**5-Module Curriculum for Postsecondary Education Exploration**

**Course Overview:**

This curriculum aims to introduce students, especially students with disabilities (SWDs), to the world of post-secondary education and career exploration. The goal is to engage students early in understanding the wide range of postsecondary opportunities and the necessary steps for transition from high school to various career pathways. The curriculum also includes advising students and their families on disability services, financial aid, and exploring appropriate academic and vocational options.

**Module 1: Introduction to Postsecondary Education & Career Exploration**

**Objective:**
Students will explore a variety of postsecondary education options, including academic, vocational, and occupational training. They will begin to identify career interests and the educational requirements to pursue them.

**Key Topics:**

1. **What is Postsecondary Education?**
	* Introduction to community colleges, universities, vocational schools, trade schools, military, apprenticeships, and specialized postsecondary programs.
	* Overview of different career fields (e.g., healthcare, technology, trades, arts, and sciences).
2. **Exploring Career Options**
	* Identifying personal interests and strengths.
	* Introduction to career interest assessments to help guide students' career exploration.
3. **Academic and Vocational Pathways**
	* The difference between academic and vocational training programs (AA/AS degrees, certificate programs, apprenticeships, technical programs).
	* Exploring how different training pathways lead to different careers.

**Activities:**

* Career interest navigation.
* Group discussions on various careers and required training.
* Watch videos or presentations from professionals in various fields.

**Module 2: Academic Planning and Understanding the Admissions Process**

**Objective:**
Students will learn about academic curricula and the postsecondary admissions process, including how to research potential schools, how to plan courses, and the steps to apply to postsecondary institutions.

**Key Topics:**

1. **Understanding the Path to College/Vocational Schools**
	* Overview of middle school courses that prepare students for high school and postsecondary education.
	* Introduction to the high school curriculum and how it leads to college or vocational programs (e.g., math, science, and language requirements).
2. **Navigating College & Vocational School Applications**
	* The steps to apply to colleges and vocational training programs (e.g., application forms, required documents, deadlines).
	* Introduction to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and how it can help fund postsecondary education.
3. **Support for SWDs in the Postsecondary Application Process**
	* How SWDs can access additional support, including personalized academic planning and guidance for their specific needs.

**Activities:**

* Review sample college and vocational school applications.
* Practice filling out a simple college application form.
* Role-play a family meeting where parents discuss the steps of applying to postsecondary institutions.

**Module 3: Understanding Disability Services in Postsecondary Settings**

**Objective:**
Students and families will gain an understanding of the differences between disability services in special education and postsecondary education settings, and how to access support at colleges, vocational schools, and other institutions.

**Key Topics:**

1. **Disability Services: High School vs. Postsecondary**
	* Differences in accessing disability services between high school and post-secondary education (self-advocacy, documentation, and responsibility for requesting accommodations).
	* Introduction to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how it applies to postsecondary education.
2. **Disability Support at Colleges and Vocational Schools**
	* Overview of the Disability Services office at colleges and vocational schools.
	* Types of accommodations available (e.g., extended test time, note-taking services, assistive technology).
	* Understanding how to request accommodations for college entrance exams (e.g., SAT, ACT).
3. **State and Local Agencies**
	* Introduction to agencies such as OPWDD (Office for People with Developmental Disabilities) and OMH (Office of Mental Health) that provide services and support for SWDs during their transition to postsecondary education.

**Activities:**

* Discuss the process of requesting accommodation in a postsecondary setting.
* Invite a representative from the local college’s Disability Services office to speak to the class.
* Provide a simple guide on how to request accommodation for standardized tests (e.g., SAT, ACT).

**Module 4: Postsecondary Exploration Activities: Campus Visits & College Fairs**

**Objective:**
Students will participate in real-world activities to explore postsecondary education options and connect with different postsecondary institutions, including universities, community colleges, and vocational programs.

**Key Topics:**

1. **Campus Visits: Exploring Colleges and Vocational Schools**
	* Planning visits to local universities, community college, or vocational school campuses to explore their academic and disability services.
	* Preparing for a campus visit: What to look for and questions to ask (e.g., “What accommodations are available?”, “What programs are offered for students with disabilities?”).
2. **Attending College and Career Fairs**
	* How to navigate a college fair to gather information about various institutions.
	* The importance of talking to representatives from disability services and learning about different programs.
3. **Visit to Job Corps Campus**
	* Introduction to Job Corps as an alternative postsecondary program that focuses on vocational training.
	* Planning a visit to a local Job Corps campus to explore options for career training.

**Activities:**

* Organize a group campus visit or virtual tour to a local university or community college.
* Attend a local college fair or host a mini-college fair at school.
* Arrange a tour of a local Job Corps center and discuss potential career-focused programs.

**Module 5: Transition Planning and Preparing for the Future**

**Objective:**
Students will create a transition plan for postsecondary education, which includes career goals, educational objectives, and steps to take to prepare for the transition from high school to college or vocational training.

**Key Topics:**

1. **Creating a Postsecondary Transition Plan**
	* Setting short- and long-term goals for postsecondary education and career.
	* Identifying necessary steps and deadlines for achieving those goals (e.g., college applications, scholarship deadlines, career exploration).
2. **Building Skills for a Successful Transition**
	* The importance of self-advocacy and independence in a postsecondary setting.
	* Building skills such as time management, budgeting, and problem-solving to succeed in postsecondary environments.
3. **Technology Needs for Postsecondary Education**
	* Identifying technology tools that may be needed in postsecondary education, such as adaptive technologies or assistive devices.
	* Discussing technology options available for SWDs in postsecondary settings.

**Activities:**

* Develop a personalized transition plan, including academic and career goals.
* Practice self-advocacy skills through role-playing scenarios (e.g., requesting accommodation).
* Create a list of technology tools and resources that may be needed for postsecondary success.

**Assessment & Reflection:**

* **Reflection Journal:** At the end of the curriculum, students will reflect on their learning experience and write about their postsecondary goals.
* **Transition Plan Presentation:** Students will present their transition plan to the class, discussing their postsecondary education and career goals.

This 5-module curriculum introduces students to postsecondary exploration, helping them understand various education and career paths, the importance of academic planning, and the available disability services. By focusing on hands-on activities and real-world experiences, students will be empowered to start planning for their futures early, while also learning how to advocate for themselves and access support services in postsecondary settings.