

Impact

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Feature Issue on Postsecondary Education and Students with Intellectual, Developmental and Other Disabilities

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Micah Fialka-Feldman on his first day of living in the dorm at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. See story below.

What's a Parent to Do? Micah's College Dream

by Janice Fialka

My father proudly graduated from the University of Michigan in 1948, the first in his family of 11 children. Little did he know he established a generational pattern for the important men in my life. My two brothers, several cousins, and my husband all claim the same “maize-and-blue.” At the age of 5, our son, Micah, attended his first U of M football game and was immediately awestruck by the “Go Blue!” spirit. I sensed he felt destined to follow in the footsteps of his Papa, father, and uncles. He didn't have the words to express this dream – words did not come easily to him then – but his dream was deepened with every U of M game he attended.

We as parents wanted both our children, Micah and Emma, to have dreams. Dreams motivate our spirit, drive us forward, stretch us in new directions, and compel us to try new things. We wanted our children to gradually feel the pull of passion and purpose. But what if their dreams are met with words like “unrealistic,” “impossible,” “out of reach,” “can't do that,” “unheard of,” or simply “Why would he do THAT.....?” Those were some of the very words we heard when Micah talked about his college dream. “Look at the facts,” we were told, even by well-meaning people who cared about Micah. Fact # 1: Micah has a cognitive impairment with a low I.Q. score. Fact #2: Micah didn't read or write (though he could sign his name after years of practice.) Fact #3: There were no fully inclusive college programs in our community. Fact #4: Youth like Micah, with an IEP, go to community-based programs after high school, not college! What's a parent to do?

[Fialka, continued on page 24]

From the Editors

Postsecondary education is a primary goal for the majority of high school students with transition plans, according to the National Longitudinal Transition Study–2. However, according to that same study, only about 3 in 10 young adults with disabilities have taken postsecondary education classes since high school. And among those with the lowest rates of participation are students with intellectual disabilities. This Impact issue explores what we know, and what we still need to know, about what works to support increased participation of students with disabilities, especially those with intellectual disabilities, in postsecondary education and why that participation is important. It includes stories about students with disabilities succeeding in higher education, strategies for families and school personnel to use in supporting planning for postsecondary education during high school, research findings and historical overviews on our national journey to support full participation in all areas of life – including education – for individuals with intellectual and other disabilities, and explanations of the education laws that can undergird that participation. It's our hope that readers of this issue will find new ways of thinking about the role of post-high-school education in the lives of young people with disabilities, and about the benefits to those young people as well as our communities and nation.

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Students with Disabilities in Higher Education: Participating in America's Future

by David R. Johnson and Derek Nord

Ensuring that high school students with disabilities have access to and can fully participate in postsecondary education has been identified as one of key challenges in the future of secondary education and transition for such students (Luecking & Gramlich, 2003). As the American economy becomes increasingly more knowledge-based, attaining a postsecondary education is more critical than ever (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003). Projections for the

public and private vocational training programs, has intensified for both students with and without disabilities.

Policies related to transition planning have been put in place to support students with disabilities in achieving postsecondary education and other post-high-school goals. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) amendments specifically draw attention to postsecondary education as one of several critically important post-school goals for youth with disabilities that needs to be addressed in the young person's IEP/Transition meetings. The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) has found that postsecondary education is a primary high school goal for more than four out of five secondary school students with transition plans (Cameto, Levine & Wagner, 2004). Perhaps reflecting this, youth with disabilities increasingly are taking rigorous academic courses in high school, including college preparatory classes such as math and science (Wagner, Newman, & Cameto, 2004). However, the NLTS2 has also revealed that only about 3 in 10 young adults with disabilities have taken postsecondary education classes since leaving high school (Wagner, et. al., 2005). This current rate of attending postsecondary school is less than half of their peers in the general population, with students with intellectual disabilities among those with the lowest rates of enrollment. Attainment of a postsecondary education credential opens opportunities in the labor market for individuals with and without disabilities, including higher earnings, benefits, and opportunities for career advancement. In short, it has increasingly become a ticket to an individual's future economic self-sufficiency. Yet, students with disabilities are still very much in the minority in postsecondary education.

There is also growing concern regarding student persistence and the successful completion of programs of study for those who do enroll in postsecondary education. Access is only a first step in a larger challenge of persisting and succeeding within the postsecondary education environment, completing a program of study and graduating, and, ultimately, achieving meaningful employment following program completion. Because of the high stakes involved, exploring the conditions that contribute to postsecondary success and persistence has been a focus of educational psychology research for the past three decades. Some researchers have noted as students are actively engaged in learning, they are more likely to participate in college (Gardner, 1998), whereas, others emphasize the role student involvement in out-of-class experiences plays in students persistence (Kuh, 1991). No single variable explains persistence. What we know is that of the

Postsecondary education is a primary goal for more than four out of five secondary school students with transition plans. However, only about 3 in 10 young adults with disabilities have taken postsecondary education classes since leaving high school.

next decade suggest that the strongest job growth will be in occupations requiring postsecondary education. Further, analyses exploring the relationship between educational attainment and earnings have, over the past 25 years, found that the gap in earnings between the different educational levels has widened. For example, in 1975, those with an advanced degree earned 1.8 times as much as high school graduates; by 1999, the disparity had increased to 2.6 times as much (Day & Newburger, 2002). The need for knowledge attainment and skill development through two-year and four-year colleges and universities, as well as

As the American economy becomes increasingly more knowledge-based, attaining a postsecondary education is more critical than ever.

53% of high school graduates who enter a four-year college directly from high school, only 35% graduate with a college degree. Findings are even more dismal for students who enroll in two-year community and technical colleges, with only one-third of students who enroll full-time in community colleges successfully completing their programs of study and

graduating (Tinto, Russo, and Kadel, 1994). Even among those who enroll with a goal of earning a degree or certificate, fewer than half actually complete a credential of any kind (Silverberg, Warner, Fong, & Goodwin, 2004). These findings do not bode well for young people with disabilities because there is virtually no data that suggests that their experiences are any different. While more youth with disabilities are

education and employment. And we need to apply that emerging knowledge in ways that make it possible for students with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities to successfully enter and complete post-high school educational programs through which they gain the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in our nation's workforce, and to be engaged citizens in our communities and society.

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We need a better understanding of what it takes to support students with disabilities to successfully enter and complete post-high-school education.

enrolled in two-year community and technical colleges than in other types of postsecondary schools, there is no information currently available on their rate of postsecondary education completion. But given the additional barriers to participation that they encounter in many postsecondary settings (i.e., programmatic, support service, accessibility, financial etc.), their opportunities for success are likely more limited than students without disabilities.

Seventy percent of students with disabilities identified some type of employment as a goal for the years after secondary school in their IEPs according to the NLTS2 (Wagner, et. al., 2005). Their future employability and opportunity to become economically self-sufficient is, as for all students, linked to the attainment of increased levels of knowledge and skills gained through participation in postsecondary education and vocational preparation programs. We need a better understanding of what it takes to support students with disabilities – especially those with the lowest participation rates – in postsecondary

Postsecondary Education: A National Priority

President Obama, in his February 2009 speech to the Joint Session of Congress, laid out his administration's goals and vision for postsecondary education participation in America. Among his comments were these:

In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity – it is a pre-requisite. Right now, three-quarters of the fastest-growing occupations require more than a high school diploma. And yet, just over half of our citizens have that level of education. We have one of the highest high school dropout rates of any industrialized nation. And half of the students who begin college never finish. This is a prescription for economic decline, because we know the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow. That is why it will be the goal of this administration to ensure that every child has access to a complete and competitive education – from the day they are born to the day they begin a career...

It is our responsibility as lawmakers and educators to make [our educational] system work. But it is the responsibility of every citizen to participate in it. And so tonight, I ask every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training. This can be community college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship. But whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma. And dropping out of high school is no longer an option. It's not just quitting on yourself, it's quitting on your country – and this country needs and values the talents of every American.

Excerpted from the Address to joint session of Congress, Tuesday, February 24th, 2009. Washington DC: The White House. Retrieved 12/2/10 from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-address-joint-session-congress>

A Prelude to Progress: Postsecondary Education and Students with Intellectual Disabilities

by Meg Grigal, Debra Hart and Sharon Lewis

Given the current activity and recent coverage in some mainstream media around the issue of postsecondary education for individuals with intellectual disabilities, it would be easy to assume that this area is well established in terms of common values, philosophical foundations, data-driven practices, and widely available existing services. Evidence of progress abounds. There are now specific provisions supporting college access for individuals with intellectual disabilities in a federal law; unprecedented access to some forms of financial aid; a recent State of the Art 2010 national conference with over 300 participants; a Web site with databases on literature and existing programs; and, as a sign of the times, a Facebook and Twitter presence. These are all positive accomplishments and surely serve as significant markers toward progress.

We are entering a new phase of the conversation when the questions focus less on, “Should students with intellectual disabilities go to college?” and more on, “How can students with intellectual disabilities go to college?”

However, for a young person with an intellectual disability in a town or state where the choice of going to college does not exist, these markers have little impact. In fact they may serve as a frustrating reminder of the paucity of available options. A constant refrain from students with intellectual disabilities and their families across the country

is, “I want to go to college, but there is nothing available in my community. Can you help me? Do you know of any programs in my area?” Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2) indicate that only 2% of out-of-school youth with intellectual disabilities in 2009 were enrolled in any kind of postsecondary education institution (National Longitudinal Transition Study – 2, 2009). These recent findings demonstrate that for the majority of students with intellectual disabilities in our country, college is still not considered a viable or realistic option.

Therefore, the markers of progress may be a bit misleading as they in some ways reflect the *potential* for a new reality more than our current reality. We cannot assume that the existence of some research, some online or print resources, and a relatively small number of programs means that our work here is done. The progress achieved thus far has allowed our field to begin a conversation that will likely need to last a very long time. And we should expect to hear conflicting opinions regarding what can and should be possible for students with intellectual disabilities in the context of postsecondary education. If, as Mohandas Gandhi observed, healthy discontent is the prelude to progress, then we are certainly in the prelude phase of this conversation. Perhaps as we celebrate these recent, and yes, important markers of progress we should also take a look back at the journey thus far to acknowledge and inform the long road ahead.

A Historical Perspective

This topic of conversation, postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities, brings with it important and complex questions about research, policy, and practice. Developing and

implementing evidence-based practices, cultivating common standards with which to measure and research such practices, and generating supportive policies at the federal, state, and local levels will require significant amounts of time and resources. As we look to this next realm of adult life – higher education – with the intent to build upon what’s been achieved and determine what might be possible for people with intellectual disabilities, we must bear in mind that as a field of study this is one that is in its infancy. History shows us that change takes time.

It is not that long ago that a student with an intellectual disability did not have access to a public education, let alone college. In fact, some states had laws that explicitly excluded children with certain types of disabilities, including students with “mental retardation,” from attending public school. In the 1970s, parents in 26 states had to resort to litigation to assert their children’s right to attend public schools (National Council on Disability, 2000). Large numbers of people with intellectual disabilities languished in state institutions where their basic needs were barely met. The thought of educational or rehabilitation services was not even considered, certainly not as we know these services today. The medical community often counseled parents to institutionalize their children so they could get the “care” they needed and be “kept safe.”

With the passage of the Education For All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) in 1975 (now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – IDEA), Congress finally cleared the way for children with disabilities to have the opportunity to learn and to succeed in public school. Initially, the law was about creating access to a free, appropriate public education as well as individualized planning and least restrictive

learning environments. In the 35 years since 1975, our public education system has responded to new expectations for these students and developed teacher training programs, standards and quality indicators, and regulatory oversight mechanisms. Much of this work was funded by the U.S. Department of Education in the form of personnel preparation, model demonstration, and field-initiated research projects.

This view of history allows us to put the current status of postsecondary education access into perspective. It has been only two years since the passage of the Higher Education Opportunity Act amendments (PL 110-315), the law that supported access to higher education and federal aid for students with intellectual disabilities. Consider for a moment the status of public school access for students with disabilities two years after the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. What was the level and consistency of services, the existence of standards to guide best practice, and the research supporting evidence-based practices and outcomes for special education students that existed two years after this ground-breaking piece of legislation? The policies and practices of that time reflected the knowledge base and values of the time, and provided a foundation for future expansion and innovation. For example, the notions of least restrictive environment, community integration, and individualized planning have been present in disability, special education, and rehabilitation legislation for many years; yet the manner and extent to which these notions have been implemented in practice has evolved significantly over time. Self-contained special education classrooms, sheltered employment workshops, and group homes were at one time “state of the art” in their respective fields of education, employment, and community living. However, as our expectations evolved about what people with intellectual disabilities could achieve in terms of learning, working, and living with people without disabilities, so did our practices.

As IDEA evolved to reflect higher expectations for youth with disabilities transitioning out of high school, this new emphasis was reflected in the hundreds of projects funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education, focused on demonstrating and researching transition practices in the 1980s and 1990s (OSEP, 2010). A similar level of interest in postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities, and corresponding funding from federal agencies, will be required to expand the current foundation of practice and to guide future research and policy agendas.

Another pivotal piece of legislation that has had a major impact on the lives of people with intellectual disabilities has

been the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This year was the 20th anniversary of the ADA. Remarkable progress has been made: We now know what quality services are and that they must be designed to support people with intellectual disabilities in deciding what they want to do, when, and where. People with intellectual disabilities have the right to try, take risks, fail, and succeed. The rights of students with intellectual disabilities afforded under the ADA (Office for Civil Rights, 2010) must not only be protected but fully implemented so that the goals of the law – equality of opportunity, across all aspects of adult life, including higher education – are fully realized for each person with an intellectual disability.

[Grigal, continued on page 26]

Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities: An Overview of Current Program Types

There are currently three main models of postsecondary education programs that admit students with intellectual disabilities: mixed or hybrid, substantially separate, and totally inclusive. Within each model, a wide range of supports and services is provided. Each model is described here in the order of prevalence:

- **Mixed/hybrid model:** *Students participate in social activities and/or academic classes with students without disabilities (for audit or credit) and also participate in classes with other students with disabilities (sometimes referred to as “life skills” or “transition” classes). This model typically provides students with employment experience on- or off-campus.*
- **Substantially separate model:** *Students participate only in classes with other students with disabilities (sometimes referred to as a “life skills” or “transition” program). Students may have the opportunity to participate in generic social activities on campus and may be offered employment experience, often through a rotation of pre-established employment slots on- or off-campus.*
- **Inclusive individual support model:** *Students receive individualized services (e.g., educational coach, tutor, technology, natural supports) in college courses, certificate programs, and/or degree programs, for audit or credit. The individual student’s vision and career goals drive services. There is no program base on campus. The focus is on establishing a student-identified career goal that directs the course of study and employment experiences (e.g., internships, apprenticeships, work-based learning). Built on a collaborative approach via an interagency team (adult service agencies, generic community services, and the college’s disability support office), agencies identify a flexible range of services and share costs.*

Excerpted with permission from Hart, D., Grigal, M., Sax, C., Martinez, D. & Will, M. (2006). Postsecondary education options for students with intellectual disabilities, *Research to Practice*, 45. Boston: Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts. Retrieved 12/21/10 from http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=178

How College Benefits Us: Students with Intellectual Disabilities Speak Out

compiled by Maria Paiewonsky

Staff from the Institute for Community Inclusion, at the University of Massachusetts Boston, asked 50 students with intellectual disabilities who have participated in inclusive college experiences to share how they perceive they have benefited from attending college. Below are some of their comments on six different aspects of college life.

Overcoming the First Day Jitters

Several students admitted that even though they were excited about going to college, the first few days were a little nerve-wracking. In addition to talking about how they felt at the time, three students talked about how they overcame their fears:

- At first, I didn't know how to be in a college classroom. It's scary in there. Cuz I just started. It was my first time going to college. When you start new things, you're not sure you can do it. Then you just say in your head, "I think I can" and then you just do it. – Adrian, 19

In college, the professors don't baby you like they do in high school. You're responsible for your own work. I like that.

- It was tough being in a new place and all, but I got by. I joined a club pretty quick and made a lot of friends. – Antony, 21
- Getting around the campus was so difficult at first. It was so hard figuring out where everything was. Like where the entrances were, what floor my class was on, and where the Braille

signs were, if they even had Braille signs at the campus. I got some help from my mobility instructor. She helped me learn routes around the campus and reminded me to listen for new sound cues like the hum of the vending machines in the student lounge. I do it on my own now. – Roberto, 19

Realizing the Differences Between High School and College Courses

A strong theme in the students' responses was the realization they came to that the college courses they take are much more rigorous than classes they took in high school, and that they are meeting higher academic expectations:

- When you're still in high school, when you're taking math, for example, you think you're taking a hard class. Then, after you finish high school and you sign-up for a math class at college, okay, that's actually a hard math class. – Cassidy, 21
- College is okay. It's kind of like high school but different. The class is harder. In high school, you can come in late. Here at college if you call your professor, you can come in late, but they don't accept excuses. They tell you that. It's up to you. Class starts on time and you have to be there. It's your responsibility. That's what they tell us. – Fabiola, 19
- For me, when I was in high school, I didn't have the chance to take classes with regular kids. Now, in college, I'm having to learn to do harder work. In high school I didn't have homework a lot. In college the professors don't baby you like they do in high school. You're responsible for your own work. I like that. – Grace, 21

Learning New Things

Many students talked about what they are learning in their courses, and were especially eager to talk about courses that are related to their interests:

- I'm taking a course called "Music of the 20th Century." We talked about Richard Strauss and we listened to his Alpine Symphony. We talked about Louis Armstrong. We listened to Elvis Presley, the king of rock and roll, and we also listened to Ella Fitzgerald. A whole variety of music and jazz. – Michael, 20

My best class is my Choral Class. It really helped me find my voice. Not just my singing voice. I'm speaking up for myself now in many different situations.

- I took a mythology class last semester and even found a mythology Web site for the class that lists the gods in alphabetical order and by country. At first the professor was skeptical about letting a student with disabilities take the class. Then he realized I had already read an older version of the textbook he was using for the class and changed his mind. – Crystal, 21
- I love my painting class and my favorite painting is "The Egg." I put lots of shadow into it, light, dark. My other painting, "The Green Bottle," it was part of the college's Student Art Show. I went to the artist's reception. I feel great that I had three paintings in the art show! – Allison, 20

- I learned a lot in this class. We read Stephen Covey's book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, and we learned about multiple intelligences. I know now I am an interpersonal worker. That means I like to work with people, not by myself. – Adrian, 19

Appreciating More Freedom and Independence

Nearly all the students commented on how much they appreciated the freedom and independence they felt at college:

- There's more freedom at college, more independence. It doesn't matter if it's after class, or on the weekends. You come to college and find things to do. In college, it's okay to hang out when you're not in class any time you want to. – Joey, 21
- I like having time to work out at the fitness center. You can meet people there, get a work out, just hang out. – Antony, 21
- I like spending free time at the library so I can check sports Web sites and my email. – Wilson, 21

Becoming a Changed Person

Several students described how they have changed as a result of going to college:

- Here's what college has taught me about myself: (1) I've learned how to be more aware; (2) I learned more about who I am as a person; (3) I've learned how to be an independent and responsible person; and (4) I'm learning to be more focused. – Grace, 21
- My best class is my Choral Class. It really helped me find my voice. Not just my singing voice. I'm speaking up for myself now in many different situations. I was quiet before but now, here I am, talking about college. It's like, bam! I've got everything under control. – Arielle, 19
- I feel different now because I'm getting an education and meeting new people. College might be hard, but you can get through it. I know plenty of people

who quit college and don't want to get an education. Last year I thought about quitting, but I didn't. I said to myself that the work might be hard, but I know I can do it. And I did it. – Stephan, 20

Some Advice About College

When asked what advice they have for younger students who have not thought about college or are anxious about trying college, the students had a number of encouraging responses:

- Motivate yourself. Believe you can go to college. You don't have to be the world's smartest student. You just have to try. – Grace, 21
- You know the thing is, students are thinking that college is going to be tough for them in their future, but you know what? College is more fun for people. They can take more different classes than they were taking back in high school. And get everything done in college, not just be lazy. None of this, I don't want to do this, I don't want to do this, I want to listen to music... No! Go to college and get your education done through college. That's what students have to understand. – Arielle, 19
- Taking college classes and looking for work when you are still in school isn't easy. First of all, you have to work a lot. And you might miss your friends from school and the classes you had there. It's hard to manage your new schedule. And there are always going to be transportation problems. I worry about working it all out. But if you're thinking is it all worth it? Yes, I think it is. – Adrian, 19

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Survey Findings on College Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

In 2009, Think College conducted a national online survey of postsecondary education programs to identify existing services for students with intellectual disabilities. There were 149 program respondents from 37 states. Key findings included the following (the number of respondents is in parentheses – response rate varied by question):

Types of Programs

- 50% were at four-year colleges or universities, 40% at two-year colleges, and 10% at trade/technical schools (N=135)
- 45% served only adults, 26% served dually-enrolled students, and 29% served both groups (N=118)

Admissions and Fees

- 60% indicated students with intellectual disabilities were formally enrolled (N=143)
- 56% had special entrance criteria (N=149)
- 71% indicated students do not take the college course placement test (N=132)
- 78% did not charge students or families fees for additional services related to students with intellectual disabilities (N=129)

Course Access

- 75% offered other instruction or social events specifically for students with intellectual disabilities (N=129)
- 75% indicated students with intellectual disabilities participate in group instruction or activities only with other students with intellectual disabilities (N=129)
- 53% indicated students access courses through the typical registration process (N=130)

Access to Disability, Housing and Other Services and Supports

- 58% received services from the college's disability office (N=128)
- 39% offered residential options (N=123)
- 49% indicated students had person-centered planning (N=115)

Note: These findings represent only the programs that responded to the survey, and are not representative of every program serving students with intellectual disabilities in the U.S. Also, responses indicated that programs vary considerably in terms of level of student integration, access to typical courses, services, and the level of involvement of disability services, if at all.

Contributed by Debra Hart, Meg Grigal, and Cate Weir, Think College, Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts, Boston. For more see <http://thinkcollege.net>

Federal Legislation Increasing Higher Education Access for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

by Judy L. Shanley

In 2008, the Federal legislation that regulates higher education policy was reauthorized. The legislation, known as the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) (PL 110-315), includes two major provisions that have the potential to facilitate entry into higher education for more students with intellectual disabilities. First, through Title VII of the legislation, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE), awarded five-year grants to two- and four-year institutions of higher education and consortia to implement model demonstration projects. These projects will provide the

The Higher Education Opportunity Act includes two major provisions that have the potential to facilitate entry into higher education for more students with intellectual disabilities.

infrastructure for 27 institutions or consortia to establish or extend programs for students with intellectual disabilities in postsecondary education settings. Second, the Title IV regulations of the HEOA enable eligible students to receive Federal financial aid if they are enrolled in an approved comprehensive transition and postsecondary program. These two pieces, made possible through the HEOA, are expected to create increased opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to attend higher education.

New Projects Using Diverse Strategies

The Transition Program for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) Model Demonstration Projects are required to support students through a focus on academic, social, employment, and independent living strategies. Twenty-seven five-year grants started on October 1, 2010 and offer heterogeneous strategies and supports (see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/tpsid/index.html>). The range of strategies implemented by these grantees suggests that there is not a one-size-fits-all model for program implementation. Grant outcomes are expected to result in improved understanding of varying strategies used across programs, enhanced learning regarding the resources required to use these strategies, and, to the extent possible, extended understanding of how particular strategies may affect student performance and success in higher education, and student outcomes. The following illustrates the broad range of strategies used by transition programs for students with intellectual disabilities:

- *Academic/Instructional Strategies:* Using peer tutoring and mentoring by students without disabilities, and educational coaching; implementing Universal Design for Learning; enhancing faculty skill to provide supports through their involvement in advisory functions for the project; engaging disability student service professionals; and sharing information with higher education faculty and staff at professional development forums.
- *Employment/Career Strategies:* Providing inclusive practicum and internships; inviting participation of vocational rehabilitation professionals; raising awareness of campus career center events and ensuring that students with intellectual disabilities are

included; staffing projects with career center staff; and creating roles for employers, business leaders, and Department of Labor agencies and workforce development systems in the delivery of instruction and development of courses related to careers and employment.

- *Independent Living/Residential Strategies:* Creating inclusive residential options for students; offering life and independent living skill coursework; and addressing content related to community activities such as transportation, money management and budgeting, consumerism, and community participation.
- *Social Strategies:* Ensuring that information about campus clubs and social activities reaches students with intellectual disabilities; providing access to institutional processes such as obtaining a college identification card, and ensuring that students with intellectual disabilities have access to recreation events such as purchasing athletic event tickets; inviting students with intellectual disabilities to serve in leadership positions within clubs or organizations; and educating student campus leaders about students with intellectual disabilities attending the college and encouraging outreach and communication strategies that invite a diverse range of students to participate in social activities.

These transition programs for students with intellectual disabilities require students to be socially and academically integrated with students without disabilities to the maximum extent possible, evidenced by providing students with choices to enroll in regular college classes, live in inclusive residences, develop employment and career skills through integrated work experiences, and participate in social activities, clubs,

and recreation with college peers without disabilities. Programs incorporate educational supports and instructional delivery methods, such as educational coaching, peer tutoring, academic and social mentors, universal course design (Hart & Grigal, 2010; Zeff, 2007), and Universal Design for Learning (Rose & Meyer, 2002; Shaw, 2010) to facilitate student retention, advancement, and success (Thoma, Bartholomew, & Scott, 2009). Programs also use varying methods of person-centered planning, including individualized career plans, to ensure that students have a voice and a choice in planning their coursework, selecting social opportunities, and deciding upon career and employment goals. Educators suggest that understanding individualized academic, social, and career-related needs of students with disabilities and encouraging equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency are important to raising expectations for student outcomes (Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Park, 2003).

Another key feature of the transition programs for students with intellectual disabilities is the expectation for cross-setting collaboration and linkages across K-12 settings, and across employment and community settings. Characteristics related to collaborating across secondary and postsecondary education settings and transition planning are linked to improved post-school outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities (Neubert & Redd, 2008). In some projects, transition personnel may sit on advisory committees at the higher education institution and may plan and co-teach classes. In other projects, business leaders, employers, and vocational rehabilitation professionals are part of the planning, implementation, and advisory functions of the program. As the evidence supports, when students have access to a range of community-based instruction, work-based learning, and a focus on career-development (Izzo & Lamb, 2003) improved post-school outcomes are realized.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) (PL 108-446) requires transition planning for students with disabilities that includes a coordinated set of activities in a results-oriented process focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student with a disability to facilitate their movement from high school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational preparation, and integrated employment (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Students with intellectual disabilities may receive these services, if they are identified in the individualized educational program (IEP), in higher education settings. The differences across secondary and postsecondary settings such as campus size, variety of classes, and the increased opportunities that students have to plan their own learning and social experiences, require early transition planning (Getzel & Wehman, 2005). Educators in K-12 settings can invite higher education program staff and students with intellectual disabilities to visit schools to help raise awareness regarding the possibilities of attending higher education; offer summer programs in which middle and high school students with intellectual disabilities attend the college program; and offer family events at which parents of students with intellectual disabilities can receive information about postsecondary education programs. These strategies are often linked to improved post-school outcomes for students with disabilities (Halpern, Yovanoff, Doren, & Benz (1995).

New Regulations Open Up Federal Student Financial Aid

Students with intellectual disabilities and their families cite the high cost of higher education as a barrier to participation in postsecondary education (Grigal & Hart, 2010). Prior to the HEOA, students with intellectual disabilities were unable to participate in Federal aid programs because of requirements for students to have attained

a high school diploma or its equivalent, and to pass an ability-to-benefit test. One use of this test is to assist higher education professionals to determine the instructional needs of incoming students. The HEOA includes waivers to these two provisions, thus, if an institution chooses, and they participate in Federal student aid programs, the institution can apply to Federal Student Aid to have its comprehensive transition and postsecondary program approved. With the approval, students with intellectual disabilities who

The HEOA has provided an impetus for transition planning and building transition infrastructures across K-12 and postsecondary education.

are eligible to participate in Federal student aid, based on financial need, may be eligible to receive Federal Pell Grants, Federal Work-Study (FWS), and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG). (Information about the process by which institutions update their Federal application to Federal Student Aid is available at <http://ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/062110TitleIVeligibility.html>).

Making Use of the HEOA Provisions

The HEOA has not only provided opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to access higher education, the legislation has provided an impetus for transition planning and building transition infrastructures across K-12 and postsecondary education. Transition personnel can learn about the programs that may be available in their area, and can offer to provide information and resources regarding program development to students and their transition

[Shanley, continued on page 27]

“What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?”: A College Graduate

by Claire Bible

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” A question that is timeless through the ages. When I was little, growing up in Wisconsin, the response was simple, automatic: I wanted to be a writer. When asked the same question in middle school my response was, “To go to college.”

I daydreamed about college. In the realm of daydreams I would minor in one or two areas of study, double-major graduate with a Bachelor of Arts, go on to graduate school to get my Masters.

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These daydreams were fueled by the fact that my oldest cousin was at the time going off to college. I was inspired by it all. I wanted to go myself. I even thought occasionally of stuffing myself into a duffle bag so that he would have to take me with him. Unfortunately for me there wasn't a duffle bag that I could fit into.

I've always loved to learn; I was a curious kid. Learning didn't always come easy to me (I have a learning disability in math). Despite that, I loved school. This love of learning and my childhood curiosity helped me in high school. I saw homework as recreation and I loved it, I thrived on it. Many evenings were spent reading books and cuddling with Domino or Stella (whichever cat preferred me at that moment) while listening to music.

I can't remember a time from 12 on up when I didn't think about going to college. I kept daydreaming about it even in high school. In high school I took the ACTs, and applied to colleges. Since I have a learning disability in math I didn't take the regular set of math classes (this wasn't for lack of trying). I took both pre-algebra and algebra 1 my freshmen and sophomore years, and after that I took life skill math classes. Because of this not many colleges were open to me. I even got two rejection letters from the same school.

Then I found the Threshold Program at Lesley University in Boston. Threshold is an independent living curriculum that shares the Lesley campus and facilities. I moved to Boston and began college in the Threshold Program in 2006 and was there for two years. They had their own dorms for us, their own agenda of what was important, and a curriculum that had us hopping from nine in the morning to seven, sometimes eight or nine, at night. After a time I began to get steadily frustrated. I wasn't getting anywhere in the arts (my main area of interest); they offered only three extra-curricular classes in the arts. I picked one of the two available majors, Early Childhood, kept up with my classes, and began to look for that small talking doorknob out of Alice in Wonderland that could lead me somewhere different. In the meantime, I involved myself on my campus. I went to every event, cause or otherwise. I saw fantastic plays, many comedians, and heard and saw so many bands that way. I would spend weekend nights, or any time when I didn't have anything else pressing, at the student center, sometimes to the witching hour of five in the morning, working on my novels. And my poetry found a voice at the open mike.

It was around Christmas that I learned of the Cutting Edge program at Edge-wood College in Madison, Wisconsin.

When I flew home for the holiday I took a meeting with the program. I had found the door with the talking door knob at long last! In 2008, I graduated from Threshold with a certificate in early childhood, a few transferable credits, and moved home to an opportunity that I felt lucky to have.

The differences between the two programs hit me right away. While I respect the Threshold Program, it's an older model. Threshold gives you the fundamental education, which is important; it gives you a solid foundation. Where it is lacking is in giving you the wings to fly.



While the goal of living independently is well and good, your 20s should be the time of pursuing your dreams, making mistakes, finding out who you are. In Threshold, “our 20s” are your mid-40s.

Cutting Edge puts the student in the college classroom with the motto that everyone that wants a postsecondary education can get one. Instead of focusing on independent living, Cutting Edge spends only five hours a week on independent living, and the rest is made up of the classes you're taking, studying, and living life. No college is ever a breeze to get through, and Cutting Edge is no exception. But, if you work hard you'll find that Cutting Edge is that fairy godmother that you dreamed of as a child, along with Tinkerbell who holds

the fairy dust that if shaken liberally can give you the wings to fly.

I've benefited greatly from being within the Cutting Edge environment. Now I don't feel unrealistic in what I'm shooting for. I've been able to take fantastically challenging classes with amazing professors. I have found another stage for my poetry; in the past year I took second in the talent show. I also took second out of the entire English department with one of my poems that I had submitted to the writing contest. I have also have been living on campus in the dorms going on three years.

My advice for kids with disabilities is to keep dreaming. Never let anyone tell you that you can't; anything can happen – it's a long life. Keep fighting for what you want, speak up, let the world hear your voice, even if it's the tiniest of roars keep roaring, working hard, and just being you. Advocating as loudly as you can

is a large part of it. My advice for teachers is to inspire and challenge all your students, those with disabilities and without. When you ask that question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" really listen; don't say it's an unrealistic dream, and dream big with them. You could be the teacher that student remembers forever for saying "yes you can." Every child wants to be believed in. Use your resources, make lists, and help them begin to achieve their dreams even if it might take years. The time you take will make a difference. Attend IEP meetings with good listening skills; listen with an open heart to the parents, and the student. For people wanting to provide an opportunity for postsecondary education for students with disabilities, my advice is to not make promises you can't keep. Don't hawk an opportunity if it's not something you can actually provide. Fundraising for the program is

important; the money has to come from somewhere. Apply for grants, think creatively: yard sales, lemonade stands, food drives, book drives, clothing drives, the list is endless. Sit down and start listing ways. Decide on what kind of opportunity you want to give; do you have goals for it? Come up with a philosophy. If you're applying for bank loans, they're going to want, and most likely need to see, a business plan and how you plan to apply it as well.

Oh, and always keep asking that question that is timeless through the ages: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I guarantee the answers you'll get will always surprise you.

Claire Bible is a student in the Cutting Edge program at Edgewood College, Madison, Wisconsin.

Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities: Emerging Standards, Quality Indicators and Benchmarks

The growth of postsecondary education programs for people with intellectual disabilities over the past decade, coupled with important changes to the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), have led to a need for a more standardized approach to determine the efficacy and quality of such programs. Therefore, in 2008, the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities funded research to determine a set of standards, quality indicators, and benchmarks that could be used by existing and new programs. The Institute for Community Inclusion at University of Massachusetts Boston, in partnership with TransCen, Inc., received funding to complete this research, and the process to develop a validated set of standards commenced in 2009. The ongoing research is resulting in a validated set of practices that can be used by institutes of higher education to create, expand or enhance high-quality, inclusive postsecondary education

experiences to support positive outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Further, the standards, indicators, and benchmarks are aligned with the definition of a comprehensive postsecondary and transition program for students with intellectual disabilities contained in the HEOA in an effort to assist with compliance with these parameters.

The resulting standards, quality indicators, and benchmark tool includes eight overarching standards that have been identified as critical areas of focus for postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities. They are: Academic Access, Career Development, Social Networks, Fostering Self-Determination, Integration with College Systems and Practices, Coordination and Collaboration, Sustainability, and Evaluation. These eight standards represent the key areas that those establishing and/or improving these programs should consider. Each represents an area that is vital to establishing a comprehensive, inclusive educational experience for

students with intellectual disabilities, and to assure alignment with requirements in the HEOA. In this way, the standards will assist programs in applying to be an "eligible program" under the HEOA and therefore be eligible for financial aid for its students.

By mid-2011 the final validated standards, quality indicators, and benchmarks will be posted on the Think College Web site (www.thinkcollege.net) as a resource for new and existing programs, eventually available on the Web site as a downloadable guide. In addition, an online self-assessment tool will also be developed that will allow those who are implementing a postsecondary education program to rate their practices with those reflected in the standards. For those establishing a new postsecondary program, the standards will provide guidance on what is promising practice in the field and what is required by the HEOA.

Contributed by Cate Weir, Debra Hart and Meg Grigal, of Think College, Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts, Boston. To learn more see <http://thinkcollege.net>

The Power of Inclusion: Personal Reflections on Creating Change

by Shea Howell

What then would be our reason for instituting a program for students whose goal is not degree completion? The participation of students with cognitive disabilities on our campus indicates that we have a broader view of our institution as a center for learning... The liberal arts tradition maintains that higher education is more than preparation for a specific career or profession. It is about the continual quest for deeper understanding, richer life experiences, and personal growth; in short, the overused term – life-long learning. If we accept this as the role of higher education, then we must believe that this is our mission toward all individuals.

– Virinder Moudgil, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Oakland University, delivered at Options Graduation Ceremony, April 19, 2010

Micah Fialka-Feldman graduated from Oakland University in the spring of 2010, completing six years in a program designed to provide a fully inclusive university experience to young people with intellectual disabilities. With the support of Micah, his family, and visionary educational professionals, Oakland University opened its doors for full inclusion. In the course of this experience I was able to observe the power of inclusion to transform institutions and individuals.

I taught Micah in two classes during his final semester. He was in a public speaking class and I directed his capstone course. A year earlier Micah also took my class Persuasion and Social Movements. I was involved in his course selection throughout his academic career. I was able to watch Micah grow as an individual and to observe the impact he had on other students.

My first classroom experience with Micah was in Persuasion and Social Movements. This class fit his strengths. His family members are well-known activists and he has spent a lifetime surrounded by people engaged in move-

ments for change. Micah has a keen interest in politics; he was among the most-informed students in the class and participated fully in discussions. During the class he was the first to have seen *Milk*, a film about gay activist Harvey Milk of San Francisco. He encouraged classmates to see it and talked about how important it was for people to understand the struggles individuals faced. This kind of contribution was typical of Micah's participation, offering resources and insights to others.

Grades in that course depended on papers discussing some aspect of social movements. The only modification I made was to allow Micah to substitute video interviews for written papers. This did require giving him some clear direction in how to frame questions and approach issues. Generally, it was helpful for me to develop a few ideas and present them to Micah so that he could choose among them. He followed the same assignment schedule and handed in his interviews along with everyone else's papers. He worked with another student on their final presentation, analyzing his effort to overturn a university ruling preventing him from living in the dorm.

The second class, Public Speaking, also drew on Micah's strengths. During high school, he spoke to groups about people with disabilities. By the time he came to the university he had established a record of speaking events. Micah not only spoke on campus, but traveled locally and nationally to make presentations to gatherings large and small. Depending primarily on PowerPoint™ presentations to provide structure, Micah was comfortable as a speaker. In a class with mostly freshman and sophomores he was among the most natural, organized, and effective speakers. Micah's main challenge was to move beyond material that he had presented and to explore new ideas. Here, too, the primary strategy I

used was to develop some options for Micah so that he could select among ideas. While it was often difficult for him to generate new topic areas, once he grasped a direction he was able to move forward.

His final speech presentation in the course, on the use of the word "retarded," required research and organizational skills that challenged him. Working with his parents and another student, Micah crafted and delivered an excellent presentation, earning one of the highest grades in the class. More importantly, the speech touched off a discussion with

Adapting classes to meet the needs of students with cognitive disabilities took minimal effort. As a community we grew tremendously because of it.

students saying how much they appreciated Micah's perspective and how he made them think about things they had never considered. The experience of inviting people to think more deeply and to rethink old ideas are important gifts of inclusion to the campus community.

For the capstone course, Micah worked with Sarah Vore, a student doing a capstone in writing. Together, they produced a film about Micah's experiences at Oakland. Sarah and Micah met with Micah's family at their initiation and with Micah's permission. This proved to be an important support in developing the project. Micah's parents helped Sarah understand how to work with him to get his best ideas. They

encouraged Sarah to not only help him frame questions for interviews, but to be willing to challenge him. Having high expectations and not settling for less were important for their success in the project. Sarah wrote in her capstone paper about the experience:

Having never given much thought to higher education for this select group of individuals, my experiences with Micah have completely opened my eyes to the academic and social enrichment capabilities of those who are classified as “intellectually disabled.” (p. 3)

Earlier Sarah described her first meeting with Micah and how she was able to confront her own stereotypes:

I felt both a sense of intrigue and enthusiasm as we easily made conversation. It was during that moment that my prior myths associated with intellectual disabilities were dispelled. (p. 1)

Sarah’s reaction to Micah was not unusual. By his senior year he was among the most recognized students on the campus. In chronicling the highlights of the graduating class, the *Oakland Post*, the student newspaper, listed groundbreaking for new buildings, a 9% tuition hike, a faculty strike, and “After covering his story for over a year, Micah Fialka-Feldman won his personal battle to live on campus...” (“Return the favor,” 2010). This is perhaps my greatest lesson from this experience with Micah and efforts at inclusion. It is not only important for the growth of the individual, but it radically challenges and changes the stereotypes of others.

Even in the earliest days of the program, the potential for altering thinking was clear. In a book chapter co-written by Marshall Kitchens, the director of the Writing Center, and one of his students, Sandra Dukhie, about tutoring Micah on the use of assistive technologies, they noted the benefit to Micah’s increased confidence, but went on to say:

A primary benefit for Sandra was the sense of social awareness because of the project. Sandra describes working with Micah as “a wonderful experience.” Over the weeks that they worked together, she says, she acquired a greater appreciation for individuals with disabilities: “I now have a better understanding of some of the frustrations encountered by many individuals with cognitive impairments.” At the same time, Micah not only benefited from the experience in terms of communicative growth, but also from the social interaction, citing the social nature of the sessions as the most beneficial aspect. (p. 214)

Micah’s visible presence on campus resonated with other students with disabilities. In a moving article in the *Oakland Post*, Shawn Minnix (2010) wrote:

I thought I would take a minute to congratulate all of the seniors on their upcoming graduation. There is one person that I wish to acknowledge separately, and that would be Micah Fialka-Feldman, or as we just know him Micah. Micah has a cognitive disability, and is set to get his certificate at the end of this semester, finishing his odyssey and completing his education. I look at Micah and what he has accomplished and smile. He inspires us all to do greater things. I should know. In some ways, I used to BE Micah. I was placed in a school for the emotionally impaired when I was 6 years old, and I stayed there until I was 14 and it was hell from the start. I was told by my own principal that I would never finish high school.

The full inclusion of Micah and other students required professors who were willing to think creatively about what would enable students to contribute and learn in classes. The single most important source of these strategies emerged from meetings with Micah, with his administrative support team of professionals, and with his family. Out of these

meetings we were able to make adaptations that enriched the class experience for everyone. We recognized no one strategy fit all students or all classes, but through open communication and attention to the goal of full participation,

Through open communication and attention to the goal of full participation, we were able to find ways to meet the needs of all students.

we were able to find ways to meet the needs of all students. Adapting classes to meet the needs of students with cognitive disabilities took minimal effort. As a community we grew tremendously because of it.

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Key Roles in Planning the Transition to College and Careers

by Margo Vreeburg Izzo

Students with disabilities have the most important role in planning their own transition from high school to postsecondary education, employment, and independent living. However, parents, educators, and adult services personnel also have crucial roles in the teams that work with the students to prepare for post-high school life. This article provides an overview of some of the key roles of those adults in assisting students to explore, plan for, and move into further education and career preparation opportunities after high school.

The Role of the IEP Team

Federal legislation provides very clear guidance on how educators and parents must design special education and related services to prepare students with disabilities for further education, employment, and independent living. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 requires school personnel to begin planning transition services with the student, parents, and other agency representatives prior to the student's 16th birthday, or younger if determined appropriate. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team must review the IEP annually and update the:

- (aa) "appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills;
 - (bb) transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals."
- (IDEA of 2004, Section 614, d, VIII)

The IEP team meets on an annual basis to discuss the student's vision for the future, present levels of performance, transition services, and annual goals.

The IEP is developed to prepare the student for postsecondary education and employment. Once students reach the age of 16, they assist the IEP team to develop measurable postsecondary goals. Examples of such goals are: "After high school, Liz will obtain a two-year degree in Allied Health's Patient Care Program" and "After high school, Juan will attend classes at Independence Community College and work part-time on campus in the bookstore or student center." Once these measurable postsecondary goals are developed, the IEP team writes annual goals and identifies transition services needed to prepare students to reach their postsecondary goals. Since students' postsecondary goals guide what types of annual goals and transition services are delivered, it is essential to identify postsecondary goals that students are motivated to achieve. For example, if a student wants to go to college but doesn't currently have the study habits and educational track record to make that a realistic goal, then teachers and parents need to share their concerns with the student. They need to give him or her an opportunity to take steps toward better preparation to achieve that goal or to revise the goal. Going to college will require attending classes, doing homework, and receiving grades. If a student does not like these tasks, perhaps the student could look at alternative forms of post-high-school education, such as attending non-credit adult learning classes through the local adult and community education program where participants do not have to complete homework or take tests.

The IEP team is also involved in planning community experiences with the student to confirm potential employment and postsecondary goals and to explore various work and college settings. Research indicates that the best predictor of employment following high

school is paid work experience in high school. Gaining the skills to maintain employment is critical even if a student wants to go to college. Ultimately, employment is the goal of both high school and college programs.

Finally, the IEP must include a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. For example, a rehabilitation counselor may support a summer work experience by funding a job developer and coach to work with a student. By including descriptions of both educational and adult services in the IEP, a coordinated set of transition services leading to postsecondary education and careers is more likely to occur.

The Role of Transition Services

Transition services are designed to facilitate movement from school to adult settings including college, vocational education, employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation. IEP teams consider students' strengths, preferences and interests when planning these services. Transition services are provided by teachers and related services personnel such as occupational therapists, transition specialists, and rehabilitation counselors. These school and adult services personnel provide instruction and community experiences to develop the skills students need to navigate college and employment settings. Bridge programs located on college campuses, but designed for high school students, are becoming increasingly popular. These programs give students opportunities to navigate college settings with their age-peers without disabilities, enroll in or audit college classes, and move toward employment and adult participation in the community.

The Role of Rehabilitation Services

The Rehabilitation Act was reauthorized under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation services. The act mandates that vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors participate in transition planning for students served under IDEA, at the very least, in the form of consultation and technical assistance (National Council on Disability, 2009). Students with disabilities are eligible for VR services if they meet the following three criteria:

- Their physical or mental impairment constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment.
- They can benefit from VR services in terms of an employment outcome.
- They require VR services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment.

However, not all eligible students can be served by VR due to a lack of funds.

Vocational rehabilitation counselors provide direct services to help transition-age youth gain the educational and vocational skills needed to transition to living, working, and participating as adults in community life. The VR counselor works with eligible youth and the IEP team to develop an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) designed to assess, plan, develop and provide VR services to prepare for, and engage in, gainful employment (National Council on Disability, 2009). An IPE contains the specific employment outcome that is chosen by the eligible individual, and any services provided by VR listed and described in the IPE must be focused toward securing a reasonable employment outcome. VR counselors provide services to enable youth with disabilities to leave high school, attain postsecondary education and training, and achieve employment rates and levels of wages comparable to their peers without disabilities. Services provided through the IPE to youth and adults eligible for VR include assessment, counseling and guidance, referral, job-related services, corrective surgery, therapeutic treatment

that may reduce or eliminate an employment impediment, prosthetics, employment-related transportation, related personal services, interpreter services, and rehabilitation technology.

Several studies have reported that students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who participate in postsecondary education have increased their earnings (Grigal & Dwyre, 2010). Despite this, not all VR counselors will include the costs for college as a VR service in the IPE. However, many professionals and parents can attest to the significant growth in employability skills that occurs when young adults with disabilities are participating in college classes with their age-peers. The skills of being a good student overlap considerably with those skills needed for successful employment.

Conclusion

In summary, professionals and parents should encourage high school students with intellectual disabilities to take the lead in exploring the skills and education needed to transition to college and careers of interest. Students must take an active role in developing their IEPs and be comfortable talking about the nature of their disabilities with both educators and other professionals. Encouraging students to advocate for necessary accommodations in the high school setting will prepare them for college. Finally, empowering students to embrace their futures with the self-determination needed to set goals and make adjustments on a daily basis will help ensure their success.

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Creating a Transition Portfolio

The transition portfolio is a collection of documents students prepare to help develop their postsecondary goals and their plans to achieve those goals. Students print out and place these documents in a binder and save them electronically for easy updating in the future. Many of the documents can be developed in English or technology classes to meet required academic standards and course objectives. The following items are suggested for inclusion in the portfolio:

- PowerPoint™ presentation outlining results of students' transition assessment surveys, careers of high interest, postsecondary goals, and transition activities they will implement to prepare for college and careers.
- Job comparison chart outlining the nature of work, working conditions, salary and education needed to enter their top two careers.
- College comparison chart outlining the costs, size, residential options, majors and supports available at two or three colleges of high interest.
- Career narrative explaining their postsecondary plans.
- Measurable postsecondary goals for employment and education or training that students and their IEP team can consider including in the IEP.
- Short-term, annual goals students can complete this year to help them meet their long-term postsecondary goals.
- Resumé and cover letter for students to attach to a job or college application.
- Completed job and college applications to use as samples for future applications.
- Written interview with a professional from their chosen career area.
- Checklist of tasks that must be completed to reach their postsecondary goals.
- Bookmarks listing Web sites that have been helpful in clarifying the students' career goals and transition plans.

Contributed by Margo Izzo, Associate Director and Program Director of Special Education and Transition at the Nisonger Center, The Ohio State University, Columbus.

Preparing Students with Intellectual Disabilities for College: Tips for Parents and Teachers

by Beth Swedeen

Last year while attending our state's transition conference, my 17-year-old daughter told me she wanted to speak at the conference this coming year. Over the summer we developed and submitted a proposal that tells her story: how a student with developmental disabilities fully participates in family, school, and community life. I was both proud and a bit surprised when the proposal was one of the few chosen for a very limited number of breakout sessions. However, it also saddened me that her experiences are so unusual: She takes almost all general education courses (with modifications) in a large, comprehensive high school where she participates in extracurricular clubs and leadership opportunities; has started and maintains a small jewelry business with her sister; and is active in volunteer and other community service work. She also is on the local "speaking circuit" to college students and parent groups.

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In reality, even 35 years after the passage of legislation opening up public school experiences for our children, students with intellectual disabilities often remain on the fringes of school and community life. They continue to experience lower levels of involvement in activities, organizations, and life experiences compared with their peers, often

resulting in a lack of skills needed for postsecondary and employment success. In addition, they are not forming the relationships through which so many of us learn about opportunities. How many high school students learn about a job or become interested in a college through their connections with a friend or relative? For this to happen, those relationships need to be taking place.

Developing family, school, and community expectations that individuals with disabilities will participate across the lifespan in their schools, on the job, and in their communities is essential in creating both the opportunities and relationships necessary for students with intellectual disabilities to develop goals and achieve their dreams. While some families have paved the way in creating the expectation that students with intellectual disabilities can and should attend college, many other families who have experienced years of low expectations from schools and other professionals may need support to develop that vision.

As for any young adults, preparation for college for students with intellectual disabilities needs to begin years before those application forms are filled out and a tuition down payment is made. Students with intellectual disabilities may benefit from even more exposure and practice than their peers in making choices, exploring options, developing self-advocacy skills, and learning to navigate their communities. Sadly, most are getting far fewer, if any, opportunities compared with their peers.

Here are some ways families and schools can begin early in encouraging, providing, and supporting those critical experiences and opportunities that help students with intellectual disabilities prepare academically, form social connections, develop self-advocacy skills, and increase independence. These four components are all necessary –

regardless of disability – for the success of students in college.

Beginning in Middle School

During 6th and 7th grade, the following preparations for college can begin:

- Talk with the student about a range of careers and necessary preparation.
- Use person-centered planning tools (e.g., PATH, MAPS, Essential Lifestyle Plans) to identify the student's strengths, interests, motivators, connections, and potential resources.
- Look at different postsecondary programs online with the student.
- Attend college sports activities, plays, or other events together if you live near a college or university.
- Encourage the student to use the Internet to conduct searches about careers and postsecondary options.
- Encourage the student to make choices and his or her own purchases at stores, restaurants, movie theaters.
- Have the student sign-in or check-in for doctor and dentist visits.
- Make sure the student has a library card. Libraries are a great resource for practice making choices and performing independent transactions. Students also begin to learn responsibility for keeping track of the card and checked-out resources.
- Include and involve the student in general education courses.
- Encourage use of technologies other students use (Internet, iPods, email), as well as assistive technology such as voice to text programs.
- Discuss with the student extracurricular and other community opportunities that match his or her interests.

- Discuss and set-up necessary supports for the student to participate in extra-curricular activities.
- Involve the student in aspects of the IEP process (e.g., display or discuss the student's portfolio of work, talk about goals for the coming year, decide who to invite).

During Eighth Grade

Parents and teachers can support preparation for postsecondary education by doing the following while the student is in 8th grade:

- Continue to discuss with the student possible career paths and interests.
- Administer age-appropriate transition assessments, including person-centered planning tools.
- Connect the student to possible leadership opportunities (e.g., 4-H, self-advocacy training, school leadership teams).
- Work with the student to develop high school class schedules aligned to his or her transition path and course of study, with a priority on general education courses with accommodations/modifications as needed.
- Discuss the value of extra-curricular activity involvement and encourage the student to identify and participate in at least one activity during freshman year.
- Include a high school teacher on the 8th grade transition IEP team.
- Set up a high school tour and spend some time in the high school setting as part of the 8th grade transition process, if needed.
- Consider peer mentors, as opposed to adult supports, as guides, tutors, or supports when possible.
- Encourage participation in programs and activities that have an overnight component, such as Scouting and other camps, recreation programs, sleep-overs with friends, etc.
- Provide opportunities for the student to have some ownership in planning and participating in the IEP process (e.g., welcoming participants, sharing favorite experiences from the school or a new interest discovered).
- Discuss possible summer activities that align with the student's career and academic interests, such as volunteer opportunities, interest camps and recreation programs, and part-time work.
- Continue to explore with the student technologies teens use to connect and communicate (e.g., Facebook, cell phones, texting, instant messaging).
- Reflect with the student, toward the end of the year, on school and community experiences in which he or she participated during middle school. Evaluate what went well, what supports were helpful, and what activities are worth pursuing in high school.

Beginning in 9th Grade

Among the steps parents and teachers can take to further prepare a student for postsecondary education beginning in 9th grade and continuing through the remainder of high school are these:

- Continue discussions with the student about his or her interests, aptitudes, and motivators throughout high school.
- Continue using age-appropriate transition assessments.
- Provide opportunities to encourage development of self-advocacy and other self-help skills through typical high school experiences (e.g., field trips in which the student makes his or her own lunch and incidental purchases, learning to ride the city bus, buying items at the school store, signing up for peer tutoring, etc.).
- Provide support for the student to keep and use a daily planner.
- Work with the student to design a class schedule based on ability, interests, and postsecondary options, prioritizing general education classes with appropriate accommodations and modifications as needed.

- Further facilitate discussion and exploration of career options through career fairs, job shadows, in-school and community volunteer experiences, and service learning.
- Begin to fade the use of one-on-one supports. Encourage connections with peers for support, such as peer-tutoring, mentoring, and study groups.
- Help the student learn to identify when he or she needs help, and then ask peers for support when needed.
- Support the student to learn appropriate self-regulation and classroom behaviors (e.g., asking for a break, asking for help from a peer, not interrupting classroom discussion).
- Discuss ways that the student can begin to take ownership for daily chores at home (e.g., making lunch, cleaning room, adhering to a medication schedule).
- Encourage establishment of a bank account and use of a debit card and/or checkbook.

Conclusion

My daughter's presentation for the conference is a work in progress. She continues to work on new skills. These include using her planner every single day and getting a ride home from a friend after school, then letting herself into the house with her key and calling me to say she got home. It seems like the set of skills to learn is endless, but having those opportunities to practice problem-solving and take some risks are what growing up is all about. And they certainly increase any young person's chances of success in college.

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Using Individual Supports to Customize a Postsecondary Education Experience

by Cate Weir

With special programs for students with intellectual disabilities now in place on approximately 200 college campuses in the U.S., the opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to attend college as part of an organized program are greater than they have ever been. While a program may offer classes and social events specifically for students with intellectual disabilities, and for many individuals this may be the route they would like to go, others may want

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to go a different route. They may want to attend a college that is near to their home or one that offers the courses they are interested in even though it does not have a program specifically for them. It is still possible for people with intellectual disabilities to attend a college of their choice, even if a special program does not exist. This can be accomplished through the creative use of individualized, collaborative supports that are designed around the unique needs and desires of the student.

What Are Individual Supports?

It may be helpful to describe what individual supports are *not*. They are not predetermined, they are not on a menu to pick from, and they are not packaged together into anything that would resemble a program. Where programs may be developed on a campus with the generic needs of a group of students

in mind (for example, those with labels of autism) and then students with this label are directed into that program, individual supports start with the unique needs and desires of the student. A key difference between programs and individual supports is the level of choice one has of which college to attend. Another critical distinction is that individual supports utilize existing college support systems, perhaps supplementing those with additional services such as vocational rehabilitation and other adult support agencies; but it does not create a special support system designed only for program participants.

The essence of individual supports is person-centeredness – the student her or himself is determining the process, and supports are coordinated by the student or a person that student picks. This may be a friend, a case manager, a high school teacher, a vocational rehabilitation counselor or a staff person from an adult support agency. This method requires good communication among the people involved in supporting the student, and that all parties be knowledgeable about how college supports work.

The Process of Creating Supports

To prepare for college while still in high school, students who receive special education services must be assisted to develop independence in the use of accommodations they need, be encouraged to pursue the academic coursework needed for college courses that they desire to take, and have the opportunity to attend college fairs along with their peers. Once a student has decided to attend a particular college, if it is in or near the student's home community the student's school district can assist him or her to prepare for entry to that college by including a college support person on the transition team. The district can also

provide the student with a document to share with the college that explains the best learning and teaching strategies for this student's success. In some instances, when a student is under the age of 21 and still eligible for their school district's support, tutoring, transportation or classroom assistance may be provided by the district on the college campus.

In planning for individual supports for attending college, the person with an intellectual disability – whether still in high school or post-high school – and a team of people representing both professional and personal relationships meet to identify challenges the student may face in college and to plan for supports for those areas. Collaboration and person-centered planning are both key features of individual supports for college. The person is supported to attend regular college classes and activities, and supports are provided in much the same fashion as supports are provided to *any* student who requires assistance. Key considerations in creating individual supports include the following:

- *Resource mapping:* Identify all resources available to the person that can offer supports and services to assist at college. Examples of resources that students have used include vocational rehabilitation services, developmental disability agencies, Medicaid funding, private pay tutors, public transportation, college disability services, Americorps, mentor programs on college campuses, family resources, along with school district resources for those under age 21.
- *Creative use of generic resources:* It may not be readily apparent that some of the supports a person has can be used to attend college. For example, an adult developmental disability agency may offer staff support to a person to do their shopping or learn

to clean their apartment; but that staff support could also be used to help them with homework or learning to use the college cafeteria.

- *Technology:* For individuals with disabilities technology can be a critical support in attending college and can also offer long-term independence. Perhaps the best technology solutions are devices that all students are using, such as cell phones, smart phones, iPods, and computers with their many applications that can be used to help support students on campus and improve communication and personal organization. In addition, many campuses have technology centers equipped with special software and hardware to assist students with disabilities in their school work, and vocational rehabilitation services may also be able to help with obtaining assistive technology to help the student be more independent.
- *Person-centered planning:* With a commitment to planning that puts the person's dreams at the center, it is more likely that the services and assistance that are designed to support their college education are aligned with the true wishes of the person. It also opens up the type of creative, out-of-the-box thinking that effectively supporting a college education requires. Rather than fitting a person into a pre-existing "slot" the resources can be aligned with what that person wants to do.
- *Coordination:* An individual approach to services and supports for people with disabilities seeking postsecondary education requires someone who is aware of all the pieces and can coordinate them to maximize the usefulness of each one. This role can be filled by a transition coordinator at a school district, by a case coordinator at an agency, or sometimes by a parent. Certainly it is sometimes the student himself or herself who does the coordinating. But someone who is always seeing the big picture is a key to success.

- *Collaboration and communication:* Many individuals with intellectual disabilities who want to attend college have had less-than-successful experiences when the communication between and among all the players, especially college faculty and staff, is not effective. For many college personnel, their experience with people with intellectual disabilities is limited, and their understanding of why people with significant disabilities want to go to college may be lacking. Many students have found it helpful to identify a "champion" on campus. That "champion" can help college faculty and staff understand the student's commitment to a college education, help address concerns and answer questions, and facilitate collaboration and communication between all involved parties.
- *Knowledge of how college differs from high school:* Because a college education is not a guaranteed right like a K-12 education is, there are different ways to approach a college. There are things that are not available to students who are not "matriculated" – not admitted fully into the college certificate or degree programs. Students with intellectual disabilities often enter the college through continuing education divisions and classes, rather than through the certificate or degree application process. Discussions on what courses are available, how to register, and how to obtain services from the disability services office all need to take place before the individual attends. Conversations with the college are critical to laying the groundwork and the understanding between and among all the people involved, and setting the expectations for everyone involved.

Conclusion

Through pre-planning that emphasizes the goals and dreams of the student, creative use of existing resources and a willingness to challenge assumptions about the capacity of individuals with

significant disabilities, students with intellectual disabilities are attending college in increasing numbers. Here are some of the supports and strategies students are using to make their dreams of college come true:

- A student who never received a high school diploma took college classes through the university's division of continuing education. His successful completion of college level courses showed that he was qualified to continue his education. He used support from his family, an adult support agency, and vocational rehabilitation services in addition to the supports provided to him as a student with a disability through the Access Office on campus.
- The state Vocational Rehabilitation agency financially supported a young woman to meet state licensing requirements by completing two college courses in child development. The agency paid for professional tutoring for the student to supplement the peer tutoring available at the college. The student and her tutor developed grids for the child observations that were required in her class that were adopted by all of her classmates. Child observations had been a historically difficult area for *all* students, and this approach proved very successful for all students in the class.
- A course of study was individually designed for a student interested in completing a degree that will allow her to work in the animal grooming field. Together with her academic advisor, the student was able to design a major that highlighted her strengths and interests. For those classes that were particularly difficult, she audited the class first, and then took the course for credit, allowing her more time to learn the essential material.

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Not Superwoman: Reflections on Beginning Graduate School

by Kira Fisher as told to Donna Carlson Yerby

Kira Fisher is a new trainee in the year-long Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disorders (LEND) program at the Carolina Institute on Developmental Disabilities, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The primary purpose of the program is to prepare professionals for cutting-edge leadership roles that will allow them to participate in improvement of the health status of infants, children, and adolescents who have, or are at risk for, developing neurodevelopmental and related disabilities, and their families. She is the first student with a disability to be admitted to the North Carolina program. Here, she describes her perspective one month into the program.

I have been asked why I wanted to be a trainee in the LEND program at the Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities (CIDD). To answer that question, I need to explain a little about

Last spring I was approached about the opportunity to participate in the LEND program at CIDD. I was told that this would be a “pilot.”

my background. Even when I was a kid, I saw my life as being important, although things were hard. I had to deal with lots of personal challenges because of cerebral palsy and I learned to accept things in stages and to ask for what I needed. I guess I had advocacy skills without knowing what that was.

I was in inclusive settings in high school and college and I had to ask for accommodations, like using the elevator (I got my own key). A turning point for me was being the first person in North

Carolina with a disability to serve in AmeriCorps. That experience taught me that even if I failed I could learn from challenges. After that, I spent three years trying to find a job, but I volunteered during that time with the Acting for Advocacy Advisory Committee. Eventually, I was hired to work on a grant, Youths for Advocacy, collaborating with other self-advocates training high school students.

Becoming a LEND Trainee

Last spring I was approached about the opportunity to participate in the LEND program at CIDD. It involves training with a group of other students for two semesters. One requirement of the training is a course, Developmental Disabilities Across the Lifespan, and there is also leadership training.

At first I felt honored about being selected, and I got lots of positive feedback from my family and some of my friends. I was told that this would be a “pilot” and there would be a coach (a doctoral student in Occupational Science) to work with me. All the trainees are assigned to mentors and I would have two. Even though I was excited, I had doubts, too. I didn’t know what it would be like. I would have a change in status from being a supervisor in a program to being a student/trainee, and I felt maybe my co-workers were not supportive. I already knew one of the mentors, but I was uncertain about working with the other one. I started to feel more and more anxious and I was overwhelmed by all the changes – completing my current employment, having to change my schedule, and arranging transportation. To get started, I had to enroll in the course and take some self-assessments. I met with my coach and mentors, but I didn’t really know at that time what I was getting into.

Initial Impressions: The First Weeks

I initially realized that participating in the LEND program was going to be harder than I expected. There was a lot already happening in my life because I was still working on the other project. I had to change my transportation (and my life) so that I’d be at CIDD one more day to keep up with everything I had to do.



The Leadership Intensive (3-day workshop) was INTENSE all right. We were told to balance our past experience with learning new information and having new experiences. To disconnect from my past was really difficult. My self-image is connected with advocacy and I’ve been working in that area for a long time. The intensive brought up negative memories and feelings, like “you’ll never be able to do that” and “you’ll always need help with anything you do.” I was confused about the process and going through this negative mess. I asked, “Why am I here?”

So I had an emotional melt-down and cried throughout one day. I didn’t want to continue, but I didn’t quit. My coach and one of the instructors were very helpful. They listened and reminded me that I’m a leader despite what the outside world might think or how they

see me, and they assured me that it was okay to feel this way. I also talked to other students and found out they were going through the same thing, internalizing, and I hadn't realized that. I tried to learn through what was happening.

The week after that the course began. It's problem-based learning with case studies and a team approach. I met my six group members and got the first assignment. My first response was: how am I going to do this because of my physical limitations? When I met with my coach we discussed accommodations for the class. I couldn't record anything because of confidentiality. I decided to learn how to use an iPad.

A Few Weeks Later

I offered to be co-facilitator for the case study in the first class, which happened to be about cerebral palsy. I met with the other student facilitator and we divided the tasks. She did most of the typing on part one, which was reading, answering specific questions, and doing some research on the Internet. For part two, I typed the additional probing questions.

That took me a long time and I did it over the weekend.

The class went well. The students participated and there was a lot of discussion. I didn't expect this to happen but I had an emotional reaction empathizing with the person: underlying fears of losing my parents and what might happen next, and fear of ending up like that individual. My mentor met with me later that day and we talked through my emotions. I feel like we are on more of a human level now.

Goals and Expectations at This Time

I'm trying to resolve the issue of seeing myself as an advocate. I've already made that part of my life clear to everyone. In this setting, everyone in the course as well as the faculty are advocates for people with disabilities.

I want to listen more. Some people with disabilities have a tendency to think they need to speak up because others aren't listening or don't understand, or because of their previous experiences. Or, like the woman in the case study, they just shut down. I want to learn

more about other clinical disciplines. I'm trying to separate my personal feelings from my professional goals.

What Challenges Do You Foresee?

I have personal challenges because of the time it takes to complete the course requirements and the additional project that all LEND trainees do. There are unknowns about the course demands in the future. I'm using the iPad but it's been a long time since I was a student and there's a lot to do. It's hard to keep up with everything. I'm hopeful about balancing learning with self-doubt.

Kira Fisher is now halfway through her LEND trainee program. Her perspective has changed to a positive outlook on the process, and she is now confident in her experiences and skills as a leader. Donna Yerby is her LEND faculty mentor. There are 39 LENDs in 32 states and the District of Columbia funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For information about the LEND at CIDD visit <http://www.cidd.unc.edu/Education/> and select "LEND."

Employment and Dual-Enrollment Transition Programs: Data From a Two-State Study

In 2004, the Postsecondary Education Research Center (PERC) Project, established by TransCen, Inc., collaborated with dual-enrollment transition programs for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities in Maryland and Connecticut on a study of exemplary practices in supporting students with intellectual disabilities, ages 18-21, in dual-enrollment programs in postsecondary settings. "Dual-enrollment" programs are those in which students receive their final two or three years of public school transition services on a college campus, with most of these programs addressing the issue of employment.

The Maryland and Connecticut programs shared a common expectation that the students served could and would obtain paid employment in the community. This belief, backed by trained staff and fostered in a context of flexible scheduling and

access to community businesses, allowed a large percentage of the students in these programs to get and keep jobs in their communities.

Employment data were collected twice annually on all participating students, and upon exit from the program. Employment was defined as an individual being hired and directly paid competitive wages by a business or employer; therefore, these data did not include volunteer experiences, unpaid job training or internship experiences, jobs that had sub-minimum wage or stipend pay, or group or enclave work. Between 2005 and 2009, data collected on 96 students with intellectual disabilities showed 89 employed in paid jobs while they attended the dual-enrollment program. The average wage earned was \$8 per hour and students worked on average 19 hours per week. Over half of the students held jobs in

the retail field; other students were employed in clerical jobs, food services, maintenance, personal care, and trades. Of those students who completed exit and follow-up surveys, 78% were engaged in paid employment after they exited the college-based transition program. Overall, the students in these programs had a relatively high rate of paid employment, and some factors that may have contributed were 1) setting paid employment as a goal, 2) time and staff dedicated to job development and placement, 3) staff trained in job development strategies, 4) flexible staff schedules that facilitated spending time building relationships with potential employers, 5) flexible student schedules that allowed them to work a variety of times of day, and 6) a person-centered career discovery process.

Adapted with permission from Grigal, M. & Dwyre, A. (October 2010). Employment activities and outcomes of college-based transition programs with students with intellectual disabilities. Insight, 3. Retrieved 1/12/11 from <http://thinkcollege.net/about-us/publications>

Education for Employment: Mandela's Story

by Shelley Paquette and Jenilee Drilling

The Employment First Anoka County program (EFAC), based in Spring Lake Park, Minnesota, was established to further the education and employment options for youth with disabilities. It focuses on assisting students to obtain jobs in the health care field, particularly in the roles of Personal Care Attendant (PCA), Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and Home Health Aide (HHA). The program was started through a partnership with Anoka Technical College's corporate training department and Rise Inc., an organization that works with people with disabilities and other barriers to employment and housing. The EFAC program staff consist of a certified instructor as well as a student support specialist. The typical class provided by Anoka Technical College is extended in length from 3 weeks to 6 weeks and the days shortened while still meeting the required classroom hours needed for the PCA/CNA/HHA certification. During the classroom portion of the course the student support staff is present on a daily basis to assist with study skills and review, college classroom soft skills, transportation, and other individualized needs. Classroom size is limited to no more than 15 enrollees. Students seeking enrollment are referred by school staff, Minnesota vocational counselors, or county social services. They range in age from 18-24 and currently receive or at one time received educational services guided by an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The students are not required to take any type of entrance exam for the courses offered, though basic reading ability is required.

For this article a young man named Mandela was asked to share his experiences with the program, and describe how it has helped him in preparing for employment. He was referred to the EFAC program by his school's transition staff for the Fall 2009 course. He is identified in his IEP as having a Specific Learning Disability for reading and

comprehension. He says that he became interested in the field of health care after one of his uncles died from pancreatic cancer and later his grandmother was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. He wanted to learn more about the diseases and disorders, their causes, and potential cures. It was noted in the intake process that his long-term goal was at that time to work in medical research. Inquiring as to why he chose to participate in the EFAC course offering of PCA/CNA/HHA, Mandela responded, "You can get in at the ground floor and get a lot of information." He refers to the information and skills that he received in the EFAC courses, mentioning that it "opened my eyes to a variety of jobs. Before, I felt I could only apply to fast-food type jobs and now jobs would be open for me at hospitals and nursing homes. The EFAC program helped me a lot." The student support staff assisted in classes in various ways; specifically for Mandela the supports were mentoring and classroom supports regarding his understanding the course and the instructor's expectations. He also received transportation assistance for the clinical portion of the course, which was located at a local long-term health care facility. Mandela mentioned that he found the instructor for the course very helpful and able to give him the information he needed to further his success.

Mandela is currently participating in a work experience program at a day program for individuals with traumatic brain injuries and has received positive feedback from the coordinator of this program. In our conversation, Mandela expressed his appreciation for the supervision and guidance that he is receiving from the staff during this work experience; though there are no current openings or opportunities for him to be hired at this location, the coordinator has expressed that she will be more than willing to offer a recommendation.



While pursuing his interest in the health care field, Mandela has decided that he would like to further his education. He is currently enrolled at a community college for the courses of Communication and Broadcasting. This is not surprising as he is a very outgoing and social individual who has been told "I have the gift of talking to people." While attending school he plans to continue working in the health care field. Mandela also has the support of the Minnesota State Rehabilitation office for additional needs he may have while attending school or in his future employment endeavors.

Mandela had this advice for others who have barriers to employment: "Don't let nothing stop you or discourage you, stick it through. Whatever you have gone through will only make you wiser and stronger." He added that "You have the responsibility to pursue your dreams – no one else can do it for you." He concluded the interview with this thought: "A caterpillar has to go through the entire cocoon phase by itself. If someone were to break open the cocoon, the butterfly will never be strong enough to fly."

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Resources for More Information

The following resources from around the country may be of interest to readers of this Impact issue.

- **HEATH Resource Center's Online Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities** (<http://www.heath.gwu.edu/>). This clearinghouse gathers and disseminates information to help people with disabilities reach their full potential through postsecondary education and training. It carries resource papers, fact sheets, guides, and directories on topics such as accessibility, career, development, classroom and lab adaptations, financial aid, independent living, transition, career-technical education, and rehabilitation. Operated by George Washington University and the HSC Foundation.
- **Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)** (<http://www.ahead.org>). AHEAD is a professional membership organization for individuals involved in the development of policy and in the provision of quality services to meet the needs of persons with disabilities involved in all areas of higher education. On its Web site is information about its publications, programs, events, activities, affiliates, special interest groups, and membership.
- **DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology)** (<http://www.washington.edu/doi/>). The DO-IT center works to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs and careers. It promotes use of computer and networking technologies to increase independence, productivity, and participation in education and employment, as well as application of Universal Design to education settings. It has extensive online resources for students with disabilities, K-12 and postsecondary educators, parents and others, and is based at the University of Washington.
- **Disability.gov** (<http://www.disability.gov>). Among the extensive resources on this Web site is a section titled "Preparing for Post-Secondary Education" (http://www.disability.gov/education/parent_resources/transition_planning/preparing_for_post-secondary_education) that describes and links to a wide range of materials and organizations from around the country of use to parents, students, and educators.
- **National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth** (<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>). This Web site includes extensive resources for youth and families, policymakers, agency administrators, educators, and youth service practitioners to help them create the context for youth with disabilities to succeed. Among the resources is *Guideposts for Success*, a publication identifying those things that all youth need to transition to adulthood successfully, and the report *Career-Focused Services for Students with Disabilities at Community Colleges*. It is based at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, D.C.
- **CAST** (<http://www.cast.org>). CAST is a nonprofit research and development organization that works to expand learning opportunities for all students, especially those with disabilities, through Universal Design for Learning. On its Web site is information for preK–college educators that can be used to maximize learning opportunities in diverse classrooms.
- **Going to College** (<http://www.going-to-college.org>). This Web site offers a range of resources for teens with disabilities, including tools to identify their strengths and interests, learning styles, and goals for college; information about navigating campus life; and steps to prepare for college. Resources include online videos speaking directly to young people. It also has sections for parents and school personnel. It is operated by the RTC on Workplace Supports and Job Retention at Virginia Commonwealth University, which also operates <http://Worksupport.com>, featuring a resource section "Transition to College."

Think College: Promoting College Opportunities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (<http://thinkcollege.net>)

Think College is a consortium of federally-funded projects dedicated to creating inclusive postsecondary education as a choice for students with intellectual disabilities. Through funding from Administration on Developmental Disabilities, Office of Postsecondary Education, and National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, staff conduct research and evaluation, provide training and technical assistance, and disseminate information on postsecondary education for individuals with intellectual disabilities, family members, and professionals. The following are its key activities:

- **Research:** Conducts research including national surveys; secondary data analyses

of existing national datasets; participatory action research by college students with intellectual disabilities; development of standards, quality indicators and benchmarks for postsecondary programs; and, as National Coordinating Center for Transition Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities, evaluates the 27 program grant recipients.

- **Training, Technical Assistance, and Dissemination:** Conducts a wide range of training and technical assistance face-to-face, via webinars, and using online learning modules for a wide array of higher education personnel, adult service agencies, K-12 educators and administrators, legislators, parents, and self-advocates.

[Fialka, continued from page 1]

Listening to the Dream

One of the first things we learned as Micah's parents was to listen to his dreams, even if they appeared "unusual." Our first experience with the "listening thing" occurred when Micah was in his first grade self-contained classroom. After four months he announced to us, "I want to go through the same door as all my friends." We were stunned, and later swayed by his insistence to move him into a general education classroom. Micah began to teach us "unusual" does not imply "impossible."

Getting Micah in a general education classrooms through 12th grade was a bit challenging. But "college" – that was something entirely different! We had no idea *how* we were going to help him get through that door. Nonetheless, Micah held steadfast. We were committed to listening to him and heard more than just "I wanna go to college." We began to hear his unspoken desires like, "Hey, I wanna be with my friends. I wanna talk about what they're talking about. I wanna tell everyone what college I'm going to. I wanna go to football games. I wanna keep learning." And maybe most importantly, "I wanna make my own choices."

As parents, we shifted our thinking (most of the time!) away from someone else's facts and words like "impossible" and turned toward "what's the next step?" This was often not easy, but always right, and eventually became a strategy for dealing with the so-called impossible: Keep taking the next step!

Building the Dream

During Micah's final two years of high school, a creative and dedicated group of college and public school professionals and parents from the metro Detroit area met to consider, and eventually create, an inclusive program through which young adults with intellectual disabilities could become college students. Now called the OPTIONS Program at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, it gave students with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to attend classes, participate in extra-curricular activities, and, in

Micah's case, live in the dorm. At age 19 Micah entered the program and through his six years in it grew academically, socially, morally, and politically in dramatic ways. He studied public speaking, created Power Point™ presentations on group dynamics, studied the difference between the ways males and females greeted each other in the Student Center for a sociology class, learned to use more hand gestures when speaking, studied social movements, took a hip-hop dance class, traveled to Israel, participated at the student leadership retreat, wrote papers (maybe not 20 pages long but two pages of facts he discovered with the support of a peer), and taught students how to use the voice-to-text software program critical to his communication. "Success" doesn't even begin to capture the extent of his growth, increased friendships and social networks, and enhanced skills to navigate the world. It wasn't a one-way street either. Based on the feedback from professors, staff, and students, he made important contributions to his campus and at several others across the nation.

In 2010, he received his certificate from the OPTIONS Program, celebrating his graduation. He now works in Detroit at the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion as a social justice educator for youth. He speaks nationally on disability and serves on the board of directors for TASH and the National Youth Leadership Network.

Guiding Principles

Looking back over the years, several principles guided our actions in supporting Micah's college dream:

- *Acknowledge the range of feelings.* For 12 years, Micah attended public schools. Although some days brought struggles to get him what he needed, the school experience was familiar and predictable. Near the end of his senior year, I had moments of sheer panic as I thought of Micah at college. Would he be safe? Would he be teased? Would he know how to get from one end of campus to another? He wasn't even comfortable crossing a small intersection by himself – how

was he going to take two public buses for one and a half hours to a campus? Feelings are part of all transitions. If we don't acknowledge them, share them with a trusted person, these emotions return, often hindering us from moving forward. It was very important for me to communicate with a couple of mothers whose children had disabilities and were older than Micah. They had lived through it, survived the transition, and knew what I was feeling and needed to hear. They understood and validated my fears, worries, and even sadness at times. They also celebrated and shared my excitement. My mantra, when I remember it, is, "Feel the feelings first, with someone you trust, then move on to the next step."

- *Support great expectations.* This is a common chorus often repeated in the world of disabilities, so much so that sometimes it loses its significance and meaning. What these three words meant to us as Micah's parents was that we had to believe Micah could learn more and do more than what was often expected of him. Finding the right supports was vital to achieving those high expectations. "He can do more" became a common chant in our family, not in a way that pressured him (we hoped), but in a way that allowed him to build on what he enjoyed and could do well, sprinkled with a little bit of nudging out of his comfort zone at times. When Micah said he wanted to go to college, believe me, we never expected that he would eventually share a film about disability history in his class on social movements. We did not know that at the beginning of each new semester, he would stand up in class and ask for a tutor to help him study (and would be thrilled that "so many pretty girls" came to his assistance). We did not know that his confidence would soar so high that he would be able to speak on his own in front of the University Board of Trustees to present his case to live in the dorm. We did not know that he would sign-up to travel to Israel (gulp), or that he would discover a strong desire to read and diligently work at it with friends, or that he would

find an interest in money, piqued by watching his friends use the on-campus bank. We did not know that he would understand the word “norm” and would inform us that it was *not* “the norm for college kids to wear boots in the winter!” He became more capable almost by the day. Even brain research supports what many parents have known for years: Students with intellectual disabilities do *not* stop becoming smarter and better problem solvers once they leave their senior year of high school. They continue to increase their problem-solving skills and academic performance *if* given authentic opportunities to learn, embedded in high expectations.

- *Be mindful of the changing parental roles.* A wise sociologist once told me there are two roles parents assume: one is the *protector* and the other is the *guide*. In the early years of raising children, the parent defends, cares for, looks after, and shields the child from harm and danger. It is easy to see how this role is often more deeply entrenched for parents of children with disabilities. We learn to be fierce advocates for our children. As they grow, we are challenged to move away from being the constant protector to being the emerging mentor or guide. We had to step back a bit and let Micah tell his story, hand in his un-perfect paper, sign his name at the doctor’s office, make his choices about what to wear. This re-arranging of roles is not a simple transition. When Micah ended up stuck at his bus stop for two hours 30 miles from home in an evening snow storm that shut down the entire county, I wanted to put on my Super-Mom cape, leap over tall snow mountains, and fly him to safety. I couldn’t. We literally became his guide (thank goodness for cell phones!). We created a plan whereby his father called him every 15 minutes as he stood in a bus shelter. (He did begin to think differently about the norm of not wearing boots after his feet almost froze that evening!!). After that experience his confidence increased, as did ours in him.

- *Build relationships with allies and his peers.* Beginning in 6th grade, Micah invited a few friends to help plan his IEP and attend part of every meeting. This involvement of friends continued into college. At his person-centered planning meetings, he always invited a few college peers to participate by bringing real-world solutions and insights into the discussions. They often came up with the most practical and astute ideas of how to support him. When Micah was in college, each year we invited him and a few of his friends to dinner. We kept the conversations light, fun, and we listened a lot. We learned so much. Eventually some of the peers felt comfortable sharing more ideas and questions. I recall one friend asking me how to handle Micah’s falling asleep in an early morning class. I asked her what she would do if another friend fell asleep. She quickly said, “I would elbow him and tell him to bring a cup of coffee to class.” She instantly “got it” as evidenced in her response to me, “Oh yeah, I get it. I guess I can do that with Micah too.” Folks need to know that it is okay to ask questions and share concerns. Micah learned to tell his tutors, “I’m okay with you asking about my disability. I’ll tell you about it and how I learn best.” Fundamental to Micah’s sense of self was his participation in organizations led by youth with disabilities, where he experienced disability pride and culture.

- *Expect to live with uncertainty and risk.* I suspect that many parents raising a young adult with a disability have experienced a similar unsettling internal dialogue that goes something like this. “Do I let Micah try new things? If I do, what if something goes wrong? What if he gets hurt? Would I have this same fear if he didn’t have an intellectual disability? But he does, so what do I do?” I’m not sure this worried-parent script will ever cease, but after more than two decades I am somewhat better at expecting these periods of anxiety. I try to be mindful of them, maybe talk with a friend or family member,

create a plan, and eventually remember to not let fear dominate my decision-making and support of Micah. My husband and I try to minimize the risks, discuss pros and cons, and practice with Micah the best ways to handle awkward or uncertain situations. But, ultimately, we realize that overprotection will only hinder his ability to make safer decisions for himself. When this happened during Micah’s years at college, I tried to practice getting more information from Micah, gaining a sense of how *he* was doing, and if necessary reach out to others. My husband and I cannot shelter Micah from all risks, nor can we do that for our daughter, Emma. Risk-taking comes with the territory for all of us.

I recently read an article by Sunny Taylor (2004), an artist with a physical disability, in which she said that too often professionals (and I would add parents) equate independence as having “self-care skills” such as feeding, dressing, moving about the community, banking, etc. These skills can be important, but they are not the determining factor in one’s quality of life. In her words, people with disabilities define independence beyond self-care skills as the “...ability to be in control of and make decisions about one’s life, rather than doing things alone or without help.” Twenty years ago I don’t think I would have understood this definition. I think I do now. Micah has taught us that the quality of his life is primarily based on his ability to *know* he has choices and *can make choices* with support. And for Micah making his own choices has meant going to college (with or without his winter boots!) and it’s been worth the effort and risk for all of us.

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Current Realities

As we embark on this next generation of work, the policies, research, and practices addressing postsecondary education access for students with intellectual disabilities must be developed using a framework that reflects and adheres to the legislative guidance provided in the Higher Education Opportunities Act while keeping in mind the existing parameters set forth by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. On a policy level we need to recognize that students with intellectual disabilities will not be supported to consider college as a realistic or viable option unless the legislative and regulatory language that guides our secondary special education practices more clearly supports this option. While there is

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some very brief (and difficult to locate) language in the preamble to IDEA that states that nothing in the law would prohibit a local education agency from using IDEA funds to support students with disabilities in a postsecondary environment, there is no clear support articulated for funds to be used in that manner. The current IDEA regulations also do not differentiate between the IEP guidelines and transition expectations

for students between the ages of 18-21. Therefore, school systems may struggle with translating meaningful, socially integrated, transition experiences for young adults on a college campus into the same IEP framework used for elementary, middle, and secondary special education students receiving services in a high school.

The current research literature on postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities is comprised primarily of descriptive studies, qualitative studies, and some single subject and case studies on postsecondary experiences and outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities (Think College, 2010a). There is scant research on evidence-based practices or interventions for students with intellectual disabilities in postsecondary education. Why is this? One reason is that there was – and to large extent still is – little existing or consistent practice, let alone evidence-based existing practice. We must recognize that the currently operating programs and services in colleges for students with intellectual disabilities have been created without federal or state legislative or regulatory guidance or funding, and thus these practices can be difficult to compare in a meaningful way. Additionally, up until very recently, there have been extremely limited and somewhat disjointed efforts to fund any kind of research in this area.

Despite this, over 140 postsecondary education options for students with intellectual disabilities do exist (Think College, 2010b). The existence of these options demonstrates the power and potential of the early grassroots efforts of institutes of higher education, local education agencies, and families to offer people with intellectual disabilities access to college. These efforts have been revolutionary and in many cases these practices have been ground-breaking. Each of these past efforts should be honored, but also thoughtfully examined in light of the new federal guidelines.

What Comes Next

Ongoing and future work in this area should build upon the early efforts of the institutes of higher education, school systems, agencies and individuals that created opportunities where none existed. Emerging programs can benefit from their collective experience regarding what worked and what didn't in terms of planning, brokering partnerships, blending resources, and cultivating authentic learning experiences for students with intellectual disabilities. Part of the next generation of work will be conducted by the colleges and universities that have been recently awarded Transition and Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) model demonstration grants by the Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education (see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/tpsid> for the grantees list). These 27 projects across the country will provide the field with the opportunity to see how the Higher Education Opportunity Act regulations can be put into practice, and will determine the extent to which practices based upon those parameters create and support successful outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities.

These new model demonstration projects will deepen our understanding of the structures necessary to implement postsecondary education services, and provide some common measures of the experiences and outcomes of students. Yet, sole reliance on these projects to cultivate and refine our knowledge base around higher education and students with intellectual disabilities would be short-sighted. It will be imperative that, as other federal and state agencies or foundations prioritize funds, efforts are made to engage other two- and four-year colleges and universities, vocational and technical colleges, and local education and adult service agencies in a diverse array of research activities. These efforts will be made all the more fruitful as additional programs and services are developed and implemented across the country.

This final component of the next generation of work – the creation of new programs and services options for people with intellectual disabilities – will depend greatly upon leadership at the state and local level in state departments of education, higher education commissions, local school systems, and rehabilitation and disability services agencies. Collaborative efforts between these entities will build and strengthen state networks, and allow for the development of the systems-level infrastructure and communication mechanisms needed to foster and sustain new partnerships and services. Our state and local leaders must take the time to become aware of the resources and opportunities that exist in their states, identify gaps in services, and establish plans to respond to the growing need and desire of their constituents with intellectual disabilities to access higher education.

Conclusion

The next decade will be a very exciting time as the range of options for postsecondary education for individuals with intellectual disabilities continues to grow nationwide. We are entering a new phase of the conversation when the questions on the table focus less on, “Should students with intellectual disabilities have the option to go to college?” and more on, “How can students with intellectual disabilities have the option to go to college?” and “What should these experiences be comprised of and culminate in?” These questions will drive the next wave of research, policy, and practice. As we seek to answer them, we will have the chance to apply the lessons we have learned about how higher expectations affect the achievements of and outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities in public education, employment, and community living to the relatively new arena of higher education. As our vision of what is possible for students with intellectual disabilities expands once more, we will be challenged to move beyond the comfort and relative ease of what we know,

and to embrace the uncomfortable chaos that comes with not knowing.

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planning teams. Vocational rehabilitation professionals can offer similar kinds of support and can work with program leaders in higher education to determine vocational rehabilitation supports, or address topics related to the effects of varying funding supports, such as Social Security for students who may be eligible for Federal student aid. Parents and families can encourage the development of opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities at institutions by offering to share information, serve in advisory capacities, and bring resources from other networks, such as those available through the National and Regional Parent Network funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office

of Special Education Programs (OSEP) (for more see <http://www.tadnet.org/matrix?centers?id=11>).

Families, educators, students, and others desiring more information about the provisions in the HEOA are encouraged to consult the resources below:

- The U.S. Department of Education Web site at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html>
- The PACER Center Web site at <http://www.pacer.org/tatra/TheHigherEducationOpportunityAct.doc>
- The 2010 State of the Art Conference on Students with Intellectual Disabilities Web site, under “Presentations,” at <http://www.scsid.org/>

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Impact

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