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MEMORANDUM

TO: District School Superintendents

FROM: Cheri Pierson Yecke, Ph.D.

DATE: October 28, 2005

SUBJECT: **Students with Disabilities in Transition**

Contact Information:

Name: Janet Adams

Phone: 850/245-0478

Email: janet.adams@fldoe.org

K12 2005-145

Educators throughout Florida are working to ensure that students obtain high levels of achievement and successfully transition to adult life. Implementing quality programs for students with disabilities; providing effective support services; and promoting collaboration among educators, families, and agency representatives are important components in this statewide transition effort.

The purpose of this memo is to raise awareness of transition service requirements for students with disabilities; highlight one of Florida's ongoing collaborative efforts (Access and Opportunities Workgroup); identify sources of support to districts; and solicit your support of Florida's transition initiative.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) addresses transition planning for students with disabilities and requires a summary of academic achievement and functional performance, including recommendations to assist the student in meeting post-secondary goals. IDEA 2004 emphasizes collaboration among educators, agency representatives, and families, at the state and local levels, to assist students with disabilities to reach their desired post-school outcomes.

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES) staff participate in a number of collaborative state level initiatives that focus on improving transition outcomes for students with disabilities. One such initiative is the Access and Opportunities Workgroup coordinated in conjunction with the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council. Workgroup members, representing families, educators, and agencies, are focusing on enhancing opportunities for students with disabilities who are pursuing a special diploma.

For students with disabilities, transition planning focuses on their plans and dreams for the future. The transition Individual Educational Plan (IEP) provides a framework and process that helps prepare students with disabilities for a successful transition. State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.03028, Florida Administrative Code (FAC), Development of Individual Educational Plans for Students with Disabilities,

CHERI PIERSON YECKE, PH.D.
CHANCELLOR, K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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requires transition services to be addressed in a student's IEP, "Beginning by the student's fourteenth birthday or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team ..."

The success of transition planning depends on each member of the Transition IEP team, including the student, family members, educators, and agency representatives. Training, technical assistance, and products are available from BEESS to assist students and their Transition IEP teams in developing and implementing meaningful Transition IEPs.

Two major statewide transition projects funded by BEESS to provide information and support to transition stakeholders include: (1) the Career Development and Transition Project/Transition Center at the University of Florida, including *Project CONNECT*; and, (2) the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) System Project at the University of South Florida. Information about these projects is available from the Transition Center through its website at <http://www.thetransitioncenter.org> or by phone at 352/392-0701, ext. 291, and the TIP Project through its website at <http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu/> or by phone at 813/974-6412.

Many district transition specialists are involved in statewide transition initiatives developing and implementing innovative and effective practices. Thanks to administrative support, promising transition practices are being replicated across Florida.

We would appreciate your continued support of Florida's transition effort, including staff participation in training and technical assistance activities and use of products available through BEESS. Statewide data reflecting increased numbers of students successfully completing school, continuing in post-secondary education, and becoming employed will document the results of our efforts to improve the transition outcomes of Florida's students with disabilities.

For further information or assistance, please contact Dr. Janet Adams, Program Specialist, Department of Education, Transition, by telephone at 850/245-0478 or by electronic mail at Janet.Adams@fldoe.org.

BJL/jam

cc: Exceptional Student Education Administrators
High School Principals