

Postsecondary Transition Companion Film:

Garrett Shows: I'm in Charge Discussion Guide



Garrett Shows, 18, leads his Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting at ConVal High School in Peterborough, New Hampshire. “I feel like, obviously, it’s all about me and it’s my IEP meeting,” Garrett says in the film. “I’m in charge of it.”

This film focuses on Garrett Shows, 18, a sophomore at ConVal Regional High School in Peterborough, New Hampshire. ConVal has put in place a number of effective transition strategies for Garrett and other students with disabilities—such as internships and extended learning opportunities, Unified Sports, inclusive education, student-led IEP meetings, paid work opportunities, a welcoming environment for families, and a high school diploma pathway for students with intellectual disability.



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*Garrett
 Shows: I'm
 in Charge.*

Student directed transition planning

“Obviously, it’s all about me and it’s my IEP meeting. I’m in charge of it.”

—Garrett Shows,
 ConVal High School Sophomore

- What helped Garrett to plan his long- and short-term future goals? Who was involved in providing Garrett with information he needed? How was that information provided?
- If Garrett was not in a leadership role in his transition planning, do you think his goals would be the same? Why or why not?
- How would it make you feel if other people were in charge of deciding your future?
- If you had a team supporting your decision-

making, who would you want to be on the team and why?

- How does your school support student-directed futures planning?

Inclusive education

"I've known him since he's a fourth grader. He was always popular with the kids because he has charisma and he's actually a natural leader."

—Tod Silegy, Physical Education Teacher and mentor for Garrett's internship

- How has Garrett benefitted from being fully included in his school community?
- How about his classmates, teachers, and the whole school community? Do you think they benefitted? If so, how?
- Do you think that being included in the general education curriculum, classes, and school culture has an impact on planning for the future? Why or why not?
- What strategies did you see in Garrett's school that supported a sense of welcoming and belonging for all students?
- What are the lessons being learned when students with and without disabilities grow up living, learning, and playing in the same places? What lessons are learned when students with disabilities are not being included?
- What is your school or community doing to promote positive connections and a sense of belonging for all students?
- What are some of the reasons your school may not be as inclusive of students with disabilities as ConVal Regional High School? What are some strategies to overcome those reasons?

Friendships and social relationships

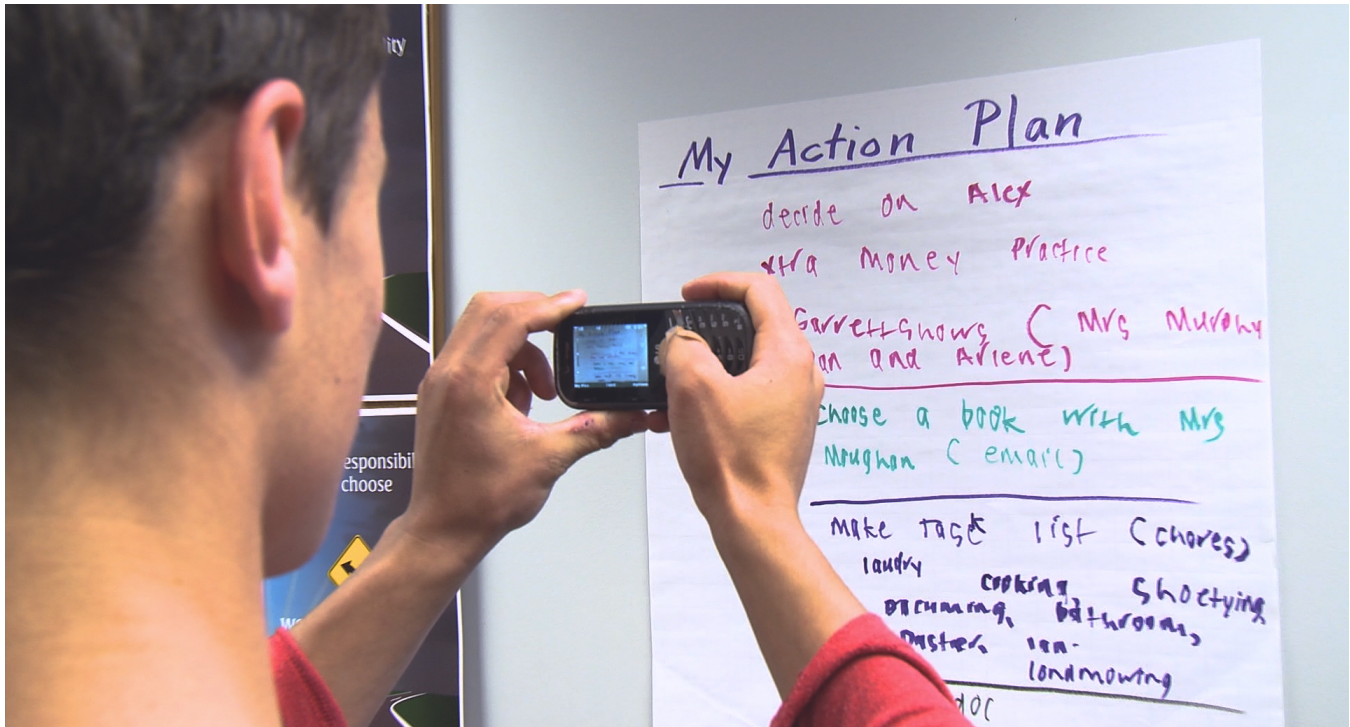
"I play on the Unified Basketball team. It's kids with and without disabilities playing together. It's definitely fun and you get to, like, interact and make friendships."

—Garrett Shows



Top: Garrett looks through a microscope at dissected flower leaves during a science lab. **Bottom:** Garrett plays on multiple Unified Sports teams at ConVal. "It's kids with and without disabilities playing together," Garrett says. "It's definitely fun and you get to interact and make friendships which is huge for me."

- Think about your time in high school. What memories stand out for you? How did the social and emotional experience of high school influence the person you are today?
- How do Garrett's friendships and social relationships influence his sense of self and decision-making?
- What impact do you think friendships and meaningful social relationships have on student learning and planning for the future?
- Garrett's school participates in [Unified Sports](#). What do you think are the benefits of inclusive sports programs for athletes with and without disabilities?
- If Garrett expressed interest in joining the school's regular basketball team, how would you recommend this request be addressed?



After leading his IEP meeting, Garrett takes a photo of the “Action Plan” his team developed as part of his transition planning. “I really want to be independent,” Garrett says in the film. “I want to have a relationship of my own. I want to live in my own house, not under my parents’ roof—to do what I want, when I want, where I want. I think that’s every kid’s dream.”

- Do you think programs like Special Olympics and Unified Sports let typical sports and recreation teams “off the hook” for figuring out how to design and support teams that welcome everyone? Why or why not?
- Some schools have clubs like “Best Buddies” that aim to create friendships between students with and without disabilities. What are the benefits of these type of programs? What are the pitfalls?

Family support and student-directed futures planning

“You know, I really want to be independent. Obviously, my mom, my dad wants me to be independent, as well. I want to have a relationship of my own. I want to live in my own house, not under my parents’ roof—to do what I want, when I want, where I want. I think that’s every kid’s dream.”

—Garrett Shows

- In what ways have Garrett’s family supported his dreams?
- What specific influence do his mother, father and brother each have on Garrett?
- What supports and information might Garrett’s family have accessed throughout his life to poise them with high expectations for Garrett? What kinds of supports and information are provided to families in your school or community? What happens for some families if information regarding possibilities for positive futures is not available or encouraged?
- What might be some of the challenges Garrett’s family is experiencing supporting him to direct his future? Think about how these challenges might be the same or different for kids without disabilities.
- Should school-based transition planning include discussion of long-term, non-

academic/non-vocational goals like marriage and home ownership?

Diplomas and Graduation

"I really want my diploma. I really want my name to be announced and get my high school diploma. And I am going to work toward it every step of the way no matter what I have to do."

—Garrett Shows

- What is the value of a high school diploma on a young person's future?
- What is the difference between a "certificate of attendance" (or other non-traditional exit documents) and a regular high school diploma?
- Some students with disabilities stay in the high school building full-time to continue to receive educational and transition planning supports until they are 21 years old. What do you think about this?
- What other ways might students receive educational supports until (in most states) age 21?
- Are you familiar with the graduation requirements and diploma options in your state? (You can find out more through your state department of education or your school district administration offices. You can find out what is happening in other states through the [National Center for Educational Outcomes](#) or the [National Center for Education Statistics](#).)

Employment and internships

"I've never been late to Shaws. Either early or exactly on time. Never late. Ever. Ever. And I don't ever intend to do that."

—Garrett Shows

- What are the lessons being learned by Garrett as a Shaws Supermarket employee? What lessons is the Peterborough community learning by shopping and working alongside Garrett?



Garrett sorts carts at his job at Shaws Supermarket in Peterborough, NH. "I've never been late to Shaws," Garrett says. "And I don't ever intend to do that."

- Do you think students with disabilities should be able to participate in community-based work or internships during the school day? Should students without disabilities have that option?
- When, where and how can students with disabilities learn employment skills? When, where, and how do students without disabilities learn these skills?
- What skills was Garrett learning through the internship in the middle school physical education class? What were the students learning from Garrett?
- With specific documentation of efforts to provide an individual with career planning supports and self-advocacy training, employers may legally employ an individual with a disability in a position for sub-minimum wage pay. What do you think of this?

Postsecondary education

"You know, every kid's dream is to work to earn money, and I really want to go to UNH. So I went on the computer and I typed up, 'How much money do you have to save in order to go to UNH?'" So I wrote down that amount of money and I am saving it."

—Garrett Shows



Garrett works with classmates on a poster during drama class. He has always been on track for a regular diploma. “I really want my name to be announced and get my high school diploma,” Garrett says. “And I am going to work toward it every step of the way no matter what I have to do.”

- Garrett’s dream is to go to college. Do you think that is possible or likely?
- What types of supports might Garrett need to be successful in college?
- How could Garrett’s school team support his dream of going to college? How about his family?
- Are there other agencies/organizations you are familiar with who could offer support for students with disabilities attending college? What are they?
- Should Garrett’s team encourage him to visit and apply to a four-year college, a community college, or one of the [“Think College”](#) programs for students with intellectual disabilities? Or all of the above? Explain your rationale.

IQ testing

“When Garrett was in elementary school, they brought in a MR representative—a mental retardation specialist—because they had to give him an IQ test. He scored in the MR category and they were trying to put that label on him. It was very hard for me to swallow.”

—Arlene Shows, Garrett’s mother

- Why was Garrett’s mother concerned about labeling Garrett with mental retardation?
- The label mental retardation has been changed to intellectual disability. Do you think this change makes a difference in how people with the label are perceived? Why or why not?
- Do you think IQ testing and labeling impact a student’s educational and career opportunities? Why or why not?

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