documentation with stakeholders. This helps all teachers, counselors, and parents to be on the same page as they transition to or access education, employment and services after high school.

Why is the tool critical in the transition process?

Better outcomes happen when the students have a plan for what class they could take next, credits they want, or job training to look for. This inventory tool really comes in handy when the student is transitioning because it outlines the documentation they will need as they access resources outside of their school and in their post high school careers or education planning.



Frequently Asked Questions



How does the tool remove the guesswork?

Teachers help students explore more of who they want to become, and talk about how it affects the choices they make about school today. The tool provides the teachers with the language for meaningful conversations to make transition more relevant. Using the tool removes the guesswork and helps teachers know what to say. Helpful videos, hyperlinks, and a resource page are included.

The ACTNow tool educates and informs teachers and students regarding support resources in the community. Students take ownership and demonstrate self-advocacy. Students get a general idea for how their individual skills will feed into future careers. This may increase the possibility of independent living. Using the tool with an IEP helps to meet the requirements of an exit summary and complete the documentation in transition planning.

Examples of goals students might list in their plan

The students will be setting short and long term realistic goals. Students could make a goal such as sending an email to a teacher about an assignment they missed, talking to counselors at a tech school, or asking an adult to tell them more about a career they might be interested in. This script helps the student communicate their interests with adults and others who can provide support, or help them plan.

“One of the biggest advantages would be to provide a framework for having a series of discussions with students regarding transition that are consistent, and which take place over time during the students’ high school experience. . . .As students hear this consistent language with straightforward terminology and use of specifically named laws and programs, it will help them acquire the language to use themselves. It can help them ‘normalize’ these terms, making them more able, and willing, to use the supports available to them.”

Jennifer Tanner, Special Educator

Frequently Asked Questions



What is the benefit for students?

The ACTNow tool provides students with one-on-one assistance from a trusted teacher, counselor or career coach. The 30 day plan and follow-up procedures help the student to see where they are in their schooling and where they might need credits or make-up work. It also gives them ideas for classes they can take and accommodations they can use. Then facilitators help students find agencies in the community, as well as helpful videos, resource pages, and in-person opportunities.

This process helps student to build self-confidence, and allows them to see the future a little more clearly. Helping them to see what they are good at and how they might improve. Specifically students with disabilities become more aware of what their disabilities are and how to advocate for their approved accommodations.

As they walk through this process it will open doors to community programs as well as possible financial help in post high school education. The ACTNow tool is a non-intimidating way get student help from mentors, making their dreams and goals a reality.

Is there a benefit to teachers, LEAs, and Counselors?

The benefit to parents, students, teachers and counselors is they are all on the same page. The process provides an avenue for clear communication and defines an active plan regarding careers and post high education. As they team with students to create the best education plan for them, based on information pulled from this program, students become more prepared for life outside of high school. This process helps foster close relationships between schools and community programs.

How does it help a student with an IEP or 504?

Students with disabilities become more aware of what their accommodation needs are. The main goal is to help students self-determine what it is they would like to achieve and how they can advocate for themselves. As they cover the transition services on the IEP, it helps them learn about the documentation that is needed once they graduate.

“If I had grown up with people talking to me about the support and scholarships--about what was possible-- things could have been very different for me.”

Candice Taylor, Parent & Facilitator

Frequently Asked Questions



How it helps connect with post high resources?

While using the tool, educators become more aware of how to address transition and what needs to be addressed. The discussion tool is broken down into three areas: education, employment, and independent living. The language is consistent with existing IEP content and is in an easily transferable framework that all can use. The tool provides access to effective and efficient tools like videos, hyperlinks, and resource pages. It is a guide for educators on how to work with and individualize the transition for each student.

Teachers, counselors, LEAs, parents and students can see the goals each individual student sets. The goals help the students see why they should stay in school or why they should work harder to pass courses in their path. It also addresses inter-agency requirements for determination of outside services.

How will this prepare seniors for success?

Once they have started the discussion tool, have them update it as often as needed. At the very least once a year up through graduation. This process helps to make graduation feel relevant to them without scaring them. It is helpful to focus on the volunteer or work experience component. Students need to know how to find what the prerequisites are, and what they should do to prepare.

The inventory tool will show where students are at the moment, regardless of their grade. Educators need to understand and help them understand that career planning goes in steps. For example a teacher may say, "This is probably where you want to be as a senior or even after you graduate. This is where you are now as a sophomore." The questions help them realize they have only 3 years left in school and begin a discussion that lets them know how they need to be prepare for the school years ahead their post-high school lives.

Special Education students need to start thinking about transition sooner. The discussions should start anywhere between 7th and 8th grade. Once they are sophomores the tool should be used once a term, to get them thinking about their post-school plans.

"As a counselor I used this with small groups of students. The interaction as we talked about what they wanted to do and how they might get there really helped me get to know the students better."

Ryan Wilcox, Counselor