

Trends is published regularly throughout the school year by **Cornerstone Day School** as a service to New Jersey school professionals. Each issue highlights one important topic with practical applications for those working with students with emotional and behavioral problems.

# TRENDS



*"Integrating state of the art psychiatric treatment and outstanding academics within a dynamic school environment."*

*"Despite the challenges that EBD students deal with, the encouraging news is that these students can and do succeed in post-school endeavors...."*

## References:

- Wagner, M., D'Amico, R., Marder, C., Newman, L., & Blackorby, J. (1992). *What happens next? Trends in postschool outcomes of youth with disabilities*. The Second Comprehensive Report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.
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## Improving Post-School Outcomes for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) face a variety of challenges when transitioning to higher education or employment. But despite the challenges that EBD students deal with, the encouraging news is that these students can and do succeed in post-school endeavors. For this to occur, it is imperative students develop supports and receive instruction in strategies, throughout their academic career, not just prior to graduation. The following reflects the challenges these students face as well as school-based strategies to improve post-school outcomes for students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

### Educational Outcomes

Children and youth with EBD often experience academic difficulties. Learning disabilities frequently co-exist with EBD and result in problems mastering academic content. The relationship between academic and social behaviors appears to be reciprocal, with challenges in one precipitating challenges in the other.

### Employment

Data from several longitudinal studies suggest that youth with EBD experience difficulty obtaining employment after graduation. Individuals with EBD are more likely to be employed part-time rather than full-time and earn less than individuals with or without other disabilities.

### Social Relationships

Individuals with EBD have more problems with social adjustment than other groups of individuals with disabilities. They typically lack social support and when they have difficulties, they are more likely to experience negative interactions within their communities. Evidence-based strategies to improve post-school outcomes for students with EBD include:

### Peer Supports

Peer mediated supports (peer mentors or buddies) provide academic and social supports for students with EBD. Peer support programs are relatively easy to develop and require modest investments of staff time and resources. Using peers allows positive behavior to be naturally rewarded, increasing the chances that positive behavior changes will be maintained and used in different situations.

### Positive Behavioral Support

An effective approach to intervention for students with EBD and those at risk for behavioral problems is Positive Behavioral Support (PBS). PBS is based on the premise that schools address the full range of behavioral issues and needs of the student population, including strategies for preventing challenging behavior and intervening when such behavior does occur. Interventions based on PBS also focus on teaching desired replacement behaviors that serve the same functions as undesired behavior.

### Vocational Education and Supports

Vocational education is an effective strategy to improve post-school outcomes for individuals with EBD. School programs that focus on providing students with the skills employers seek, have demonstrated improved employment outcomes for students with EBD. Students with EBD are more likely to finish school and obtain employment when they provided with specific job training and experiences through vocational work placements, job coaching, and other related activities.

### Transition Planning

Student-centered transition plans identify the individual's and family's post-school goals specific to employment and independent living. Areas of focus typically include adult services, supported employment, independent living options, and post-secondary education. Transition planning often includes self-advocacy and how to set realistic personal and professional goals.

### Wrap-Around Planning and Services

Many children and youth with EBD appear to benefit from integrated services designed through wrap-around planning. Wrap-around plans and services match individual and family needs with community agencies and opportunities. Services commonly used by individuals with EBD include counseling; financial education; job training, mentoring, and coaching; supported housing and health services. When providing integrated services to these students before they complete school, appropriate community supports and contacts should be in place before students leave school, to help the person achieve post-school success.