• As you know, the purpose of transition programs and services is to prepare students for positive post-school outcomes so that they may be integrated in the community and assume young adult roles and responsibilities to the greatest extent possible.

• To achieve this purpose and have students reach their desired, positive post-school outcomes, transition services, according to IDEIA (2004), require a “coordinated set of activities”.

• This coordination must take place at all levels and be focused on students’ successful transition into young adulthood.
• Transition... where are we going? What is the status of transition programs and services in our state?

• We need to begin at the local level, where students are to receive these services. It is important that we understand the local transition programs and services and if that meet the needs of students with disabilities, served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, IDEIA.

• As we focus on local school systems, we must determine if these systems are climbing “up stairs” or descending “down” the figurative “staircase” of service delivery? Or are they stalled on a “floor” somewhere and not sure what direction to turn.

• We are addressing this issue through a number of ways. In this presentation, we will explain five initiatives focusing on transition programs and services throughout the state. These are not all the activities, but just a few we will highlight here.
• We will discuss six initiatives that are underway to improve transition programs and services within our state.

• To begin, we will be taking a closer look at transition programs and services at the local level during regularly scheduled Focused Monitoring Reviews, beginning Fall 2014.

• Building upon previous youth advocacy work, there will be a continued emphasis on the development of Youth and Young Adults in Transition or YAiT advocacy groups across the state. These groups, and activities associated with them, should help students develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills, both of which are evidenced-based practices for successful transition.

• The Alabama Transition Conference is a long-standing tradition within our state. It is also one of the main avenues in which professionals continue their professional development training in transition. We know this, because transition professionals have indicated that this conference is their primary source of transition information according to data provided that has been gathered from the Training in Transition evaluation reports.

• In order to fill that void from one conference to another, the Training “iN” Transition or TNT program was initiated and has been expanded. This program is an extensive online and onsite series of training modules on key transition topics.
• The Transition Leadership Academy is a summer event that brings together a select number of transition leaders from LEAs to develop local plans for the delivery of transition services.

• These five initiatives, along with other activities jointly sponsored by the ALSDE and the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute, activities in the SPDG, and ongoing ASLDE activities, will help bring a focus to transition and the needs of youth with disabilities as they prepare for post-secondary activities and life after high school.
• Beginning this year Alabama’s Continuous Improvement System incorporates an intensive review of transition services being provided to students with disabilities, as a result of increased complaints and/or due process hearings. Also, during the monitoring of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), it has been documented that there is a lack of or inadequate transition planning (such as: assessments, goals, and services) provided to students with disabilities.

• Another reason that we need to intensely examine our state’s transition program is because there is a renewal of interest in and concern for transition programs and services at the national level. This emphasis is coming from several sources including the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).
The **Continuous Improvement System** has as its anchor the State Systemic Improvement Plan (or S-SIP) as required by the Office of Special Education Programs. (next Feb)

As depicted in the figure above, which is found in the handbook, the Continuous Improvement System contains the following major components and is divided into four phases:

**A Focused Review** targets areas of needed improvement in compliance and practice.

- **PHASE I – Desk Audit**: consists of reviewing student records utilizing the STISETS web-based program.
- **PHASE II – System Profile/Fiscal Review**: consist of an onsite visit to determine compliance and program quality strengths and challenges.
- **PHASE III - Student Services Review (SSR)** is a case-based review method used to determine the extent to which students are progressing successfully and the system is supporting positive student outcomes. Additionally, the review will consist of two assessment instruments: the Transition Practices Survey and the Transition Program Rating Scale. A Parent Survey will be distributed to parents who have transition-aged youth.
- **PHASE IV – Indicator Review** consists of examining LEA data submitted through the district-approved process.

Additional components of the Continuous Improvement System include:
• **Technical Assistance and Training** which is provided to support system improvements.

and

• **Local Special Education Plans** which are reviewed to reflect procedural compliance aligned with local self-assessment and special education improvement planning.

All of these activities will continue as they have in the past, but as previously mentioned targeted steps will be infused into the process to specifically address transition.
• Alabama’s Continuous Improvement Process will include a review of transition programs and services beginning fall of 2014.

• As a part of PHASE 3: Student Service Reviews (SSR)/Review of Transition Practices, we will review 4 Steps of the online transition evaluation process. These steps include the use of an online Transition Program Evaluation System that has two assessment instruments: the Transition Practices Survey and the Transition Program Rating Scale.

• In addition to these two instruments, a Parent Survey will be provided to local systems to be distributed to parents who have transition-age youth.

• If these parent surveys are not returned an interview will be scheduled with parents of transition-age youth, as part of the Continuous Improvement Process.
• As previously mentioned, the Transition Program Evaluation System (TPES) includes the Transition Practices Survey (TPS) and the Transition Program Rating Scale (TPRS). There are two versions of each of these instruments based on individuals’ roles in transition.

• This system provides a one-stop online portal for transition coordinators, teachers, and transition-age students to enter information about their perceptions of transition programs and the actual services being provided to three randomly selected students.
• (click) There is a **Transition Coordinator’s** version and a **Transition Teacher’s** version of the **Transition Practices Survey (TPS)**.

• (click) The purpose of the TPS is to gain the perspectives of coordinators and teachers regarding the delivery of transition services in their school system and school, respectively. The TPS includes six sections that address content such as transition planning, transition practices, and program supports.

• (click) The Transition Program Rating Scale requires teachers to reflect upon the services being provided to three students they serve. The TPES randomly selects three different numbers for each teacher to use in identifying students from his or her caseload. For example, if numbers 1, 5, and 10 appeared, the teacher would choose the first, fifth, and tenth students on his or her caseload list. The teacher would then complete rating scales on each of these students.
To explain the transition components of the Continuous Improvement System we will review the four steps of the online transition evaluation process.

The online system includes instruments to be completed by the Special Education or Transition Coordinator and teachers responsible for the delivery of transition services and the students who receive transition services.
The first instrument, and the first to be completed in the online transition evaluation process is the Transition Practices Survey (TPS). The TPS is to be completed by the Special Education Coordinator, Transition Coordinator, or person responsible for overseeing and supervising the LEA’s transition program.

The TPS contains content items regarding transition planning and the delivery of services in the local school district.

It also includes items regarding transition program structure and professional development needs. It should take about 15 minutes or less to complete the survey.

The purpose of this survey is to gain the Special Education or Transition Coordinator’s perceptions of transition practices being provided in his or her LEA.
WHO? Transition Teacher


HOW? Access the Transition Program Evaluation System and the system will randomly select 3 numbers that the teacher uses to match to his or her numbered caseload list.

- In step two, Transition Teachers will complete THREE Transition Program Rating Scales (TPRS) by indicating what services are being provided to the students selected. All students will not need all, or should be expected to receive all transition services described in the scale. It is important that teachers be as accurate as possible in identifying the services provided to the three students randomly selected by the online system. The purpose of TPRS is to collect information on the overall service delivery practices.

- This procedure is different than typical program assessments, which usually ask participants to rate their performance and/or use of program requirements. The inherent problem with this approach alone is that there is a high risk that participants will give socially appropriate answers and not provide genuine responses that reflect actual practices. The TPRS addresses this limitation, to some degree, by asking special education teachers to reflect on the practices used with specific randomly selected students, thereby, taking the focus off the teachers and onto particular students’ services.

- It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete each scale, so the total possible time commitment to complete these scales would be no more than 1 hour and 20 minutes total. Teachers will be able to leave and return to the site in order to complete the scales at their convenience.
Similarly to the Transition Coordinator or Special Education Coordinator, in the third step, each Transition Teacher will complete the Transition Practices Survey (TPS).

Transition teachers are those who serve students with disabilities ages 14-21.

These teachers will complete the TPS according to their perceptions of the transition programs and services being delivered in their school.
In step 4 of the online evaluation system, the transition teacher will coordinate for the administration of THREE Transition Program Rating Scales (TPRS) Student Version with the 3 students randomly selected by the online system.

- Students will complete the TPRS by indicating what services they are currently receiving.
- It will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour for each student to complete the scale.
- If the student’s disability is so severe that he or she cannot complete the rating scale, then an interview will be scheduled or another student selected.
- It is suggested that students complete the scale in a computer lab, so they can be monitored by someone other than their transition teacher.
Parents input has been a part of the Continuous Improvement System process. This process will continue, but have an additional component targeting parents’ views of their child’s transition program and services.
The State Department will mail out the parent transition survey to the LEA three weeks prior to the onsite visit to the coordinator.

The coordinator should oversee the delivery of the parent transition surveys per student.

If no response is received from the parent within the first week, the coordinator should contact the parent to schedule an interview to be completed via phone (by ALSDE team member) prior to the end of the onsite visit.
• To recap the Focused Monitoring Review process that target transition programs and services, let’s review this timeline of the process.

Refer to timeline for notes
• The second transition initiative we would like to discuss is the Youth and Young Adults in Transition or YAiT.

• Youth and Young Adults in Transition (YAiT) is a statewide advocacy group for young people with disabilities. The YAiT group was established, in part, as a means to sustain and build upon the youth development and advocacy activities initiated through the My Voice project (2007).
• The mission and purpose of YAiT is to provide youth and young adults with disabilities a forum for developing and using their self-determination and leadership skills for the betterment of themselves and other young people with disabilities.

• The current statewide YAiT advocacy group has periodic regional meetings, at which members practice and develop their leadership roles, such as how to establish local chapters of YAiT and how to make presentations to others about disability.
• The third and probably most well-know transition initiative in our state is the Alabama Transition Conference.

• The Alabama Transition Conference is one of the longest-running annual transition events in the nation.

• Also, as previously mentioned, it is the primary forum that teachers, and other transition professionals, obtain their training in transition.
• The 24th annual Alabama Transition Conference will be held March 3-4, 2014.

• The annual Alabama Transition Conference offers two days of professional and personal development for transition stakeholders.

• This conference provides a forum through which participants are able to enhance their knowledge and skills on best practices, learn of exemplary and innovative programs and services, and mutually explore contemporary issues, problems, and solutions relating to the transition process for youth and young adults with disabilities.

• Registration for the conference is still open and is available online. To access the online registration, please visit the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute website at auburn.edu/atli and click the conference icon.

• As you can see from the graphic chosen for the conference announcement and program cover, Birmingham is the “spotlight” city this year.
• Training iN Transition or TNT is an ongoing, collaborative effort of the Alabama Department of Education and the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute.
• TNT is a comprehensive series of workshops and online training modules that provides ongoing professional development for service providers as well as personal development for young people with disabilities.

• The training series is expanded each year, with updates and additions reflecting the progression of state and national transition policies and practices.

• The training program includes 2 to 4-hour presentations, handouts and slide shows, participant pre- and post-tests, and program evaluation.

• Topical webinars are also periodically presented through this program.
Onsite TNT workshops are available during the annual Alabama Transition Conference in March and during the Alabama MEGA Conference in July each year.

Currently active are eight online modules. A brief overview of each module and what you may learn has been provided to you within today’s handout.

TNT online modules are designed to be taken in sequence. Module choice occurs after registration. Allow at least two hours to complete each module.

As the need continues each year, ALSDE will offer two training webinars. Webinar Six will be held on August 27, 2014 with registration opening in the spring, April 7th and closing August 13th, 2014. Webinar Six, just as this training, will contain content and national, state, and/or local policies and procedure updates specific to the upcoming school year.

Participation in these trainings affords you the opportunity to gain CEU credits and keep abreast of the latest in transition. For more updates on the Training iN Transition Series visit, auburn.edu/(forward slash) atli and click on the TNT logo.
The last state initiative we will discuss today is the Transition Leadership Academy.

The purpose of the Transition Leadership Academy is to strengthen and build capacity within local communities in order to deliver quality transition programs and services to students with disabilities.
The ultimate goal of the Academy is to improve transition services, as measured by implementation of local transition plans focused on improvement of Federal Indicators.

The 2014 Transition Leadership Academy is scheduled to be held on June 8th through the 10th of next year. Academy teams from local areas will be assisted with developing goals and prioritizing strategies to implement their transition plan once they are back in their local areas.

The Academy involves a multi-step evaluation and planning process carried out by local transition teams, consisting of 3-5 transition stakeholders, which include,

-- special educators, rehabilitation professionals, job coaches, transition coordinators, 504 coordinators,

-- career technical educators, mental health service providers, administrators,

-- students in transition, and/or parents.

We are pleased to acknowledge existing Academy teams who continue to keep the initiative going in their local areas year after year. These districts are listed here.
Technical assistance from agency state representatives who serve on Alabama’s State Interagency Transition Team or SITT is available upon request. SITT is a multidisciplinary group of representatives from various state agencies and organizations providing services for youth and young adults with disabilities. SITT convenes quarterly to seek and implement new and better ways of providing secondary special education and transition services for youth and young adults in Alabama.

Finally, follow-up on the plans developed during the Academy is provided to LEAs.

LEAs may request this assistance by visiting the Academy or SITT website.

We look forward to establishing more teams across the state.
The last state initiative we will discuss today is the Transition Leadership Academy.

The purpose of the Transition Leadership Academy is to strengthen and build capacity within local communities in order to deliver quality transition programs and services to students with disabilities.
As a recap, the six transition initiatives we have reviewed in this presentation are:

a. Initiating an intensified approach for examining local transition services and programs, during regularly scheduled Focused Monitoring Review sessions.
b. Continuing the emphasis on the development of self-determination and self-advocacy skills in youth with disabilities, by encouraging and assisting in the formation of Youth and Young Adults in Transition (YAiT) groups.
c. Keeping with the tradition of offering a statewide forum for transition training through the Alabama Transition Conference, and
d. Providing on-going training through the Training ‘iN’ Transition (TNT) program.
e. Developing local plans for the delivery of transition services.

Again, these are not all of the transition initiatives being conducted in our state, but just a few we wanted to review in this presentation.
As we mentioned at the beginning of this presentation, OSEP describes transition services as a “coordinated set of activities”. Coordination of this magnitude and importance requires a great deal of teamwork.

Thank you for what you do as a part of the team to improve transition services and programs within our state.

Ultimately, having good transition services and programs will result in better post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities.

Again, thank you and we appreciate your assistance!