

Transition Times

Volume 1 • Edition 3

October 2008

This issue

MTP MOVES
FORWARD IN
THE NEW
SCHOOL YEAR

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).

VESID is Moving!



EFFECTIVE
11/1/2008

NYS VESID
609 E. Church St.
Elmira, New York
14901

Same phone
number, same
great service!

MTP Steering Committee

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



December Conference Fast Approaching

Hildreth Rose, Transition Specialist PDS

The RIT and Conference Center located in West Henrietta, NY will host the 4th Annual NYS Transition Conference on December 9 - 11, 2008. This event is co-sponsored by Cornell University, University of Buffalo, CNYSEA and the Western and Midwest Transition Coordination Sites. Highlights include over 30 concurrent sessions on a variety of topics including College Preparation, Parent Advocacy, Job Development, Assistive Technology, MTP initiatives and much more! There will be an Awards ceremony with the 2008 theme, *Honoring the Parent*, A highlight of the power and support a parent brings to their child's life and education.

Key Presentations include a discussion with Dr. Rebecca H. Cort, Deputy Commissioner NYSED VESID and Dr. Edward Placke, Assistant Commissioner NYSED VESID. Also, Dr. Ellen Arnold, Author and Consultant; Connie Ferrell, Owner of Integrated Services; Jeff Klare, CEO of Hire DisAbility Solutions; and Kenneth L. Grisham, President and CEO of Premier Assistive Technology, Inc. Please find registration information at www.modeltransitionprogram.com. If you have any questions feel free to speak with your MTP facilitator. See you there!

Collaboration Works

Marion Richards, Teacher

Last fall I began attending the monthly Transition Support Group (TSG) meetings and I would like to share the difference collaboration of services has made for one of my former students.



Last year Justin, as a senior attended two programs at the Corning Host Site for GST BOCES. In the morning he worked on his academics and in the afternoon he worked as a paid employee at the Corning Community College Bookstore. Carol English of Youth Employment and Janice Preston of BOCES ACCESS made this possible. Justin enjoyed his job and learned that he was a valued employee; while we were learning that Justin was interested in teaching.

In a volunteer capacity, Justin worked with teachers Kari Ordway and Crystal Watson at Smith Elementary School in Corning. There he gained valuable work experience as a teacher aide. He did an excellent job and was encouraged to apply for a job after graduation. Hearing this, Janice Preston coached him through the application process including gathering letters of reference. Justin was interviewed by Cynthia Drake, Corning Host Site BOCES supervisor and was hired as a substitute aide beginning fall 2008.

The Model Transition Program (MTP) provided funding for Justin's fingerprint fee and his driver permit cost. And Justin passed the test on the first try! Diane Stachowski from VESID provided support for drivers training and also helped with the cost of work clothes.

Since September Justin has remained busy as a substitute at the Corning Host Site, gaining experience and confidence with his chosen field of work. He loves the job! Thanks to all who made this school to work transition a success!

College Experiences

Antonio Perry, Transition Coordinator

One of the upcoming activities planned for the "Connections" program students is a series of College Exploration field trips. The group will consist of mostly seniors and some juniors from the Elmira City School District and Horseheads High School. The visits will begin in October and continue throughout the school year. The trips will serve to help college-bound students gain experience in the collegiate environment and obtain information on financial aid, student life, admissions, and academic programs. Students will have the opportunity to navigate the campuses of TC3, Alfred State,.... *Continued above*

College Experiences, continued

BCC, Cortland State, and Cornell University. Seniors from each of the schools are going to have the opportunity to get a more in-depth look at the programs being offered at Corning Community College. Starting with a visit to the Criminal Justice complex on November 13th, they will have a chance to get a first-hand look into Nursing, Auto Body, Machine Tool, Early Childhood, and Computer Programming. During the visit to CCC, they will be able to speak to the professors in these departments and gain insight into the course requirements for each program.

There is one objective for these field trips. We are hoping that our students realize that college is a possibility and that barriers such as finances or learning challenges can be accommodated and overcome.

Summer Learning Series

Jill Durkin, Lead Facilitator

This past summer the Corning Painted Post Lead MTP contracted with AIM Independent Living Center to develop and implement a pilot summer program for eight students from Corning, Addison, Odessa Montour and Spencer VanEtten. AIM conducted a series of seven sessions on topics such as team building, job applications, interviewing skills, budgeting, housing, comparison shopping and employment. AIM was very creative when working with the students they incorporated field trips into a number of their sessions with stops at the local Workforce Development Center, National Guard Armory, Tanglewood Nature Center, Corning Federal Credit Union, Wegman's, Walmart, Holiday Inn Express, the Arnot Mall and local apartment complexes.

Students who participated in this experience were mainly those who are ineligible for 12 month programming but could benefit from an extended learning opportunity. A focus was placed on pre-employment skill development that included overviews from local business managers on their hiring practices. The students were also given an opportunity for a work experience at a local hotel. They were given useful information on interviewing skills, the importance of proper attire, work ethic, wages, characteristics of good/bad employees and appropriate behaviors on the job. As a result of these experiences two students were placed in a temporary paid employment opportunity.

AIM also incorporated useful independent living skills into their series. Students worked on budgeting skills where they identified wants/needs and income/expenses. They planned meals and did comparison shopping at local markets. They had the opportunity to explore housing options in the local region as well as understand the application process, price and quality of local facilities.

I would like to thank AIM Independent Living Center and their staff for all their hard work for developing this program from the concept I shared with them. This program was well received by the students, parents and teachers of those who participated. Schools are encouraged to open up dialog with their MTP Facilitators if they have an idea for a summer program that would serve the needs of their students and we look forward to supporting unique opportunities

Alfred University Welcomes Student

Bonnie Goodwin, Steering Committee

Fred, a student at the Alfred ACCESS program, is participating in two college classes at Alfred University this semester. Fred is interested in the field of archeology and he was invited by Ann Monroe-Baillargeon to join her class, Social Foundations of Education. Fred is also working with Josh, an Alfred University graduate student, who approached faculty in the History department to arrange for Fred to audit the History level 110 class, The Making of Europe. The MTP is supporting Fred by purchasing his textbooks for both classes. Alfred University faculty and staff have provided assistance establishing Fred's "Blackboard" account, which allows him to electronically access important class information including assignments, quizzes, papers and exams. Ann and Josh will also help Fred utilize an Alpha Smart Reader to assist with note taking, an area of difficulty for him. It has been exciting seeing these collaborative efforts assisting Fred with a transition opportunity for success in learning first hand the key differences between secondary and post secondary education and expectations

Kenny Grover Shares His Success Story

Deb Gush, Vocational Services Supervisor

Kenny was a student who began at the Community Job Center in the fall of 2007. During his first week he informed me that he did not plan to graduate because he didn't like school and he was not excited about attending the Community Job Center. Kenny had some personal hygiene issues as well as some behaviors and an attitude that were standing in the way of his success.

As the year progressed Kenny stated that he learned a lot of things, "I learned why it is important for me to stay clean". He also learned work seeking and independent living skills, such as resume development, job applications, job interviewing and money management skills. Through the Model Transition Program (MTP), Kenny was given the support he needed with the assistance of a job coach. Kenny was able to experience seven to ten different work sites within this timeframe while learning the needed social skills to be successful in the community. Kenny states, "I enjoy meeting new people now and have found many new friends."

During Kenny's final semester, he transitioned to job coaching supports through VESID and the STEP program at Chemung ARC. He obtained employment at Wegman's in Elmira and in June, Kenny walked across the stage at his high school graduation and was handed his diploma. What a change from the student I met who wasn't going to graduate!

After experiencing success at Wegman's, Kenny decided to pursue the career of his dreams in construction. Using some of the skills obtained at the Community Job Center, Kenny resigned from his job at Wegman's with a two-week notice, but not before finding a new job.

Kenny now has a full-time position in the construction business doing siding, roofing, windows, skylights and sheet rocking. He loves what he is doing and has been making sure to do the very best that he can. He works Monday through Thursday and earns extra money by working overtime on Fridays whenever possible. Kenny rides his bike to and from work everyday and during the winter he has arranged transportation with family members. He has opened a savings account and is planning for his own apartment.

Through the entire year and now at his place of employment, Kenny has proven himself to be a hard working and dedicated young man with many gifts and a bright future ahead.

Steuben Employment Services Partners with MTP

Marcel Lamb, Manager of Steuben Employment Services

Steuben Employment Services, a department of the Arc of Steuben, has been pleased to work with four of the MTPs in this region since 2007. We have worked with numerous students during the first year of the grant in various settings that include job shadows, work experiences, soft skills training, and DVE's (Level II Assessments).

Steuben Employment Services has a Senior Employment Specialist, Robin Crapo, who is dedicated to working with MTP. We also have a number of Employment Specialists who will be focusing on working with students, depending upon demand. We can provide services in any of the geographic areas served under the four MTP grants in this region.

At Steuben Employment Services, we have already seen some of the intended results of the MTP program. One of the goals was to have better prepared referrals to VESID. A student who worked with us through MTP from winter of 2007 through spring of 2008 was referred to ProAction for Summer Youth Employment where she performed janitorial work at Bath Haverling School. She was referred to VESID in late spring as well, and has now been offered a job extension at the school.

Another student worked at Bob Evans as a prep cook last year; he was asked back this year and has added a second job at Rotsell's Deli.

This year we are pleased to offer the LIFE (Looking into Future Employment) program, which is designed to work with ninth and tenth grade students in small groups in a variety of work settings. In this program students will obtain skills training (in areas that may include hygiene, work ethics, decision making, team building, depending upon the need) that are directly related to the career samples they will experience at their chosen work setting. Again this year, we will coach students in job shadows and work experiences to better prepare them for their careers upon graduation.

A Work and Community Experience

Stacey Brzezinski, Transition Coordinator

At the beginning of the school year, Anthony Keeler, a senior at Haverling High School in Bath, came into class one day very excited about the school's football game that occurred over the weekend. When asked if he attended he replied, "No, I listened to it on the radio." After further discussion it was revealed that Anthony not only had missed that football game, but had never attended an after school event of any kind. In fact on his Senior Class Yearbook Data Sheet for this year's yearbook, he wrote that his most memorable experience at Haverling was attending the pep assembly last year. In addition, Anthony had never had a work experience outside of the regular school hours due to transportation and financial restrictions. Putting the goals of having a work experience and community experience together was a perfect solution. *Continued above*

A Work and Community Experience, continued

Anthony was given the opportunity to work at the following three home football games stamping hands at the admission gate with members of the Haverling Sports Boosters. Anthony stated that, "Stamping the hands of people coming into that game, and then saying thank you," was his favorite part of the work experience. After the rush of the spectators subsided and the players ran onto the field, Anthony was free to attend the game. He was able to attend the game at no charge and the concession stand gave him a free meal during the game. Anthony said he loved sitting with his friends and watching the game together, and seeing the band's performance at half time.

Through the MTP, transportation and a school shirt for his uniform were provided. Anthony could not stop smiling when he was working, and at the end of the night when asked how he thought his first work experience went, Anthony replied, "This was the best day of my life, I need to change my Senior Class Yearbook Data Sheet!"



Students Soar

Janet Hayman, Teacher

The students in Janet Hayman's BOCES ASD program at Thomas A. Edison High School participated in a two-part project last school year to gain vocational skills and to apply these skills in a vocational community-based setting. With sponsorship from the GST BOCES Model Transition Program, students participated in four soft skills training and then put these skills to immediate use in a volunteer work experience at the Wings of Eagles Discovery Center in Big Flats, NY.



With the assistance of a supportive job coach from Capabilities, Inc., the students worked at setting up and tearing down tables and chairs for various special events at the museum, cleaned the kitchen, cleaned and maintained display areas, and cleaned offices and the hanger.

The students definitely exhibited positive growth in employable skills and demonstrated these throughout their experience at the Wings of Eagles. This experience helped the self-esteem of these six students to "soar" and demonstrated how education-based staff, agencies and the community can work together to bring rewarding opportunities to our students.

Level II Vocational Assessments

Kathy Newton and Michele Nye, Allegany Arc

During the summer of 2008, Michele Nye, Director of Voc. Ed. Services, and Kathy Newton, Transition Mentor from the Allegany Arc were contracted by Beth Perry, Facilitator for the Alfred-Almond Lead MTP. The referral was to complete Level II Vocational Assessments on four students with autism from the Horseheads School District to assist with their transition planning.

The purpose of a Level II Vocational Assessment is to identify the student's abilities, interests and learning styles. Review of the student's school records takes place. Use of achievement, aptitude and dexterity tests, along with learning styles inventories, and classroom observations, allow for vocational goals to be developed for inclusion in the student's IEP. This includes an appropriate course of study, and identification of needs and supports.

For the most part, students were evaluated over a two-day period in short spans. Vocational Assessments for students with autism require more than the average amount of flexibility on the part of the person who is administering the assessment, due to their unique needs. While administering, it is necessary not only to be prepared to stop what you may be doing on one instrument and begin another, but also to take into consideration the individual needs of the student in terms of their particular calming mechanisms. For one student, short breaks to allow him to re-group where necessary. Having the assessments scheduled in the OT/PT room proved to be useful as it allowed this student the opportunity to use the therapy swing when needed. For another student, a walk in the hallway was encouraged and given when concentration became difficult. During the two days, each student displayed their personality as well, and it was enjoyable for us to see a sense of humor in one of the students, which is often not observed in individuals with autism.

By providing what was needed for each of the students, they were able to tolerate the assessment much better. Results from these Level II Assessments proved to be a valuable tool from which to make recommendations for each student's transition planning. We look forward to providing additional assistance to school districts in the GST BOCES region over the course of the year.