

# ***FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL***

## **SECTION 18**

### ***EDUCATION: COACHING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS***

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## SECTION 18A & 18B

### A. BACKGROUND

**Young people in foster care are incredibly resilient.** However, some young people in foster care can struggle academically due to a variety of factors, including school/home instability (moving from home to home and/or switching schools, which can cause gaps in learning and credit obtainment) and experiencing trauma (which could impede executive functioning associated with academic success).

For a young person who may have academic gaps, a learning disability, and/or be several grade levels behind, obtaining a high school degree/equivalency can be very challenging.

However, when young people receive the supports and guidance they need, the sky is the limit. Resilience can translate into grit and determination, and in NYC there are many programs and resources for foster youth who are college-bound.

No matter the academic challenges or gifts a young person has, the **Coach's role is to ensure that young person is enrolled in a best-fit school/program, persists in that setting, and has the supports and resources they need to reach their full educational potential.**

### B. COACH'S ROLE IN HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE ACHIEVE THEIR ACADEMIC GOALS

**The aim is to help all young people graduate high school** and eventually navigate onto a living wage career path. In today's economy, with some exceptions, a living wage career requires a college degree and/or vocational credentials.

Without a high school degree, there is little-to-no chance that a young person will be able to be economically self-sufficient in New York City. These young people will be at very high risk of further system involvement. **Therefore, it is the role of a Coach to ensure that all young people get their high school degree or equivalency, no matter how long that takes!** From there, Coaches help young people navigate onto a best-fit post-secondary pathway and persist in that setting.

Should a young person not be ready to enroll, Coaches can help them connect to career development experiences and/or academic remediation supports to help build their resumes, skills, and post-secondary preparedness.

Should a young person not persist in any particular school/program, the Coach helps them to reflect on the experience, explore other opportunities, and re-engage in a better-fit setting.

Very few young people, if any, will transition right from high school onto a living-wage job without any post-secondary credentials. There are some civil service positions where this is possible – for example, firefighters do not require any college degree and earn over \$55,000 the first year. However, these exams only come out every few years or so and are extremely competitive. And even where these jobs do exist, having some sort of post-secondary degree/ credentials will ultimately help the young person advance, earn more, and/or have more mobility and overall economic stability.

**Therefore, Coaches also expose all young people to post-secondary options as early as possible**, including college and accredited vocational programs, to help them start to plan and prepare. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#).

**WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE ENROLL IN THE FAIR FUTURES COACHING PROGRAM, THEY WILL COME IN WITH VARYING LEVELS OF ACADEMIC SKILLS AND CREDENTIALS. COACHES MEET YOUTH WHERE THEY ARE AND HELP THEM ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL, WHETHER THEY ARE DISCONNECTED OR A STAR STUDENT.**

## **A COACH'S ROLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT A DEGREE, BASED ON WHERE THEY ARE, INCLUDES:**

FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN HIGH SCHOOL:

**Coaches help young people persist** with the overall goal of helping with grade promotion and attaining with 10+ credits that year.<sup>1</sup> They do so by providing emotional support, visiting the school, connecting them to needed services/resources, checking in at critical junctures, and helping them to navigate challenges, as needed.

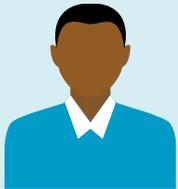
FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN AN HSE PROGRAM:

**Coaches help them persist with the overall goal of helping them obtain their HSE.** They do so by visiting the program, providing emotional support, connecting them to needed services/resources, checking-in at critical junctures, and helping them to navigate challenges, as needed. [See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D.](#)

FOR DISCONNECTED YOUTH WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE/EQUIVALENCY:

**The Coach helps reconnect them to an appropriate academic setting.** Even if a young person is initially not interested in getting a high school degree/equivalency, the Coach's role is help them understand why they need their degree. While a young person should always be driving his/her own goals and a Coach should be supportive of whatever pathway they choose, a high school degree is a necessity for their success. It is the Coach's responsibility to find ways to help them realize this in a way that is motivating and supportive. **Telling a young person is degree is important usually doesn't work – they know that!** There are other effective, innovative approaches to use. [See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 20.](#)

### **OVERALL, FROM AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE, COACHES:**



- **Ensure young people are enrolled in a best-fit school, college, or program** (and connect them to one if they are not)
- **Help young people persist in that academic setting**
- **Build relationships** with the primary people at the young person's school/program, and work with the young person's family/adult figures to support them
- **Plan and prepare** for the next step on their journey

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<sup>1</sup> Students with intellectual disabilities who are alternately assessed will have a modified persistence goal. See Goals & Steps framework.

## SECTION 18C

### C. COACHING 9TH GRADE STUDENTS/1ST YEAR OF COACHING

#### COACHING 9TH GRADE STUDENTS

Many students will begin coaching in the 9th grade. This is a critical transition year for all young people, as it can be overwhelming both academically and socially. High school students have to adjust to a new school environment, are expected to perform more independently in their academic work, and also start feeling increased social pressures and influences.

For students in foster care, who often enter 9th grade academically behind or over-age, these academic expectations, combined with the social pressures, can lead them to repeat 9th grade. It doesn't feel good to fail. At this juncture, the desire to be accepted by their peers, the pull of the streets, and/or the allure of getting a job and earning money, can lead them to negative outcomes, such as dropping out and/or experiencing early parenthood.

Students who enter the 9th grade on/above grade level can also get deterred if they do not have the right supports or if they are in an under-performing school. Instead of getting on a 4-year graduation, college-bound or vocational track, they can also slip through the cracks.



**Coaches can play a critical role in helping students transition successfully to high school** so that the first year does not feel as challenging. Ideally, Coaches will begin building a trusting relationship with the student in the summer before the 9th grade. During this period, Coaches can help students mentally prepare for what they may expect in high school and let them know that they will be there for them.

Coaches should follow up with students the day before their first day of high school, the first day after to reflect on the experience, and check in on them every week thereafter. If a young person knows that there is a caring, supportive adult in their lives who believes in their potential, cares about their emotional well-being, and monitors and supports their academic performance, the young person will often strive to live up to that adult's expectations. They often will not do it for themselves until a later developmental stage.

#### **DURING THE 9TH GRADE, COACHES SHOULD:**

- Set up the first school visit (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 19](#))
- Check in with the student's guidance counselor each semester, or more frequently if needed
- Continue to build a trusting relationship with the young person, so that the young person comes to them before a challenge becomes a major issue
- Provide emotional support to young people, including helping them navigate new social dynamics (friends, relationships, etc.)
- Ask about homework assignments and tests, and attempt to connect them to a tutor (as most students could benefit);
- Connect students to afterschool and summer activities in line with their interests to keep them engaged, and/or to a paid internship (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#)).
- Connect them to summer school, if needed
- Start engaging youth in post-secondary exposure, career exploration, and career development activities. Even if a young person is struggling academically, these activities can help them envision a pathway and/or build self-esteem, which can lead to increased engagement in school. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#))

#### **THE FIRST SCHOOL VISIT**

For students in 9th grade, Coaches should set up a school visit as soon as possible, in September or October of their first term.

For those who come into the program in other grades or junctures, the Coach should visit the school/HSE program (with the young person, whenever possible) within the first 30 days, as discussed in the "Initial Engagement" section.

[See Appendix C5\\_First School Visit.](#)

# 48%

**OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
IN FOSTER CARE  
REPEATED  
9TH GRADE**

IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-18

The meeting should take place with the young person, the student's guidance counselor and any other school staff, as needed, and the parent (if they are able to attend).

The purpose of the visit is to:

- Show the young person that the Coach cares about them;
- Ensure that they are enrolled in a safe, productive environment ([See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#));
- Help create a plan for graduation and post-secondary exploration;
- Ensure that the student is receiving any needed supports from the school/program;
- Form a working relationship with key staff, so that the school knows to reach out to the Coach if any challenges, issues, or opportunities arise as it relates to that young person.

### **Before the first visit**

The Coach should obtain required documentation:

- For youth in foster care, prepare the ACS school records request letter or obtain a signed release from the youth's parent, legal guardian, or the youth (if they are over 18, on final discharge, or adopted).  
See [Appendix F2\\_School Records Request Letter](#).
- Review the student's most recent report card, attendance, transcript (if they are in their second year of high school or later), and IEP (if they have one).
- Explain the purpose of the visit to the young person. By this point, the Coach should already have begun to develop a solid rapport with the young person and ensured that they understand that the Coach is there to support them
- Reach out to the parent, as appropriate, to see if they can attend.
- If they have a good relationship with the student, invite the youth's Case Planner, Socio-Therapist, or other relevant agency staff to participate.

### **During the first visit**

The Coach should set the stage for the meeting, and try to create a warm, engaging, and supportive environment. Sometimes these visits can be traumatic, as some young people associate "school" with another "system," and guidance counselors do not always take a strength-based approach, particularly if a young person is struggling academically or has behavioral concerns. The Coach should model the appropriate tone, try to create a "circle of support" around the young person, and empower the young person to participate in the discussion.

If the student does not have strong performance, **it is the role of the Coach to focus on their potential**, and what steps can be taken. It may be helpful for the Coach to meet with the guidance counselor or other school staff alone before asking the student to join the meeting, to ensure everyone is on the same page. This can be useful if there are sensitive topics to discuss.

The Coach should also be sure to:

- Let the student talk!
- Inquire about any needs the student has, particularly if they have an IEP or 504 Plan, and whether the appropriate support services are in place (refer to [Appendix F1\\_K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#)).
- Review the student's attendance thus far, including timeliness and attendance in individual classes. It is common for students to attend school regularly but arrive late, skip academic classes, or leave school early. The students should be given a chance to express their thoughts and concerns as well.
- Discuss any supports the school has (e.g., afterschool programs, Regents prep, extracurricular activities, etc.), and the student's interests in these activities.
- Assess the school for quality and fit. Ideally, that young person received individualized support with the high school selection process while in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. However, students come into foster care at all ages and may not have been assisted with the selection process. If a student is struggling with attendance and performance, among the factors influencing this may be the school setting – in some cases, a small transfer high school, for example, may be a better fit than a larger, traditional one. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#))

## IF THE STUDENT IS IN 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE OR ABOVE (OR A SECOND-TIME 9<sup>TH</sup> GRADER), THE COACH SHOULD ALSO:

- Discuss the high school graduation goal: What type of degree is the student hoping to earn?**

Option include: **Advanced Regents, Regents, Local Degree**

An alternative degree called a **Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC)** is also available for students with significant disabilities. *Note: a SACC degree is not a high school diploma and cannot be used to apply to college, the military, or trade schools, as the other degrees can. Students with IEPs should earn a diploma whenever possible and the SACC should be a last resort.* (See [Appendix F7\\_High School Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities](#))

With a **Local Degree**, the young person can pass their Regents exams with a 55 (instead of a 65)

*This should only be discussed as an option if the student is really struggling to pass and getting discouraged.*

- Review the young person's transcript and progress towards graduation with the Guidance Counselor.**

*Note: Coaches do not need to discuss the high school graduation goal or type of degree for first-time 9th graders, as all young people should start off aiming for a Regents degree (unless they are already being tracked for an alternative high school degree).*

See [Appendix F6\\_High School Graduation Checklist](#).

### After the first visit:

**The Coach should debrief with the student** and talk through any feelings the meeting may have produced, particularly if the student's performance is not optimal. This is an important relationship-building moment – it will reinforce that the Coach is there for them, no matter how they are doing in school, and that they believe in the young person.

The Coach should also update the parent if he/she was not able to attend.

Additionally, the Coach should notify the case planner of any urgent concerns, if they weren't present, and include any relevant information about the visit in the monthly report to the Case Planner (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 12B](#)).

Urgent concerns would include:

- If the student is already cutting classes;
- If there are concerns about bullying;
- If the student's IEP isn't being followed
- If there's a medication form that needs to be completed, etc.

As early as possible, the Coach should encourage all students to be connected to a tutor. See Fair Futures Program Manual [Section 18F](#) and [Section 19](#) for more information.

### If the student is experiencing suspensions and disciplinary issues:

- Coaches should review Section V of [Appendix F1\\_K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#).
- Additionally, see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 5F](#) for detailed steps to take.

## AFTER THE 9TH GRADE

### IF THE YOUNG PERSON COMPLETES THE SCHOOL YEAR WITH 10+ CREDITS AND IS PROMOTED:

The Coach should continue to provide coaching/persistence support going into 10th grade and beyond. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18E](#))

### IF A YOUNG PERSON REPEATS THE 9TH GRADE:

The Coach should engage their Supervisor, the school guidance counselor, the case planning team, and the student's parent to gather additional information/input on the best course of action.

If the issue does not seem to be academic driven and related more to engagement, potential steps include:

- Help young person understand why school is important by connecting them to a peer group or credible messenger;
- Help young person understand why a school is important by connecting them to an extracurricular program or experience in line with their interests to build self-esteem & help them envision pathway;
- Help young person have a "breakthrough moment" by taking them on a trip or engaging in a new experience that broadens their horizons.
- Work with young person to improve attendance; coach young person, text/call young person in the mornings.

If the student is engaged but struggling due to mostly academic reasons, common actions include:

- Refer the student to a tutor (and follow-up with tutor on performance);
- Help the student enroll in afterschool programming or Regents exam prep;
- Create a study plan;
- Advocate with the school/DOE to help the student obtain a particular service or accommodation;
- Request that the school submit an evaluation for an IEP or 504 Plan (requires parent's consent - refer to [Appendix F1\\_K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#));
- Evaluate whether the school is a good fit with Supervisor (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#)).

### IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER IF TRANSFERRING SCHOOLS SEEMS LIKE A GOOD OPTION:

- ❖ **Many 9th graders experience a dip in performance**, due to the adjustment period and other social and social-emotional factors.
- ❖ **If a student is doing poorly in school, an assessment should be made whether the school is a good fit**, including the size of the school and what services/supports it offers. Because this is an important and nuanced decision, the Coach should engage their Supervisor and review [Appendix F8\\_Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#).
- ❖ **If the student has an IEP**, determine if their current school has sufficient supports to meet their needs.
- ❖ **Students who were enrolled in 12:1 or 12:1:1 classes in middle school often find the transition to high school particularly difficult.** Many NYC public high schools, especially the smaller ones, do not offer self-contained 15:1 classes, or may only offer 15:1 classes for ELA and math. Even if the school has a 15:1 setting, the larger class size and lack of additional adult support may be hard for students to manage. Additionally, the student will likely be in general education classes for electives, and they will need to navigate the building on their own unless they qualify for a health or crisis para. For these students, you may need to consider other options, like District 75 inclusion, nonpublic schools, or specialized programs for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) or Intellectual Disabilities (ID).

Refer to the Special Education section of [Appendix F1\\_K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#) for more information and next steps.

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# SECTION 18D

## D. TRANSFERRING STUDENTS TO AN ANOTHER HIGH SCHOOL

Students may need to transfer into another high school for a variety of reasons. Remember that this is an important and nuanced decision, and all stakeholders should be consulted before taking action – the young person, parent, school/guidance counselor, Case Planner, the Coach’s Supervisor, etc.

Should this become a goal, the Coach should select the “[Transfer student into a better-fit high school setting](#)” goal in the Online Platform and follow the Required Steps.

### TYPES OF SCHOOL TRANSFERS

❖ **Transfer via the high school selection process:**

First-time 9th graders who are unhappy with their high school match can go through the high school admissions process again to apply for a 10th grade seat at a new high school. See [Appendix F5\\_High School Selection Guide](#).

❖ **Transfer to an alternative high school setting: Transfer schools, YABCs, or a High School Equivalency Program**

All of these models are tailored to serve overage, under-credited students and provide them with the supports they need to graduate in a condensed timeframe. See [Appendix F8\\_Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#) for a description of each type of alternative high school, the supports they provide, the application process, and coaching guidelines around enrollment and persistence.

- When selecting a program, the Coach should refer to [Appendix F8\\_Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#)
- A list and description of screened transfer high schools can be found in [Appendix F9\\_Vetted List of Alternative Middle and High Schools](#).
- A directory of HSE programs can be found in [Appendix H3\\_Career Development Tools \(coming soon!\)](#)
- Coaches should motivate the student and help them apply. See “[Transfer student into a better-fit high school setting](#)” Goal for Potential Steps a Coach can take with the student.
- The Coach should visit the program with the young person

❖ **Transfer to another traditional high school setting**

Students can request a school transfer for medical, safety, or travel hardship. They can also request a guidance transfer if they are struggling with academics, behavior, social-emotional concerns or attendance, and a different school could address the problem. Since transfer high schools and other alternative settings mostly serve students age 16 and older, these types of transfers may be the best option for younger students who need a new school. For more information, refer to [Appendix F10\\_Requesting School Transfers](#).

❖ **Transfer to an international high school**

If a student has newly arrived in the country and is an English Language Learner (ELL), they may want to consider an international high school. International schools are designed to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of newly-arrived immigrant students. They offer additional English as a New Language (ENL) supports and have some flexibility with Regents exams requirements. To enroll, students must list the school on their High School application or be placed through the [Family Welcome Center](#).

❖ **Transfer to a specialized setting including: Day Treatment Programs and non-public special education schools**

Students who require intensive special education supports beyond what is available in a District 1-32 high school will need to consider a specialized setting. This should typically be the last-resort option, after considering a local diploma and an alternative high school (transfer school, HSE program, etc.). In order to enroll in a specialized setting, students will need updated psychological testing and a current psychiatric or other specialized evaluation. They also likely will need a new recommendation on their IEP.

For more information on the different types of specialized settings available to students with disabilities and how to apply, see [Appendix F1\\_K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#) and [Appendix F10\\_Requesting School Transfers](#).

If a Coach is not sure which type of program to help a student pursue, they can visit a **Referral Center** for more information. Social workers at Referral Centers can counsel students on their options, refer students to schools with available seats, and help students enroll.

## **SELECTING THE BEST-FIT ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL**

If an alternative high school transfer is needed, the next step is to figure out what type of alternative school/program would be a best fit: an HSE program, transfer high school, or YABC school. See [Appendix F8\\_Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#) for more information. Key factors to consider when determining the type of alternative high school include:

### **□ Age, Number of Credits Earned, Regents Passed**

*For example:* A student cannot remain in a YABC program or transfer high school past the end of the school year when they turn 21. If a young person transfers into a transfer high school at age 19 but does not earn a degree by age 21, they will have to leave the school and enroll in an HSE program. *Therefore, it is important to consider the student's age, number of credits, and Regents exams passed when considering options.*

There is a rough visual guide in [Appendix F8](#) that provides guidelines around the type of school/program based solely on age and number of credits obtained.

### **□ Any special needs a student has and whether their needs can be met in that setting.**

Not all transfer schools and YABCs provide the full range of IEP programs that may be available in other schools. To enroll in some transfer schools and YABCs, sometime the student's IEP needs to be adjusted. Coaches will need to weigh the potential benefits of a transfer school, such as the ability to earn credits in a shorter time frame, with a student's need for specialized services.

Students with significant mental health needs or learning disabilities may require a more specialized setting, such as a nonpublic school.

Once the type of alternative high school is established, the Coach should help the young person **find the best school/program** within that category. Also refer to the [Appendix F8\\_Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#) for additional guidance.

## **FACTORS THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN SELECTING THE BEST-FIT HIGH SCHOOL/PROGRAM:**

### **Location**

- What borough(s) can the student reasonably travel to, and want to travel to)? Was the student's attendance at their previous school impacted by travel?

### **School quality (graduation rate, safety/climate, etc.)**

- To assess key performance measures, including the graduation rate, climate, etc., look online at the schools' dashboard: <https://tools.nycenet.edu>
- Note: a graduation rate around/over ~50% for a transfer school is average/acceptable, as the 6-year graduation rate of overage/under credited students is closer to ~15%. Some schools may have lower rates than others because they accept students with little/no credits.
- Refer to the [One Degree Directory](#) for transfer schools with a 50%+ graduation rate and additional details on program structure.

### **Student needs and whether they can be accommodated**

- Does the student have an IEP or 504 Plan? If so, can the school of interest can accommodate their needs?
- If the school cannot meet the needs as outlined in the student's plan, is getting the student's IEP/504 Plan reevaluated an option that makes sense?
  - The Coach should discuss with their Supervisor, and this conversation should be had with the school's team, the student, and the student's parent. The Case Planning team should also be looped in.

## Student's interests

The student's interests should be placed front and center and be considered alongside the above factors. Some factors to consider include:

- Is the student motivated to attend a particular school that also meets the above criteria?
- Does the student want/need a paid internship?
- Is there a particular area of study or extracurricular that the student is passionate about that one school has and another doesn't?

## All of the above can help inform this important and nuanced decision.

The remaining Required Steps for the "[Transfer student into a better-fit high school setting](#)" goal include:

- Create a vetted list of specific high schools/programs to visit with the young person (based on the above);
- Discuss plans with parent and Case Planner
- Reach out to potential schools/programs to ask about open houses, process, eligibility criteria, services offered, etc.
- Visit potential schools/programs with young person (and/or have parent visit with young person)
- Follow-up with school/program and young person after visit(s) to debrief and hear their thoughts
- Apply to a best-fit school or HSE program; support young person through any interviews
- Enroll in best-fit school or HSE program; complete any paperwork
- Celebrate acceptance into the new school/program
- Follow up with young person before the first day of school to provide support/encouragement
- Follow up with young person after the first day to debrief/reflect on experience
- Follow up with young person after the first week to debrief/reflect on experience (if still enrolled at this point, check off goal as "completed")

**If the young person is not accepted to a particular school or program**, keep repeating the above steps until the student is accepted.

**Transferring schools sometimes requires some advocacy from the Coach! The fact that the Coach is not giving up and sticking with the student throughout the entire process will help strengthen their relationship.**

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# SECTION 18E

## E. PERSISTING IN HIGH SCHOOL/HSE PROGRAM

Once a student is enrolled in a best-fit school or program, the Coach will provide persistence coaching until a high school degree or HSE is obtained.

To determine a young person's Academic goal, refer to [Appendix E\\_Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#). Use the [High School Roadmap](#) to review the Student Situations and the corresponding goals.

See examples of student situations and goals below:

- ❖ **If the student is enrolled in high school (including a transfer high school or YABC),** the goal will be: [“Complete school year promoted with 10+ credits”](#) if they are in grades 9-11. Once the student is a high school senior or have approximately one year left to graduate, the goal becomes: [“Obtain high school degree”](#)
- ❖ **If the student is in an HSE program,** the goal will be: [“Advance a grade level in a High School Equivalency Program and/or Pass a section of the TASC exam.”](#) Once they are ready to take the full exam or are close to passing most of it, the goal becomes: [“Obtain High School Equivalency”](#)
- ❖ **If the student is enrolled in an alternate assessment (non-degree) high school program,** the goal is: [“Complete school year with 90%+ attendance and mastery of IEP Goals.”](#) Once the student is one year away from graduating, the goal becomes: [“Obtain Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential”](#)

Depending on the **Goal**, there are some **Required Steps**, which are in line with best practice, and necessary to help student achieve their potential.

**The Required Steps that apply to students enrolled in high school** who have a goal of [“Complete school year promoted with 10+ credits”](#) or [“Obtain high school degree”](#) include:

- Monitor attendance
  - This should happen at whatever frequency attendance data is provided.
  - If a student is in a traditional DOE high school, monthly attendance data is currently provided.
  - If a student is in a transfer high school, some provide biweekly data. The Coach should form a relationship with the student's Counselor (who typically work at much lower ratios than traditional schools) and request a regular update.
- Monitor grades
  - This should happen on whatever frequency data is provided (typically quarterly).
  - Some transfer schools offer grades on a biweekly basis.
- Monitor student's transcript
  - In February and July (for students on a semester schedule), and in December, March, and July (trimester schedule).
  - This ensures that Coaches are monitoring not just a student's grades but their cumulative credits, the Regents exam that they have completed, and which exams are still needed to graduate.
  - For students with a GPA below 75, grades should be monitored ideally biweekly, if possible.
- Speak to/meet with the guidance counselor/staff regarding young person's attendance or performance
  - The Coach should do this at least once per semester (or more if needed) to ensure the student is on-track for graduation and receiving the supports they need. These conversations will also be centered around planning and preparing for a post-secondary setting. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#))
  - The Coach should bring the [Appendix F6\\_High School Graduation Checklist](#) and ensure the student has the appropriate high school graduation goal (Advanced Regents diploma, Regents diploma, Local Diploma, CDOS, or SACC – see [Appendix F7\\_High School Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities](#)).

- Provide weekly coaching, support, and encouragement around school persistence: *Text, call, or meet student*
  - Regardless of the academic setting, the Coach should check in each week with the young person. If needed, this can include an in-person visit to discuss any concerns.
  - If they are doing well, it can be a weekly text message to send an encouraging, supportive message (e.g., “Good luck on that quiz today! You have been working so hard – let me know how it goes.”).
  - A weekly contact also helps with continuing to build the relationship, even if the young person does not respond, they will know that their Coach is still there for them. **Consistency and constancy!**

**If the student is engaged in school but struggling academically**, some common actions include:

(all are **Potential Steps** under the “[Complete school year promoted with 10+ credits](#)” or “[Obtain high school degree](#)” goals)

- Refer the student to a tutor (and follow-up with tutor on performance);
- Help the student enroll in afterschool programming or Regents exam prep;
- Create a study plan;
- Advocate with the school/DOE to help the student obtain a particular service or accommodation;
- Request that the school submit an evaluation for an IEP or 504 Plan (requires parent's consent) (Refer to [Appendix F1\\_K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#))
- Evaluate whether the school is a good fit with Supervisor (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#))

**If the student also needs support around engagement in school** (not just academic support), effective suggestions/

**Potential Steps** include:

- Help young person understand why school is important by connecting them to a peer group or credible messenger;
- Help young person understand why a school is important by connecting them to an extracurricular program or experience in line with their interests to build self-esteem & help them envision pathway;
- Help young person have a “breakthrough moment” by taking them on a trip or engaging in a new experience that broadens their horizons.
- Work with young person to improve attendance; coach young person, text/call young person in the mornings.

**If the student is experiencing suspensions and disciplinary issues**, Coaches should review [Section V of Appendix F1\\_K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#). See also [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 5E](#) for detailed steps to take.

**If the student is in an HSE program**, the Required Steps to help them persist include:

See “[Advance a grade level in a High School Equivalency Program and/or Pass a section of the TASC exam](#)” goal

- Monitor attendance and performance biweekly (check-in with the young person's Primary Person at the program);
- Provide weekly persistence coaching, support, and encouragement to advance grade level (text, call, or meet).
- If the student is struggling, follow the Potential Steps listed above under the student situation “**If the student is engaged in school but struggling academically**”

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# SECTION 18F

## F. ADVOCACY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 5G](#) for a detailed overview on how to provide educational advocacy for special education students and students with disabilities, and [Appendix F1\\_K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual, Section V](#).

Students who require accommodations to make sure their educational needs are met may have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or a 504 plan. For these students, an additional required goal is “[Ensure receipt of appropriate accommodations or special education services](#).” This is important because sometimes students can fall through the cracks and not receive the services they need to succeed academically.



This goal will automatically populate in the Youth Profile section of the Online Platform if a student has an IEP or 504 Plan.

The **Required Steps** that ensure students are receiving appropriate services include:

- Obtain copy of most recent IEP/504 Plan and ensure it is current within the last year. If it's not, contact the school to see if a more recent version exists; if needed, work with the school and family to schedule a new meeting as soon as possible
- Participate in annual IEP meeting and/or 504 meeting; try to ensure the student and student's parent participates
- Confirm student is receiving all accommodations and services mandated by 504 or IEP, and is in the right classroom setting

Some **Potential Steps** include (depending on the course of action needed):

- Renew 504 Plan;
- Obtain copy of most recent psycho-educational evaluation and ensure it is current within the last 3 years (required for students with IEPs but not 504s);
- Request new accommodation(s), if needed (requires parent's consent);
- Request that the school conduct a new IEP or 504 evaluation, if needed (requires parent's consent);
- Request an independent educational evaluation if student is not demonstrating progress and the school evaluation is not comprehensive (requires parental consent);
- Request that the school make changes to IEP, if needed (requires parent's consent);
- If needed, work with educational decision-maker to exercise due process rights on behalf of student (e.g., request mediation or an impartial hearing).
  - *This should only happen after talking with the student's teachers, principal, IEP team, and case planning team (and, when needed, the District Superintendent).*
- Work with school [to apply to ACCES-VR](#); proceed to Career Development Goals in [Appendix E\\_Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#) or in the Online Platform.

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# SECTION 18G

## G. CONNECTING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO TUTORS



**In most circumstances, tutoring would be beneficial for any high school student.** If the student is behind, it will help bring them closer to being on grade-level. If the student is an A student, tutoring could help them prepare for the PSATs or SATs to become eligible for a better college and/or more scholarships.

However, if tutoring is not available to all students for whatever reason, students who are at risk of not being promoted or have below a 75 average should be prioritized.

After the Coach has formed a relationship with the student, the Coach should make this suggestion to the student and his/her parent. If the student is open to it, the Coach will refer the student to a Tutor. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 19](#))

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