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# Using Data to Set Goals: Collaborating for Success

*By Luanne Barron, Stephanie Ray-Oyler, and Dana Lattin*

*I would like to address the gap by creating a better communication tool for students and their parents for that next connecting agency. I am still working on what that tool will look like.*

~ Transition facilitator and a parent,  
Kansas School for the Deaf, in response to the QI-2

Representatives from the Kansas State Department of Education; the Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; the University of Kansas Transition Coalition; and the transition coordinator, parents, Independent Living Center, and administrators from the Kansas School for the Deaf formed a team to establish quality transition services and resources for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and assistance to their parents, educators, agencies, and independent living center staff, especially in rural areas. Our team, a result of the Summits sponsored by the federally supported pepnet 2, wanted deaf and hard of hearing students to be empowered to experience life as self-sufficient and contributing citizens. To do this, we needed a statewide plan.

The Kansas team got together and deliberated. We were aware of multiple and varied needs, but we had a difficult time prioritizing. What should be the focus? At first, we thought that the focus should be program structure, but there was inadequate

*Photo courtesy of pepnet 2*

*Illustrations courtesy of Luanne Barron, Stephanie Ray-Oyler, and Dana Lattin*



the University of Kansas, coordinating professional development in the areas of secondary transition and dropout prevention for Kansas schools in partnership with the Kansas Technical Assistance System Network. Ray-Oyler welcomes questions and comments about this article at [Stephanie.Oyler@elginisd.net](mailto:Stephanie.Oyler@elginisd.net).

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data on the status of transition for deaf and hard of hearing students in our state. We needed data to pursue a systematic approach and make purposeful and effective decisions—and we needed to include other people who were involved with and cared about the transition process for deaf and hard of hearing young people.

A needs assessment was in order. A representative from pepnet 2, the federal initiative to increase the lifetime choices of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, suggested that the team reach out to the Transition Coalition, a research unit at the University of Kansas that provides information, training, and resources for effective transition for students with disabilities. The Transition Coalition in partnership with the Kansas Technical Assistance System Network, a branch of the Kansas State Department of Education, provides technical assistance to support school districts' systematic implementation of evidence-based practices.

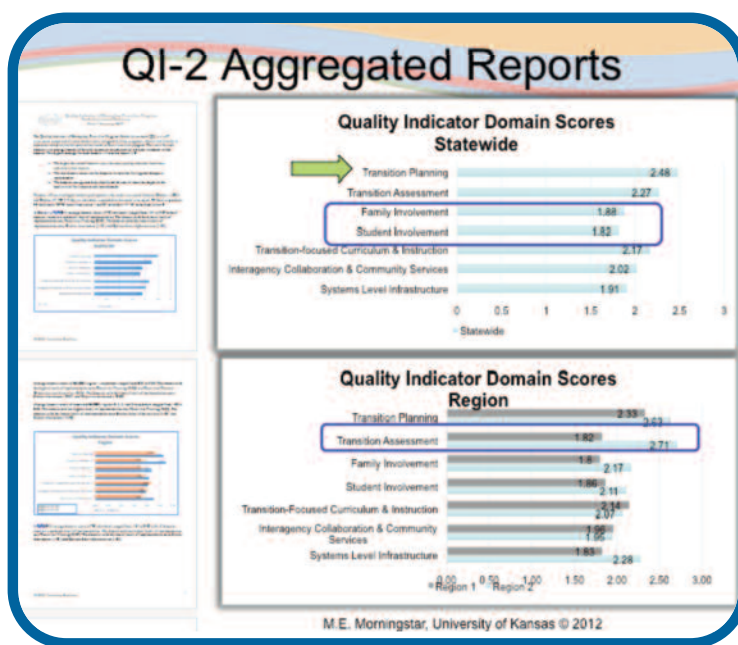
The Transition Coalition recommended that we administer its Quality Indicators of Exemplary Transition Programs Needs Assessment-2 (QI-2) developed by Morningstar, Gaumer Erickson, Lattin, and Lee (2012) at the University of Kansas. The QI-2 is a cost-effective needs

assessment tool that helps educators collect data on the effectiveness of local transition programs and practices. It may be found online at [www.transitioncoalition.org](http://www.transitioncoalition.org).

A valid and reliable instrument (Morningstar, Lee, Lattin, & Murray, 2015), the QI-2 survey has been used by multiple states and districts to help identify priorities for planning, professional development, and program enhancement. Designed to assist programs, schools, and districts as they prioritize the most critical needs of transition programs, the QI-2 generates an evaluation for each individual who takes it, producing a profile that comprises 47 indicators across seven domains. These domains are:

1. transition planning
2. transition assessment
3. family involvement
4. student involvement
5. transition-focused curriculum and instruction
6. interagency collaboration
7. system-level infrastructure

We administered the QI-2 statewide between August 1, 2014, and June 15, 2015, contacting individuals involved in deaf education and transition via e-mail. A total of 89 individuals



responded, including parents of deaf and hard of hearing children, young deaf and hard of hearing adults, and those who work directly with deaf or hard of hearing students.

### What the Data Said

*We have recognized ... {that we} are not well prepared to accommodate the anticipated growth/influx of D/HH students into the system ... I have been able to use the data to create pressure onto the system as State is preparing for changes as a result of {the Workplace Innovation and Opportunity Act}.*

~ Executive director, Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, in response to the QI-2

The results, compiled in a report, were sent to everyone, and we gathered together to discuss them. Face-to-face discussion was essential. Everyone was able to share his or her thoughts and concerns. We were able to problem solve as a group.

The data indicated that transition planning had a high level of implementation across the state. Planning for transition began early in students' education and continued as they went through school. Students were assisted in developing goals, addressed both in academics and through their transition needs.

However, the results showed areas of concern as well. Respondents indicated that more support is needed in facilitating student involvement in their transition, and more collaboration is needed among agencies and community services. Students needed to be supported and involved in their own transition planning, which meant a need for teaching decision-making and goal-setting skills. In addition, support was needed to develop meaningful, collaborative partnerships among schools and community agencies.

Data from rural areas was particularly problematic, showing

significant gaps within programs and inadequate collaboration among agencies. Further, students and families needed to increase their involvement in transition planning.

### The Challenges to Collaboration

*There is no formal ... data on how a particular population of Deaf/HH students is functioning in regards to transition planning within the state of Kansas.* ~ Kansas State Department of Education in response to the QI-2

The team faced some challenges throughout the process. State agencies underwent administrative changes, and one of the largest districts made changes just at the time the survey was administered. Our team experienced the loss of two members. The original response rate was unsatisfactorily low. As a team we expressed our concern and strategized how to increase the responses. We decided to tap personally those whom we knew in the organizations we represented and participated in; we sent information out through listservs, and we sent informational e-mail to school districts throughout the state. The result was a slight but significant increase in the number of responses—and this provided us with sufficient data for goal development.

It was also a challenge for us to locate all of the students, ages 14-21, who are deaf or hard of hearing within the state. Attendance at all of the Special Education Association regional meetings and the Annual Special Education Leadership conference gave us the opportunity to make an announcement about the survey.

Results from the QI-2 will help schools and districts determine the most critical needs within their transition programs. Short- and long-term statewide goals will be developed based on the unmet transition needs of students.

## QI-2 Aggregated Reports

Quality Indicator Item Report			
Transition Planning	Statewide N = 56	Region 1 N = 33	Region 2 N = 23
Transition Planning Items	2.48	2.33	2.63
1. Transition planning begins early in a student's educational experience and is done with the student.	2.73	2.7	2.75
2. Transition planning incorporates student-centered approaches (e.g., rights, personal choices, preferences).	2.58	2.8	2.75
3. Postsecondary goals are based upon student strengths, interests, and preferences.	1.93	2.1	1.75
4. Postsecondary goals target postsecondary education, training, employment, and other appropriate independent living.	2.70	2.4	3.0
5. Postsecondary goals target postsecondary education, training, employment, and other appropriate independent living.	2.58	2.4	2.75
6. Postsecondary goals and a course of study are identified to assist the student to reach postsecondary goals.	2.85	2.3	3.0
7. Annual IEP goals addressing both academic and transition needs are identified.	2.48	2.2	2.75
8. Approaches are used during transition planning to identify outcomes supporting student and family cultures.	2.43	2.1	2.25
Transition Assessment	Statewide N = 56	Region 1 N = 33	Region 2 N = 23
9. A wide variety of formal and informal transition assessments are available to use with students.	2.27	1.82	2.71
10. Assessments for each student evaluate specific transition needs, strengths, preferences, and	2.18	1.6	2.75
11. No transition assessment process is ongoing throughout the year.	2.10	1.7	2.5
12. Transition assessment results are shared with students, families and staff in a meaningful way.	2.23	1.7	2.75
13. Transition assessment results are shared with students, families and staff in a meaningful way.	2.18	2.0	2.75
14. Students' postsecondary goals are based on transition assessment results.	2.28	1.8	2.75
15. A summary of performance with recommendations for meeting postsecondary goals is developed when students enter high school.	2.43	2.1	2.75

M.E. Morningstar, University of Kansas © 2012

Today the Kansas pepnet 2 team has identified the unmet needs of deaf and hard of hearing students, and we hope to use this data to enable school districts to better prepare teachers, parents, and students for transition from high school to postsecondary education or the workplace. Whether students should move on to independent living, employment or postsecondary education, or both, the data we have at our fingertips should facilitate the process. Partnering with other agencies in administering and analyzing the QI-2 will make the delivery of transition services to the deaf and hard of hearing youth of Kansas more effective.

### References

Morningstar, M. E., Gaumer Erickson, A., Lattin, D. L., & Lee, H. (2012). *Quality indicators of exemplary transition programs*. University of Kansas, Department of Special Education.

Morningstar, M. E., Lee, H., Lattin, D. L., & Murray, A. (2015). An evaluation of the technical adequacy of a revised measure of quality indicators of transition. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Children*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1177/2165143415589925

## QI-2 ADMINISTRATION AND BENEFITS

# Using Data for Effective Planning

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The process that we followed in our transition planning proved to be effective. The steps below may be helpful to others who wish to use data for planning transition in their area. To pursue effective transition planning through collaboration, we:

1. Administered a statewide and district-level needs assessment evaluation.
2. Compiled the data in partnership with the Transition Coalition at the University of Kansas.
3. Analyzed the data to develop results-based outcomes for students, family members, and professionals who work with deaf and hard of hearing students.
4. Developed a short- and long-term plan to effectively execute the statewide transition planning using the data to determine trends.
5. Assessed the state of the transition program infrastructure at the state level for deaf and hard of hearing students ages 14-21.
6. Identified and used district, state, and national resources.

Our evaluation instrument, the QI-2, developed by the Transition Coalition at the University of Kansas, allowed us to:

- Identify regions in the state with the most needs.
- See results for each domain—student involvement, transition planning, transition assessment—as well as results for indicators within each of those areas.
- Distinguish the different needs experienced in rural, urban, and suburban schools.
- Identify and implement interagency strategies to address specific needs.
- Develop a shared action plan for which we could work together to improve the transition outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Administering the QI-2 had the additional benefit of engaging those who developed, administered, and took it in collaboration. The relationships that resulted from the collaboration continued after the evaluation was completed, allowing for communication among agencies to flow more easily, for higher levels of cooperation, and for increased benefit for deaf and hard of hearing students.