

Transition Times

This issue

HIGHLIGHTS
FROM A
SUCCESSFUL
SUMMER

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September 2008

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 Educational Department in partnership with the University of Buffalo, Cornell University, and VESID (Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities).

“Thank you to the Steering Committee members for putting in some time this summer in an attempt to strengthen transition services in our area..”

MTP Steering Committee

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



How I Spent My Summer Vacation

Laurie Crooker, Lead Facilitator



This summer, Jamie Kennedy, who is currently beginning his Senior Year at Bradford School, participated in job shadowing experiences with the assistance of Shirley Clark, Job Developer, his parents, Bradford School Personnel, Employers, and MTP staff. This collaboration resulted in Jamie having work shadowing experiences that relate to his interest in emergency services and his ultimate career goal to become a paramedic. Jamie stated the following:

I have been meeting once a week with Shirley Clark (Job Developer) and she set up a job shadowing experience for me with the Erway Ambulance Corp. I feel that this was a great learning experience and I am also looking forward to another job shadow with the Corning Ambulance Association in September. Since I have an interest in emergency services, these opportunities have allowed me to have first hand experience in what it would be like to work in this field. My job developer is also working with my school and the Schuyler County Emergency Management Office to set up an internship for me to work two days in the Emergency Management office to witness the daily operations, as well as one day in the Schuyler County Sheriff's Office. I will also be assisting and riding with the Schuyler County Volunteer Ambulance Association. These experiences should give me a good overall view of how emergency services work. My other plans are to continue my education in this field, as I would like to take an EMT course and attend college after high school.

In addition, an Avoca School Senior, Cris Zeltwanger has had the opportunity to participate in the WIA Summer Youth Employment program where he worked as an animal care assistant at “Country Hospitality” a pet daycare/ resort and spa for companion animals. Through the cooperation of Avoca School, Pro Action, Cris’s grandmother, MTP, and Senior Employment Specialist, Robin Crapo; Cris was able to gain knowledge about the pet care business. Cris explained:

There is a lot of responsibility that comes with caring for dogs. Besides the daily care of feeding, cleaning, and playing with them; he stated that he learned how to deal with their behaviors. “You have to be patient with them” Cris said “Teaching them how to behave takes time. Before working with the dogs, I didn’t have patience for anything, now I do!”

As we begin the new school year, we anticipate coordinating more job shadowing and work experiences for students! The teamwork and collaboration of everyone involved is what paves the way for a student to be successful.



Steering Committee Summer Initiatives

Bill Losinger, Steering Committee

Over the summer, members of the MTP Steering Committee collaborated on a variety of projects that will hopefully assist teachers and agencies in improving transition services for our students. Members formed work teams to address the following topics; Level One Assessments, Transition-Based Lesson Plans, Enclaves, College Day Programs, and a College Resource Guide. Teams also took a look at current students who will be in need of agency services this semester and discussed the best way to refer these students so that the students would have services in place at the beginning of the semester.

The dates for upcoming Career Fairs and the Looking Ahead Conferences were also determined by these work teams and will be discussed at the Transition Support Group (TSG) meetings. . . continued above

Steering Committee Summer Initiatives - continued

A comprehensive Level One Assessment tool was developed which summarizes information gained from the student, the student’s family and school personnel. The assessment form will be shared on the MTP web site and at the TSG meetings.

In an attempt to offer teachers relevant activities that address transition skills several lesson plans were written by one of the work teams. Members of the Steering Committee plan to teach these lessons in their classrooms this semester and will make necessary changes based on the results of the lesson. Once the “glitches” are worked out the team will post the lesson plans on the web site.

Work teams met with representatives from Alfred State and Corning Community College to develop College Days at these institutions for the upcoming school year. The activities were formalized and more information regarding dates of the events will be made available soon. A work team also began the process of developing a College Resource Guide that will assist students in the college application process.

Members of the Steering Committee met with several agencies over the summer to discuss Enclave Development. Progress is being made and on-going discussions are continuing. This too will be shared at TSG meetings.

Thank you to the Steering Committee members for putting in some time this summer in an attempt to strengthen transition services in our area.

Developing a Meaningful IEP

Hildreth Rose, Transition Specialist

This past three years New York State began the process of mandated transition IEP self reviews. To date one third of the state schools have participated. Twelve of the 21 proponent districts in GST have self-reviewed. Three districts reported compliance in the eight indicators cited. NYS reviewed their results and accepted two of the districts results; these two districts have demonstrated compliance and now continue the ongoing quest for quality improvement.

Indicator 13 has taught the GST region that we can develop IEP’s that include the required transition components. The educators and administration are dedicated and diligent in their efforts. We are ready to take the step from compliance to quality, a continuous improvement effort. This year will invite some important questions. Does this individual plan, in its entirety, afford the student an opportunity to succeed in meeting their measurable post secondary goals? Are our coordinated sets of activities truly designed to meet **this** youngster’s **individual** need? Have we designed a document that will provide educational benefit?

The 2009/10 school year brings challenges and the continued need for the development of school processes that will allow the new requirements of IDEA 2004 to flourish and provide a format to self-monitor and continue improvement. Clearly Indicator 13 is not an indicator that is met and disappears into the abyss.

Please contact me at 607-765-8403 or hrose@gstboces.org for district specific support. I look forward to working with the region in the support developing and implementing IEP’s that afford successful transitions.

A Transition Plan for Success

Jill Durkin, Lead Facilitator

Jill Durkin, MTP Facilitator for the Corning Painted Post School District lead recently sat down with Tosha Merrill a 2008 graduate of West High to discuss her experience transitioning from high school to college.

Tosha who was identified in second grade as learning disabled in reading and spelling knew from that point on that she wanted to be a school teacher helping others like herself. True to her word she is currently. . . continued

A Transition Plan for Success

Jill Durkin, Lead Facilitator

working towards that goal by attending Corning Community College (CCC) and plans on transferring to Mansfield University to complete her Bachelor's Degree.

Tosha, who is a very personable young lady, walked me through her experiences, supports and opportunities for exposures during her senior year at West and now at CCC. She shared and compared experiences such as using the resource room at West and how helpful the teachers were, but how she was a little apprehensive about the stigma she felt was attached. She stated her choice of becoming a teacher was confirmed from opportunities given to her through volunteering at Frank Pierce since a child and the co-op opportunities and elective courses in child development offered through the high school.

Tosha began working with Bill Losinger, Transition Teacher with the district, who assisted with applying for VESID services and completing the application process with CCC. She was deemed eligible and assigned a VESID counselor who worked with her to develop her Individualized Plan for Employment with the goal of attending CCC. Tosha proactively attended three orientations at CCC and felt that these opportunities prepared her the most for being a student on campus. One of the orientations was sponsored by the Model Transition Program which emphasizes self-advocacy and working with Student Disability Services and the professors to receive the accommodations necessary to be successful. She took the tools learned from those orientations and applied them as she began to walk through the process of becoming a college student. She received assistance from VESID with funding for books and has met with Kathy Pettet, Director of Student Disability Services, to ensure her accommodations are in place.

Tosha feels she has become more independent and that it is necessary to her success in a college setting. She explained the process of planning individual meetings with each of her professors to discuss her disability and needs for accommodations. When I asked her about her accommodations and if other students in her class would be aware of her needs she stated, "No, on days we have tests instead of going to class I will just go to the testing area, so no one even knows. They just think I'm not in class that day."

At the time of the interview Tosha had only been attending CCC for about two weeks. She was very confident though that she would be successful using her accommodations and keeping open communication with her professors. She feels her college classes are more focused and although there is more homework there is less drama than high school. She has taken on a lot with a schedule of 18 credits this semester including one online class and in addition she works part time. She's excited about getting involved in campus activities and has met a lot of new people. Tosha is realistic in thinking that she may take five semesters to complete course requirements at CCC and will do whatever it takes to make her next smooth transition to Mansfield University.

Transition Academy Highlights Local Student

Sue Bain-Lucey, Steering Committee

Kelly Snyder, son of Ron and Kathy Snyder of Alfred Station, Alfred Station, recently participated in a student panel as part of a presentation at the Transition Academy held in Rochester. Kelly and five other students, ages 18 through 21 addressed an audience of educators from the Rochester and Southern Tier area. The students answered questions and described their educational programs. Kelly discussed the ACCESS, a local BOCES program. He relayed how this program has prepared him for employment. Kelly currently hosts a radio show on WALF. He hopes to continue this next year.



The day was designed to highlight quality transition practices within our region. Transition refers to planning and services that are needed to prepare youth with disabilities for moving smoothly from school to adult living, learning, or earning roles in the community after leaving secondary education. This process includes instruction, community learning experiences, or support services to develop skills, knowledge and abilities and other strategies to address post-school living, learning or working needs. It may also include assistance in making applications prior to leaving school for services from community agencies, colleges, or employment.

Expanding Our Circle

Wendy Milliman, Transition Teacher

While attending a seminar on Autism, the school speech pathologist and I observed the desperation felt by parents of children with Autism. There seemed to be a sense of isolation among them. As we returned to our responsibilities at Arkport Central School, we contemplated solutions to the ongoing challenges of providing a good education to students with special needs in rural school districts.

With spring break approaching, we talked about how socially isolated our students are outside of the school day. My students enjoy the relationships they have with their classmates however they attend a small school and spend much of the day with the same three classmates. So the question becomes, "How do we expand their circle of friends?"

We decided we would start small, find another local school with a similar group of students and invite them to lunch. Our first get together, "lunch and munch" was held the Friday before spring break. We hosted the event in my classroom, which is fully equipped with a kitchen. . . . *continued above*

Expanding Our Circle- *continued*

We invited our friends from Canaseraga to join us, and we prepared tacos, corn, rice and Mexican sundaes for dessert. Our CSE Chair and Superintendent stopped by and were immediately swept up in the excitement.

This great opportunity for socialization also gave my students an opportunity to practice many other life skills. Each student maintains an address book with pertinent personal information, contact information about their friends and job reference information. You can imagine our delight when we returned from spring break to learn that one student had made plans with a new friend from Canaseraga and went bowling. Francis said, "It was a lot of fun to hang out with a new friend. He's really funny."

Since then we have been invited to Canaseraga for another successful lunch and munch and planned a picnic extending invitations to the student's families. We are hoping that this will provide a much-needed opportunity for parents to network and to expand the circle again.

Alfred University ACCESS –

A Unique Approach

Bonnie Goodwin, Steering Committee

The Greater Southern Tier ACCESS Program is a community based transition program located at Alfred University designed for students with disabilities who are 18-21 years of age. We are gearing up for another exciting year of activities and experiences that will enhance student transitions to employment or post secondary opportunities!

The Chair of the Division of Education at Alfred University, Ann Monroe-Baillargeon and the teacher of the ACCESS Program, Bonnie Goodwin, have begun collaborating for the 2008-2009 school year. Ann's graduate assistant students work with the ACCESS students to enhance individual transition opportunities.

During the past school year, Todd, an ACCESS student worked with Gary, an AU graduate student. They developed a bulletin board, which was displayed in Meyers Hall in the education corridor. The bulletin board included a report that Todd researched and wrote on Spinal Bifida, a condition that Todd was born with. It also highlighted photographs of Todd growing up, his family and activities and special occasions in Todd's life. Todd was also able to participate in several classes that were related to his career interests. Gary assisted Todd in setting up community visits to view first hand occupations that Todd is interested in. Todd and Gary developed a great relationship. It was a huge success!

Ann and Bonnie have begun working together for the fall semester to aid Alfred University graduate students and the ACCESS students in the development of new relationships as well as assist as needed with transition activities. Ann will be teaching a couple of classes during the daytime and has welcomed any ACCESS students who are interested to attend her class! It is invaluable for our students with disabilities to be able to participate and be accepted by their peers. We are so appreciative that we have this positive collaborative relationship and look forward to great things in the future!

Elmira City Schools "Connections"

Antonio Perry, Transition Coordinator

Becky Gilbert, Transition Advisor

We welcome everyone back to this upcoming school year. It is with good reason that we are excited about the 2008-09 year. We are proud of our students' accomplishments and look forward to expanding on them for the upcoming school year.

From the programs beginning on October 2007, Connections has collaborated with administration, teachers and students. After identifying the needs of our student population we sought to work with community agencies that would help increase the students' success. We served approximately 150 students between the two Elmira City High Schools (Elmira Free Academy and Southside High School). The goal of the program is to increase the amount of students being gainfully employed, graduating from High school, and attending college. We have tried to reach these goals by providing the necessary resources for students to develop their skills and explore all of their Career and Vocational possibilities.

This past summer was the first for the C.E.W. Program (Career Exploration Workshop). This was an intense program designed for 14-16 year old students looking to explore career opportunities in their communities, and develop their skills for their future. Students could take full advantage of a variety of fun activities and explore career fields while attending sessions at Corning Community College, and the Community Job Center. A wonderful addition to this program was the Junior Counselor position. This was for a student that was committed to the program and just completed their junior year of high school. Up to 30 students attended the program from July 8th - July 24th. The program concluded with a student-planned event that saw a number of parents, administrators, and teachers come show their support.

The focus for the upcoming year is Parent Involvement. This will be encouraged through monthly parent meetings, various workshops and a Parent retreat. The goal is to increase Self-advocacy for parents of students with disabilities. We will also expand on the success of our middle school program, which serves to prepare students for high school through career exploration and soft skills trainings. Through Positive youth development and Community involvement, we will continue to help empower our students to create a transition plan that will increase Post-secondary success. "Connections-" Model Transition Program.

Continuity ... Community ... Careers ... Content