

Best Practices: CTE Teachers' Role in Transition ARD Meetings

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Introduction

To be effective instructors, CTE teachers must find ways to individualize instruction and assessment for their students with special needs. A majority of these students in today's CTE classrooms are those with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) – 25 percent on average. Given this scenario, the best opportunity a teacher has of getting to know the student's background and designing an instructional program for him or her is by attending their Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings. In Texas, CTE teachers' attendance at ARD meetings is also mandated by the Commissioners' Rules:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter075/ch75bb.html>

The objectives of this module, therefore, are to help CTE teachers get familiar with the ARD process, learn about the roles and responsibilities of ARD members, and get acquainted with best practice strategies to effectively participate in the process themselves.

Participation

A best practice ARD consists of several members, including the CTE teacher. In addition to the parent/guardian (if the student is younger than 18) and the student, the special education teacher, general education teacher, principal/administrator, diagnostician, and other invited guests attend the meeting. Best practice also implies that those professionals who are directly involved with the student participate in the ARD meetings. We advise any educator who will work with the student to attend the ARD meeting if at all possible. However, letter

of the law can be accomplished as long as the professionals in attendance carry the appropriate title. Most ARD meetings are facilitated or chaired by a diagnostician or an administrator. Transition plans for students are likely to include CTE courses that will set the students up for post-secondary success. Therefore, we reiterate that the special education teacher, general education teacher, parents, and student collaborate with the CTE teacher prior to the transition ARD meeting to look for a match between the student's profile and the program offering.

Students can participate in their own ARD meetings at any time during their school career. In elementary school, participation will enable the student to feel that she is part of the group that is working for her best interest. In middle or junior high, the student can discuss his progress and have input into choosing courses. Participating in high school-level ARD meetings will enable the student to hone her self-advocacy skills and aid the team in writing post-secondary/transition goals.

Depending on the school district, an ARD meeting's agenda is facilitated by the diagnostician and/or the principal. While it is necessary for the diagnostician or administrator to facilitate or lead the team through the ARD agenda, best practice would be to ensure that when appropriate, the student leads the meeting. In our mock ARD example, we have the student leading the meeting, the diagnostician facilitating the ARD agenda, and the principal presiding over the procedures.

Participants' Roles and Responsibilities

Diagnostician: The diagnostician's responsibility in the ARD meeting is to be able to explain the eligibility for a student on the basis of assessment results and to assist the committee in developing an appropriate educational plan for the child. Documents that the diagnostician maintains include past ARD packets, testing information, medical information, and other special education information.

Principal: The principal or a representative of the administration attends the ARD meetings to stay informed of the student's needs, preside over the proceedings, make sure due process is adhered to, and address any concerns the parents or guardians may have. The principal also informs the ARD committee if the required facilities or services are available at an alternate campus or setting.

To prepare for the meeting, the principal reviews student documents; looks over progress reports; and examines attendance reports, TAKS results, and computerized IEPs.

Special Education Teacher: Special education teachers bring documentation and reports on the progress of the student over the past year in terms of their IEP goals and objectives. In addition, the teacher puts forth suggestions for new goals and objectives and informs the committee about the student's functional and academic skills. The teacher can share a number of pertinent documents with the committee including updated IEP goals and objectives from the previous year; draft annual goals and objectives for the current year; the student's graduation plan, transcript, attendance records, and discipline referral records; student/ teacher/parent interview; and work samples. As an added measure, the special education teacher or counselor can interview the parent and get his or her perspective on the student's transition plans. The information from this interview can then be reported at the ARD meeting.

General Education Teacher: The main responsibilities of a general education teacher at an ARD meeting are to report on the student's current level of functioning, support the special education teacher and the CTE teacher, recommend accommodations, and answer questions regarding behavior or discipline issues. Prior to the meeting, the teacher collects grade sheets, behavioral reports, and discusses with the special education teacher any concerns regarding discipline or academic issues.

CTE Teacher: CTE teachers' responsibilities are usually two-fold. First, for students interested in their course, they will need to attend the ARD meetings and share information about their course and its requirements. Secondly, CTE teachers or their representatives must attend the ARD committee meeting for students who are currently enrolled in their classrooms. They will report on the student's performance, whether the suggested accommodations are working, and share any concerns that may need to be addressed by the ARD committee. A CTE teacher can also attend the meeting to represent a colleague. In such cases, it is important for him or her to meet with the colleague prior to the meeting and collect all pertinent information regarding the student so reporting and advocating is accurate.

As mentioned before, the Commissioner's Rules in Texas mandate that CTE teachers or their representatives participate in the ARD meetings – not just for initial placement but also for continued placement in their classes. In our example, the CTE teacher attended the ARD meeting because that student was going to be placed in her class the following academic year. In the case of continued placement, the following are the responsibilities of CTE teachers.

1. Monitor achievement of IEP goals.
2. Maintain progress reports on achievement of IEP objectives.
3. Maintain reports on present levels of performance (PLOPs).
4. Record the coordinated set of activities implemented such that students may progress toward their post-secondary plans (e.g., job shadowing, mock interviews, co-op experiences, college visits, etc.).
5. Collaborate with the special education representative (or tracking teacher/case manager), general education teacher, parents, and other pertinent agencies to ensure continued success of the students.
6. When ARD meetings are scheduled, make available to the committee all documents relevant to your student, including the evaluation data, progress reports, PLOPs, and your suggestions for alternative or additional accommodations/modifications, coursework, IEP goals, and objectives.
7. Also, you need to be aware of your responsibility to call an ARD meeting when the student's placement seems to be not appropriate or the suggested accommodations and modifications are not contributing to that student's success.

Important ARD Terminology

ARD Committee (Admission, Review, and Dismissal):

In Texas, this is the name for the group made up of a student's parents and school staff who meet at least annually to decide whether or not the student has an eligible disability and what special education and related services will be provided. Its major responsibility is the development of the IEP for students receiving special education.

Accommodations: Tools and procedures that provide equal access to instruction and assessment for students with disabilities. Designed to "level the playing field" for students with disabilities, accommodations are generally grouped into the following categories

- Presentation (e.g., repeat directions, read aloud, use of larger bubbles on answer sheets, etc.)
- Response (e.g., mark answers in book, use reference aids, point, use of computer, etc.)
- Timing/Scheduling (e.g., extended time, frequent breaks, etc.)
- Setting (e.g., study carrel, special lighting, separate room, etc.).

Disability Categories: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) disability categories include autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment (e.g., asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia), specific learning disability, (e.g., Perceptual Disabilities, Brain Injury, Minimal Brain Dysfunction, Dyslexia, Developmental Aphasia), speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment (including blindness), and developmental delay.

Extended School Year Services (ESY): An individualized instructional program for eligible students with disabilities that is provided beyond the regular school year. The need for ESY services must be determined on an individual basis by the ARD committee based on the student's retention and recoupment of academic skills.

Individualized Education Program/Plan (IEP): A written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised according to the requirements of IDEA.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are to be educated with children who are not disabled.

Present Levels of Performance (PLOPs): Description of what skills the student is able to demonstrate in all academic areas. This description addresses specific competencies in developmental, behavioral, and/or academic skills.

Transition Services: A coordinated set of activities that:

- improves the academic and functional skills of the student to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities such as post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;
- is based on the individual student's needs, taking into account his or her strengths, preferences, and interests; and
- includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives and, when appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

ARD Agenda

Stage 1: ARD members introduce themselves.

Stage 2: The diagnostician explains the purpose of the meeting and the agenda for the day. At a transition ARD meeting, the student can be asked to talk about their interests and career goals.

Stage 3: The diagnostician and the other ARD members will review evaluation records and report on any new assessment results that they may have obtained. At this stage, the teachers can also report on transition-related information collected through the formal and informal assessments they administered to the student.

Stage 4: At this stage of the meeting, the diagnostician reveals the diagnosis and qualifying factors that allow the student to receive special education services. These qualifying factors typically include any of the 13 IDEA-qualifying categories.

Stage 5: Parents or guardians state their concerns and members address them.

Stage 6: The student's present levels of performance are reported on by both the special education and general education teachers. PLOPs typically include physical, behavioral or discipline, health or medical, vocational, academic, communication and language abilities, as well as assistive technology needs.

Stage 7: In this portion of the meeting, the ARD or IEP committee reviews the previous goals and progress; new IEP goals are developed based on the student's needs, interests, and preferences. The special education teacher, the general education teacher, and the CTE teacher review previous IEPs and progress; they also discuss proposed IEPs, proposed modifications and accommodations, and progress reporting. The principal oversees this process by monitoring the progress reports and keeping track of the extent to which the student's needs are being met.

- To aid in this process, all education personnel should monitor the student's progress on the IEP goals and objectives, observe which accommodations and curriculum modifications are working, and collaborate as much as possible with each other to compare notes.
- Upon review, if the teachers consider CTE as a good option for their student's high school courses, the concerned CTE teacher should be contacted and invited to the ARD meeting.

Stage 8: A transition ARD meeting is the most important stage for the CTE teacher. In this stage, the student's transition goals are addressed and matched to proposed coursework. The CTE teacher at this stage can use various

tools such as a Basic Skills Inventory, Comprehensive Skills Inventory, Program Inventory (download examples at <http://ctsp.tamu.edu/videos/videos08/toolbox/index.php>), PowerPoint presentations, videos, photos, etc. to describe their course to the ARD committee. Based on the presented information, the ARD committee can confirm that the activities within the CTE course will enable the student to meet their post-secondary/transition goal.

Other issues typically discussed when assessing transition may include related services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, transportation, and skills such as independent living as well as community living.

Stage 9: Students served under Special Education have the option to continue their high school education until the age of 21. The ARD committee will discuss an expected date for graduation and establish or review the student's requirements for graduation.

Stage 10: Texas requires that additional services for students with Autism or Visual Impairments need to be discussed and addressed at this stage.

Stage 11: Any modifications and/or accommodations to address student needs are discussed and recorded.

Stage 12: The student's state and district assessment results from the current school year will be discussed. The ARD committee will then decide what state and district assessments are appropriate for the following school year and will decide how the student will be evaluated.

Stage 13: The ARD committee will determine if the student needs ESY services.

Stage 14: The ARD committee will discuss services that have been tried, considered, and provided in the past and whether these services have met the student's educational needs. If the committee decides that any of the instructional services have been unsuccessful in meeting the student's needs, the committee must discuss why, and it must be recorded in the minutes. If the student has been receiving or will be receiving services outside of the regular educational setting, the committee will discuss the reasons why this is necessary. In Texas, TEA provides for Career and Technical Education for the Disabled (CTED) classes. Any CTE course may be taught as a CTED course. Students with disabilities in grades 7 through 12 may be served in these courses. CTED classes must be self-contained classrooms for special education students only. Students earn contact hours. Students are placed in CTED classes when the ARD committee decides that the regular CTE classes are not suitable for the student.

Stage 15: In this section, the committee determines what services to provide the student. The committee reviews student need based on information gathered thus far. The committee has a responsibility to consider assessment data, transitional goals, present levels of performance, and any other information pertinent to the student's particular needs. The members are responsible for using that data to develop a suitable education plan and determine services and supports to sustain that plan. Determinations include:

- *Classes/Where Instruction Will Be Provided:* When deciding instructional settings, the committee must always consider the general education (including CTE) setting first, and determination of instructional setting must be made using the Least Restrictive Environment stipulation of IDEA.
- *Coordination between Regular and Special Education:* Discussion of coordination protocol between instructional personnel (i.e., regular education teacher, CTE teacher, and special education teacher) will be discussed, and the committee determines responsible parties related to delivery of instructions, implementation of modifications, how grades will be assigned, etc. related to any specific needs of the student.
- *Grading:* The committee will establish a procedure for how progress grades will be determined and documented.
- *Related Services:* Based on student need, the committee will assign the amount of time and the place allocated for any related service proposed. Related services are any additional services that the committee deems necessary to support students so they can benefit from their education. Related services include occupational and physical therapy, orientation and mobility services, assistive technology, and more. These services provided by the schools are for educational benefit and do not address the student's medical needs.
- *Transportation Needs:* If the student's needs, due to their disability, prohibit their use of the school's general bussing system, the committee will discuss and determine appropriate alternative transportation services.
- *Removal from Home Campus:* If the student will not be receiving their educational instruction on the campus that they would attend if they did not have a disability, the committee will discuss the reasoning, and those reasons will be documented.

- *Determine Placement:* The committee is responsible for determining placement based on the Least Restrictive Environment stipulations in IDEA. The ARD committee must specify the appropriate instructional arrangement/setting based on the student's individual needs and IEP.
- *Date of Services:* The dates for implementation and completion of services is proposed and documented.

Stage 16: If the student is going to receive any services outside the regular educational setting, the committee will discuss and state what effects, if any, it will have on the student. The ARD reflects on areas related to opportunities for participation in the same activities as their non-disabled peers; any potential harmful effects related to stigmatization, isolation from peers, decreased self esteem, lack of opportunity for social interaction, etc. must be discussed and noted. The student's educational need must outweigh the effects of removal from the general education or CTE classroom.

Stage 17: In the final section of the ARD agenda, the committee members sign the signature page of the ARD document and certify on the document whether they agree or disagree with the student's proposed plan.

FAQs

Who can I ask to find out who the diagnostician is for my campus?

Ask the school counselor or the campus principal and/or the student's special education representative.

What can I do if I believe a student with special needs has been inappropriately placed in my class? Who can I talk to about the student's progress or lack of progress in my class?

1. First, look for the ARD packet and the signature page within that packet. This page will inform you about who attended the ARD, represented CTE, and who the student's representatives are.
2. Next, speak with the student's special education representative to determine why your class was recommended as an appropriate course of study.
3. In addition, seek assistance from the special education representative (sometimes referred to as the tracking teacher or case manager). This teacher can assist you with the development of accommodations/modifications that were recommended by the ARD.
4. If, despite continued collaboration and documentation of efforts, at the end of six weeks the student is not making satisfactory progress, call an ARD based on your district's policies.

Where can I find information on the student's present levels of performance (PLOPs)?

If upon contacting the CTE representative you do not receive all pertinent documents, you can locate this document in the student's ARD packet. These packets are contained within the district's original special education folder; often a copy is retained by the student's special education teacher.

Where can I find information about what modifications or accommodations I am supposed to implement for a student?

If a student is going to be placed in your classroom, you should receive a copy of their accommodations/modifications sheet and an IEP if it is appropriate. Also, contact the special education teacher for additional information, and continue collaboration over the year to help ensure the student's progress.