

The Transitions Curriculum Introduction

What is *The Transitions Curriculum*?

The three books of *The Transitions Curriculum* constitute an organized series of lessons and activities to help each student develop a plan, choose a career and begin a productive life. The over 300 lessons and 600 interactive worksheets include a discussion of career and life skills supported by assessments, development of goals and plans that are then refined and recorded in the student authored **Transitions Portfolio**.

We developed *The Transitions Curriculum* because we were seeing too many disenfranchised and unmotivated students drop out of school. These students were leaving school at a severe disadvantage because they had no plan and no self-determination skills to move ahead on their own. Federal legislation, including the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), requires that all students are prepared for post-school education, employment and independent living when they complete their school program. Our response to that mandate is *The Transitions Curriculum*.

The Transitions Curriculum systematically embeds evidence-based practices into each instructional unit. This feature empowers students to identify, develop and implement goals and plans by themselves, tailored to their individual needs. This approach increases learning for students with a wide range of learning needs. For example, *The Transitions Curriculum* consistently encourages student goal setting and provides monitoring throughout each unit, a technique shown by Lee, Wehmeyer and Shogren (2015) to develop self-determination skills and improved outcomes for students with mild-to-moderate autism.

Who can benefit from *The Transitions Curriculum*?

The Transitions Curriculum is designed for middle and secondary school students who are at risk due to cognitive, learning or behavioral difficulties that have impeded school success. It is designed to address concerns expressed about high dropout rates and lack of preparation for success in the work-world. *The Transitions Curriculum* is effective with:

- Students who have an IEP and have been identified with a disability including mild-to-moderate autism, students with intellectual functioning in the mild-to-moderate range, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, emotional/behavioral disorders and physical disabilities
- Students with a 504 plan who need specific accommodations and supports for success in school.
- Students in general education who have experienced difficulty or failure in school due to poor attendance or poor choices.
- Students who attend alternative education, foster-youth, re-entry or community school programs.
- Students enrolled in adult education, career technical training programs and vocational training programs.

Further, *The Transitions Curriculum* can be used as a comprehensive outline or structure that provides teachers with an overview of the essential features of a transition plan. Not all students are able to perform at the level this curriculum addresses however instructors can utilize the three volumes and the many units as a guide, culling from them the information and activities best suited to their students' unique needs.

How is *The Transitions Curriculum* organized?

The Transitions Curriculum is comprised of three volumes: *Personal Management*, *Career Management* and *Life Management*. Each volume contains four units with an average of 20

skill-building lessons in each unit, totaling approximately 80 complete lessons per volume (see Figure 1). To capture the attention of secondary students who have been exposed to the fast-paced world of entertainment and technology, *The Transitions Curriculum* lessons are filled with highly motivating topics and hands-on activities that are relevant to the real-world orientation of young adults today. All of the lessons provide opportunities to infuse the core curriculum and apply critical thinking skills as students identify and seek solutions to problems they will face as adults.

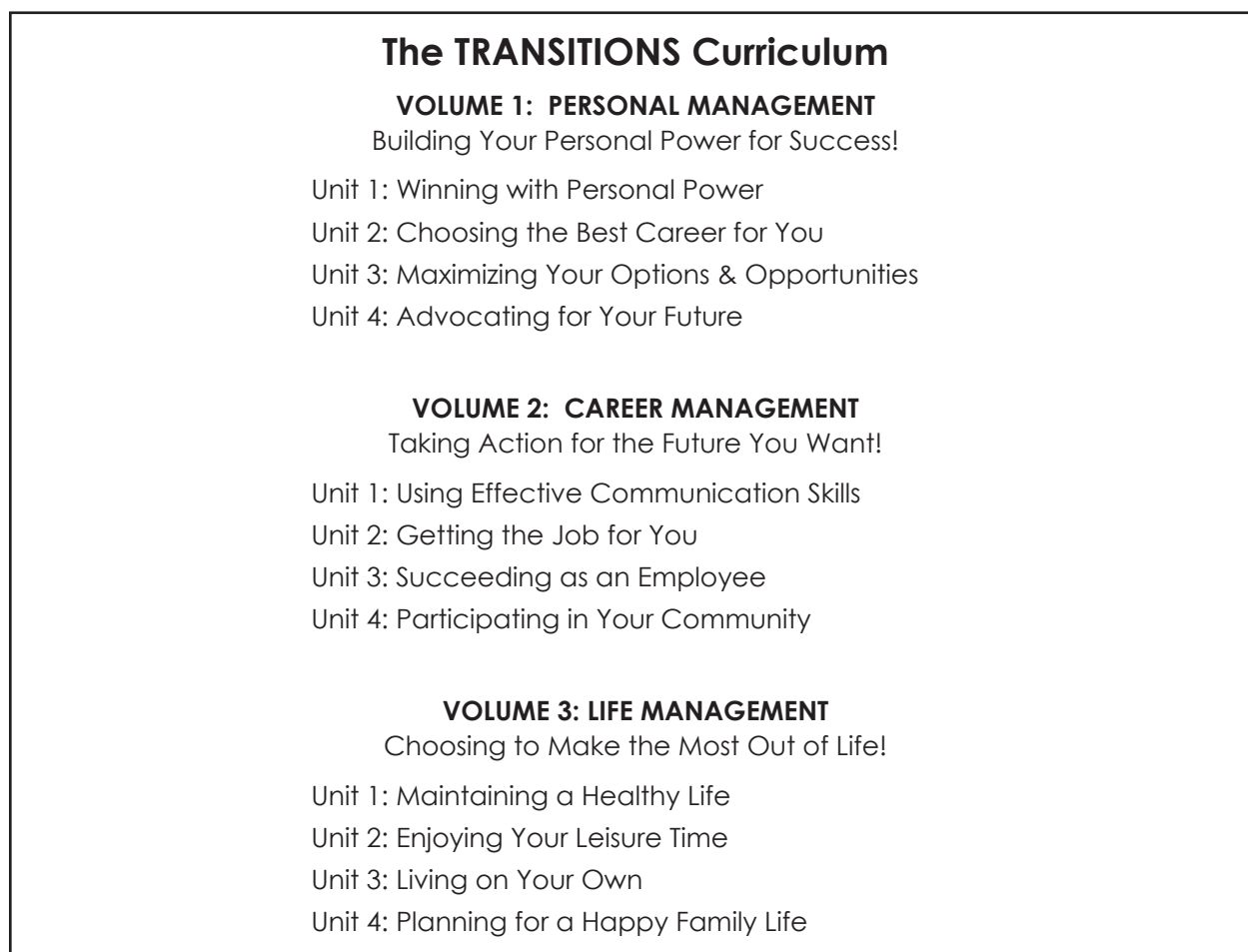


Figure 1

What is the content of *The Transitions Curriculum*?

Each volume in *The Transitions Curriculum* — *Personal Management*, *Career Management* and *Life Management* — focuses on one important transition question. The four units in each book, along with the unit lessons, help students develop answers to these questions through numerous real-world, relevant activities.

Personal Management, Volume 1, poses the question: “Who am I and how can I achieve the personal power I need to be in control of my life?” Through power-building unit lessons and activities, students discover and practice:

- Skills to use in appreciating their own uniqueness
- Strategies for identifying and pursuing a career goal of their choice
- Steps to take in furthering their education
- Skills to use in advocating for themselves

Career Management, Volume 2, asks: “What action can I take to have the future I want?” In this unit, students will learn and apply:

- Methods of effective communication
- Steps to take to enter the career they have chosen
- Actions to take to become valued, successful employees
- Ways to become responsible members of their community

Life Management, Volume 3, helps students answer the question: “How can I make choices that will lead to a happy and successful adult life?” In this unit, students identify and practice the decisions they will make as responsible adults, including:

- How to value and maintain a healthy lifestyle
- Choices that lead to enjoyable and high-quality leisure activities
- Options and opportunities for living independently
- Choices that lead to a satisfying family life

When and how long should *The Transitions Curriculum Series* be taught?

Each volume of *The Transitions Curriculum* is easily adapted to a one-semester course. With an average of 20 lessons per unit or 80 lessons for each book, the 18 weeks of the typical semester is ideal. Thus, in three semesters, students would complete the *Personal Management*, *Career Management* and *Life Management* books.

Although it is possible to extend or condense *The Transitions Curriculum* to conform to other time frames, it is important to maintain the sequence of skill-building lessons as much as possible. Most lessons either prepare students for upcoming lessons or build on skills learned in previous lessons, although some lessons stand alone. *The Transitions Curriculum* will not be as beneficial to students if presented out of sequence. If it is necessary to adhere to a shorter time frame, some of the lessons can be shortened or omitted. If a longer time frame is desired, *The Transitions Curriculum* can be extended by using the connecting activities suggested at the end of the lessons, modifying or repeating some lesson activities or creating new activities. The teacher will be able to use discretion on which lessons to omit or extend and can appropriately integrate them into *The Transitions Curriculum* sequence.

Transition classes are being offered with increasing frequency on secondary school campuses. In some cases, they are offered as electives with normal unit credit for the class. To assign credits for this course, district personnel will want to refer to the Scope and Sequence section. Through careful planning, a teacher also can infuse related *Transitions Curriculum* lessons and activities into a core curriculum, vocational education, elective or specialized class. Infusion can add real-world relevance to the content of the existing course.

What materials are included in *The Transitions Curriculum Series*?

The Transitions Curriculum is composed of three separate volumes, Volume 1, *Personal Management*; Volume 2, *Career Management*; and Volume 3, *Life Management*. Each volume is accompanied by a CD, that contains a complete set of student handouts in the form of black line masters for every lesson in that volume.

Each volume includes an introduction, instructions, scope and sequence of the lessons, list of selected resources and four units of instruction related to critical transition issues. All four units are composed of a series of 17 to 20 transition lessons, complete with instructions, directions and assessments needed to teach the lesson. Each volume has approximately 80 lessons.

As the lessons are taught, there will be handouts from games and activities, worksheets and assessment materials for students to complete alone, with a partner or in small groups. The teacher will assist students in creating a **Transitions Portfolio** by using a binder to hold specific handouts. Students will be guided to add these handouts to their **Transitions Portfolio** throughout the assessment lessons. Select handouts will include growth goals, progress charts, journal pages and assessment checklists.