

The Woodstock Academy
STRIVE Transitional Program
Guide



Hello and welcome to the STRIVE Transition program!

We are excited to begin a year of growth, learning, and meaningful experiences within the Transition Program. Whether you are returning or joining us for the first time, we look forward to working in partnership with you to support your young adult's continued development and success.

Each year, we will continue to prioritize building transition skills and community-based instructional opportunities as a core part of our program. Our young adults will engage in real-world learning experiences that build independence, strengthen social skills, and connect learning to transition goals. We are also proud to maintain our partnerships with local organizations and businesses, which provide valuable opportunities for our students to build social skills, academic skills, functional skills and employability skills in authentic settings. These partnerships are foundational to the community-based learning opportunities we can provide – and students are learning to manage time, advocate, and coordinate to be able to fully participate.

Additionally, in the spirit of giving back, our students will continue to take part in philanthropic endeavors that foster empathy, purpose, and connection to the broader community. These experiences are an important part of our programming which aims to support the development of engaged and responsible citizens. Our yearly philanthropic endeavors are developed by our young adults as they identify needs in their community that they are driven to address and support.

Be on the lookout for our monthly newsletters to everyone informed of activities, events and opportunities within our program. We are always here to answer questions and support you as these are exciting times! We are grateful for your trust, support and collaboration. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or ideas.

In partnership,

(Add signature)

Shannon VanderSwaagh
Director of Student Support Services

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Introduction

The Woodstock Academy STRIVE Transitional Program Guide outlines the key elements of transition planning within The Academy's student services system and in compliance with the state of Connecticut regulations. It is intended to support all stakeholders involved in preparing identified students for a successful transition from high school to postsecondary life, including both college and career readiness. This document includes an overview of the STRIVE (Structured Teaching Reinforcing Individualized Varied Experiences) transition planning, its framework and policies, pathways for autonomy, and other resources to best prepare families for school exit and postsecondary life. The Woodstock Academy is committed to working collaboratively with students, parents/guardians, educators, and the larger community to create positive experiences that improve student achievement.

Our Mission

The Student Services Department supports students with diverse learning needs, ensuring all students achieve their highest potential and are prepared for lifelong learning through individualized academic, social, and emotional support.

Overview

The Woodstock Academy Student Services department provides a spectrum of services for qualifying students. This includes a program specifically designed for students 18-22 who remain eligible for educational services beyond grade 12. The Woodstock Academy STRIVE (Structured Teaching Reinforcing Individualized Varied Experiences) Secondary Transition blends academic instruction with meaningful, real-world community experiences as they transition to adulthood. Through a collaborative, student-centered approach, a specialized team, which includes a Transition Coordinator, social worker, psychologist, board certified behavior analyst, speech-language pathologist, and job coaches, partners with students, families, and community organizations to design individualized plans that build on each student's strengths and promote independence. Using person-centered planning and ongoing transition assessments, students identify their goals while receiving targeted support in areas such as daily living, employment, and continued learning. The program offers a wide range of opportunities, including functional academics, leadership development, social skill building, community-based instruction, and customized employment experiences through internships that may lead to paid work. With structured vocational coaching that gradually fades as independence increases, students develop workplace readiness, interview skills, and professional competencies. STRIVE also emphasizes community engagement through service, recreation, and philanthropic efforts, fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility. Each student builds a comprehensive transition portfolio, a resume, recommendations, and variety of self-advocacy tools, to support future success, while access to therapeutic and consultative services ensures that social-emotional and health needs are addressed in coordination with community providers.

Eligibility Criteria

Students within the greater community may participate in the 18–22 Transition Program if they:

- Have an active Individualized Education Program (IEP);
- Have not earned a regular high school diploma;

- Are determined by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) to need continued
- transition services; and
- Are under the age of 22 and have not exceeded the age of eligibility for Special Education.

CT CORE Skills Resource Chart

The Connecticut State Department of Education has released the updated CT CORE Transition Skills Resource Chart, a comprehensive tool designed to support students with disabilities as they prepare for life after high school. This resource brings together state and national guidance, transition assessments, instructional materials, and sample IEP goals across 16 essential transition skills areas, including self-advocacy, employment, postsecondary education, daily living, community involvement, social-emotional skills, and more.

Each skill area includes three sections:

- Alignment to the Guideposts for Success and Level Up (Pre-ETS) services
- A curated list of assessments, progress-monitoring tools, and practical resources for students, families, educators, and VR professionals
- Sample IEP goals, objectives, and transition activities aligned with ELA College & Career Readiness Anchor Standards

Access the "[CT CORE Transition Skills Resource Chart](#)."

Preparing for Age 18: A Family Guide for Students with Disabilities

Turning 18 is an exciting milestone! It also brings important legal and service changes. In Connecticut, when a student turns 18, they are considered a legal adult. This means certain rights and responsibilities transfer from parents/guardians to the student. Families may wish to begin planning 1–2 years before age 18 to ensure a smooth transition into adulthood.

At age 18, educational rights transfer from the parent/guardian to the student under federal special education law (IDEA). Families may wish to consider an Educational Representative which allows a parent or other trusted adult to continue participating in special education decisions if the student needs support understanding their educational program.

Once a student turns 18, medical providers must receive permission to share information with parents. Families may consider a Health Care Proxy / Medical Power of Attorney which allows a trusted adult to assist with medical decisions if the student requests support, and a HIPAA Release Form which allows doctors to share medical information with parents or caregivers.

Many young adults with disabilities qualify for financial supports after turning 18. To plan for financial supports, Families may want to explore: Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a monthly income support through Social Security, Medicaid / Husky Health medical insurance coverage, and ABLE Accounts which are tax-advantaged savings accounts for individuals with disabilities

Applying for benefits early can help ensure services are available after graduation.

Some families consider conservatorship through the Connecticut Probate Court if their child needs assistance making important decisions about medical care, personal safety and living arrangements, and financial matters. The court determines whether conservatorship is necessary and will consider the least restrictive option to support independence whenever possible. Because the process may take time, families often begin learning about conservatorship before their child turns 18.

Students who receive special education services may also be eligible for adult services.

Families may want to explore Department of Developmental Services (DDS, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), and Community employment and transition programs. Applications can take time, so early planning is helpful.

Conservatorship

When a student approaches age 18, parents often don't realize that the legal landscape changes quickly. In Connecticut, once a person turns 18, they are legally considered an adult, which means parents no longer automatically have the authority to make medical, financial, or educational decisions, even if the student has significant disabilities. Because of that, families sometimes consider conservatorship or other decision-making supports.

Conservatorship is a legal arrangement in which the Probate Court appoints another adult (often a parent or guardian) to help make decisions for someone who is unable to manage certain aspects of their life due to a disability or medical condition. The person receiving help is called the "respondent." The person appointed to help is the "conservator." Conservatorship can be limited (only certain decisions) or plenary/full (all decisions), depending on the person's needs.

There are two types of conservatorships. Some individuals may need both, while others may only need one.

1. Conservator of the Person (Medical / Personal Decisions)

This status allows someone to help make decisions about: medical care and treatment, mental health treatment, living arrangements, personal safety and care, educational or service planning, and accessing support services. This conservatorship is the type most commonly pursued for young adults with developmental disabilities.

2. Conservator of the Estate (Financial Decisions)

This status allows someone to manage money or bank accounts, government benefits, contracts or leases, paying bills, financial decisions and assets.

Some individuals may need both, while others may only need one.

Connecticut courts must consider the least restrictive option. That means conservatorship is not automatic, courts must try to preserve as much independence as possible and sometimes limited conservatorship is used instead of full control.

The Conservatorship process goes through the Connecticut Probate Court. A parent, or other interested adult, files an application for conservatorship with the local probate court where the student lives. Forms are available through the Connecticut Probate Court system.

Conservatorship is not the only option. Some families choose less restrictive supports. These options maintain more independence if the student can still participate in decisions. Educational Representative (IDEA) allows a parent to continue participating in special education decisions. Health Care Proxy / Medical Power of Attorney allows the student to designate someone to help with medical decisions. Financial Power of Attorney gives another person the authority to manage financial affairs. Supported Decision-Making agreements are legal or informal agreements that allow an individual with a disability to make his/her own decisions with help for trusted supporters rather than giving the decision-making authority away.

The Goals of Transition Planning

Many students starting high school share concerns with increased academic workload, social stressors, and acclimating to a new environment. This pivotal period also marks the beginning of conversations focused on postsecondary options. Transition planning and programming starts with regular conversations between students and educators about navigating high school, identifying experiences available to them, finding meaningful experiences, and engaging in various extracurricular activities. It also includes discussion of self-advocacy and how strengths and interests connect to post-school options. is intended to cultivate skills, experiences, and personal growth. Key focus areas include independent living skills, social and interpersonal skills, and personal growth and self-advocacy skills. This skill development is part of the process to foster vocational development, career development, and transition planning with support.

During the high school years, more formalized transition planning and services begin. The critical components of postsecondary planning include:

- Preparing for graduation by pursuing the appropriate diploma and/or credential options;
- Having ongoing, meaningful conversations about a student's hopes and plans for life after high school;
- Creating and maintaining a transition portfolio;
- Creating an exit summary prior to the student's exit from high school; and
- Creating a career plan and an employability profile.

Curriculum and experiences that promote independent living skills have students practice budgeting and money management, meal planning, cooking, and grocery shopping, personal hygiene and health management, and navigating both personal and public transit transportation. Throughout all the learning opportunities, students continue to improve their social and interpersonal skills. Students work on building relationships, understanding boundaries, and healthy relationships. They practice conflict resolution and emotional regulation. Their ongoing participation in community or social groups enhance their communication skills and their networking abilities. Taking an active role in their personal growth is key. It helps students to foster skills in a variety of areas: self-advocacy, goal setting and decision-making, self-awareness and confidence building, and understanding personal rights and advocating for needs. Students play an active role in determining the curriculum and experiences of the program. This individualization allows student to explore hobbies, interests, and personal passions.

Transition planning goals also include vocational development, career development, and postsecondary education. Vocational development focuses on the cultivation of job readiness skills that include resume building, interviewing, workplace etiquette. As determined by individualize interest, vocational training and job

certifications can be explored in areas such as trade skills, technology, and/or healthcare to name a few. Career development includes opportunities for vocational experiences, internships or job placements to gain hands-on experience as well as ensuring that students fully understand understanding workplace rights and responsibilities. Some students may wish to explore postsecondary education. STRIVE programming will provide assistance with developing a post-secondary pathway: vocational placement, college preparation and application guidance, academic skills development such as time management, study habits, and organization. Building self-advocacy skills in educational setting is also an area of focus so students work to fully understand their disabilities, their educational rights, and to navigate accommodations for these disabilities as appropriate.

Transition Programming: Guiding Instructional Principles

The STRIVE transitional program uses a student-centered approach to prepare individuals for independent adult living by integrating instruction across essential life domains. Students build skills in community engagement, household management, and physical health while developing independence in daily routines and personal well-being. The program also emphasizes financial literacy and vocational development, helping students explore careers, gain job readiness skills, and sustain employment. Underlying all areas is a strong focus on social-emotional growth, including self-awareness, communication, and relationship skills. Together, these components create a practical, real-world learning experience that supports each student's transition to adulthood.

The following table outlines the skills, purpose, and learning opportunities designed to bring growth and success to the STRIVE students:

Skill Area	Purpose	Learning Opportunities
Community Engagement	To engage in safe navigation of the community, apply functional math and reading skills, social communication skills and self-advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedules and Time Management • Community Involvement • Travel & Transport • Consumer Skills
Household Skills	To increase independence in home environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food prep and cooking • Laundry & clothing • Household chores • Independent Living
Physical Health	Understanding how to take ownership of their own health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hygiene • Medical Health • Nutrition & Exercise • Self-actualization
Financial Awareness & Management	To learn about financial responsibility, financial independence and earning money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money Math • Community financial resources • Budgeting • Making purchases • Banking & Credit

Vocational Skills	Increasing success in finding a career path and maintaining employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-vocational • Career Exploration • Applying • Starting and maintaining employment • Reflection and feedback
Social- Emotional	Building competencies to be positive and contributive to their community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness • Disability awareness • Self-management • Social Communication • Relationship Skills

STRIVE Program Framework

The Woodstock Academy STRIVE (Structured Teaching Reinforcing Individualized Varied Experiences) Program serves eligible students (grades 9-12 & Post Grad) by providing special education and related services as determined by the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). STRIVE is designed to provide a nurturing environment, fostering student-centered, strengths-based programming to impact learning at school and transitioning to all aspects of daily life.

The STRIVE program has eight essential elements for success:

- Functional assessment that identifies student strengths and skill deficits;
- Functional curriculum that meets the student's individual needs;
- Core curriculum standards, implemented with effective modifications and accommodations, to align with functional assessment measures;
- Transitional & vocational readiness skills embedded throughout the student's programming;
- Comprehensive systems that coordinate special education and social emotional learning (SEL) treatment services;
- Appropriate staff, resources, and procedural protection for students with disabilities as required under the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- Supportive climate in which students feel welcome, safe, and valued; and,
- Parent/guardian engagement and resource sharing.

STRIVE offers multi-tiered programming:

- *Emerging*: First 2 years of STRIVE (approx. Grade 9 & 10)
- *Developing*: Second 2 years of STRIVE (approx. Grade 11 & 12)
- *Pathways to Autonomy*: Postgraduate (12+)

Throughout the school year, STRIVE students develop Core Competencies as learners, in vocational preparedness, and in social-emotional readiness.

As learners, students will:

- independently manage and monitor their responsibilities and tasks.
- identify and initiate conversations with adults and peers to advocate for their accommodations and needs.
- play an active role in preparing for transitional needs, self-advocacy, self-disclosure, and post-secondary planning.
- actively seek and use feedback to improve performance.
- initiate conversations with adults, peers, staff, community members and programmatic liaisons to ensure post-secondary goals for education are complete.
- develop, reflect, and revise personal goals using evidence and feedback.
- update and seek feedback/input on Present Level of Performance (PLOP) page on IEP.
- understand their rights and responsibilities under disability legislation (IDEA/504/ADA).

In vocational preparedness, students will:

- have opportunities to explore employment/volunteer in the community
- have proficient understanding of independent living skills
- review, reflect, and revise their 2-year plan for vocational needs, community-based
 - instructional needs, and work-based experiences.
- attend work-based learning experiences with coordinator contact and scheduled observations.
- engage in community-based instruction with minimal support.
- develop and revise vocational goals, identifying opportunities within the school and larger community to facilitate success.
- facilitate meetings, reporting on goals and progress, and advocating for individualized programmatic needs.
- demonstrate skills to independently identify relevant and important access community resources.
- use skills for data collection, analysis, and reflection to facilitate experiences.
- identify community resources and support networks; apply for and/or receive services related to vocational goals.

In social-emotional readiness, students will:

- engage in peer mentoring opportunities to support the growth and development of peers.
- engage in individual and small group instructional opportunities throughout the year, with designated leadership responsibilities.
- demonstrate leadership in sharing opportunities for technology use to mentor and enhance social/emotional capacities and influences.
- demonstrate leadership skills to affect positive change (program, community) by guiding or directing others, modeling, and influencing the behavior and opinions of others.
- will initiate, demonstrate, and accept responsibility for independence and advocacy.
- will initiate and demonstrate appropriate social interactions to engage with others and develop meaningful relationships.
- independently advocate for their needs, initiate and respond to relevant information-sharing threads between teachers, staff, related service providers, and/or home.

Student-Centered Plan (18–22 Transition Program)

The Student-Centered Plan is a collaborative planning process that places the student's voice, preferences, strengths, and future aspirations at the center of transition programming. Developed in partnership with the student, family, school staff, and community agencies, the plan serves as a personalized roadmap for adulthood.

Rather than focusing solely on educational services, the Student-Centered Plan identifies the student's long-term vision for employment, education and training, independent living, community participation, health and wellness, executive functioning, and self-advocacy. It outlines meaningful goals, action steps, community experiences, and coordinated supports that promote increasing independence while aligning with the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) transition goals.

The plan is reviewed and updated regularly as students develop new skills, explore career pathways, and refine their goals. Throughout the process, students are encouraged to actively participate in decision-making, reflect on their progress, advocate for their needs, and assume increasing responsibility for planning their own future.

STRIVE Social Skills & Emotional Resiliency Groups

Students' ability to negotiate a variety of social settings serves as a predictor of future success. Students require intentional opportunities for students to learn social, emotional and resiliency skills. Social skills, interpersonal skills and emotional resiliency skills are required to be active learners and positive community members. These groups will be facilitated by the following STRIVE team members: a Board-Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA), a special education teacher, a social worker, a school psychologist, and/or a speech & language pathologist.

The goal of groups is threefold: to increase self-awareness, self-esteem, and interpersonal effectiveness by strengthening communication skills through conversing and socially interacting with classmates; to provide opportunities in a small group environment to practice skills, take risks, and receive feedback in a safe environment; and to accept the wonderful and the terrible, identify what really matters to us and what we want our life to be about, and move toward these goals and values.

Participation in groups promotes social and emotional well-being through a systematic instructional approach. It fuses together three evidence-based practices of intervention (Accept, Identify, Move) for students to develop a “recipe” of instructional practices for social and emotional skills that may be lagging. Successful practice in these two groups will help students to meet the following objectives:

Provide students with a voice in the ability to share stories and circumstances;

- Instruct on Stress Tolerance skills and emotional pliancy;
- Increase their ability to connect the “if” to the “then” (social, academic, and interpersonal);
- Develop social awareness (physical affect, face, intent v. impact, nonverbal v. verbal);
- Develop perspective taking & empathy;
- Increase psychological flexibility; and,
- Provide an inclusive environment with like and unlike peers.

The following curriculum resources will be utilized to guide and inform effectiveness in social skills and emotional resiliency groups.

Primary:

- The *PEERS® Curriculum for School-Based Professionals*, developed by Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson at UCLA, is one of the most well-researched social skills curricula available for adolescents. It is a structured evidence-based program designed to improve social competence and peer relationships for teens with autism spectrum disorder and other students with social communication challenges.
- *AIM (Accept, Identify, Move)*, Mark R. Dixon & Dana Paliliunas &
- *Social Thinking*, Michelle Garcia Winner

Secondary Sources:

- *Dialectical Behavior Therapy in Schools*, Marsha M. Lineham
- *The Curriculum for School-Based Professionals: Social Skills Training for Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder 1st Edition*, [Elizabeth A. Laugeson](#)
- *Executive Skills in Children & Adolescents*, Peg Dawson & Richard Guare PEERS

Pathways to Autonomy

Building on national research-based resources, The STRIVE program provides a structured, time-limited, and person-centered service designed to support individuals in exploring and preparing for competitive employment or post-secondary schooling. Integrated with daily living skills, time management, travel training and financial literacy, the program provides comprehensive exposure to the world of work through individualized career planning, interest and skill assessments, community-based work experiences, and targeted job-readiness training, while also identifying and addressing barriers to employment and job retention.

Through a combination of personalized planning and practical skill development, identify their vocational strengths and interests while building the competencies needed for workplace and college success. The process culminates in a detailed life plan that outlines actionable recommendations for next steps, including options for job development, referral to supported employment programs, continued skill-building through additional services to support long-term employment success, and/or post-secondary schooling options. Specific STRIVE pathway experiences include: work-based learning at local businesses (Foskett's Equipment, Inn at Woodstock Hill, Woodstock Recreation Department, Hale YMCA, WPS Elementary and Middle School, Spirit Halloween, Main Street Gelato, Nikki's Dog House, Killingly Pubic Library, Camp Woodstock, Westview Childcare, and Chace Building Supply), as well as on campus vocational experiences: The Cinamon Tree Café, Athletic Office Assistant, Bright Desk, and Philanthropic programing.

Community-Based Instruction provides structured, supervised community service and/or recreation activities. These activities are geared toward putting daily living skills into practice, developing peer relationships, modeling appropriate behaviors in a variety of settings, and fostering a sense of community belonging. Community Work-Based Learning includes weekly community trips, and volunteering at TEEG and the YMCA Camp Woodstock. Collaborative planning and customized employment plans highlighting the employer, program, and student responsibilities for each work internship. Within this agreement, the training objectives, as well as student targeted skills, are defined. Job development skills are provided to help students obtain competitive employment, based on their interests and strengths before they leave the program at age 22. The staff

assists the students in developing a resumé and interview skills. The level of job coach support provided will depend upon the student's needs and the natural supports available at the job site. The level of support can range

and is designed to fade gradually over time. Job coaching includes data collection on skills, goals, and outcomes.

Vocational Instruction starts with partnerships with local businesses to develop employability skills. Structured and scaffolded training and skill development occur within programmatic and school community employment opportunities, such as work at the Centaur Shoppe, delivering school mail, and assisting with Caring Continues food pantry. Throughout this employability growth, Vector Employability Trainings are used to build prior knowledge and earn certifications. Job coaches and other transition staff provide monthly documented observations with feedback to collect data and determine areas of growth and development. The STRIVE staff also provide coordination with various employment services including American Job Center, LevelUp, and DDS, SSI, as appropriate.

STRIVE has an ongoing partnership with CT State QV to foster post-secondary learning. This dual enrollment opportunity serves to bridge the gap between high school and adulthood by providing authentic, age-appropriate learning experiences in a real-world setting. The purpose is to expose students to postsecondary education while building independence, self-advocacy, and confidence in navigating adult environments. Through participation in college courses, campus activities, and support services, students strengthen academic, social, and executive functioning skills such as time management, communication, and problem-solving. Students gain experience with expectations similar to those in employment and higher education, explore career interests, and develop a clearer sense of their postsecondary goals. They also learn to access accommodations and supports independently, an essential skill for both college and the workplace. Being part of the college community fosters inclusion, expands social networks, and promotes a greater sense of autonomy and self-determination, ultimately increasing readiness for competitive employment, further education, and independent living.

Below, you will find sample examples of campus-based work experiences: The Cinnamon Tree Café, Academy Office Assistant, Landscaping & Agriculture Experience and BrightDesk.

The Cinnamon Tree Café

The Cinnamon Tree Café was created as part of our special education department to provide meaningful, hands-on opportunities for students with disabilities to develop essential transitional and vocational skills.

Through operating the café, students gain experience in all aspects of small business management - from planning and production to customer service and financial transactions.

Participation in the Cinnamon Tree Café helps students to develop workplace readiness skills through active participation in a functional micro-business. They also strengthen communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities and apply academic concepts in real-life contexts (e.g., budgeting, measurement, scheduling). This exploration provides a potential career pathway related to food service, retail, marketing and customer relations. It also builds independence, confidence, and social interaction skills.

As a student-run micro-business, STRIVE students have established the processes for opening and closing and developed checklists for supported independence in completing required tasks. They have both voice and choice in planning monthly selections, identifying recipes, developing lists, shopping and preparing the monthly café menu. The Cinnamon Tree Café recently built a partnership with Good as Gold Coffee in Worcester Mass, as its coffee supplier. During the students' first partnership visit, they learned about sourcing beans, roasting beans,

and even made a special blend for the Café. The Cinnamon Tree Café gives students a safe, supportive environment to practice real-world employment skills while contributing meaningfully to their school community. Each café day helps prepare students for success in future work, volunteer, and independent living settings.

Skills developed

- Vocational Skills
- Food preparation and safety
- Inventory management and restocking
- Cash handling and point-of-sale transactions
- Customer greeting and order taking
- Task organization and following multi-step directions
- Social & Communication Skills
- Greeting and assisting customers
- Engaging in polite conversation and active listening
- Practicing teamwork and conflict resolution
- Responding appropriately to feedback
- Functional Academic Skills
- Working within a budget
- Inventory of ingredients and supplies
- Reading recipes and following written directions
- Measuring ingredients
- Counting change and calculating totals
- Writing signs, menus, and order slips
- Independent Living & Transition Skills
- Time management and responsibility
- Personal hygiene and presentation
- Workplace safety and sanitation
- Self-advocacy and confidence in community roles

Athletic Office Assistant

The STRIVE Transition Program at The Woodstock Academy provides community-based and on-campus vocational experiences for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program emphasizes skill development in communication, time management, self-advocacy, and employability to support students' transition from high school to adult life. This proposal introduces an Athletic Office Assistant Worksite Opportunity within The Woodstock Academy Athletic Department for a STRIVE student who has expressed a strong interest in athletics, teamwork, and school spirit.

The goal of this opportunity is to provide a supported, real-world work experience that builds administrative and clerical skills, fosters communication and teamwork, and promotes independence and pride. It also strengthens the student's connection to the larger school community through athletics and teamwork. Under

supervision of the Athletic Department staff and STRIVE Job Coach, the student may assist with tasks such as organizing athletic forms and rosters, preparing game-day packets, maintaining uniforms and equipment, delivering materials, updating bulletin boards, and greeting visitors. Duties can be adapted based on the student's interests and skills.

A student is scheduled for 2-3 days per week in 1–2-hour shifts. The STRIVE Job Coach or teacher will provide initial training, modeling, and ongoing support. The Athletic Department staff will offer daily structure and natural workplace feedback. Student progress will be tracked as part of their Individualized Transition Plan (ITP).

Skills developed include:

- Vocational Skills
- Inventory management and restocking
- Customer greeting and order taking
- Task organization and following multi-step directions
- Playing field/court preparations (athletics)
- Social & Communication Skills
- Greeting and assisting customers
- Engaging in polite conversation and active listening
- Practicing teamwork and conflict resolution
- Responding appropriately to feedback
- Functional Academic Skills
- Inventory of supplies and equipment
- Following written directions
- Reading schedules and planning
- Independent Living & Transition Skills
- Time management and responsibility
- Personal hygiene and presentation
- Workplace safety
- Self-advocacy and confidence in community roles

BrightDesk

Bright Desk is a student-run, in-school job experience designed to mirror a professional copy and print center similar to a Staples Copy Center. Bright Desk provides students with meaningful, structured work experiences that build confidence, independence, and career readiness in a supportive environment. Bright Desk workers develop real-world job skills while providing high-quality printing, copying, and basic design services to the school community. Authentic experiences also include, but are not limited to, sorting mail, laminating, shredding, mailing prep, bulletin board display/assembly, label and sticker printing, filling teacher supply orders, preparation of event materials, certificate planning and printing for awards ceremonies. With this meaningful work, students undertake experiences that build confidence, independence, and career readiness in a supportive environment.

Bright Desk student employees undertake a variety of job roles: Office Manager, Print & Copy Specialist, Sorting & Distribution Clerk, Shredding & Recycling Manager, Communication Assistant, Inventory and Supply Coordinator. These positions help students to gain skills and proficiencies in customer service, communication and collaboration, time management and organization, use of office and printing equipment, and task completion and accountability. In participating in the student-run business, students also develop profencies in sorting and filing invoices, answering voicemails, data entry/form entries, inventory, virtual scheduling, filing system management, reception desk greetings, and technology aptitudes to in programs such as Excel, Word, Outlook.

Skills developed included:

- Vocational Skills
- Inventory management and restocking
- Customer greeting and order taking
- Task organization and following multi-step directions
- Print & Copy production
- Social & Communication Skills
- Greeting and assisting customers
- Engaging in polite conversation and active listening
- Practicing teamwork and conflict resolution
- Responding appropriately to feedback
- Functional Academic Skills
- Working within a budget
- Inventory of supplies
- Reading orders and following written directions
- Independent Living & Transition Skills
- Time management and responsibility
- Personal hygiene and presentation
- Workplace safety and sanitation
- Self-advocacy and confidence in community roles

Landscaping & Agriculture Experience

Growing Skills. Building Futures. Cultivating Independence.

The STRIVE Landscaping & Agriculture Program provides students with authentic, hands-on vocational experiences that develop real-world job skills while helping beautify The Woodstock Academy campus.

Working alongside peers, staff, and community partners, students learn how to transform ideas into completed projects—from planning and budgeting to construction, planting, and ongoing maintenance. Every garden planted, flower bed designed, and landscape maintained becomes another opportunity for students to build confidence, strengthen workplace skills, and make a lasting contribution to their school community.

Skills developed included:

- Landscape design and planning
- Reading and creating site maps
- Presenting ideas and obtaining project approval
- Budgeting and pricing flowers, plants, mulch, soil, and supplies
- Safe use and care of landscaping tools
- Building raised garden beds
- Greenhouse construction and maintenance
- Plant selection, planting techniques, and seasonal care
- Watering, fertilizing, weeding, and daily garden maintenance
- Lawn and grounds maintenance
- Working as part of a professional landscaping team
- Following work schedules and completing projects from start to finish

A Collaborative Campus Initiative

This program is developed in partnership with:

- The Woodstock Academy Science Department
- Earth Save Club
- Garden Club
- STRIVE Vocational Program
- Together, students are creating a sustainable campus agriculture program that includes:
- Raised garden beds
- Campus landscaping projects
- Vegetable gardens
- Hydroponic growing systems
- Pollinator and flower gardens
- Seasonal campus beautification
- Ongoing care and maintenance of campus garden spaces

Preparing Students for the Future

The skills students develop extend far beyond gardening. Through every project, students practice:

- Teamwork
- Communication
- Problem solving
- Organization
- Time management
- Responsibility
- Attention to detail
- Workplace safety
- Professionalism
- Pride in quality workmanship

These experiences prepare students for future employment in fields such as:

- Landscaping
- Grounds Maintenance
- Greenhouse Operations
- Agriculture
- Horticulture
- Facilities and Property Maintenance
- Parks and Recreation
- Nursery and Garden Centers
- The skills also support lifelong independence by helping students confidently maintain their own homes and outdoor spaces.

STRIVE Philanthropic Service Learning

Philanthropic experiences provide students with opportunities to contribute meaningfully to their school and local community while building essential life, social, and employability skills. Through giving back, students develop empathy, confidence, teamwork, and a sense of belonging and purpose. Recent philanthropic activities include volunteering at TEEG Market, preparing veterans Day Gift Bags, Brooklyn Cares Holiday Helpers, supply drive for PAWS, food drive for FRESH Pantry.

Through community-based philanthropic activities, our students have developed real-world employability and social skills in meaningful contexts. There have been significant gains in confidence, teamwork, and problem-solving as they plan and carry out donation drives and service projects. Partnerships with local organizations have also enhanced inclusion, with students being recognized as capable contributors to the community. Student participated and tool initiative in planning, organizing and executing philanthropic opportunities. They learned to work together toward a shared goal, dividing tasks (e.g., collecting items, sorting donations, writing thank-you cards) and showed greater understanding of others' needs (e.g., realizing how donations impact families, shelters, or local causes). Students met deadlines, managed materials or money, and completed projects start to finish.

Skills Developed included:

Perspective-taking, compassion, social-emotional awareness, communication, task completion, dependability, teamwork, following directions, work stamina, goal setting, decision-making, advocacy, leadership, Conversational skills, listening, public speaking, written communication, Self-esteem, self-awareness, pride in accomplishment, intrinsic motivation.

STRIVE Policies & Procedures

These program-specific expectations and procedures guide the day-to-day practices in the Transition Program. It is meant to complement, not replace, the *The Woodstock Academy Special Education Handbook*

(<https://www.woodstockacademy.org/academics/student-services>) and *The Woodstock Academy Student Handbook* (<https://www.woodstockacademy.org/parents-guardians/handbooks>) of The Woodstock Academy. These primary handbooks detail the comprehensive policies, rights, and procedures governing all special education services, in full

alignment with both Connecticut state regulations and the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

All families, guardians and students are encouraged to refer to *The Woodstock Academy Special Education Handbook* as the foundational resource for understanding our broader special education practices. This Transition Guidelines document builds upon that foundation, highlighting the structures and supports unique to the 18–22 programming.

Individualized Programming & IEP Progress Reporting

Each student's participation in The Woodstock Academy Transition Program is guided by their Individualized Education Program (IEP). Programming is intentionally designed in collaboration with the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) to align with each student's unique goals, strengths, and areas of need.

Our goal is to support students as they develop the wide range of skills necessary for adulthood—whether in the areas of independent living, employment, social relationships, self-advocacy, or community participation.

Programming is structured to gradually help students move from a supported environment to increased independence, becoming confident, contributing members of their community.

To ensure families remain informed and engaged, progress on IEP goals is shared:

- Quarterly, in alignment with The Woodstock Academy's academic reporting calendar;
- At the annual IEP review meeting; and
- At any time upon parent/guardian request, including through interim PPTs or informal check-ins.

The Woodstock Academy team is committed to maintaining open, ongoing communication as we support each student's journey into adulthood.

Attendance Expectations: Building Responsibility Through Participation

Consistent attendance is a key component of success in The Woodstock Academy Transition Program. This program is designed to help students develop independence, vocational skills, and life readiness. To fully benefit from the individualized supports and real-world learning opportunities we offer, regular participation is essential. If a student accrues more than 9 excused or unexcused absences in a given semester, the Team may convene a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting to review the student's progress, revisit their goals, and assess the appropriateness of current IEP services.

All absences must be reported and documented in accordance with *The Woodstock Academy Student Handbook*, which serves as the official reference for attendance policies and procedures. In the spirit of promoting self-advocacy and independence, we encourage students to email the Transition Coordinator the evening before or the morning of any absence. Practicing this communication is a valuable life skill and closely mirrors the expectations they will encounter in the workplace and in adult life.

By showing up, students strengthen their routines, build accountability, and maximize their opportunities for growth.

Dress Code: Preparing for Adulthood with Purposeful Presentation

Students in the Transition Program are expected to dress in a way that reflects readiness for learning, community participation, and work-based experiences- a skill that is essential in employment, public settings, and independent living. Appropriate attire supports not only a positive learning environment, but also fosters self-respect, safety, and preparation for adult responsibilities.

Students should follow The Woodstock Academy's dress code, which promotes clothing that is neat, clean, and appropriate for a school and work-like environment.

Attire should not be disruptive, offensive, or distracting to the educational or community setting. Students must comply with safety-related dress expectations, especially during off-campus activities, such as job sites, volunteer work, or life skills training. Some work-based learning experiences may require uniforms or specific attire (e.g., closed-toe shoes, business casual dress), which will be communicated in advance.

Behavioral Expectations: Fostering a Respectful and Supportive Community

The Woodstock Academy Transition Program strives to maintain a positive, inclusive, and respectful learning environment that supports all students in reaching their goals. Students are expected to conduct themselves in ways that promote safety, dignity, and engagement for all members of the program—both on and off campus. They will demonstrate respect toward peers, staff, and members of the community. They will follow all program, school, and community-based rules to ensure safety and structure. They will also engage positively in scheduled activities, job sites, community outings, and classroom instruction.

Positive Behavior Support

The STRIVE program implements Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to reinforce appropriate behavior and teach self-regulation, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills. The team works proactively to coach students through difficulties and celebrate progress. When challenges arise, staff work with students to understand expectations and support growth. Individualized behavior support plans may be developed when needed to help students meet their goals.

Disciplinary Actions

Our approach is always centered around helping students learn from experiences and develop the tools they need for adult life. We believe in accountability with support, and we partner with families every step of the way. In instances where behavioral expectations are not met, the following responses may occur based on the nature and frequency of the behavior:

- Coaching conversations and verbal redirection
- Parent/guardian communication or meetings to collaborate on solutions
- Implementation of a behavior contract with clear expectations and supports
- Suspension (in-school or out-of-school) if safety or significant disruption occurs

- A Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting may be convened to reassess programming and determine if additional supports or changes are needed

Data Collection & Confidentiality: Using Information Responsibly to Support Student Growth

At The Woodstock Academy Transition Program, we believe that tracking progress and respecting privacy go hand-in-hand. By collecting meaningful data and upholding strict confidentiality, we create a safe, informed, and supportive environment where students can grow with dignity. We are committed to using data thoughtfully and ethically to support student success. Our goal is to make evidence-based decisions that help each student move forward in their transition to adulthood.

Student progress is monitored through a combination of ongoing assessments, staff observations, daily checklists, and community-based performance reflections. This data is used to inform instruction, develop individualized supports, and make real-time program adjustments based on student needs. Our team regularly reviews data in collaboration with students (when appropriate), families, and service providers to guide evidence-based planning.

All student data and records are handled in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Access to student records is limited to authorized personnel who are directly involved in the student's education and services. Confidential information is securely stored and discussed only in appropriate professional settings to protect student privacy.

Graduation & Exit from the Transition Program

The goal of the Transition Program is to prepare students for meaningful adult lives by developing the academic, vocational, independent living, and self-advocacy skills necessary for success beyond high school. Exit from the program is an individualized decision made through the IEP planning process.

Students may exit the Transition Program when they:

- Meet the IEP team's criteria for postsecondary readiness.
- Successfully complete their IEP goals and receive a regular high school diploma.
- Reach the end of the school year in which they turn 22, the maximum age of eligibility for special education services under IDEA.

Transition Planning Prior to Exit

Planning for a successful transition begins well before a student's exit from the program. Throughout a student's enrollment, the IEP Team, student, family, and community partners work together to develop a comprehensive transition plan that reflects the student's strengths, preferences, interests, and long-term goals.

Postsecondary planning for students with disabilities include a range of available pathways. The Woodstock Academy staff work to facilitate a match with the student's sense of purpose and meaning. It is important to note that as adults, individuals with disabilities are afforded protections under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Rehabilitation Act, not IDEA.

Prior to exiting the program, the team may assist with:

- Connecting students and families with adult service agencies, including the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), and other community providers, as appropriate.
- Identifying employment, postsecondary education, vocational training, or community participation opportunities.
- Developing plans for transportation, independent living, and community access.
- Supporting students in strengthening self-advocacy, self-determination, and decision-making skills.
- Facilitating referrals and collaboration with adult service providers to promote continuity of supports.

A "Life After High School" Readiness Checklist

- Who will support me? (DDS, BRS, providers)
- Where will I live?
- How will I get around?
- What kind of work do I want?
- How will I manage my money?
- What will I do for fun?
- Who are my friends and community connections?
- What do I need to stay healthy?
- Can I explain my strengths and ask for the support I need?

Recreation & Community Involvement

(Adult life shouldn't only be about work.)

Examples:

- Special Olympics
- Community recreation
- Libraries
- Volunteer organizations
- Faith communities
- Art programs
- Fitness
- Clubs
- Social groups

Building Your Adult Team

(Encourage families to identify their "team.") Possible members include:

- Student
- Family
- Case Manager
- DDS Case Manager
- BRS Counselor
- Employer
- Job Coach
- Clinician
- Physician
- Adult Service Provider
- Friends and mentors

Summary of Performance

Students exiting special education with a regular high school diploma or upon aging out of eligibility will receive a **Summary of Performance (SOP)**. The Summary of Performance provides a summary of the student's academic achievement, functional performance, effective accommodations, and recommendations to assist the student in meeting postsecondary education, employment, and independent living goals.

Community Transition & Adult Service Providers

As students prepare to exit high school/Transition Program and transition into adulthood, a variety of community agencies offer programs designed to support employment, independent living, community participation, and lifelong learning. The following organizations serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and may provide services based on eligibility, funding availability, and individual needs. Families are encouraged to contact agencies directly to learn more about available programs and referral processes.

Please note: Services, eligibility requirements, funding availability, and waitlists vary by agency. Families should contact each organization directly for the most current information regarding admissions, eligibility, and available programs.

Center of Hope Foundation

100 Foster Street
Southbridge, MA 01550
Phone: (508) 764-4085
Website: <https://thecenterofhope.org>

The Center of Hope Foundation provides a range of adult services, including day programs, in-home supports, employment opportunities, and community-based services that promote independence and quality of life.

Horizons

127 Babcock Hill Road
South Windham, CT 06266
Phone: (860) 456-1032
Website: www.horizonsct.org

Horizons offers a continuum of supports including Supported Employment, Options Day Services, Education Support Services for transition-aged adults, residential supports through Supported Living, and recreational opportunities including Summer Camp and Weekends in the Country.

Seabird Enterprises

169 Thames Street
Groton, CT 06340
Phone: (860) 446-0882
Email: info@seabirdenterprises.org
Website: <https://www.seabirdenterprises.org>

Seabird Enterprises develops and provides community-based programs focused on vocational training, employment opportunities, life skills, and social engagement for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Arc Eastern Connecticut

125 Sachem Street

Norwich, CT 06360

Phone: (860) 889-4435

Email: info@thearcct.org

Website: <https://www.thearcct.org>

The Arc Eastern Connecticut partners with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to promote equal opportunity, community inclusion, self-determination, advocacy, employment, and lifelong supports.

Northeast Placement Services (NEPS)

312 Route 169

Woodstock, CT 06281

Phone: (860) 963-2555

Email: inquiry@northeastplacementservices.org

Website: <https://www.northeastplacementservices.org>

Northeast Placement Services (NEPS) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing integrated employment opportunities, vocational supports, and community-based services for adults with intellectual disabilities, serving individuals ages 21 through older adulthood.

RESOURCES

[18–22 strive secondary transition program Rev. 2025.pdf](#)

[CT CORE Transition Skills.pdf](#)

[DDS CSD- Family Fact Sheet.pdf](#)

[DDS Eligibility Application .pdf](#)

[DDS Transition Timeline English 9.2023 \(1\).pdf](#)

[Eligibility Fact Sheet 23 .pdf](#)

[HIPPA Letter Acknowledgement.pdf](#)

[WA Student-Centered Plan Template.pdf](#)