

Visualizing Futures

Young people need meaningful formats if they are to participate in designing their futures (Dowse, 2009; Ritchie, 2002). Accessible formats engage young people, capitalize on their learning styles (Armstrong, 1987; Gardner, 1985), and create common understanding (Fudge Schormans, 2010; Horn, 1998; Tierney, 2003).

Graphic facilitation (Sibbett, 1977) harnesses the power of visuals to engage and clarify. Participants see their ideas captured and recorded as they are discussed. Graphic facilitation involves two people working with a planning group—a *meeting facilitator* leads the conversation, drawing out ideas, issues, and themes, and a *graphic recorder* captures ideas in visuals on a chart.

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The Circle of Courage is itself a visual presentation that highlights four principles of positive youth development: Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. These universal growth needs provide a format for setting goals as young people share their dreams and visualize their futures.

Each young person's transition planning involves a small group consisting of the young person, family members, the teacher, and the school's transition coordinator. When applicable, residential caregivers, community transition coordinators, and social workers join the meeting. This case study of Andrew shows the planning process. Andrew is a unique individual but, like many other students in his school, he shows behaviours which those who interact with him find "challenging."

The Planning Process

Transition planning involves three stages: *preparation* with the young person, *arranging* the meeting venue, and *conducting* the planning meeting:

Preparation with the young person

- Prepare the young person for the transition meeting. Discuss the purpose and procedures

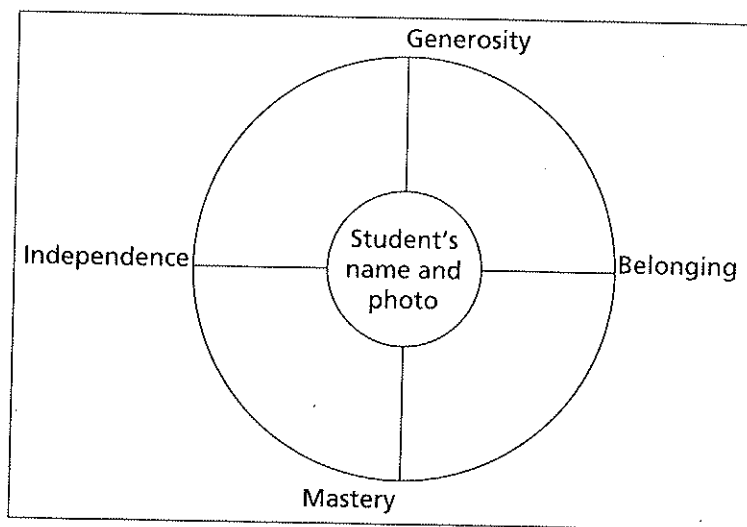
for the meeting and review the four principles of the Circle of Courage. Ask the young person to identify dreams, needs, and possible goals.

- Ask whom the young person would like to have present at the meeting. Prepare and send out invitations to possible participants.

Arranging the venue

- Select the meeting room for accessibility, privacy, and suitability.
- Arrange comfortable chairs in a semi-circle to enable participants to see one another and to view the evolving chart.
- Mount the pre-drawn individualised template (see Figure 1) with the young person's name and photograph on the wall before participants arrive.
- Ensure coloured pens are available for recording the chart.

Figure 1: Pre-drawn chart



Conducting the transition planning meeting

- Give a welcome and introductions to ensure everyone knows one another.
- Explain the purpose of the transition meeting.
- Establish a time frame for the planning.

- Focus on each principle starting with Belonging and progressing to Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. Within each element, follow this sequence:

1. Overview the meaning of the Circle of Courage principle.
2. Develop the Dream—What would the young person and the family like to happen in transitioning from school?

3. Capture the Now—What can the young person do at the present time using skills and knowledge to work towards the Dream?

4. Plan for Action—What do the young person and the support team need to achieve in journeying towards the Dream?

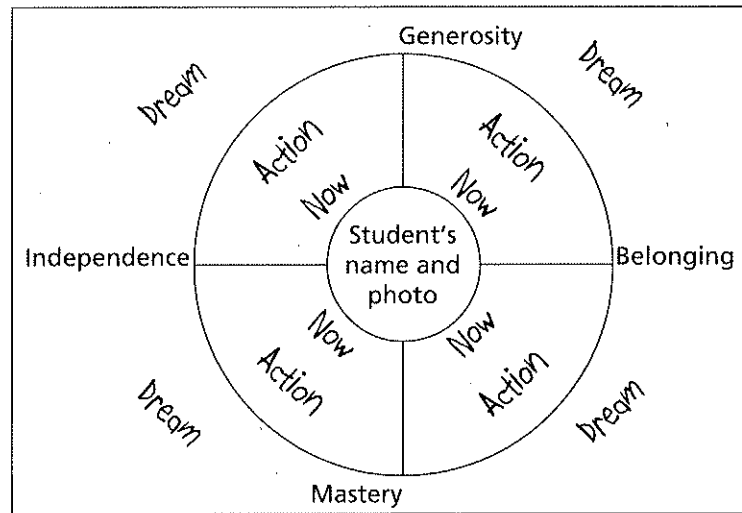
A list of scripts which can be used to guide discussion is provided in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Possible questions, prompts, and thought starters

Belonging	Dream & Goal	Where would you like to belong after you leave school? What groups would you like to belong to?
	Now	Where do you belong now? What groups/families do you belong to now?
	Action	What can you do to belong to...? What can teachers/family/friends/others do to help you?
Mastery	Dream & Goal	What you like to do when you leave school? What would you like to learn? What would you like to better at?
	Now	What can you do now? What are you good at?
	Action	What can you do to get better at this? How can you to learn to do this? How can teachers/family/friends/others help you?
Independence	Dream & Goal	What would you like to be able to do by yourself? Where would you like to go by yourself?
	Now	What can you do by yourself now?
	Action	What can you do to get better at this? What can teachers/family/friends/others do to help you...?
Generosity	Dream & Goal	When you leave school what would you like to be able to do for others? What would you like to be part of? What would you like to do to help other people?
	Now	How do you help others? What do you do for friends, family, and others?
	Action	What can you do to achieve this? What can teachers/family/friends/other people do to help you...?

- Seek ideas first from the young person, then parents, and then others.
- At the completion of each principle, invite the graphic recorder to summarize the planning, first re-telling the *Now*, then the *Actions*, and then the *Dream*.
- At the completion of the planning, when all four principles have been covered, the graphic recorder will summarise the entire chart, emphasising the inter-relationship of the principles and the plan as an entity.
- Close by asking participants to comment on how they are feeling about the planning meeting. This gives participants an opportunity to share delights and concerns and to clarify or raise queries.
- Take photographs (for the file) with the young person and participants standing in front of the chart.
- Remove the chart from the wall and present it to the young person. The immediacy of providing a record of the outcomes will make it easier for the young person to remember the plan, think about it, and discuss it with others.
- After the meeting, distribute the photograph to all participants through email or printed copy. The photograph has the advantage of being immediately available and in a format that is easily understood by all participants.

Figure 3: Representation of each element showing sections



- Invite the young person to select different coloured pens to represent self, family, friends, teachers, and other community members. This colour coding supports interpreting the chart.
- Before the meeting, become familiar with the young person's interests, dreams, needs, and community connections as this will assist with the use of meaningful graphics, symbols, and words.
- Listen for the key points and main ideas. Record these accurately in imagery that the young person can relate to and understand.
- At the end of each element retell the story, highlighting key points, checking for accuracy, and determining if there is anything to clarify, amend, or add.

Recording the Transition Plan

During the meeting, the graphic recorder documents ideas expressed by the young person and other participants on a large chart. The chart provides a canvas on which ideas and feelings can be captured in a visual format through the use of colour and easily understood drawings.

- Prepare the chart (Figure 1) placing a recent photograph of the young person at the centre.
- Use culturally relevant imagery to foster connection with, and participation in, the process. The personalised design of each chart will reinforce ownership of the plan for the young person and participants.

An example of a completed plan is provided on page 44.

Andrew's experience

Traditional individual education plans (IEPs) had been written for Andrew for 19 years, since he was two years old. According to his parents, planning had always been decided without Andrew or themselves being involved. Teachers commented that this process encouraged Andrew to participate in designing a plan that was more real for him. Andrew's residential caregivers stressed that all who supported Andrew were "working on the same wave-length together." Andrew's planning meeting lasted an hour and a half. His mother stated:

One and a half hours is a long time but you needed that time to cover everything....Andrew stayed the whole time...this is a young man you could not usually get in the door—but he wanted to come in.

The Chart

Andrew's mother noted that the drawing was always in front of him making it easier to recall the conversation and follow the process. The teachers commented that the photo of Andrew personalised the process, reinforcing that the meeting was about him. A teacher commented:

If we talk the words, you hear them and they are gone. For students the pictures are up there for them to look back to—it is permanent. After each small section was discussed the grapher would feed back—this "recapture" ensured the words and ideas were all recorded, and refreshed everybody about where they were.

The Terminology

Andrew's mother stated that she appreciated the Circle of Courage terminology which guided her son's transition into adulthood. The residential caregiver found the language within the planning useful and has since included the words *mastery* and *independence* in Andrew's service plan and daily dialogue. The caregiver said, "He was sitting there. If he had not understood, he would have acted out and left."

The Use of Graphics

Participants found this an effective way to capture the content and energy of the discussion. Andrew's mother remarked that Andrew could understand the writing and pictures:

He was able to figure what we were actually talking about. Andrew enjoys spending time focusing on the intricacies of items. The detail has provided many opportunities for further discussions as Andrew connects with his chart.

Participants concluded that the chart enabled Andrew to "see his dream."

Converting the Plan into a Programme

Teachers were able to translate the key aspects of the plan into programme detail: "From the picture [chart] we wrote the 'who,' 'what,' 'where,' 'when,' and 'how' so the graphic was the first part of the whole."

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The human service agency found they were able to work across all three of Andrew's environments: his family, his school, and his place of residence. Andrew's mother saw the plan as giving a clear idea of skills and experiences they must concentrate on with Andrew at home and in the community. "It is a tool everyone can use—not only the student, but caregivers, parents, school—it is so easy to understand."

Engagement and Responsibility

Andrew demonstrated a high level of engagement throughout the planning process. When others were talking, Andrew would look at them and listen intently. Teachers noted body language and contact that demonstrated Andrew's full involvement. Andrew's mother commented that the process had given her son "greater control of part of his life instead of something being planned for him."

Andrew's mother observes increased confidence and personal responsibility as he participates in planning his life.

Ownership of the Plan

Andrew's mother remarked that previous planning had not meant much to him, but this process had impacted his behaviour. The family has the

planning chart on the dining room wall and Andrew interacts with it. Photos are added around the outside as Andrew achieves the actions in the plan.

Conclusion

This transition planning process brings together key people and organizations involved in a young person's life. The collaborative nature of the planning was a major strength. As one participant remarked, "It wasn't an 'us' and 'them'...it was everyone together for Andrew."

Young people with learning and behaviour disabilities continue to have significantly poor post-school outcomes. While transition from school to adult life is a time of uncertainty, careful planning and support can lead to positive outcomes. Using the strategy of graphic facilitation and the holistic framework of the Circle of Courage kept the focus on Andrew's needs and aspirations, resulting in a plan for purposeful transition.

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