

5-2022

## Intervention Program for the Transition from High School to the Real World

Tiana González  
*California State University, Monterey Bay*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes\\_all](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all)



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

González, Tiana, "Intervention Program for the Transition from High School to the Real World" (2022).  
*Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 1265.  
[https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes\\_all/1265](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/1265)

This Capstone Project (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csumb.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csumb.edu).

**Intervention Program for the Transition from High School to the Real World**

Tiana Gonzalez

Learning for Life Charter School -- Sergio Paredes

Collaborative Health & Human Services

Department of Health, Human Services and Public Policy

California State University Monterey Bay

May 4th, 2022

**Author Note**

Tiana Gonzalez, Department of Health Human Services and Public Policy, California State University Monterey Bay. This research was supported by Learning for Life Charter School. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Tiana Gonzalez, California State University Monterey Bay, 100 Campus Center, Seaside, CA, 93955. Contact: [tigonzalet@csumb.edu](mailto:tigonzalet@csumb.edu).

### **Abstract**

An evidence-based argument shows that early post-graduation planning plays a vital role in a student's transition into life after high school; therefore, establishing a comprehensive plan while in high school is crucial to stability and success. The capstone project, Adopt a Senior, was implemented at Learning for Life Charter School (LFLCS), an alternative school serving at-risk youth grades 7-12 in Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties. The Adopt a Senior project is intended to provide LFLCS seniors with support, guidance, and assistance to prepare for graduation and transition into life after high school. As of the 2021-22 academic year, LFLCS had 50 seniors enrolled. Of the 50 students, 24 (48%) participated in the Adopt a Senior program, and 18 (36%) identified a post-graduation plan. Therefore, it is recommended that LFLCS continue implementing the Adopt A Senior program, with changes to increase student participation and interaction.

*Keywords:* at-risk youth, school social work, high school, alternative school, post-graduation preparedness

### **Agency and Communities Served**

Learning for Life Charter School (LFLCS), founded in 2001, is an alternative public charter school with the mission of educating at-risk students in grades 7 to 12. LFLCS employs a trauma-informed care approach to education and learning. Additionally, LFLCS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization; however, due to being a public charter school, they also receive ongoing funding via the “LCFF Supplemental and Concentration Grants; Federal Titles I, II, IV, & V funds; Lottery & Restricted Lottery funds, State Special Education funds, Federal Special Education funds” (LFLCS, 2021, p. 6 )

The community served by Learning for Life Charter School is primarily based in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito school districts (LFLCS, n.d. -a). As previously stated, LFLCS initially opened for students who were at risk of dropping out or had already dropped out; however, they currently serve other at-risk students. LFLCS serves families and students that are unhoused, experiencing food insecurity, low income, and foster youth (LFLCS, 2021, p. 1).

### **Problem Description**

#### **Problem Definition**

Currently, LFLCS does not have a program or service that supports graduating seniors for life past their secondary education (LFLCS, n.d. -b). Moreover, LFLCS seniors are not receiving sufficient support to increase preparedness for life after graduation through guidance, assistance, and support as they transition from high school to the “real world.” The lack of preparedness for life after high school can contribute to significant hindrances to the economic and educational opportunities held by LFLCS seniors (Bangser, 2008).

Contributing to this problem are the following factors: lack of student engagement, limited focus and knowledge on diverse post-graduation paths, lack of programs directed at preparing graduating seniors, and low graduation rates. If not addressed, this problem can consequently result in post-secondary education failure, low-paying jobs, and ultimately, unemployment.

### **Contributing Factors**

#### ***Lack of Student Engagement***

Because Learning for Life Charter School is an alternative school that employs an independent-study modality, maintaining student attendance and engagement is a significant challenge. Learning for Life Charter School reported that, during the 2019-2020 academic year, attendance rates were at 85%, and chronic absenteeism rates were at 45.5% (LFLCS, 2020). The rate of student absenteeism significantly impacts the efficacy of any supportive services provided by LFLCS.

#### ***Low Graduation Rates***

In the 2020-2021 academic year, the California Department of Education reported that Learning for Life Charter School's senior cohort of 58 students, only 43 students graduated (California Department of Education, n.d.). That is to say, the percentage of graduating LFLCS seniors was at a rate of 74.1%, which is lower than that of Monterey Peninsula Unified School District's overall cohort graduation rate of 92.2% (California Department of Education, n.d.). Moreover, according to the California Department of Education (n.d), of the 43 graduating students, none met the CSU or UC enrollment requirements.

#### ***Limited Focus on Post-graduation Preparedness***

There are no specific services or programs to aid LFLCS high school seniors with post-graduation readiness (LFLCS, n.d, *Support*). Instead, LFLCS is primarily focused on providing the students with a trauma-informed care approach to education in an effort to lead them to graduation successfully. According to Wyatt et al. (2014), there is a positive relationship between preparative engagement in high school and post-secondary success. If an LFLCS senior's selected post-graduation plan is enrolling in community college, attending a four-year university, enrolling in a trade school, or entering the workforce, working to establish a comprehensive plan is crucial. A lack of preparation before graduation can negatively impact the feasibility and success of their selected pathway.

### **Consequences**

#### ***Low Post-Secondary Educational Attainment***

High school students' in-school experiences often do not prepare them for the rigor of post-secondary education. According to Bangser (2008), a sizable number of high school students enter post-secondary education needing to complete remedial courses due to inadequate academic preparation and a lack of applicable skills to aid them in succeeding. LFLCS currently reports that only a small percentage of graduated seniors have met the CSU/UC matriculation standards. As the standard of academic success notably increases and becomes more demanding in post-secondary education, it can become increasingly difficult for students to maintain enrollment (Bangser, 2008).

#### ***Limited Career Advancement and Low-Paying Jobs***

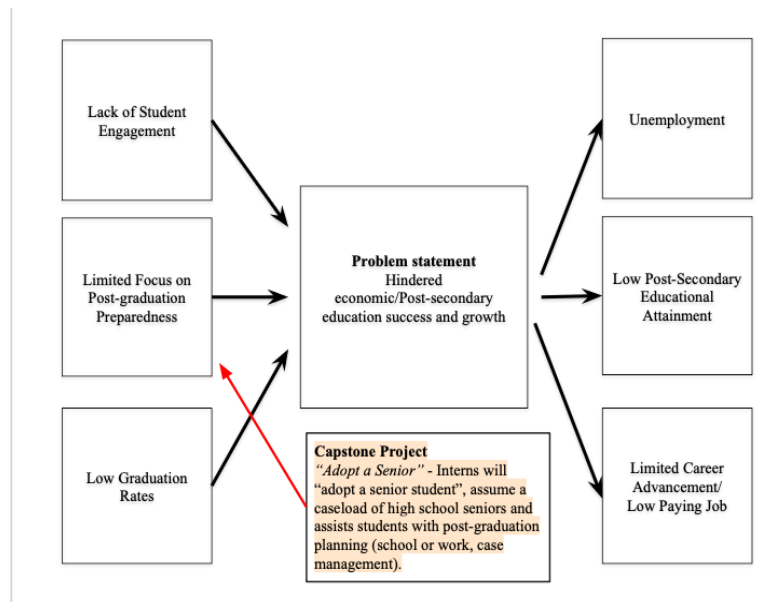
There is a significant relationship between school failure, poverty, and low-paying jobs (Christle et al., 2007). Lack of post-graduation readiness has a meaningful impact on career obtainability, wage rate, and job-advancement opportunities. Moreover, Gabe et al. (2019)

reported that only 5% of low-wage workers were able to transition to “higher-quality jobs.” Typically, those working low-wage jobs will remain in said position or move to another low-paying position with little to no upward mobility. Furthermore, due to additional factors such as high-turnover rates, minimal benefits, and lack of job protection, low-wage positions substantially correlate to unemployment rates (Gabe et al., 2019).

**Unemployment**

Ultimately, if the areas of post-graduation preparedness and post-secondary educational attainment are not addressed, graduating high school seniors have a higher chance of being unemployed. According to Torpey (2021), those with only a high school diploma report an unemployment rate of 9%. That is significantly higher than those with any type of postsecondary education. If recently graduated students do not acquire a job after completing high school, future employment endeavors may be impaired.

**Problem Model**



## **Capstone Project Description and Justification**

### **Project Description**

Adopt A Senior is an intervention program implemented at Learning For Life Charter School. Again, the program aims to assist, guide, and support high school seniors plan and prepare for the transition into the real world after graduation. Participants of the program included LFLCS staff, university-level interns, and the students themselves. Of the LFLCS staff, Sergio Paredes (school social worker) and Dr. Sarah Pennington (academic counselor) supervised the Adopt A Senior Program. Additionally, Collaborative Health and Human Services interns, Melisa García and Marissa Sareñana were vital participants in the program and collaborated to develop and implement Adopt a Senior. Each social work intern was allocated a caseload of 16 to 17 LFLCS seniors. As long as it remained within the parameters set in the program guidelines, each social work intern had the independence to work with their student caseload as they determined.

### **Project Justification**

Previous to the implementation of the Adopt A Senior program, LFLCS did not have a program or support service in place that specifically focused on advising and aiding students through their senior year. The Adopt a Senior project is intended to provide LFLCS seniors with support, guidance, and assistance to prepare for graduation and transition into life after high school. Through this program, seniors were assigned (“adopted”) by an LFLCS (CHHS) intern. The intern then assisted and supported the seniors in developing a post-graduation plan and guided them in successfully attaining that plan.



**Project Implementation**

Project implementation was initiated with two surveys distributed to LFLCS seniors. The first survey, “Post-graduation Plans Survey,” focused on ascertaining the students’ post-graduation plans, i.e., community college, trade school, four-year university, workforce, or the military. The second survey, “Post-graduation Preparedness Survey,” focused on gauging the students’ feeling of preparedness for life after high school. Survey results informed the work conducted when meeting with seniors and most of the adjustments made to the program. Their corresponding social work intern sent weekly check-in emails to all LFLCS seniors. Each check-in included: a check-in survey, a link to a Google Sheet to schedule in-person or virtual meetings, and any relevant information for the week. Based on the student’s responses, appropriate resources, information, and support were provided to develop and execute the student’s individualized post-graduation plan. Lastly, the “Post-graduation Preparedness Survey” was distributed several times throughout the program. The survey, as mentioned above, served as a periodical benchmark evaluation of the program. The final survey was sent in March of 2022 after the program to gather feedback and gauge program effectiveness.

**Assessment Plan**

The expected program outcome was to increase post-graduation preparedness and readiness among high school seniors attending an alternative charter school, LFLCS, by the end of the Spring 2022 semester. By March 15, 2022, at least 50% of LFLCS high school seniors will report improved post-graduation preparedness and readiness. All aspects of the data assessment and evaluation are based on data collected from pre/post surveys distributed to LFLCS seniors periodically throughout the 2021-2022 academic year. All project data will be collected from Google Forms, measured, and evaluated by my capstone collaborators, Melisa Garcia, Marissa

Sareñana, and I. Additionally, we social work interns are responsible for the final project evaluation. This effort aims to measure and ascertain the success and efficacy of the capstone project.

### **Expected Outcomes**

The expected program outcome was to increase post-graduation preparedness and readiness among high school seniors attending an alternative charter school, LFLCS, by the end of the Spring 2022 semester. The objective set for Adopt A Senior was that as of March 15th, 2022, at least 50% of LFLCS high school seniors will participate in the Adopt A Senior Program, and 30% will have identified a post-graduation plan.

### **Project Results**

In evaluating the data collected from the Adopt A Senior program surveys and other related data, of the 49 seniors attending LFLCS, 23 (46.93%) participated in the program. The figures can be further broken down to 8 (16.33%) students fully participating, 15 (30.61%) students partially participating, and 25 (41.02%) who did not participate. I had 17 LFLCS seniors on my individual caseload results. Of this caseload, 10 (58.8%) participated, and 5 (29.4%) identified a post-graduation plan. Similarly to the overall program results, my individual caseload only met one of the project's expected outcomes. With my caseload, I achieved the expectation of 50% participation; however, I was unable to meet the goal of having 30% of LFCS seniors on my caseload, identifying a post-graduation plan. For a comparative overview of program and caseload data, see **Table 1**.

### **Table 1**

*Overall Program and Individual Caseload Data*

	<b>Overall Program Data</b>	<b>Individual Caseload Data</b>
<b>Enrolled Seniors</b>	50 100%	17 100%
<b>Total Participants</b>	24 48%	10 58.8%
<b>Identified Post-Grad Plan</b>	18 36%	5 29.4%

### **Conclusion & Recommendations**

The overall and individual results of the Adopt A Senior program are varied concerning meeting the expected outcomes; however, this does not imply the success or failure of the program. As exemplified in the data, total program participation of 46.93% and 58.8% within my individual caseload, the want to plan for post-secondary life is apparent among LFLCS students. The most significant obstacle to the efficacy of the Adopt a Senior program was student engagement. Recommendations to improve the program include examining additional ways to increase student participation through incentives, community functions, adjusting the program's modality, or any other means of engagement. Further recommendations include increasing teacher involvement due to them having a routine and established communication with students. Utilizing LFLCS teachers could substantially increase student participation due to their regular and frequent interactions with LFLCS's student body. Advertisements such as posters, flyers, and adding a section on the LFLCS website regarding Adopt A Senior are also highly recommended to increase the visibility of the Adopt a Senior program at LFLCS.

### **Personal Reflection**

Over the past year, the development and implementation of the Adopt A Senior Program have been integral to my growth and development as a Human Services professional. The Adopt A Senior program was developed to address a need at Learning For Life Charter School

regarding the lack of post-graduation preparedness among the seniors attending. In building, creating, and developing the program from the ground up, my capstone collaborators and I provided Learning For Life Charter School with a service that can significantly aid their graduating seniors in their postsecondary success. Additionally, in developing my capstone project, I have acquired the skill of program/project development. Lastly, I learned that I can successfully create an intervention program, implement it, and work with youth to pursue their goals for life after high school.

### References

- Bangser, M. (2008). *Preparing high school students for successful transitions to postsecondary education and employment* [Issue Brief]. National High School Center. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED502596.pdf>
- California Department of Education. (n.d.). *2020-21 four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate: Learning for life charter school report (27-66092-2730240)*. DataQuest CA Dept. of Education. <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/CohRate.aspx?agglevel=school&year=2020-21&cds=27660922730240>
- Christle, C.A., Jolivette, K., & Nelson, C.M. (2007). School characteristics related to high school dropout rates. *Remedial and Special Education*, 28(6), 325–339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07419325070280060201>
- Gabe, T., Abel, J.R., & Florida, R. (2019). Can workers in low-end occupations climb the job ladder? *Economic Development Quarterly*, 33(2), 92–106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891242419838324>
- Learning for Life Charter School. (2021). *Local control and accountability plan*. <https://lflcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LFLCS-LCAP-2021-22-V2.pdf>
- Learning for Life Charter School. (2020, October 29). *One-year tactical plan*. <https://lflcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LFLCS-One-Year-Tactical-Plan-2020-21-V2.pdf>
- Learning for Life Charter School (n.d. -a). *About*. <https://lflcs.org/about>
- Learning for Life Charter School. (n.d. -b). *Support*. <https://lflcs.org/support>

Wyatt, J., Smith, K., & Proestler, N. (2014). *The benefits of early engagement in the college-preparation process: Implications for practitioners*. (Report No. 2014-1).

College Board. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED556463.pdf>

Torpey, E. (2021, June). *Education pays, 2020*. *Career Outlook*. U.S. Bureau of Labor

Statistics. [https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2021/data-on-display/education-](https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2021/data-on-display/education-pays.htm#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20workers%20with%20a,was%20a%20high%20school%20diploma.)

[pays.htm#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20workers%20with%20a,was%20a%20high%20school%20diploma.](https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2021/data-on-display/education-pays.htm#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20workers%20with%20a,was%20a%20high%20school%20diploma.)

**Appendix A**  
**Scope of Work**

<b>Adopt a Senior</b>		<b>Tiana Gonzalez</b>		
<b>Task</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Parties Involved</b>	<b>Materials/Services Needed</b>	<b>Completed Product</b>
Select Capstone Project	Aug. 2021	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sergio P., Kenneth L.E., Sarah P.	n/a	Adopt A Senior
Plan and Develop Capstone Project	Sept. 2021	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sergio P., Sarah P.	n/a	Developed document with program outline
Develop Pre-program Survey	Sept. 2021	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sergio P., Sarah P.	Google Forms	Student Post-Graduation Survey
Develop Weekly Check-in Survey	Sept. 2021	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sergio P., Sarah P.	Google Forms	Weekly Student Check-in
Develop Weekly Check-In Email	Sept. 2021	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sergio P., Sarah P.	Gmail	Weekly Check-in Email
Develop Adopt A Senior Procedure Guide	Sept. 2021	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G.	Google Docs	Adopt A Senior Procedure Guide
Project Implementation	Sept. 2021 - March 2022	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sergio P., Sarah P.	n/a	Adopt A Senior

Participate in Supervision Updates	Jan. 2022 - March 2022	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sergio P., Sarah P.	n/a	
Conduct Weekly Check-ins Student Caseload	Sept. 2021 - March 2022	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G.	Google Forms	Adopt A Senior Progress Data
Meet with LFL Seniors to Create Post-graduation Plan	Sept. 2021 - March 2022	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sarah P.	n/a	Student Post-graduation Plan
Conduct Research and Deliver Resources to Student Caseload Accordingly	Sept. 2021 - March 2022	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G.	n/a	Student Post-graduation Plan
Assist with Job Search, College Applications, Resume Building, FAFSA Applications, Personal Statement Review	Sept. 2021 - March 2022	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G.,	n/a	Student Post-graduation Plan
Check Weekly Survey Responses and Respond Accordingly	Sept. 2021 - March 2022	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G.	n/a	Student Post-graduation Plan
Benchmark Evaluation	Oct. 2021	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sergio P., Sarah P.	n/a	Adopt A Senior Progress Data
Benchmark Evaluation	Dec. 2021	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sergio P., Sarah P.	n/a	Adopt A Senior Progress Data
Benchmark Evaluation	Feb. 2022	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sergio P.,	n/a	Adopt A Senior Progress Data



		Sarah P.		
Develop Post-program Survey	Oct. 2021	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sergio P., Sarah P.	Google Forms	Adopt A Senior Progress Data
Analyze and Compare Data (Pre Surveys, Post Surveys and Weekly Check-in Surveys)	March - April 2022	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G.	Google Forms and Google Sheets	Adopt A Senior Progress Data
Final Project Evaluation	March - April 2022	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G., Sergio P., Sarah P.	n/a	Capstone Report
Report Project Finding	May 2022	Tiana G., Marissa S., Melisa G.	n/a	Capstone Presentation

## Appendix B

### Implementation Timeline

Fall 2021					
Activity	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Select Capstone Project	X				
Plan and Develop Capstone Project		X			
Develop Pre-program Survey		X			
Develop Weekly Check-in Survey		X			
Develop Weekly Check-In Email		X			
Develop Adopt A Senior Procedure Guide		X			
Project Implementation			X	X	X
Conduct Weekly Check-ins Student Caseload			X	X	X
Meet with LFL Seniors to Create Post-graduation Plan			X	X	X
Conduct Research and Deliver Resources to Student Caseload			X	X	X

Accordingly					
Assist with Job Search, College Applications, Resume Building, FAFSA Applications, Personal Statement Review			X	X	X
Check Weekly Survey Responses and Respond Accordingly			X	X	X
Benchmark Evaluation #1			X		
Benchmark Evaluation #2					X


Spring 2022					
Activity	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
Participate in Supervision Updates	X	X	X		

Conduct Weekly Check-ins Student Caseload		X	X		
Meet with LFL Seniors to Create Post-graduation Plan		X	X		
Conduct Research and Deliver Resources to Student Caseload Accordingly		X	X		
Assist with Job Search, College Applications, Resume Building, FAFSA Applications, Personal Statement Review		X	X		
Check Weekly Survey Responses and Respond Accordingly		X	X		
Benchmark Evaluation #3		X			
Analyze and Compare Data (Pre Surveys, Post Surveys and Weekly Check-in Surveys)			X		
Final Project Evaluation			X		

Report Project Finding					X
------------------------	--	--	--	--	---

**Appendix C**

**Post-graduation Plans Survey**



## Post Graduation Plans

Hi seniors!

Congratulations on nearing graduation! This survey is intended to gauge post-graduation plans, and provide information, resources, and support, if needed. Please take a moment to complete this survey.

- Your LFLCS Interns ©

[melisag@lflcs.org](mailto:melisag@lflcs.org) [Switch account](#)

**\* Required**

**Email \***

Your email \_\_\_\_\_

**Name \***

\_\_\_\_\_

**What are your general interests? (e.g. hobbies, sports, movies, music, etc.) \***

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

**What are your academic interests? (e.g. favorite school subject). Please select all that apply. If you select "other", provide a brief explanation. \***

- Math
- English
- Science
- History/Social Studies
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you have plans for after graduation? \***

- Yes
- No

If yes, select the option that best describes your plans? If you select "other", provide a brief description.

- 4-year College/University
- Community College
- Trade School
- Work Force
- Military
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you interested in receiving information and resources to help develop a post-graduation plan that best works for you? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Would you like to learn about how to qualify for free money to help pay for college or trade school? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Would you be interested in any of the following senior activities? If you select other, please provide a brief explanation. \*

- College Campus Tours
- Help with college applications
- Help completing FAFSA
- How to write a resume
- How to fill out a job application
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Post-graduation Preparedness Survey



## Post-graduation Preparedness

Hi Seniors!

This survey is intended to gauge your feelings of preparedness for life after high school and graduation. Please take a moment to complete each question.

Completion of this survey will help LFLCS interns improve and inform the Adopt a Senior program which doubles as a capstone for CSUMB. We appreciate your assistance in completing this survey!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you,

Melisa: [melisag@lflcs.org](mailto:melisag@lflcs.org)

Tiana: [tianag@lflcs.org](mailto:tianag@lflcs.org)

Marissa: [marissas@lflcs.org](mailto:marissas@lflcs.org)

\*\* All surveys and responses are confidential \*\*

Name (First and Last) \*

Your answer

Do you feel prepared or ready for life after high school/graduation? \*

Yes

No

How do you feel about the transition from high school to "the real world" after graduation? (e.g. scared, excited, confused, nervous, etc). \*

Your answer

Do you feel your family has prepared you for life after high school/graduation? \*

Yes

No



Do you feel LFLCS has been successful in preparing you for life after high school/graduation? \*

- Yes
- No

---

Please explain why you chose your answer for the question above. \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

---

What can LFLCS do to better prepare you for life after high school/graduation? \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

---

Has Adopt a Senior increased your feeling of preparedness for life after high school? (yes, no) \*

- Yes
- No
- N/A - I have not participated

---

What did you like or not like about the Adopt a Senior Program? This is where you can provide us with suggestions to improve the program. \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_