

Life Mapping for Students with Disabilities©

Life Mapping© is a facilitated *Futures Planning* process, adapted from the work of Giangreco's COACH and VISTA models.

Life Mapping provides a structured format for discussion and decision-making, related to defining and establishing realistic and functional educational goals and programs for students with significant disabilities. It is a person-centered planning process with the intended outcome of developing and providing authentic and meaningful curriculum and instruction, to prepare students to live personally meaningful lives.

With a long-range focus for the student - at age 21 and beyond – staff and families (and, as appropriate, the student) reflect and create a detailed picture of the student, to date. With this profile the team is able to revisit, redefine and integrate the skills, competencies and programmatic decisions to align educational curriculum (both academic and functional) and experiences necessary for the student's success during and beyond the school years, specifically:

- ✓ Creating a Vision - The bulls-eye - 'A Picture of the Future'
- ✓ Framing the Issues - Identifying where we are 'Now'
- ✓ Developing the Roadmap - Identifying Possible Solutions
- ✓ Creating an Action Plan – based on research-based recommended practices
- ✓ Provide Links to Resources

Guiding Principles

1. Pursuing valued life outcomes as an important aspect of education
2. School-family as equal partners
3. Collaborative teamwork is essential
4. Coordination among service providers results in clarity of purpose
5. Use of problem-solving methods to improve effectiveness of educational planning
6. Special education is a service, not a place

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Futures Planning

Guiding Principles Collaborative teaming and coordination among stakeholders -

- ✓ Flexible process to organize decision-making for the team
- ✓ Provides an over time 'picture' of student through regularly planned *mapping* (annually, bi-annually or as needed)
- ✓ Helps team to think about life outcomes beyond school – provides clarity and relevance to educational programming with a focus on valued life outcomes
- ✓ Evaluates impact of educational experiences so that the team thinks together problem-solve and plan in new ways
- ✓ Helps to bring focus and agreement on shared goals and learning priorities
- ✓ Based on the assumptions that decisions will be made for individuals, with consideration of:
 - Special education is a service, not a place
 - Having students learn relevant skills
 - Provision of necessary supports

Who participates?

Although individually determined should always include family and current staff, which may include:

- Facilitator – could be a team member or external consultant
- Parent(s)
- Student – over age 13 or whenever appropriate
- Special education team members familiar with the student
- Administrators
- Paraprofessionals familiar with the student
- General education teacher