

Transition Times

This issue

WELCOME
TO OUR
INAUGURAL
NEWSLETTER

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Model Transition Program of GST BOCES

Working with high school students with disabilities to improve vocational rehabilitation with a grant from the New York State Education Department in partnership with the University of Buffalo, Cornell University, and VESID (Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities).

“Our philosophy then and now is collaborate to find creative solutions . . .”

MTP Steering Committee

- Bill Losinger
- Stacey Brzezinski
- Bonnie Goodwin
- Sue Bain-Lucey
- Cathy Rohan
- Hildreth Rose
- Jill Durkin
- Beth Perry
- Laurie Crooker
- Diane Marshall



Transition Collaboration

Diane Marshall, Coordinator

Welcome! We are happy to share our initial newsletter with you. We plan to publish each month during the school year featuring transition news from throughout the region. Please share the newsletter generously with students, parents, colleagues and anyone else who shares our commitment to creating best practices and innovative programming for students with disabilities.

Our region was notified last spring that we have been awarded 8 of 60 Model Transition Program grants statewide. Locally, the Greater Southern Tier BOCES (GST) will coordinate four of these projects that encompass all 21 local component districts. We are the only BOCES region in the New York State that has the entire region receiving the benefits of this grant. Elmira was also awarded an MTP grant for the two high schools, Elmira Free Academy and Southside. Additionally, there were two grants awarded in the Ithaca area and another grant in the Finger Lakes BOCES region. Whenever possible, we network to share resources.

The five MTP grants in our GST BOCES region will bring resources into the GST region over the next 3.5 years. These funds are earmarked to improve transition services to students with disabilities and to better prepare them for referral to Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), ultimately resulting in more students with disabilities becoming successfully employed in our region.

The NYSED VESID has also awarded a contract to Cornell University to conduct the research and a contract to the University at Buffalo to provide training to the sixty grants statewide.

Our region is building on the practices and collaborations that were started over ten years ago while implementing the Career Link Project, funded by VESID using IDEA funds. Our philosophy then and now is collaborate to find creative solutions and to build capacity within our communities to support and sustain successful transition practices.

We are proud to have the support of our partnering agencies including The CSS Workforce New York, Corning Community College, Alfred State College, AIM Independent Living Center, Allegany ARC,

Chemung, ARC, Steuben ARC, Schuyler ARC, and VESID. Since initiation, the MTP has supported assessments, job shadowing, job coaching, work experience, three regional career fairs, driver permits and training, college visits and experiences, soft skills trainings, collaborations such as the Transition Support Group (TSG) and so much more.

We are anxious to showcase the best practices we presently support (Unique Programming, Parent Participation, Work Experiences and College Training), develop additional practices to address gaps and with the tremendous influx of additional fiscal and human resources to this region, substantially increase successful transitions of students with disabilities.

MTP Highlights

Laurie Crooker, Facilitator

As an MTP Facilitator, I have had the pleasure of working with students and teaching staff from five school districts.

In a collaborative effort we have been able to expose students to several opportunities such as job shadowing, college tours, career fairs, transition night, soft skills training, and driver education.

Through partnering with community agencies such as ARC of Steuben and AIM, our students have been able to experience the world of work in a positive way. Some of our successful outcomes have included a Bath High School student becoming employed at Tops Market.

At Avoca School, we have had several students engage in job shadowing experiences as well as soft skills training. Campbell-Savona School has set up soft skills training while also involving their students in job shadows and unpaid work experiences. Bradford School students have participated in job shadowing, career fairs and held a financial aide and VESID information night for parents and students. Hammondsport teachers and students have developed an annual “Transitioning into Tomorrow” informational night that includes the participation of local employers and agencies.

Students from all schools have benefited from being able to obtain their driving permits and attend driver training which will enhance their transportation and employment options. This has been an exciting year and we hope to develop new and expanded opportunities for our youth next year!

Preparing for College

Beth Perry, Facilitator

One of our goals in the Model Transition Project (MTP) is to increase successful transition outcomes to post-secondary education. With startling statistics we are attempting to prepare students for life after high school, earlier than before. According to the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), the dropout rate for students with disabilities is approximately twice that of general education students (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996).

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“Through the continued implementation of research-based activities and continued collaboration, it is anticipated the GST region will continue to see an increase in VESID referrals as well as successful student transitions”

Preparing for College, *continued* Beth Perry, Facilitator

Typically, students with disabilities are referred to VESID (Vocational & Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities) in their junior year with services initiating the last six months of their senior year. With the research indicating interventions are needed at an earlier grade, the MTP is attempting to do that by preparing and educating students on their choices for post-secondary life. The MTP is working with educators and VESID to assure that the students are more prepared with realistic, attainable goals to develop their IPE (Individual Plan for Employment).

The MTP has initiated several activities. We have visited several regional colleges participating in campus tours, admissions overviews, and private talks with the various student disability service centers, financial aid information, and some exploration in college majors. We also have monthly, regional transition support group (TSG) meetings with regular representation from two local colleges: SUNY Alfred and Corning Community College (CCC). The Director of Student Disability Services at CCC, Kathy Pettet, presented an overview of services available to students with disabilities to our TSG which included: teachers, partners and community providers, and CSE members. We have had several students complete the First Year Experience two credit hour course through CCC. Two of three of our annual Career Fairs were college campus venues; Corning Community College Workforce and Academic Center in Elmira and Alfred University. And the third Career Fair featured representatives from several colleges. The annual Looking Ahead conferences are being held at Alfred University and Corning Community College. In addition, we have had students attend the Tech Day at CCC and college open house nights. We are also supporting CCC to create a video for students with disabilities to view while they are still in high school that will offer information on attending college with a disability. The MTP is supporting two college pilot programs for students considering college studies which will provide them with a detailed look at college life. The first pilot was held at CCC on June 3, 2008 and another pilot is being planned for SUNY Alfred in October 2008.

For more information about the responsibilities of postsecondary schools to students with disabilities, (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities, Washington, D.C., 2007) view their article or learn more about the civil rights of students with disabilities in education institutions by their website: www.ed.gov/ocr by phone: 1800-421-3481, TDD: 1877-521-2172

Career Fairs

Jill Durkin, Facilitator

Three Career Fairs were held during the 2007-2008 school year and were inclusive of all schools within the GST BOCES region. The first Career Fair was hosted at Alfred University on December 18, 2007, followed by a second at the Bath Country Club on February 12, 2008 and lastly a career fair hosted at the CCC Academic and Workforce Development Center in Elmira on February 26, 2008. Each fair included local businesses, colleges and agencies.

In total, twenty school districts attended with approximately 260 students and teachers participating. As students arrived they were given the opportunity to develop a resume and practice

their interviewing skills with the assistance from representatives of local adult agencies.

Students next attended informational sessions and gathered information from colleges and agencies including Alfred University, Alfred State College, Corning Community College, AIM Independent Living Center, VESID, CSS Workforce New York, Allegany, Chemung, Steuben and Schuyler Arcs, Pathways and Capabilities. The highlight of the student's day was participating in mock interviews with employers from the local communities. Students were matched with a business of interest and participated in a 10-15 minute interview. Employers shared feedback commenting on such things as appearance, resume, eye contact and ability to answer questions. Some examples of businesses who participated were retail establishments, hair salons, hardware stores, grocery stores, daycare centers, employment agencies, police departments, ski resorts and restaurants. An employer evaluation completed at the end of the day asked for overall feelings about the event. One responded as follows and really sums it up nicely, "I think this is a great opportunity for the students. It provides interview experience but also gives them a view of job opportunities in the area."

Each job fair was made possible through the dedication and participation of employers, community agencies and college representatives. Thank you for your on-going support

Transition Coordination Site of Mid West NY

Hildreth M. Rose, Transition Specialist

The five MTP projects of the Greater Southern Tier BOCES region support districts as they work to increase successful transitions. The New York Special Education State Performance Plan (SPP) requires districts to develop IEPs that include coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the student to meet the post-secondary goals. Beginning not later than the first IEP, in effect when the student must contain a statement of the student's needs taking into account the student's strengths, preferences and interests as they relate to the transition from school to post-school.

Each IEP must have appropriate measurable post secondary goals based on age appropriate transition assessments and they must relate to training, education, employment and, where appropriate independent living skills. In addition, the IEP must note the needed activities to facilitate this movement including a statement of the responsibilities of the school district. The Transition Coordination Site (TCS) of Mid West NY in partnership with the MTP leads and component districts reflect on the individual student goals for each sponsored MTP activity as well as noting and reviewing the student's Measurable Post Secondary Goals (MPSG).

This constant review has helped individual teachers to reflect on the development and implementation of their students IEPs. The Midwest TCS is pleased to continue this partnership through supported training and membership on the MTP steering committee. Through the continued implementation of research-based activities and continued collaboration, it is anticipated the GST region will continue to see an increase in VESID referrals as well as successful student transitions.