Understanding the strengths and abilities of students with disabilities is an essential component of planning for students transition to competitive integrated employment. A strengths-based approach to transition planning is a collaborative process that encourages students, families, educators, and others to consistently draw upon and share their knowledge of student strengths, skills, and capabilities. Focusing on existing strengths can lead to increased academic, social emotional, and ultimately positive post school employment success.

**Strengths-Based Versus Deficit-Based**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH</th>
<th>DEFICIT-BASED APPROACH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus is on identifying skills and capacity within the home, school, and community</td>
<td>Focus is on disability, needs, and perceived weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports high expectations</td>
<td>Communicates helplessness and low expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity focused</td>
<td>Problems focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive planning and building upon strengths</td>
<td>Reactive planning and identifying what is missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term impact</td>
<td>Short-term impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Partnership Led by:

Texas Beacons of Excellence
How to Implement a STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

1. Recognize
   Recognize every student has strengths, abilities, and skills.

2. Collaborate
   Enhance collaboration and gather information on students’ abilities and interests within the school, home, and community.

3. Build
   Build relationships with families. This will support families to identify strengths and achievements.

4. Assist
   Assist students to become well informed of their strengths and interests.

5. Develop
   Develop goals to build upon students’ strengths and resources.

6. Link
   Link goals to action and develop experiences to uncover additional strengths, interests, and skills.

7. Gather
   Gather data from goals and activities to build upon students’ strength profile.

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