



The Golden Thread

Connecting the IEP to Adult Outcomes



WHAT IT IS

The Golden Thread is the idea that every transition related component of a student's IEP should connect logically to the student's desired adult outcomes. Rather than viewing transition planning as a series of separate forms, or compliance requirements, the Golden Thread creates one continuous story that begins with the student's future goals and connects every decision made by the IEP team.



WHY IT MATTERS

The Golden Thread helps ensure that transition planning is:

1. Student-centered
2. Data-driven
3. Purposeful
4. Individualized
5. Compliant with IDEA and Missouri DESE requirements
6. Focused on meaningful adult outcomes rather than paperwork

When every part of the IEP aligns, educators can clearly explain why each goal, service, and activity has been selected.

BENEFITS

For Students

- Builds skills for life after high school
- Connects learning to future goals
- Increases independence and self-advocacy

For Educators

- Makes transition planning more organized
- Helps create meaningful annual goals and services
- Improves IEP quality and compliance

For Schools

- Strengthens collaboration among IEP team members
- Supports Indicator 13 compliance
- Improves postsecondary outcomes for students

THE GOLDEN THREAD FLOW



6 QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Where does the student want to go?
 - Identify the student's goals for life after high school.
2. What do we know about the student?
 - Use transition assessment data to identify the student's strengths, interests, preferences, and needs.
3. What skills does the student need?
 - Determine the skills the student must learn to reach their future goals.
4. How will we teach those skills?
 - Write annual IEP goals that target the needed skills.
5. What supports and experiences are needed?
 - Plan transition services and activities that help the student practice and develop those skills.
6. Is everything connected?
 - Make sure every part of the IEP supports the student's postsecondary goals and tells one clear story.

REMINDERS

- The Golden Thread is not another form or another compliance requirement.
- It is a way of thinking about transition planning that ensures every instructional decision, every service, and every goal is intentionally connected to helping students achieve successful adult lives.
- When educators consistently use the Golden Thread, transition planning becomes less about completing paperwork and more about preparing students for the futures they envision.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Fact Sheets

[Workshops](#)

[Functional Academics](#)

[Transition to the next environment](#)



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