

State Agency Promising Practice

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TOPIC:
Transition

Washington: Collaborating with a Community College and a Supported-Employment Agency to Facilitate the Transition From High School to Community Employment

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Background

Beginning in 2006, the Shoreline Public School District in King County, Washington partnered with Shoreline Community College to offer an off-campus transition program for young adults with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) residing in the Shoreline School District. While participants are still in high school, the Community Based Transition Program offers a structured transitional step between their traditional day and post-secondary education as well as employment in the community. Funding for the classroom space on the college campus, the special education teacher and the education support staff are all provided by the school district. The school also proposed that the King County Developmental Disabilities Division's (KCDDD) School-to-Work Project (S2W), the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the district pool resources to hire a full time employment consultant who would be embedded within the transition program. These stakeholders shared the goal of ensuring that youth with ID/DD transition from high school to employment in the community in accordance with the state's Working Age Adult Policy*.

Implementation

After completing four years of high school, students with an Individualized Education Plan who are enrolled in the Shoreline Public School District and who show a clear interest in additional services in the areas of daily living, community access, and vocational skills are referred to the program. Students, families, and school personnel meet to determine if the program is a good fit for the student. When appropriate, during their first year of eligibility for the program, students are able to split

their time between the traditional school day and the program to ease the transition to adulthood. Students who enroll in the

program are also able to take advantage of campus resources including the library, athletic facilities, computer labs, clubs, and special events. School staff report that very few individuals turn down the opportunity to participate in the program.

The district contracts with Northwest Center, a local employment vendor, to provide the full time employment consultant. During students' final year of school, the employment consultant provides job development, placement, and support to individuals who are enrolled in the program.

The program operates in two shifts, one from 11am to 4pm and the other from 12:30pm to 5:30pm. The program's hours provide an early opportunity for families to identify and implement supports for their young adult during the times that they are not receiving services. During each shift, students complete two hours of coursework in a classroom at Shoreline Community College and two to three hours of work in the community. The split schedule allows for more individualized job coaching as the job coaches are then able to coach two smaller groups of students, rather than one large group. Additionally, if during the student's final year of school the employment hours extend outside the shift hours, the employment specialist is able to be flexible and meet the student's job coaching needs. Job sites are matched to student's employment goals and are often in the fields of automotive, food service, animal care, and retail.

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*www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=222



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Impact

Since the program's inception, 35 job sites have been developed with new ones developed as needed to match the employment interests of students. Students are graduating ready to enter adult job development services or transition directly into jobs in the community.

Of the eight students graduating at the end of the 2008-2009 school year, two students had stable jobs in the community and the remaining 6 students were engaged in job development activities and had participated in a series of employment experiences to build their resumes. Of the five students graduating at the end of the 2009-10 school year, two students were employed as of December 2009. The remaining three are currently in the process of obtaining employment. This is a significant improvement in the overall outcomes for employment for transition age youth in the school district.

In the past many individuals experienced a delay in the receipt of employment services and valuable insight from special education teachers was often not included in the process. Through this project, information is shared between school and adult service providers, improving the job development process. Additionally, because class work is focused on functional skills (i.e. how to read a bus schedule and cooking) and self-advocacy skills, students are prepared to enter adulthood and live more independently.

Suggestions for Replication

- » Education and adult service systems should collaborate prior to a student's final year of school to provide employment services and support students to obtain a job in the community.
- » Provide students flexible scheduling and combine education and employment support during the final years of school.
- » Partner with a local community college to offer an age-appropriate environment to support students to transition from high school to adulthood in a non-stereotypical setting.

**For more information on this practice
contact thinkwork@umb.edu**



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