NTACT THE COLLABORATIVE | National Technical Assistance Center on Transition

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

Using CIRCLES to Increase Self-Determination

(Research-Based Practice)

What is the evidence base?

This is a research-based practice for **students with disabilities,** including students with specific learning disabilities, autism, intellectual disability, and other health impairments, based on one methodologically sound group experimental study with random assignment across 876 students with disabilities.

Where is the best place to find out how to do this practice?

- For more information on CIRCLES:
  - https://circles.charlotte.edu/
  - https://transitioncoalition.org/blog/webinar/circles-interagency-collaboration/

With whom was it implemented?

- Students with disabilities (1 study, *N* = 876)
  - Specific learning disability (*n* = 286)
  - Autism (*n* = 79)
  - Intellectual disability (*n* = 234)
  - Other health impairment (*n* = 221)
  - Other (*n* = 56)
- Students were in grades
  - 10 (*n* = 270)
  - 11 (*n* = 235)
  - 12 (*n* = 372)
- Males (*not specified*), females (*not specified*)
- Race/Ethnicity
  - White (*n* = 574)
  - Black (*n* = 179)
  - Hispanic (*n* = 79)
  - Asian (*n* = 17)
  - Multiple (*n* = 26)

What is the practice?

Communicating Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional Students (CIRCLES) is a collaborative service delivery model designed to guide schools in implementing interagency collaboration across three teams, including the Community-Level Team, School-

Level Team, and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. The focus of CIRCLES is to facilitate student involvement and leadership throughout the transition planning process to help ensure youth with disabilities are connected with the necessary services and supports in high school to support their transition into postschool life.

The Community-Level Team comprises administrators and supervisors of each agency (e.g., local education agency, vocational rehabilitation) and other community partners (e.g., employers, Chamber of Commerce, faith-based organizations). This team works to solve problems or barriers that students with disabilities might face in accessing community supports, employment, and postsecondary education to ensure these youth can fully engage within their communities when graduating or exiting high school. The Community-Level Team is responsible for appointing a direct service representative from their agency, business, or organization to serve on the School Team.

The School-Level Team comprises direct service providers from each agency, business, or organization represented on the Community-Level Team. These individuals are those that might traditionally be invited to attend a student's IEP meeting. Instead of inviting these individuals to attend every student's IEP meeting, district staff responsible for convening CIRCLES meetings invite them to attend one full-day or half-day meeting per month during the school year to learn from students about their strengths, needs, areas of interest, and postschool goals. Special education teachers prepare students to be actively engaged in these meetings by presenting their strengths, needs, areas of interest, and postschool goals, which promotes student self-determination and advocacy. The School-Level Team allows time for questions to be answered by agency, business, or organization members reducing the amount of time it takes for these individuals to attend every students IEP team meeting. Minutes of each School-Level Team meeting are distributed to members of the School-Level Team and IEP team via the special education teacher.

The IEP team is the final team in the CIRCLES multi-team approach. After the School-Level Team meeting, special education teachers take minutes and any decisions made back to the IEP meeting, and the transition component of the IEP is crafted based on the services agreed upon by the School-Level Team. This process enables the IEP team to write the other components of the IEP with the end goals of the student in mind.

Where has it been implemented?

- 44 schools located in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

How does this practice relate to Common Core Standards?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.6: Production and Distribution of Writing – Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

How does this practice relate to the Common Career Technical Core?

- **Act as a responsible and contributing citizen and employee.** Career-ready individuals understand the obligations and responsibilities of being a member of a community, and they demonstrate this understanding every day through their interactions with others. They are conscientious of the impacts of their decisions on others and the environment around them. They think about the near-term and long-term consequences of their actions and seek to act in ways that contribute to the betterment of their teams, families, community and workplace. They are reliable and consistent in going beyond the minimum expectation and in participating in activities that serve the greater good.
- **Communicate clearly, effectively and with reason.** Career-ready individuals communicate thoughts, ideas and action plans with clarity, whether using written, verbal and/ or visual methods. They communicate in the workplace with clarity and purpose to make maximum use of their own and others' time. They are excellent writers; they master conventions, word choice and organization and use effective tone and presentation skills to articulate ideas. They are skilled at interacting with others; they are active listeners and speak clearly and with purpose. Career-ready individuals think about the audience for their communication and prepare accordingly to ensure the desired outcome.

References used to establish this evidence base:

Flowers, C., Test, D. W., Povenmire-Kirk, T. C., Diegelmann, K. M., Bunch-Crump, K., Kemp-Inman, A., & Goodnight, C. I. (2018). A demonstration model of interagency collaboration for students with disabilities: A multilevel approach. *The Journal of Special Education*, *51*(4), 211–221. https://doi. org/10.1177/0022466917720764

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