



Preloved Clothing Boutique Project: Practical Occupational Therapy Strategies for Transition Success



Patricia Pelc, BScOT • Amy M. Landosky, MSOT

Mercer County Special Services School District, NJ USA

Background

“We must do all we can to ensure that the work we do with children and youth results in positive adult outcomes, especially given that success in future employment, education, and independent living is a key purpose of IDEA.” (Carroll et al., 2026)

ABOUT OUR SCHOOL

- County-run special needs school providing out-of-district placements
- Serves ~184 students, ages 14–21
- Students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds
- Wide range of diagnoses, including:
 - Autism
 - Cognitive impairments
 - Multiple disabilities
 - Emotional regulation challenges
 - Developmental disabilities
- OT provided through students' IEPs
- Focus on educational and vocational skill development
- 40-minute class periods and OT sessions

ABOUT THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

- Guided by the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF-4)
- Focus on the domain of performance skills
- Emphasize access and participation in meaningful school activities
- Students identified *Prom* as a significant and meaningful school experience



Objectives

OT ON THE TRANSITION TEAM

ABOUT THE BOUTIQUE

- Using OTPF-4, the OT identified challenges and solutions to engage students in preparing for and attending the Prom through the development of a 'Prom Boutique'.
- The high cost of prom attire was a barrier for a student to attend their school prom, inspiring the OT to organize and distribute free dresses and suits.
- The boutique was primarily funded through donations of clothing items.
- A student can shop online from home or visit our in-person boutique with dresses, suits, shoes, and accessories.
- In-house technology and free platforms were used to build the online store. Our district provided the space and rolling racks to make it possible.

HIGHLIGHTING OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

- Increase OT visibility within the school community.
- Provide a “behind the scenes” look at task analysis from an OT lens.
- Demonstrate how to adapt activities for every ability.
- Select the “just right” activity to promote engagement, independence, and success.
- Demonstrate clinical reasoning and effective strategies in a shared, functional environment.

TRANSITION SKILLS ADDRESSED

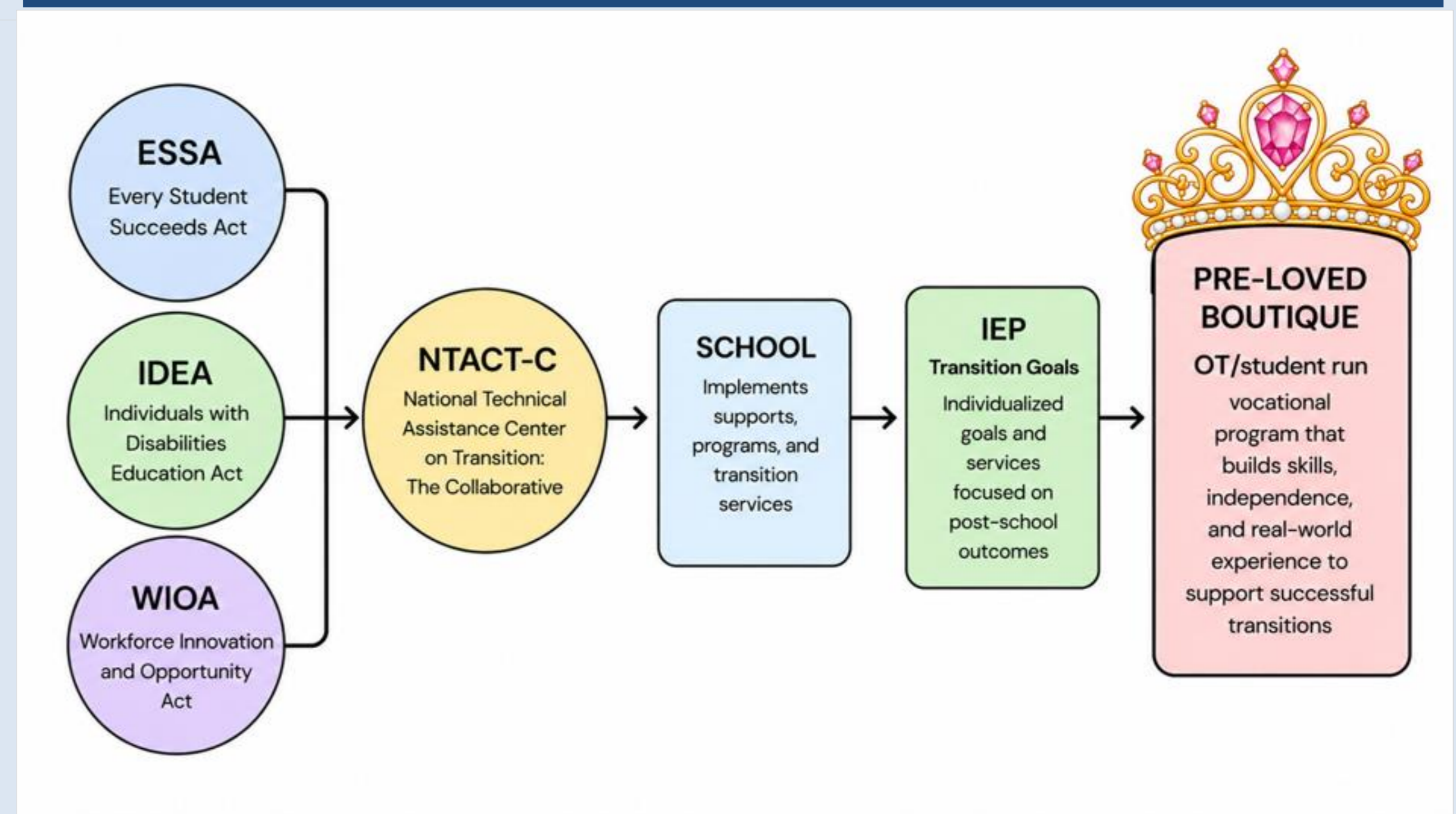
- Body positioning & motor planning
- Timing, pacing & task completion
- Environmental supports & modifications
- Visual & auditory attention / memory
- Organization & executive function skills
- Communication skills (including AAC use)
- Self-regulation & processing skills
- Autonomy & participation skills

Approach

SETTING UP A BOUTIQUE

- Request Donations**
 - Design flyers
 - Google Image
 - Google Docs
 - Chromebook with touch pad, touch screen, or mouse
 - Canva for creative design templates
 - Assemble racks
 - DIY vs Purchase
- Set up racks**
 - Arrange racks, accessories, and shoes into a logical order in your designated space.
 - Maintain the same order for continuity of skill building
- Organizing Space**
 - Ellison tag punch
 - Self-inking stamper that says size, number, and color on it with a line for the students to write on.
 - A rubber band threaded each tag to attach to hanger
- Make tags**
 - Clean/spot clean, hang on hanger
 - Sizing
- Receive Donations**
 - Keep vs Donate
 - Men's vs Women's
 - Type of Item (jacket, pants, shirt, dress, shoes, jewelry, purses)
- Sorting**
 - Create Google Form with prompts
 - Create clothing tag to attach to the hanger
 - Assign number to item
- Data Entry**
 - iPad or Smart Phone (tri-pod optional)
 - Accessible technology and programs (switches)
 - Google Photos rename photo with assigned number
 - Take 3 photos for each clothing (Front, Back, With Identifying Tag)
- Staging Clothing Items**
 - Create page using Google Sites
 - Information placed onto the webpage using the item number assigned
 - Add the front and back of each item to the webpage
 - Create sections for purse, jewelry, shoes, mens and womens
- Photography**
 - Put item on the rack in the correct size order
- Webpage Development**

Practical Implications



Conclusion

Collecting Data

Consider different ways to collect progress data:

- Specific skill progress
- Work-flow efficiency
- Student self-reflection

Include ongoing feedback during activities – allow all methods of communication that indicate enjoyment, engagement, or need for change. **Google Forms** is a quick way to track data with questions easily modified using visual symbols.

Future Vocational Opportunities Supported by the Pre-loved Boutique

Visual Merchandiser	Retail Customer Service Representative
Inventory Associate	Fashion Consultant/Stylist
Retail Sales Associate	E-Commerce Coordinator
Marketing Assistant	Web Page Designer
Information Technology Associate	Digital Photographer
Warehouse support staff	Custodial Support Staff

Replicating the Model

The Pre-loved Boutique model can easily be replicated for any school. Consider:

- A thrift store
- A coffee cart or coffee shop
- A card store
- A craft store
- A school supply store
- A small gift store
- A bookshop or library
- A toy library

Check out our link for: References, Sample IEP Goals, and to view our Prom Boutique Website.

[MCSSSD.INFO/CAOT-CONFERENCE](https://mcsssd.info/caot-conference)

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-  Students identified *Prom!* as a significant and meaningful school experience



OT ON THE TRANSITION TEAM

ABOUT THE BOUTIQUE



Using OTPF-4, the OT identified challenges and solutions to engage students in preparing for and attending the Prom through the development of a 'Prom Boutique'.



The high cost of prom attire was a barrier for a student to attend their school prom, inspiring the OT to organize and distribute free dresses and suits.



The boutique was primarily funded through donations of clothing items.



A student can shop online from home or visit our in-person boutique with dresses, suits, shoes, and accessories.



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HIGHLIGHTING OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY



Increase OT visibility within the school community.



Provide a "behind the scenes" look at task analysis from an OT lens.



Demonstrate how to adapt activities for every ability.



Select the "just right" activity to promote engagement, independence, and success.



Demonstrate clinical reasoning and effective strategies in a shared, functional environment.

TRANSITION SKILLS ADDRESSED



Body positioning & motor planning



Timing, pacing & task completion



Environmental supports & modifications



Visual & auditory attention / memory



Organization & executive function skills



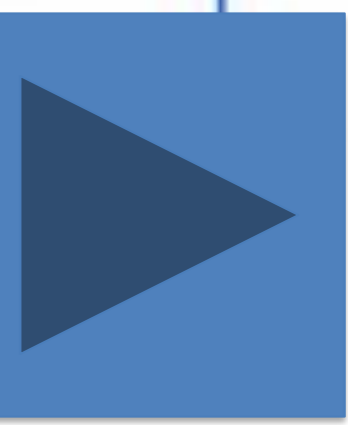
Communication skills (including AAC use)

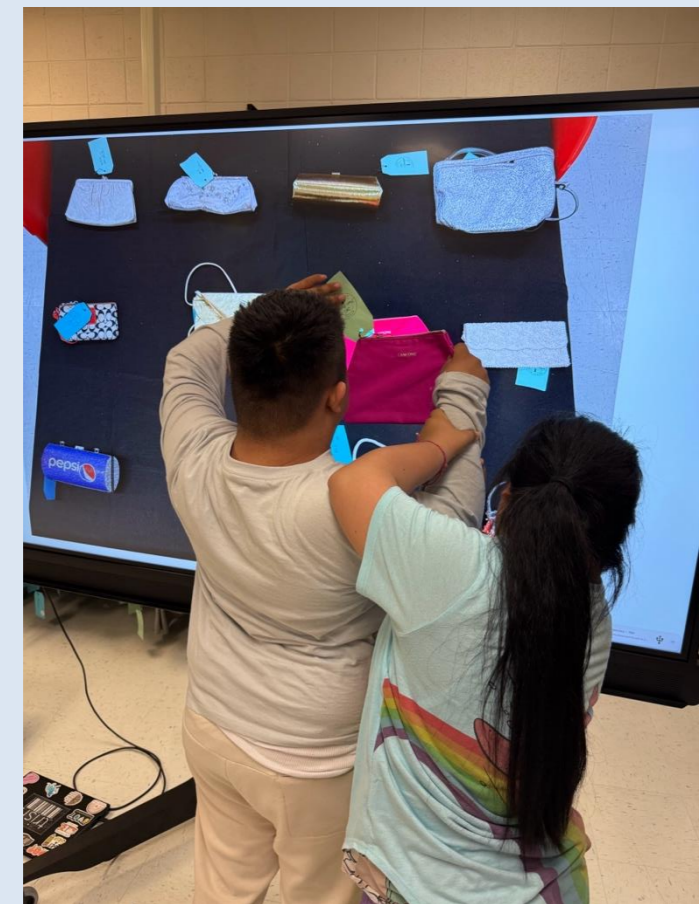


Self-regulation & processing skills



Autonomy & participation skills





SETTING UP A BOUTIQUE

01. Request Donations



- Design flyers
 - Google Image
 - Google Docs
 - Chromebook with touch pad, touch screen, or mouse
 - Canva for creative design templates

- Assemble racks
- DIY vs Purchase

02. Set up racks



- Arrange racks, accessories, and shoes into a logical order in your designated space.
- Maintain the same order for continuity of skill building

03. Organizing Space



- Ellison tag punch
- Self-inking stamper that says size, number, and color on it with a line for the students to write on.
- A rubber band threaded each tag to attach to hanger

04. Make tags



- Clean/spot clean, hang on hanger
- Sizing

05. Receive Donations



- Keep vs Donate
- Men's vs Women's
- Type of item (jacket, pants, shirt, dress, shoes, jewelry, purses)

06. Sorting



- Create Google Form with prompts
- Create clothing tag to attach to the hanger
- Assign number to item

07. Data Entry



- iPad or Smart Phone (tri-pod optional)
- Accessible technology and programs (switches)
- Google Photos rename photo with assigned number
- Take 3 photos for each clothing (Front, Back, With identifying Tag)

08. Photography



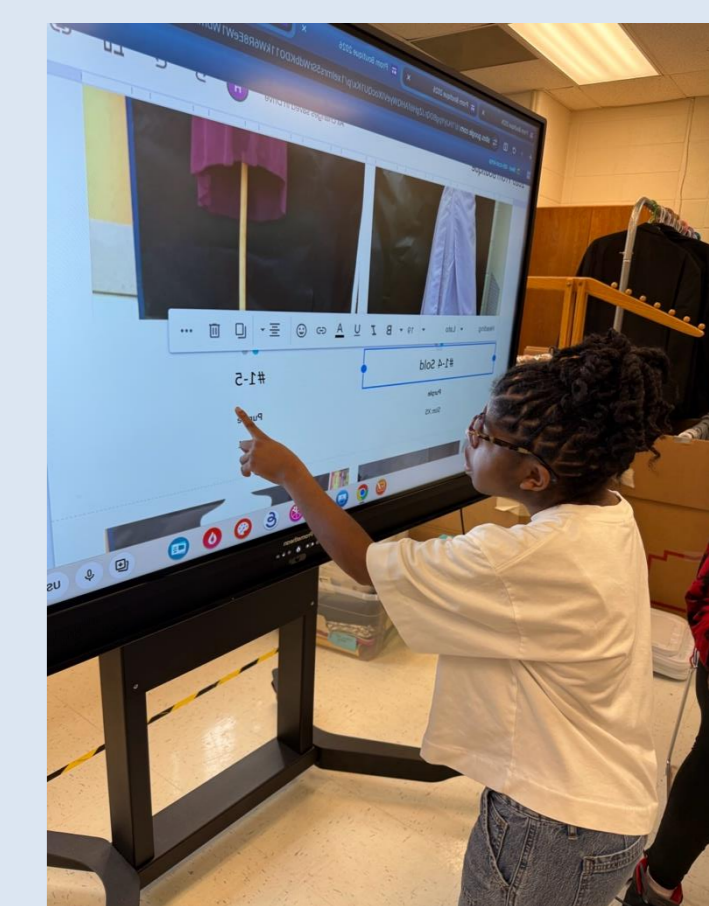
- Put item on the rack in the correct size order

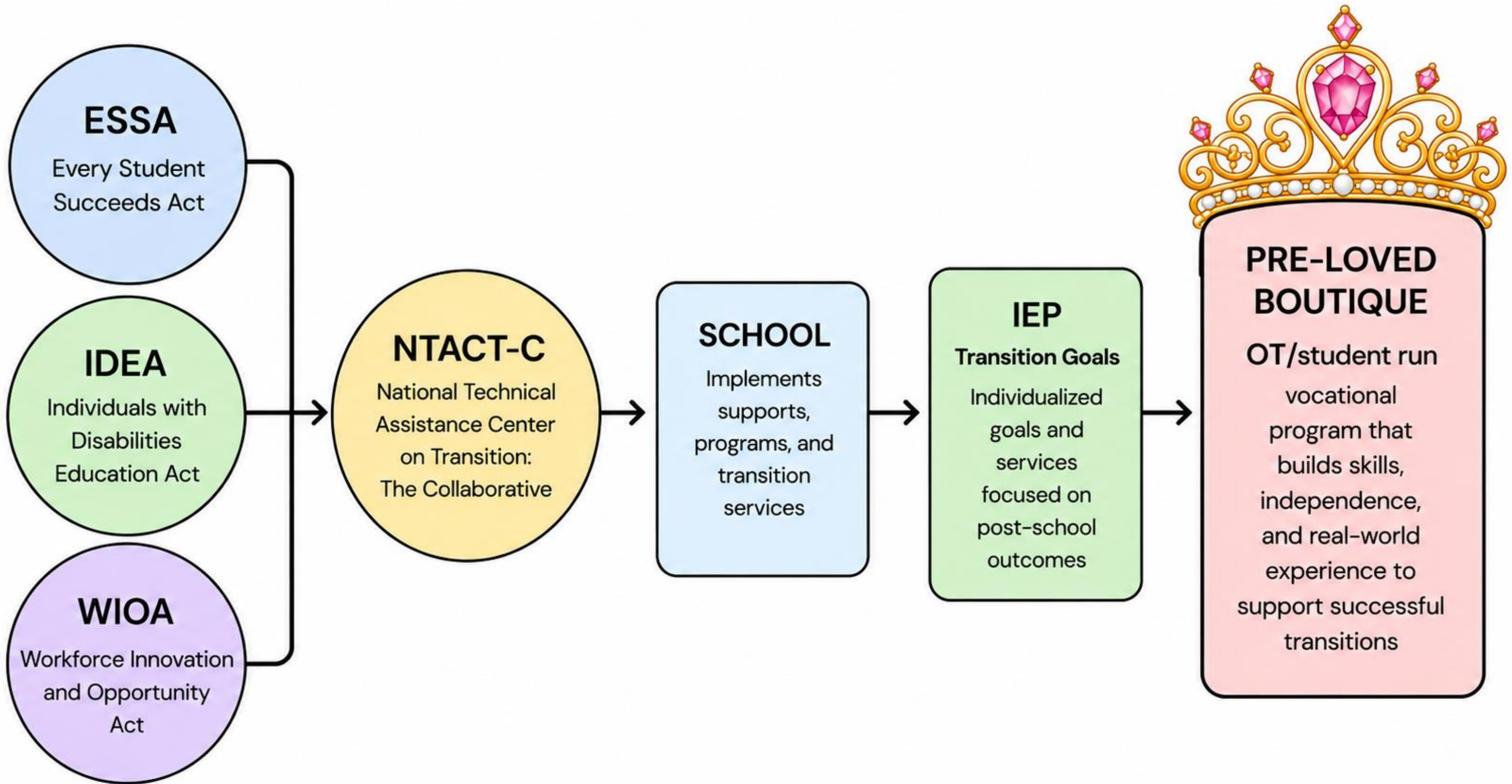
09. Staging Clothing Items



- Create page using Google Sites
- Information placed onto the webpage using the item number assigned
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10. Webpage Development





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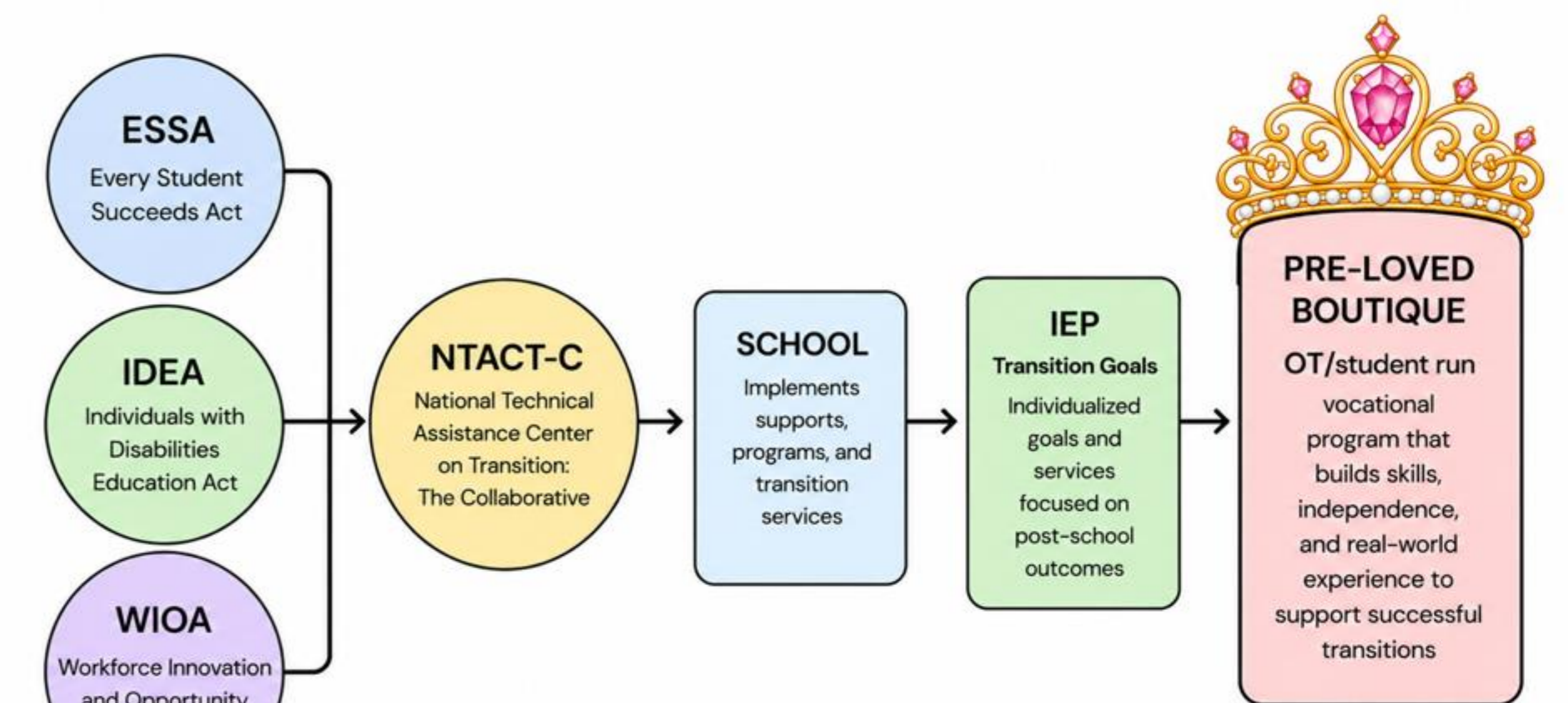
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