

Developing a Vision

"Let not our needs determine our dreams. ...but let our dreams determine our needs".

Colleen F. Tomko

One way to start building a vision for your child's future is to begin thinking about where you and your child desire and don't desire for him or her to live, work and spend leisure time as an adult. You can also consider what types of relationships and friendships are desirable. Allow yourself to dream for your child.

The vision does not need to be based on what has happened to other children with similar disabilities, or on what anyone else suggests should happen. It's for you and your child to determine. Try to realize that the dream does not need to be limited to where certain things currently exist. Once you have a dream, you can work toward getting the things where your child will need them. By building a vision, you and your child take control of their life and what path it takes, not the system.

"Vision is the fundamental force that drives everything else in our lives. It impassions us with a sense of unique contribution that's ours to make. It empowers us to put first things first, compasses ahead of clocks, people ahead of schedules and things. " (Covey, First Things First pg 116)

Keep the focus of your vision on your child's strengths and interests. Think about the things in life that you value and would like your child to have. Most people value their relationships with others and being an active member of society. We also tend to value being able to pursue things we are good at and using them for something meaningful and purposeful.

Usually people are not drawn to do the things they are least skilled at. Similarly, it shouldn't be expected for our children to have to focus only on their "disability". Example: If you lack talent in art and you don't enjoy it, but you are good at math and you enjoy it, you will most likely pursue a life of doing something in math and not art. Sometimes, when a person has a disability, so much focus is on what they can't do, that they are not given a chance to do the things that they can do or to experience those things that most people value.

Remember with the right supports many things are possible. A desire for a child to have friends, and to work and live in the community can be a dream for every child. That dream is more likely to occur if the child remains in the typical environments as they grow up. That way they will learn to function and interrelate with others using their abilities, and other children will grow up knowing your child and how to relate to them. If you don't aim for the dream the chances are greater that it won't be achieved.

Once you've made a vision, the next step is to think about what skills and supports might be needed, and how short term goals can lead toward the vision. Let the vision guide everything for your child so that they always remain on a path to their long term goals.

Things to think about when developing your Vision and desirable outcomes for your child

Home environment

Think about where you hope your child will live throughout the school years and where he/she might live as an adult. Is there any place you would like to avoid having your child live in the future? With whom do you think your child would like to live during the school years; adult years? What skills will increase your child's independence and interdependence in these environments? What help or supports might your child need to live in these environments?

Work environment

What type of work/workplace might your child enjoy in the future? This may be difficult to envision because it may be too far in the future. However, you might have some general idea about what work your child would enjoy and be capable of doing or supported in doing (competitive work, supported work, community service), and what type of general skills your child might need in order to be successful (communication, social, self-care, etc.)

Community environment

What types of activities does your child enjoy doing and what might he/she enjoy doing in the community as an adult? Where might these activities take place (recreational sites, stores, restaurants, social events)? What skills will your child need to enjoy these activities (mobility, communication skills, social skills, motor skills)? What supports will your child need to enjoy these activities (attendant care, assistive technology, circle of friends; etc.)?

Relationships/friendships

What type of relationships does your child enjoy and where might these relationships develop during your child's school and adult life (neighborhood, regular classroom, worksite, community recreational sites, etc.)? What type of skills will your child need to have to develop and maintain these relationships? Will your child need supports to learn these skills?

Other outcomes

What other hopes do you have for your child (safety, good health, personal choices, etc)?
What skills will your child need to develop to obtain these desirable outcomes? What help will your child need now and in the future to obtain these outcomes?

Prioritisation

When you have listed your desirable outcomes, it will be important to determine what outcomes are most important to your child and you. These should be the outcomes that are emphasized in planning goals for your child.

My vision for my child as a young adult

Home environment - I envision my child will:

a. live in:

b. live with:

c. be able to:

Work environment- I envision my child will:

a. work in:

b. be employed as:

c. be able to (responsibilities):

Community environment - I envision my child will participate in:

a. places:

b. activities:

c. social events:

Relationships/friendships - I hope my child will develop friendships and relationships with:

5. I would also like my child to:

6. I think my child will probably need the following supports and/or environmental modifications:



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