

# PLANNING THE Transition to Employment

**WENDY S. PARENT-JOHNSON**  
**LAURA A. OWENS**  
**RICHARD PARENT-JOHNSON**



# PLANNING THE Transition to Employment

**Wendy S. Parent-Johnson, Ph.D., CRC, CESP**

University of Arizona  
Tucson, AZ

**Laura A. Owens, Ph.D., CESP**

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Milwaukee, WI

**Richard Parent-Johnson, Ph.D.**

University of Kansas  
Lawrence, KS

· P A U L · H ·  
**BROOKES**  
PUBLISHING CO.®

Baltimore • London • Sydney



**Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.**

Post Office Box 10624  
Baltimore, Maryland 21285-0624  
USA

[www.brookespublishing.com](http://www.brookespublishing.com)

Copyright © 2020 by Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.  
All rights reserved.

"Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co." is a registered trademark of  
Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.

Typeset by Progressive Publishing Services, York, Pennsylvania.  
Manufactured in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc., Chelsea, Michigan.

The individuals described in this book are composites or real people whose situations are masked and are based on the authors' experiences. In all instances, names and identifying details have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Purchasers of *Planning the Transition to Employment* are granted permission to download, print, and photocopy the BLANK FORMS in the text for educational purposes. None of the forms may be reproduced to generate revenue for any program or individual. Photocopies may be made only from an original book. *Unauthorized use beyond this privilege may be prosecutable under federal law.* You will see the copyright protection notice at the bottom of each photocopyable page.

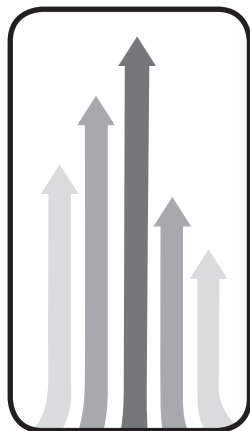
**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Parent-Johnson, Wendy S., author. | Owens, Laura A., 1961– author. | Parent-Johnson, Richard, author.  
Title: Planning the transition to employment / by Wendy S. Parent-Johnson, Ph.D., CRC, CESP, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ; Laura A. Owens, Ph.D., CESP, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI; and Richard Parent-Johnson, Ph.D., University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS.  
Description: Baltimore : Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., [2020] | Series: Brookes transition to adulthood | Includes bibliographical references and index.  
Identifiers: LCCN 2019007911 (print) | ISBN 9781598573589 (pbk. : alk. paper)  
Subjects: LCSH: Youth with disabilities—Education (Secondary)—United States. | Youth with disabilities—Vocational guidance—United States. | Youth with disabilities—Employment—United States. | School-to-work transition—United States.  
Classification: LCC LC3981 .P37 2020 (print) | LCC LC3981 (ebook) | DDC 371.9/0473—dc23  
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019007911>  
LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019980075>

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data are available from the British Library.

2023 2022 2021 2020

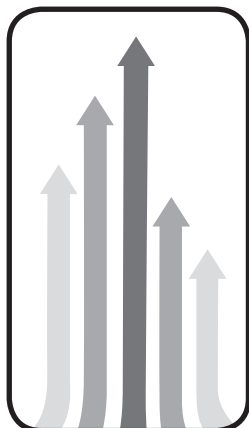
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



# Contents

Series Preface.....	vii
Editorial Advisory Board.....	ix
About the Authors.....	xi
Preface .....	xiii
About the Downloads .....	xv
Acknowledgments.....	xvii
1 Getting Started.....	1
Transition to Employment .....	1
Importance of Work.....	2
What Do the Statistics Say?.....	2
Changing the Landscape of Disability and Employment .....	3
Upcoming Chapters.....	5
2 Strategies to Facilitate Effective Transitions.....	7
<i>Teacher Vignette</i> .....	7
The Crucial Importance of Collaboration.....	8
Grow Your Own Collective Impact Team.....	10
Collective Impact: A Practical Application .....	11
Integrating Best Practices .....	17
3 Planning for Employment: Person-Centered	
Planning and Adult Agency Involvement .....	27
<i>Teacher/Transition Coordinator Vignette</i> .....	27
Planning for Employment.....	29
Ready and Reliable.....	30
Employment First .....	33
Why Is Person-Centered Planning Important?.....	34

4	Developing Skills, Identifying Passions, and Exploring Careers .....	47
	<i>Teacher/Transition Coordinator Vignette</i> .....	47
	Developing High School Services .....	48
	Identifying Learning Styles and Preferences .....	51
	Utilizing Online Career Exploration Tools .....	54
	Providing Community Work and Internship Opportunities .....	61
	Establishing Employment or Postsecondary Education Areas of Interest .....	63
5	Developing Employer Relationships to Create Job Opportunities .....	67
	<i>Teacher/Transition Coordinator Vignette</i> .....	67
	Competitive Integrated Employment .....	67
	Knowing the Business Community .....	68
	Business Knowledge .....	69
	Networking .....	70
	Meeting With Employers .....	74
	Employment Proposals .....	77
	Preparing Students for Employment Through Work-Based Learning or Internships .....	77
	Partnership Agreement .....	80
	Worksite Analysis .....	80
	Intern Criteria and Job Description .....	80
	Application and Interview Process .....	80
	Orientation and Training .....	83
	Evaluation Process .....	83
6	Providing Training and Supports While in School and After .....	91
	<i>Teacher/Transition Coordinator Vignette</i> .....	91
	Teaching Self-Determination .....	92
	Identifying Instructional Strategies and Support .....	93
	Instructional Strategies .....	93
	Natural Supports .....	95
7	Ways to Overcome the <i>Yeah, but . . .</i> Syndrome .....	107
	<i>Student Vignette</i> .....	107
	Case Studies .....	109
	Challenges That Teachers Face .....	117
	Pulling It All Together .....	119
	References .....	121
	Index .....	125



## Editorial Advisory Board

### ***Series Editor***

#### **Paul Wehman, Ph.D.**

Professor of Physical Medicine and  
Rehabilitation  
Chairman, Division of Rehabilitation  
Research  
Medical College of Virginia  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
1314 West Main Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23284

### ***Board Members***

#### **Renee Cameto, Ph.D.**

Senior Social Science Researcher  
SRI International  
333 Ravenswood Avenue  
Menlo Park, California 94025

#### **Teresa Grossi, Ph.D.**

Director  
Center on Community Living and Careers  
Indiana Institute on Disability and  
Community  
Indiana University  
2853 East 10th Street  
Bloomington, Indiana 47408

#### **Barbara Guy**

Transition/Work Experience Consultant  
Iowa Department of Education  
400 East 14th Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

#### **Debra Hart, M.S.**

Director of Education and Transition  
Institute for Community Inclusion  
University of Massachusetts–Boston  
100 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

#### **Peg Lamb, Ph.D.**

Director  
High School Diploma Completion Initiative  
Lansing Community College  
Post Office Box 40010  
Lansing, Michigan 48901

#### **Richard L. Rosenberg, Ph.D.**

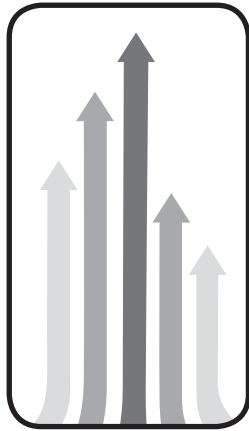
Vocational Counselor  
Career Connection  
Whittier Union High School District  
9401 South Painter Avenue  
Whittier, California 90605

**David W. Test, Ph.D.**

Professor  
Department of Special Education and Child  
Development  
Co-Principal Investigator  
National Secondary Transition Technical  
Assistance Center  
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte  
9201 University City Boulevard  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28223

**Michael L. Wehmeyer, Ph.D.**

Professor of Special Education  
Director, Kansas University Center on  
Developmental Disabilities  
Senior Scientist, Beach Center on Disability  
The University of Kansas  
1200 Sunnyside Avenue, Room 3136  
Lawrence, Kansas 66045



## About the Authors

Wendy Parent-Johnson, Ph.D., CRC, CESP  
Sonoran UCEDD  
University of Arizona  
Department of Family & Community Medicine  
1521 E. Helen Street  
Tucson, Arizona 85721

**Wendy Parent-Johnson, Ph.D., CRC, CESP**, is executive director of the Sonoran UCEDD, a Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, and professor, Department of Family & Community Medicine, College of Medicine, at the University of Arizona. Her educational background includes an M.S. degree in rehabilitation counseling and a Ph.D. in education with an emphasis on transition for individuals with severe disabilities, both from Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Parent-Johnson has 36 years' experience in the areas of supported and customized employment, transition from school to work, and Employment First policy and practice. Additionally, her research, teaching, and grant development has focused on health care transition, health disparities, interdisciplinary health science education, and the integration of health and employment. Dr. Parent-Johnson has conducted presentations and trainings; produced journal articles, book chapters, and other written products; and developed practical tools related to enhancing inclusive education, health care access, and employment outcomes. She is editor of the *Journal of Rehabilitation* and a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*.

Laura A. Owens, Ph.D., CESP  
TransCen, Inc.  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
2400 E Hartford Ave  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53211

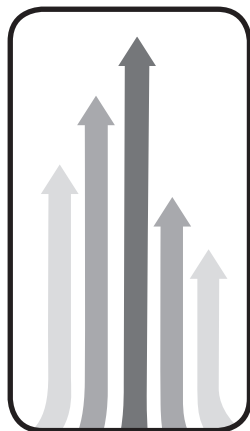
**Laura A. Owens, Ph.D., CESP**, has over 30 years of experience as a national leader in the transition and disability employment field. She started her career as a teacher (both general and special education) and is currently a professor in the Department of Teaching



and Learning at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM) where she coordinates the Graduate Transition Certificate program. She is the president of TransCen, Inc. (TCI), a national organization based in Rockville, Maryland, that provides direct placement services to individuals with disabilities; develops and evaluates new service models through research of evidenced-based practices leading to improved employment outcomes; and provides training and technical assistance to organizations and school districts focusing on the improvement of educational and employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. In 1991, she founded Creative Employment Opportunities, Inc. (CEO) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, an employment agency for individuals with disabilities, and ArtWorks for Milwaukee, a nonprofit jobs-training program in the arts for youth with and without disabilities in 2001. Dr. Owens served as the executive director of APSE, a national organization focusing on the advancement of integrated employment for citizens with disabilities based in Washington, DC, from 2008 to 2014, and along with Pat Keul and Wendy Parent-Johnson was instrumental in establishing the CESP, a national credential for employment support professionals. Dr. Owens is an internationally known speaker and has published widely on transition and employment topics. Laura earned her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Richard Parent-Johnson, Ph.D.  
University of Kansas  
1450 Jayhawk Blvd  
Lawrence, Kansas 66045

**Richard Parent-Johnson, Ph.D.**, retired as a senior research associate in the Center for Disabilities in the Sanford School of Medicine, Vermillion, South Dakota. Prior to his position at Sanford, he was a senior research associate in the Center for Research on Learning at the University of Kansas and there held a courtesy appointment in the Department of Special Education. His doctorate is in sociology from the University of Kansas. Dr. Parent-Johnson has been the principal investigator (PI), co-PI, or project coordinator on multiple state and federal grants. His most recent work has focused on health care transitions for youth/young adults with disabilities as it relates to interprofessional medical education and clinical practice. He codesigned and then led the University of South Dakota's Center for Disabilities Transition *InAction* Clinic. He continues to do consulting work in these areas. Dr. Parent-Johnson's earlier work focused primarily on the iterative design, development, and dissemination of universal curricular products *and* processes that serve the individualized transition needs of persons with mild to moderate disabilities (e.g., the *Soaring to New Heights* curriculum and lesson materials for high-school-age students with disabilities and/or special health care needs). He also taught and served as the learning specialist at Seattle University. Dr. Parent-Johnson is knowledgeable in mixed methods research methodologies with particular expertise in ethnographic research and qualitative analysis.



# 1

## Getting Started

### TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT

Educators play a significant role in changing the life trajectory of students with disabilities. No matter what their involvement is or the amount of time they have with a student, teachers can make a profound impact on their students' future employment. Teachers who have a student for only one year, one class period, or in an extracurricular activity they advise, may easily lose sight of the significance of their role. It is important to remember that transition to employment requires a coordinated set of future-driven and outcome-oriented activities. Outcomes (postschool outcomes guided by the dreams and goals of the student and his or her family) are often forgotten. The annual individualized education program (IEP) includes the objectives that form a blueprint to guide students during their school years to achieve their desired outcomes when they graduate. Each year must be purposeful in moving the students closer to their goals; each activity must be meaningful in relation to the bigger picture of a quality adult life. Teaching students direct skills, such as completing a particular task, and soft skills, such as interacting with others, is extremely important. Equally important are related skills such as acquiring a work ethic, identifying passions, enhancing self-efficacy, problem solving, dependability, and becoming a good coworker; these skills are often learned over time through the day-to-day experiences, role models, and real-life events encountered. All students can benefit from these opportunities, which should be a regular part of their education programming.

What if educators teach all these skills? What is the guarantee the student will become employed given the likelihood that other adult service professionals, who are not involved in the student's education, will be providing postschool employment-related services? These questions highlight another key point: collaboration. Transition, by definition, requires the involvement of many people in each student's life, including other school and adult service personnel. Working together with others enhances coordination, reduces gaps, and eliminates duplication. An added benefit to collaboration is the collective creativity, problem solving, resource development, and personnel support that a collaborative approach offers. Collaboration helps not only in the short term for an individual student but also in the long term for systemic change affecting all students. It simply is not effective for any school or adult service professionals to complete their roles in isolation of the others who are involved in transition. As the demand for integrated employment outcomes continues to grow and embrace more students, working together with others becomes a critical necessity. As an educator,

it is important to be aware of the possible opportunities related to work, what services and supports are available, and what is needed to achieve employment. Regardless of who is responsible for implementing employment-related services, at a minimum, the educator's role is to coordinate the services, oversee their completion, and ensure that each service contributes to the larger picture.

Gaining knowledge and relationships around employment may feel like a big change if employment has not previously been a focus or a responsibility of teaching. Moving forward, consider these tips:

- Rather than planning for transition, focus on ACTION planning.
- Rather than assuming it will be done, focus on ensuring IMPLEMENTATION.
- Rather than checking off on process, focus on following up on OUTCOMES.

This book provides strategies for focusing on action, implementation, and outcomes. Information important for making employment a reality for students with disabilities is outlined in the practical strategies, tools, and examples presented throughout the book. While reading the book, it is important to distinguish between “need to know” and “need to do” based on your own situation and local community. Knowing what is required to transition to employment is the first step. Identifying what is being done and where gaps exist is an essential next step. Clarifying personal responsibilities is an important part of the process. Defining ways to address the gaps yourself or with others cannot be overlooked.

## IMPORTANCE OF WORK

You may be asking, “Why work?” and “Why now?” After all, haven't educators always been charged with preparing our future citizens for college and the world of work? Since individuals with disabilities have been afforded a free and appropriate education with the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, great strides have been made in the outcomes experienced by students with disabilities. In higher numbers than ever before, students with disabilities are graduating from high school, going to college, and becoming employed. However, they are experiencing all of these outcomes at a rate much lower than their peers without disabilities (National Council on Disability, 2017; Newman et al., 2011; Wehman, 2013).

## WHAT DO THE STATISTICS SAY?

Employment rates are still consistently lower for people with disabilities than for the population without disabilities. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), the unemployment rate for individuals with a disability was 8.0% in 2018, more than twice that of those with no disability (3.7%). Individuals are counted as unemployed if they do not have a job, were available for work, and were actively looking for a job. It is important to note that there are many individuals with disabilities who are not employed and have given up looking for employment altogether. In 2018, 19.1% of individuals with disabilities were employed, whereas 65.9% of individuals without a disability were employed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). For individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD), the number employed are even lower (Siperstein, Heyman, & Stokes, 2014). According to the 2016–2017 National Core Indicator data, a survey of 21,548 adults in 39 states served by ID/DD agencies reported 14.9% to be employed in individual paid jobs (National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services & Human Services Research Institute, 2018; U.S.

Census Bureau, 2016). When looking at career development, individuals with a disability are often underemployed and tend to be working in service occupations (20.2%) compared to 17.3% of individuals without disabilities (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2019).

Individuals with a disability are less likely to work in management or professional occupations (34.1%) than are individuals without a disability (39.9%). The resulting impact of unemployment and underemployment is that individuals with disabilities experience poverty at a rate that is more than double that of the general population (Vallas & Fremstad, 2014). If you have a disability in the United States, you are twice as likely as a person without a disability to live in poverty, and that gap has widened in the 25 years since the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act was enacted (Fessler, 2015). Individuals with disabilities have generally poorer health, lower education achievements, fewer economic opportunities, and higher rates of poverty than do people without disabilities. Disability has a bidirectional link to poverty because it may increase the risk of poverty and poverty may increase the risk of disability (World Health Organization [WHO], 2011).

## CHANGING THE LANDSCAPE OF DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT

Recent state and federal initiatives are focused on changing these outcomes. These initiatives have generated tremendous interest, increased expectations, and demonstrated successes emphasizing employment and the valued contributions made by workers with disabilities. A significant influence has been Employment First initiatives, which establish a framework for systems change centered on the presumption that all citizens, including individuals with significant disabilities, are capable of integrated employment (Association for Persons Supporting Employment First, n.d.). Employment First directives urge systems to align policies, service-delivery practices, and reimbursement structures to encourage integrated employment as the priority option for publicly funded services for youth and adults with significant disabilities (Office of Disability Employment Policy, n.d.). Today, all 50 states have some type of legislation, policy, or activity related to Employment First.

At the federal level, the passage of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) (National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities, 2014) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) final rule, which ensures that Medicaid's home- and community-based services programs provide full access to the benefits of community living and offers services in the most integrated settings, have changed the expectations and requirements of employment, particularly for transition-aged youth as they leave school. The question no longer is "Can this individual work?" but rather "How can we support this individual in work?"

The WIOA was signed into law by President Obama in 2014. The purpose of WIOA is to better align the workforce system with education and economic development in an effort to create a collective response to economic and labor market challenges on the national, state, and local levels (National Association of Workforce Boards, n.d.). Specifically, this legislation focuses on assisting job seekers with disabilities in succeeding in the labor market, matching employers with skilled workers who may benefit from education, skills training, and employment, and support services (National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities, 2014).

WIOA targets both in-school and out-of-school youth to assist them in their career and educational development. State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies must reserve funds for the sole purpose of providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Whereas

VR has always provided transition services, WIOA expands the population of students to those who are eligible or who are potentially eligible for VR to receive services and permits a wider range of services to students with disabilities. Youth with disabilities do not need to be eligible for VR services as Pre-ETS can be provided to any student with a disability, regardless of whether the student has applied or been determined eligible for VR services. The five Pre-ETS services include

1. Job exploration counseling.
2. Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or afterschool opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships) that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible.
3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education.
4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living.
5. Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

The requirement of Pre-ETS reinforces what research has demonstrated over the last several years regarding preparing students for competitive employment. Each of the five required Pre-ETS has been cited in research as a predictor of postschool success for students with disabilities. Additionally, the requirement of collaboration in implementing Pre-ETS focused on the outcome of employment has been cited in research as an effective practice (Fabian & Luecking, 2015; Test, Mazzotti, Mustain, Kortering, & Kohler, 2009).

This book reflects a different way of thinking, strategizing, and tackling the *very* diverse challenges faced in trying to help students make successful transitions from school to work. The essence of this difference can be expressed in two succinct sentences:

Bring the community into the classroom.

Take the classroom into the community.

Bringing the community into the classroom and taking the classroom into the community is about more than just making it real for students. It is about creating ways to evoke a personal response to the skills being taught and to the opportunities being provided. That is when learning will happen for all students!

Perhaps equally important is that when students are connected with the community of people and places important to their transition to employment (and further education), social capital is being developed. Social capital is the sum of the resources accumulated by an individual as he or she participates in a network of personal relationships of “mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Portes, 1998). For this population of students—most of whom have been marginalized in one way or another—building and accumulating social capital is critical for achieving access to and legitimacy in environments where they are relative newcomers (Parent-Johnson & Parent-Johnson, 2015).

Our premise is: Students who get connected to the broader community become engaged in the process of establishing and building social capital. By building this kind of social capital, they will gain the access, resources, and knowledge to function successfully in various environments with new expectations, roles, and rules that are different from those they have been accustomed to. As educators, our job is to facilitate this process and help students



develop these connections into a durable network—a network that provides the means to achieve a successful and sustainable transition to employment (and more).

In addition, it is important to recognize that the professional and practical efforts required to bring the community into the classroom and the classroom into the community are different from the kind of participation that many educators have engaged in. The process requires the creation of an individual small community or team approach to address the issues at hand.

This process can—and in many situations should—start small. Putting together a team of two or three action-oriented colleagues who, together, identify a set of students and a set of goals they want to achieve is a first step. The number of active team members, the set of goals to achieve, and the number of students impacted can continue to grow on the basis of the team's experiences with what works and what more is needed.

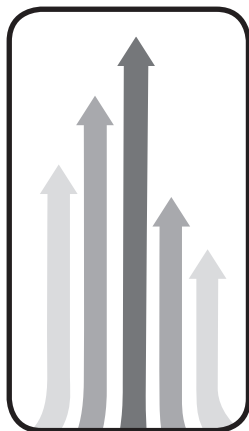
This book contains a wide-ranging set of resources and practical ideas for getting the job done. But it is figuring out which resources and ideas to apply and how the team wants to orchestrate them into coherent actions that make the difference in the postschool outcomes for youth with disabilities. Precisely because this book includes so many ideas, it is important to be thoughtful about the specific goals the team sets for itself. Be purposeful and selective about setting goals relative to advancing the skills and opportunities provided for students to make strong and successful transitions.

Based on the team's expertise, determine the scope or list of topics to address, the necessary skills related to those topics, and the experiences that team members can provide relative to using those skills to connect students with the real-world community. Again, as a team, decide what topics, skills, and connecting experiences should come first and which ones should follow (building on the earlier experiences). Be creative; try new things and build on the efforts and activities that are working for the team. Most important, do not be afraid to revisit the team's original thinking and let the team-based process and content evolve.

## UPCOMING CHAPTERS

Chapter 2 helps you think strategically about your plan to promote postschool employment. Chapter 3 continues the discussion of planning for employment by providing examples and tools, and it addresses interagency collaboration. Chapter 4 addresses the need to identify the passions of your students that lead to career exploration, and Chapter 5 focuses on developing employer relationships to provide employment opportunities based on student interests. Chapter 6 discusses how to provide support to students on the job to ensure skill development. Finally, Chapter 7 highlights some of the challenges and issues that may be experienced and provides effective strategies and solutions that other educators have suggested to help you move from “Can this individual work?” to “How can we support this individual in work?”

Chapter 7 also introduces the Implementing Transition Action Plan (ITAP)—offering readers a means to think through the transition process and concretely develop an action plan that provides guidance through the essential components of employment preparation and implementation, leading to truly integrated, competitive employment for students with disabilities.



## 2

# Strategies to Facilitate Effective Transitions

*Stacy is one of a few high school special education instructors who has started integrating classroom and community experiences related to transition from school to employment for her junior class students. She describes these new activities as “formative education, not informative education.” Stacy sees these experiences as initially being very foreign to young adults who are not used to participating at a personal level in class assignments. “This is often the first time many of my students have thought about most of these issues, let alone being asked to express themselves about them and begin to make ‘choices’ for themselves. It took them a while to realize that they ‘could’ learn how to do this stuff!” A particularly encouraging sign for Stacy was observing her students, after systematically analyzing and translating their IEPs into their own terms, begin to assert themselves in their IEP meetings and connect their learning goals with a job or future career beyond school.*

The teacher in the vignette above is directly and purposefully engaged in helping her students gain the knowledge, experience, and sense of self-efficacy needed to make the successful transition from a school- and family-based environment to a more independent and self-determined world of education, employment, and life in general.

Making this transition is a profound change for everyone. For most students, it is a venture into the completely unknown territory of independence and adulthood. Increasingly, this time of transition is being recognized as a distinct life phase and is often described in terms of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). As a life phase, this transition is understood and represented as an extended process—occurring between 14 and 26 years of age—rather than as a singular event at a given point in time.

For all students, this transition is a process that requires 1) a self-conscious exploration of themselves, 2) consistent guided practice at building the kinds of skills they will need to succeed, and 3) systematically structured opportunities for students to experience, test, and refine their own skills. For students with disabilities, creating and implementing this process is especially complicated—and necessary.

What follows in this chapter is a set of practical, field-tested strategies teachers can use to give their students the kind of knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to develop a positive and secure sense of their own capabilities to navigate this transition. But first, a point about the necessity of collaboration must be made.

## THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

The transition we are talking about is a personal and practical journey through a diverse ecology of educational, organizational, health, and employment systems. Despite the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004 (IDEIA) mandate that the “coordination of services with agencies involved in supporting the transition of students with disabilities to postsecondary activities” (20 U.S.C. 1411[d] § 300.704), these systems are *not* well integrated or coordinated.

It is clear that no one system, organization, or agency can be successful working on their own. One confirmation of this point comes from the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD):

The diverse and often complex needs of youth who are transitioning to adulthood cannot be met by any one institution or service system alone. Most youth are served in some way by at least a few institutions and some youth are served simultaneously by many—schools, community-based programs, and service providers specific to health and mental health, social services, disability, child welfare, and juvenile delinquency prevention” (NCWD, 2016).

As suggested here, effective collaboration among all stakeholders would seem to be the obvious answer to such a dilemma. Indeed, NCWD/Youth labors diligently to increase collaboration in an effort to improve the quality and coordination of services, reduce duplication of effort, and narrow the gaps that obviously exist between services.

Unfortunately, the research on interagency collaboration and/or collaboration at the inter-professional level as they relate to transition is limited to a description of essential elements and functions of effective collaboration. Nevertheless, it is crucial that we recognize and continue to address the fact that teachers (and any other professionals engaged in this process with these emerging adults) need the time and the opportunity to work with other professionals.

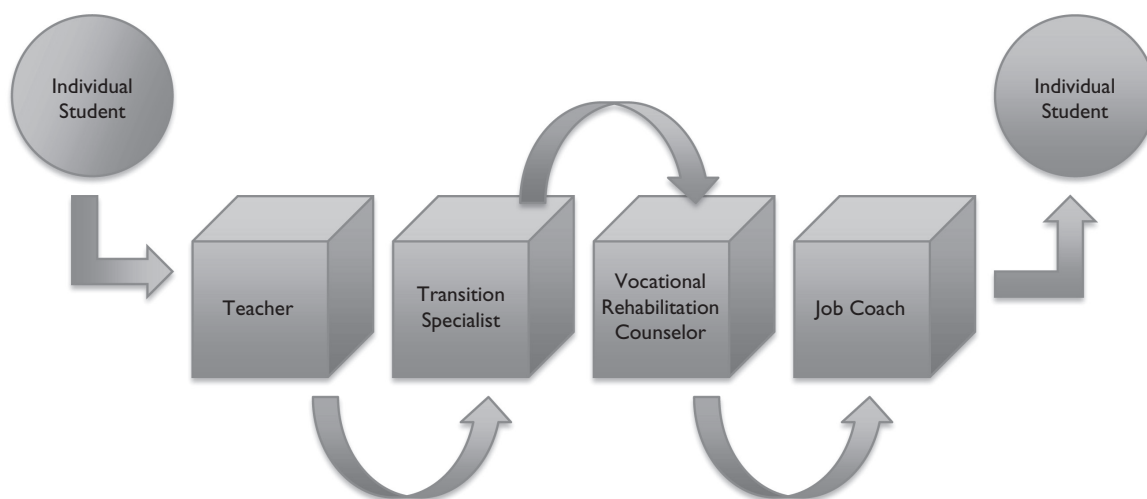
Again, it is important to recognize that the challenges associated with these transitions are, themselves, multidimensional. Further, individuals in transition are also multidimensional in the sense that they embody a unique set of skills and experiences and therefore require genuinely individualized needs and supports. It is equally important to recognize that each separate organization engaged in supporting the overall transition process focuses on and serves a limited set of those needs. As a result of this silo effect, most of our government agencies and human services organizations are seemingly compelled to operate in cooperation with or in tandem with one another (Tett, 2015). The result is that our human services agency/educational/employment process has been constructed such that each part of the system does its own job and then hands off the client or student to the next organization or agency in line (Figure 2.1).

The hand-off model assumes a level of coherence and integration across organizations that simply does not exist. It can be argued that this hand-off model, whereby each part of the system deals with a subset of the issues that face the person, becomes a big part of the challenge faced by the person who is making the transition.

Cooperation between and among these entities is not enough. Facilitating these transitions must be more than a cooperative venture. To be successful, those transitions must become a genuine team-based collaborative process. It is important to recognize that the students themselves need to be at the center of the transition process. Perhaps even more important, we must recognize that these students need to learn how to participate at the center of that process and believe in their own capacity to do so.

Clearly, schools and human services agencies serve legitimately different roles and functions with regard to the transition process. As such, they have constructed many specialized





**Figure 2.1.** Hand-off model.

roles and functions within their systems; they have even constructed their own working vocabulary of terms and concepts that reflect and constrain their particular perspectives and goals. And yet, each agency or organization serves the same population of students! The real challenge, however, is that students, families, teachers, transition coordinators, adult services professionals, and vocational rehabilitation counselors alike must learn to navigate this fragmented environment.

It is not effective for each of these professionals to do their individual job in relative isolation from one another. It is not effective to create a transition process whereby students are handed off from one system or organization to another (and sometimes back and forth). What is needed is a genuinely collaborative approach that can respond to the multidimensional quality of the transition process (Antosh & Association of University Centers on Disabilities, 2013; Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Landmark, Ju, & Zhang, 2010; Noonan, Erikson, & Morningstar, 2012).

The literature is rife with various models of collaboration. Regardless of the particular version elaborated, each approach attempts to bring disparate systems, and the professionals working in each system, together in such a way that processes and services change for the better. One particularly interesting and successful model of collaboration has been developed by John Kania and Mark Kramer. In a series of articles in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, they define collaboration in terms of collective impact initiatives. That is, as “long-term commitments by a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Their actions are supported by a shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, ongoing communication, and are staffed by an independent backbone organization” (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Significantly, Kania and Kramer describe a set of essential elements that are critical to achieving and sustaining a coherent “alignment of effort” that leads to successful outcomes.

The definition and key practices of collective impact articulated by Kania and Kramer focus on large-scale change initiated at the macro (that is, systems and organizations) level. This is certainly an important and valuable perspective that will be addressed later in this chapter. However, the principles of collective impact also have powerful application at the micro level. That is, collective impact can be achieved in the field even when a small team of

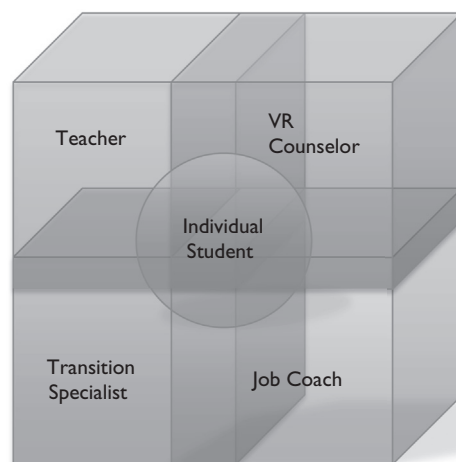
teachers, counselors, transition specialists, or other professionals work together to facilitate the successful transition of young adults with disabilities from education to employment or more education. What follows is a brief description of how to use the principles of collective impact to create and sustain a process that brings professionals together in a genuinely collaborative way that leads to more comprehensive and successful transitions for a common population of students and clients. This model of collaboration puts students/clients, as legitimate and capable participants, at the center of a mutually determined and responsive process (Figure 2.2).

## GROW YOUR OWN COLLECTIVE IMPACT TEAM

Again, teachers, paraprofessionals, special education teachers, administrators, rehabilitation counselors, transition coordinators, and many other professionals are all engaged in some specific capacity in the effort to help students achieve good employment outcomes. However, the comprehensive nature of the challenges inherent in the goal of transitioning to employment works against the likelihood that any one individual can be successful by doing things on their own. The constraints on each professional's time and their own predetermined and defined roles relative to the student they are trying to serve—create a fragmented and poorly coordinated process that is often ineffective.

Any individual professional trying to make a positive impact on the trajectory of a student's life will find it is genuinely helpful, even necessary, to develop a more team-based approach. A single teacher can begin this process by seeking out and gaining the willing participation of one or two professionals in some other organization(s) outside the school system that have some professional stake in the successful transition outcome of these students (e.g., a rehabilitation counselor, transition specialist, or job coach). That new team needs to create a collective impact perspective as it relates to the challenges of transition at hand. In order to do that, the team members need to know how to collaborate or order to achieve a collective impact.

The research done by Kania and Kramer (2011) demonstrates that collective impact initiatives require the cumulative force of five specific conditions in order for them to be successful: 1) a common agenda, 2) shared measurement systems, 3) mutually reinforcing activities, 4) continuous communication, and 5) backbone support organization.



**Figure 2.2.** Collective impact team model.

## COLLECTIVE IMPACT: A PRACTICAL APPLICATION

This section describes the five conditions and how they can be (and have been) applied in order to have a positive collective impact—in this case, on the goal of achieving the successful transition from school to employment for students with disabilities. This description is intended as a guide for how to initiate and sustain the conditions necessary to achieve a collective impact. As a guide, it is not intended to be complete and comprehensive. Rather, the content and activities suggested here are concrete, practical ways a small group of professionals can create an impact on the outcomes as students transition from school to employment that is greater than the sum of their individual efforts. View these materials as a resource and base from which to orchestrate your own collective impacts.

First, it is important to understand that creating a truly collaborative agenda and participating in mutually reinforcing activities are actually parts of a single, dynamic process. That is, a common agenda is the result of participating in mutually reinforcing activities. To begin the process, seek out and gain the willing participation of one or two other professionals from outside your own field. For example, a high school special education teacher might consider inviting a vocational rehabilitation counselor, a job coach, and/or an employment specialist to become team participants. Team members need to determine among themselves what their overall goals will be. Create a set of goals all members share. For example, which students do you want to focus on? Do you want to improve the overall self-determination skills of each student? Or, are there particular skills that you deem to be most important for students to improve or perfect? Discuss the types of skills and activities you want your students to accomplish. This represents the scope or range of the skills and activities you and your team want to achieve together with your students.

Curriculum developers often talk about the scope and sequence aspects of course content. This conversation is critical for the collective impact team to have. Developing the scope of the course content simply means determining what lessons and skills should be taught and when. Developing the sequence of activities of those lessons means determining when and in what order those lessons and skills should be taught. Drafting and working to perfect the scope and sequence of lessons and experiences in providing transition services is something that must be done by all the collective impact team members together. Developing an effective collective impact team requires both time and practice. Recognize that this is going to require at least a modest time commitment from all team members. Questions to address include: What are the key lessons and skills students need? How many and what kind of experiential learning events does the team believe will advance the students' functional skills and understanding of the worlds of work and/or education they have ahead of them? What other skills and experiences does the team deem critical to this goal? What lessons and experiences within and beyond the classroom will support that learning?

Make some initial decisions about these issues. Then begin your move toward a common agenda. A common agenda is more than a set of abstract goals that is mutually agreed upon at the initial stages of working together. It is not something that is achieved in the abstract. A common agenda is a shared vision that emerges and continues to evolve over time. It comes about as a result of spending time together—participating in an intentional and purposeful way in one another's professional roles and activities. It is the outcome of the work you do in terms of mutually reinforcing activities. Thus, the scope and sequence of your cumulative program will be subject to change as the team learns what is most effective for them.

A *comprehensive* set of lessons or topics that addresses the multiple skills and activities students would benefit from relative to making effective transitions is included here. The lessons and topics are arranged as four units with a specific content and sequence that represents best practice as it has emerged in other transition-focused educational settings. The units were developed and implemented as a semester-long curriculum for a class of 10 to 12 high-school-age students. They are recommended as a starting point from which your own team can decide what lessons and topics you want to address with your own students. Each unit has a specific theme and its own unique *guiding question* that should be introduced to the students and repeated on a routine basis. Within any given unit the number of topics and activities you address will depend upon the time you have with your students and how much time you devote to any individual topic.

## Unit 1: Discovering My Own Path

*Guiding Question:* What does it mean to transition, and how can I understand myself in those terms?

Suggested topics and activities:

- Define the concept and common experience of transitions.
- Describe the particular transition from school to work and what it involves.
- Introduce the members of the transition team.
- Discuss general substance of IEP with each student individually.
- Use specific tools/lessons to help students identify their strengths.
- Use specific tools/lessons to help students identify and explore their interests.
- Discuss and help students understand the financial benefits of work.
- Enhance each student's disability awareness, e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), IDEIA, and their rights.
- Explore and enhance individual effective communication skills (e.g., FACTS; see Figure 2.5).

## Unit 2: Charting My Own Course

*Guiding Question:* Where do I want to go in life and what steps can I take that will help get me there?

Suggested topics and activities:

- Discuss life values and how they can work to guide our direction in life.
- Discuss and help students create their own individual mission statements.
- Discuss the critical importance of setting goals.
- Use specific goal-setting lessons to help students learn how to set goals.
- Discuss the importance of the *student's own role* in pursuing their goals.
- Discuss and teach students the use of short-term and long-term goals.
- Use specific tools/lessons to teach and practice time management skills, including learning how to prioritize their time into a day and a week.

### Unit 3: Taking Real Action

*Guiding Question:* How can I best share information about myself and build my own team that helps support me in reaching my goals?

Suggested topics and activities:

- Discuss and teach how to become a self-advocate!
- Teach and facilitate each student to write a basic resume.
- Teach students how to interview in ways that communicate your strengths.
- PRACTICE interviewing.
- Teach students how to handle tough personal questions.
- Demonstrate and practice filling out job applications.
- Demonstrate and practice the art of networking.
- Anticipate and plan for transportation issues.

### Unit 4: Getting to My Destination

*Guiding Question:* How can I get and keep the job I want and stay on track for reaching my goals?

Suggested topics and activities:

- Discuss what a dream job might look like.
- Teach and practice networking with people who do the work you want to do.
- Job shadow people who do the kind of work you want to do
- Discuss what community resources and agencies exist to support students.
- Bring two or three employers in to share what they value in their employees.
- Celebrate each student's success!

As part of the scope and sequence process, it is important for the collective impact team to develop a calendar of these kinds of activities, especially those that are going to include students. It is an invaluable planning tool that keeps all team members organized and on the same page relative to what each member needs to do to make things happen. The calendar is useful not only for planning purposes but also to help students see the logic behind these kinds of explorations. It is important for students to see that they are building toward a coherent package of experiences and skills that will benefit them in the long run.

One additional tool that will become a valuable asset to both teachers and students alike is to create a lesson plan for most topics that are chosen to be addressed. It takes a bit of work on the part of at least one team member, but creating a lesson plan provides a clear focus and objective to each lesson. For example, see the lesson plan document shown in Figure 2.3.

Perhaps the most effective strategy to achieve a truly common agenda and set of practices that focus on individual goals is to create opportunities for students to act as participant-observers of the official roles that each of the team members perform. For example, teachers can create opportunities to bring vocational rehabilitation counselors into the classroom as participant-observers when information is communicated and the skills appropriate for



# Lesson Plan Form

## Guiding Question

**Example:** What does it mean to be “SELF-determined,” and how can I begin to understand myself in those terms?

---



---

## Focus Question

**Example:** What students and staff should I expect to work with during this course, and what are their roles in my education?

---



---

## Objective

**Example:** Students and staff share general information about themselves in an effort to become aware of the people involved in the class.

---



---

## Description

**Example:** This lesson is designed to help students learn about themselves, each other, and the staff. They will become acquainted with the other people who will be in the classroom on a daily basis. Students have the opportunity to identify commonalities with other students. Formal and informal assessment material will also be completed by the student and/or guardian to assess levels of self-efficacy and determination.

---



---

## Classroom Activities

---



---



---

## Review and Reflect

- What did you learn?
- Where do we go from here?

## Wrap Up and Teacher Notes

---



---



---

## Looking Ahead

Date of agency staff visit (Vocational rehabilitation, workforce center, life skills staff): \_\_\_\_\_

Date and name of guest speakers: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and location of off-campus site visits: \_\_\_\_\_

**Figure 2.3.** Lesson plan form.



transitioning to the workplace or some form of postsecondary education are taught. At a separate class session, introduce the counselors and ask them to describe their roles and what they can do for students. As a team, participate in activities with the students that involve all or combinations of team members.

Conversely, create opportunities for teachers to become participant-observers of the vocational rehabilitation counselors as they function on the job. For example, teachers can visit a counselor's office to better understand their colleague's role, practices, and work environment. The point is that it is important to know each other's worlds. An interesting and valuable follow-along activity to this initial action can then be a student and/or class experience whereby the counselor hosts a student or the class in a hands-on experience of the office. There, students can have a face-to-face encounter with the people and practices that are there to serve their interests.

A teacher can bring a counselor or adult services professional into the classroom to talk about employment options, to inform students about or perhaps initiate student enrollment in services. Over time, the counselor or adult services professional and the students become more familiar with one another; each learns more personal aspects about the other. In this way, the all-important element of trust between counselor and students is developed. Collaboratively, the teacher and counselor can begin thinking about how they might match individual students to different job opportunities, how certain skills might be taught to the class of students, and how specific skills could be nurtured in specific students. Together, they might even coordinate at least a few students with real job exploration opportunities that allow all parties to see what makes a good fit for that student and what the student might need for support in order to succeed in that opportunity.

Each student who participates in this activity or in any other off-campus activity should be required to complete some kind of assessment or evaluation of their experiences in the field. Completing a simple, concrete document (Figure 2.4) helps them think about and articulate a meaningful, personal connection between what they saw or heard and what they think about it. It also provides them a record of their experience and thoughts that they can use to compare jobs in terms of pros and cons and that can be included in a transition portfolio.

The experiences that students encounter as part of those job exploration opportunities should definitely become part of structured discussions in later classes. That is, as a group, students should be asked to share their experience and to consciously explore their experience and what meaning it has for them now and in the future. This same kind of purposeful site-visit activity can also be applied to visits to local community colleges and businesses.

Over time, given the opportunity to be participant-observers in one another's worlds, not only does each professional learn more about each other's roles and practices, but there is also a kind of hybridization of roles. What emerges from these opportunities is a new shared experience and a common shared language to articulate and facilitate transition practices for both groups of professionals. Transition practices become team based and comanaged rather than a set of institutionalized hand-offs.

One of the important changes to emerge from observing other systems, particularly for special education teachers, rehabilitation counselors, and transition specialists is the change in mindset these professionals often have as a result of working in a more personal and holistic way with students. In the everyday work world, it is not uncommon for professionals to have high student-staff ratios, extensive caseloads, and heavy workloads in general. As hardworking professionals, they are compelled to focus their efforts on discrete aspects of a student's life. While this is a professional and practical necessity, what can and does get lost



## Field Observation

☐ Business
 ☐ Educational
 ☐ Training Site
 ☐ Housing Community

Place: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	Like	OK	Do Not Like	Comments
The <b>Place</b>				
The <b>People:</b> Supervisors/administrators Coworkers/classmates (Use comments section to add contact information)				
The <b>Programs:</b> Work/educational				They are:
<b>Overall Impression</b>				Because:

Questions I have about this job, training, or program:

---



---



---

Possible questions to ask:

- It would be nice if this place had \_\_\_\_\_. Does it? Why or why not?
- What are the costs?
- How long will the training take?
- When could I move in?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Figure 2.4.** Field observation form.



is the sense of that student as a whole person. When these same professionals are allowed the opportunity to teach a course that addresses the whole person—in classes of 10 students that meet three times per week for a semester—the teachers and the counselors are, themselves, changed. The experiences they have working with students in this more whole-person way coalesces into a time of powerful and gratifying professional growth.

## INTEGRATING BEST PRACTICES

There are a myriad of best practices that teachers, paraprofessionals, special education teachers and administrators, transition coordinators, rehabilitation counselors, and many other professionals can and should adopt in order to help students achieve good employment outcomes. This section offers a set of key teaching and learning principles specific to teaching students with disabilities and provides examples of how these strategies have been operationalized and integrated into everyday practice. The key principles are 1) focusing on self-efficacy, including modeling, role playing, and elaborated feedback; 2) knowing how you and your students learn; 3) learning as a social and guided activity; and 4) using Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

For over 20 years, there has been a concerted effort in special education to improve the self-determination skills of students with disabilities (Mithaug, 1993, 1996; Mithaug, Agran, Martin, & Wehmeyer, 2003; Wehmeyer, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2006; Wehmeyer, Yeager, Bolding, Agran, & Hughes, 2003). A strong case has been made that improving the attitudes and abilities, including self-advocacy, choice making, problem solving, self-awareness, and self-efficacy, of students with disabilities will improve overall life outcomes for students. As a result, scores of classroom curricula and larger programmatic efforts have focused on the development of self-determination skills. Identifying and improving upon self-determination skills is now common practice. It has been and still is recognized as best practice. However, what is often routinely assumed, and therefore overlooked in the content and practice related to self-determination, is attention to the sense of self-efficacy many of these students have. It is argued here that rather than being one of the elements subsumed within the model of self-determination, self-efficacy must be understood as a prerequisite to learning and achieving a self-determined life.

Self-efficacy is the sense of being capable of actually doing what is expected. Bandura defines self-efficacy as “one’s perceived capabilities for learning or performing tasks at designated levels” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). However, many students with disabilities do not have a strong sense of self-efficacy; that is, they do not see themselves as capable learners. It is very unlikely that adolescent students will persist in trying to learn any activity when feeling incompetent is their experience and their expectation. Given this essential perception of self, it is critical that addressing and then building a sense of self-efficacy in students needs to happen before teaching self-determination skills (Pajares & Urdan, 2006).

It is important to recognize that self-efficacy is not a generalized sense of confidence or self-esteem. Self-efficacy is a person’s perception of himself or herself as being capable of learning or doing a particular task. The important focus, then, is on finding ways to support and enhance students’ experience of being capable of doing the tasks that are asked of them. When it comes to learning and work environments, three teaching strategies—when used routinely and over time—are especially effective: 1) modeling, 2) role playing, and 3) elaborated feedback. Students with disabilities, in particular, need to 1) see or hear models of thinking and doing a task, 2) get real-time practice at doing the task, and 3) receive high-quality feedback on their performance.

## Modeling

To model a skill or activity in the sense used here means to demonstrate the skill or activity while you literally *think aloud*. In practical terms, this means 1) describing the skill or activity in some basic detail, 2) stating why the skill is useful, 3) explaining when the skill is useful, and 4) performing the skill yourself from start to finish while sharing your own thinking out loud. The purpose is to demonstrate, out loud, your own thinking, your own problem solving, and even your own stops and starts as you perform the task. This demonstration is an out-loud model of the particular skill your students are expected to learn—against which they can compare and gauge their own performance.

For example, an invaluable strategic learning lesson was developed by faculty at the Center for Research on Learning at the University of Kansas (Lancaster & Johnson, 2005) on how to perform effectively during a job interview. The lesson involves teaching students five key steps to achieving a good interview and how to perform them. The five elements are 1) **F**ace the person, 2) **A**ctivate eye contact, 3) **C**heck expressions, 4) **T**alk clearly, and 5) **S**tay calm. There is a value-added aspect to this particular lesson in that it has its own acronym. That is, each piece of the lesson on good interviewing skills has its own phrase to describe it. The first letter from each phrase forms the acronym FACTS that helps students to more easily recall the entire set of actions they should do in order to perform effectively in any interview.

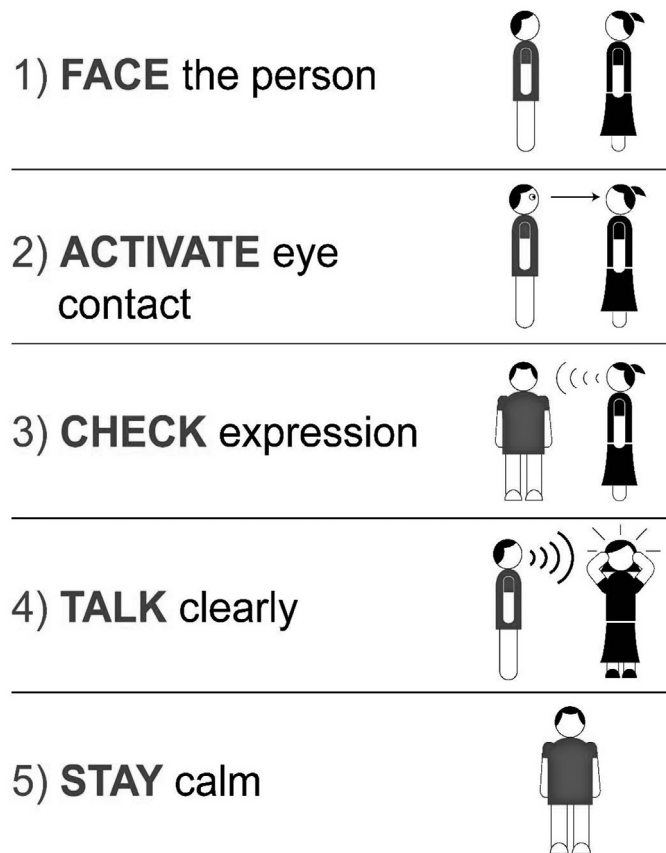
Modeling this lesson, the teacher chooses a student to sit across from him or her and plays the role of interviewee by having the student read a few predetermined questions commonly asked in an interview. In response to the questions, the teacher performs each step of the FACTS strategy—sometimes in a positive way (e.g., facing the person and making eye contact) and sometimes in a poor way (e.g., mumbling, looking out the window, and/or acting very anxious). All the while, the teacher can sustain a running commentary on which step is being modeled and why he or she is acting in a particular way.

Interestingly, the FACTS routine started out as a strategy for learning effective interviewing skills. However, in many classes it has become the standard of practice for any lesson in which students are asked to communicate directly with one another (i.e., it can become a class norm). For example, teachers may create a poster-size illustration of the FACTS routine and hang it on the classroom wall for use all year round (Figure 2.5).

Remember, as a part of any modeling activity, the *think aloud* strategy is an invaluable element for facilitating effective learning in nearly all settings. It has an infinite number of applications and should be considered a standard practice for teaching and learning.

## Role Playing by Students

Many people learn best when given the opportunity to try things out in a hands-on way. For that reason, the value of practicing/performing an activity or abstract lesson is hard to overestimate. It is one thing to hear a lecture on a subject or to read directions on how to do something; it is quite another to actually try to do it. For most people, hearing, reading, and doing is an ideal combination of activities that serves to optimize the effectiveness of learning. Consider the FACTS interviewing skills lesson. The FACTS lesson should first be described to students in terms of its five elements; followed by a brief discussion of why, when, and where this skill is useful; and then modeled for the students. The culminating action, however, is to have students role-play this lesson. In particular, students should take turns playing three different roles: interviewee, interviewer, and observer. Being the interviewee gives a student practice at responding to the kinds of real questions they are most likely to face in an



**Figure 2.5.** FACTS poster.

interview process and helps them learn to frame and express their responses in more precise ways. Then, by doing a role reversal and playing the role of the interviewer, these same students can gain valuable new insights. Being the interviewer puts students on the other side of the conversation; they often discover something about what it looks and feels like to have someone respond to their questions and what can come through as effective or ineffective communication. Finally, taking a turn at being an impartial observer while two other people perform the interview provides the opportunity for the student to see the whole dynamic of give and take between the interviewer and interviewee. They can then offer their comments in an effort to give helpful feedback to the interviewees.

While this can be a fun activity, one additional point is necessary to make. With practice over time, students will become increasingly articulate and comfortable in their performances. It is important to recognize the necessity of providing the right environment for performing role plays. Regardless of their role, every performer needs to feel safe. All performers need to be respectful of one another and the roles they are performing. Only then will their comfort and skill grow.

### Elaborated Feedback

All students need feedback on their performance. Feedback is especially important to students with a diminished sense of self-efficacy. For that reason, providing high-quality feedback is

a key strategy for supporting not just students' comprehension of a particular lesson but also their perception of themselves as a capable learner.

We are all familiar with the concept of feedback. Providing feedback, both formally and informally, has become a common practice in everyday life, both personal and professional. Retailers and service providers often ask us to provide feedback in the form of telephone or online surveys. Colleagues and supervisors solicit feedback from us as well. Certainly, providing feedback has long been an integral part of any teaching and learning environment. However, not all feedback is of equal value and quality. In an effort to understand and refine the structure and practice of good-quality feedback, the Center for Research on Learning at the University of Kansas researched and developed a process called *elaborated feedback* (Kline, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1991) as part of a set of tools that demonstrate effectiveness with learners with special needs.

Elaborated feedback has a few key elements, each one of which is important to consider. In essence, elaborated feedback means 1) providing a one-on-one meeting with the student, 2) offering at least three positive statements about the student's performance, 3) identifying not the number of errors but the *type* of error the student made, 4) giving examples of the correct performance regarding the error type, 5) describing how to avoid the error in the future, and 6) having the student say back what he or she just heard.

## Learn How You and Your Students Learn

The ways and means by which people learn are highly individualized. There are valid and meaningful ways to understand learning style, and it is much more than an abstract label. It can be understood quite literally as the way individuals perceive information, how they process the information, and what they do with that information. People develop their learning style over time and become comfortable using it. It represents their default method of learning. That is, because an individual's learning style represents his or her comfort zone, it is where he or she prefers to begin the activity of learning something new.

While the concept of learning styles is not scientifically validated, it is certainly a useful and fun way for students and teachers to engage in valuable conversations about how each of us approach learning new things—regardless of the context. There are a number of instruments that can be used to understand how a person learns. One instrument especially useful in secondary and postsecondary educational settings is the Kolb Learning Style Inventory (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). It asks individuals to rank their preferences to a set of questions that address learning situations. From their composite scores, the scale identifies students as one of four styles of learners, X, Y, Z, or A. Each learning style is articulated as having a particular set of strengths and limitations that tend to surface or get expressed in different learning situations. No one style fits, or is effective, in all situations.

Another online instrument out of the University of North Carolina, the *Index of Learning Styles* (Felder & Silverman, 2002), provides an indication of a student's learning preferences by identifying preferences on four dimensions: 1) active/reflective, 2) sensing/intuitive, 3) visual/verbal, and 4) sequential/global. A student's learning style profile provides the student (and you) with a list of possible strengths as well as tendencies that might lead to difficulty in academic settings. A note of caution: Findings should not be used to determine a student's suitability or unsuitability for a particular subject or career goal. As with any learning style tool, the results should not be overinterpreted but should be used as a guide. If a student does not agree with the findings, trust his or her judgment over the instrument results.

Clearly, knowing how individual students learn is invaluable to any teacher. However, one of the most easily overlooked parts in the learning–teaching equation is how you, the teacher, learn. How you teach is going to be strongly influenced by your own learning style. For example, your starting point and the strategies you use in your opening approach to a new concept or subject often come from your own learning comfort zone. Your learning style reflects how you perceive and process the information you are presenting. In other words, you tend to teach the way you learn best. This is why it is critical for you to know your own learning style. Reflect on how your style influences not only the methods you use to teach a lesson but also what you value in terms of how the students demonstrate their competency in a subject.

The overall message to students is that it is good to know and use their own learning style but also to be capable of developing and adapting to other styles of learning as well. The message for the teacher is to create learning environments where all learning styles are valued and each learner is given the opportunity to at least begin any learning activity in a way that fits his or her individual learning style.

Regardless of the means by which each student's learning style is determined, a very useful strategy is to create learning teams where each team comprises students who represent different learning styles. Provide each team a particular problem to solve or address. Within teams, each student is expected to bring the strength of his or her learning style to the problem-solving process and to consciously observe the strengths of other team members during the activity/discussion. Learning through consciously observing and participating with one another in this team approach validates students' individual learning styles and exposes them to the strengths of other approaches to learning.

## **Learning as a Social and Guided Activity**

It is important to remember that we are social beings and that learning as a part of our social interactions with others is a continuous experience. The real challenge faced by a teacher is how to organize team-based activities in such a way that students have a structure and process they will actually use. Students can, indeed, be taught how to function effectively together as part of a small group or team. They can learn that by working together, they often accomplish more and better things than they would have been able to do alone. To be successful, a team-based learning process must be simple and straightforward. And it must be practiced until it becomes a matter of routine.

Palincsar, Magnusson, Cutter, and Vincent (2002) developed a team-based strategy that relies on a guided-inquiry model of teaching and learning. Operationalizing its most basic steps, the guided-inquiry model contains six key elements: 1) The teacher introduces a subject or topic for the day and asks a question that focuses on some key aspect of the subject; working within small groups, students 2) frame the question in their own words; 3) look for evidence that, in their minds at least, deals with the question at hand; 4) use their evidence to develop an answer to the question; 5) report to the whole class what their particular group has determined to be the answer to the question—including the evidence they used to support their answer; and 6) respond respectfully to the first group's conclusions, agreeing or disagreeing with them and indicating why.

One attempt to integrate several of the themes discussed here is represented in Box 2.1. This outline blends the key elements of modeling with the process of guided inquiry whereby the teacher becomes the facilitator of a community of practice that, with time and patient practice, is progressively more student driven.



**Box 2.1** A Teaching Model for Student-Driven Learning and Community

## Teacher Driven

- I. Describe
- II. Model
- III. Practice
- IV. Guided-inquiry process—in response to a focus question, the teacher facilitates small groups of students to
  - A. Take a position/complete a task
  - B. Specify what supports the group's position/task
  - C. Defend the group's position (aloud to others)
- V. Over time, this learning dynamic generates a community of practice that is student driven; the teacher acts as facilitator
- VI. Individual products and actions

**Develop and/or Use Universally Designed Methods and Materials**

The racial, cultural, language, and ability diversity found in classrooms and other learning environments today is greater than ever before, and that diversity is increasing exponentially. To be successful in everyday reality, teachers must match that diversity with their own diversity of methods and materials they use to engage and teach students. Remember, there is no single way to learn and demonstrate competency of understanding and performance.

It is now imperative that a universal design approach be applied to curricula, teaching, and classrooms. That means processes and products need to be designed and delivered “that are usable by people with the widest possible range of functional capabilities” (Assistive Technology Act of 1998, 29 U.S.C. 3002[a][17]).

This mandate has been embodied in three key principles that are the core elements of UDL: 1) multiple means of representation to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge; 2) multiple means of expression to provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know; and 3) multiple means of engagement to tap into learners' interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn.

When developing classroom materials and methods, it is critical to understand that diverse materials need to be developed—all of which address the same lesson and have the same goals for learning. Some students may access the lesson content and demonstrate competency in having learned it with one type or combination of materials better than another. For example, visual/graphic representation of concepts is often more accessible than verbal/textual content to students with disabilities.

One critical but often overlooked and/or underutilized strategy for universalizing a classroom and lesson content is the development of a glossary of key terms that is specifically related to the lesson being taught. The glossary should identify critical terms, define them in everyday English and any other language needed, and include some graphic representation or illustration of the term if possible (Figure 2.5 presented earlier in the chapter is an example of this). One point of emphasis is important here. Words or concepts seldom have a simple, direct translation from one language to another. It is a mistake to assume there is common understanding for particular concepts or terms that can be applied for all students. Cultural and/or intellectual differences prevail. An effective glossary of key terms should be developed that includes symbols and/or synonyms for each word or concept listed. When necessary, it should also be multilingual. Finally, each glossary needs to be developed and made publicly available (e.g., make it a poster) to all students. In fact, working with students to create this glossary can be a valuable class activity itself.

## Collective Impact at the Organizational Level

Public-private, multistakeholder efforts to cooperate with one another in an earnest effort to solve a problem or at least address a significant issue have existed for decades. Yet, as Kania and Kramer (2011) indicate, the history of the vast majority of these initiatives suggests they have met with limited success. In general, these partnering cooperative initiatives routinely exhibit many of the following shortcomings:

- They are often targeted too narrowly and do not engage a sufficiently comprehensive set of the affected stakeholders.
- While participants may organize around a particular theme or goal, they wrongly assume that all participants have a common understanding of what that theme or goal actually means.
- The cooperation/collaboration is ad hoc, and emphasis is most often focused simply on information sharing and particular short-term actions.
- Communication among participants is limited in scope and frequency.
- Participants do not adopt an evidence-based plan of action and/or develop a shared means for measuring outcomes/impact.
- There is limited infrastructure to support the work and/or initiate accountability for results.

The same five elements needed to create a successful collective impact that were introduced earlier in this chapter can be applied here—only this time at the macro level. Again, the necessary conditions include having 1) a common agenda, 2) mutually reinforcing activities, 3) continuous communication, 4) shared measurement systems, and 5) backbone support organization(s).

This section describes how the five conditions can be addressed at the macro level—that is, at the large, organizational level relative to the work these organizations have in relation to a common set of students whom they are serving. It is a description of the kinds of activities that can lead to the development of a positive collective impact on the goal of supporting the effective transition of students from school to employment—at the organizational level. As in the earlier sections, this description is intended to act as a guide for how to initiate and sustain the conditions necessary to achieve a collective impact. As a guide, it is not intended to be complete and comprehensive. Rather, these activities suggest important ways a group of organizations can move beyond cooperation to actually creating a collective impact on the transition of students from school to employment that is greater than the sum of the efforts made by their individual organizations.

Again, it is important to understand that creating a truly collaborative agenda that has a collective impact comes about when groups create a common agenda that is the result of participating in mutually reinforcing activities. It is far more than basic cooperation.

Earlier, it was described how a single professional can begin this process by seeking out and gaining the willing participation of another professional in some other organization outside the school system who has some stake in the successful transition outcome of these students (e.g., a rehabilitation counselor). Moving beyond that, organizations can collectively develop a more systemic response to the same goals. How this might happen is discussed next.

## Create a Truly Common Agenda

Perhaps the single most significant action to take to address the challenge of navigating this terrain of separate, diverse, and specialized organizations is to create opportunities for key professionals (i.e., teachers, transition coordinators, vocational counselors, and others) who are engaged in the transition process to 1) develop a more complete understanding of one another and the separate institutions they work in and 2) create a common vision for these students that includes a shared set of steps/actions and a shared vocabulary of terms to articulate the vision.

This means bringing together a group that includes key decision makers, that is, people holding positions of authority, from the various organizations and agencies relevant to supporting successful transitions. This group must also include representatives of those agencies who are actually putting the team vision into practice—the teachers, transition specialists, vocational counselors, and so on. It will be the responsibility of this second set of representatives to report back the activities and results of everyday work in the field to the whole team. That is, they provide a kind of feedback loop with regard to successes and failures or shortcomings of everyday practices related to the model of what the larger group has developed. Changes to the model, if deemed necessary by the larger group, will be developed on the basis of feedback coming to them from the field.

All organizations have a standard of practice, a set of rules and regulations within which they operate, and a time line for achieving the actions related to the goals of their organization. They also have their own vocabulary to communicate their rules and activities. It is critical for all organizations working together not only to articulate their own rules and vocabularies to one another but also to make certain that there is a shared understanding of them. Once all participating organizations have articulated their relevant individual goals, rules, and regulations to the other groups, they have to come to an out-loud articulation of what they have as a goal for their work. For example, it is one thing for a group of organizations to recognize that they are all part of a generalized process of helping students successfully transition from school to work—but what transition actually means to each organization can be quite different. Those differences need to be discussed until a truly shared meaning of transition has been articulated to the satisfaction of all members of the group. This seemingly small act is critical because it ultimately determines how a successful transition will be recognized and measured.

## Establish a Shared Measurement System

It is vital for this team to define, in advance of work in the field, how they want to measure the success of their efforts. Is success to be measured in terms of employment outcomes? What defines employment, and when is that outcome to be measured? Or, is success to be measured in terms of skill development—say, for example, in terms of students becoming more self-determined? If so, can a pre- and postmeasure of self-determination be administered? Which one? When? By whom? These are important questions that need to be identified and answered. The participation—not only of the students, teachers, and counselors, but of the organizations themselves—may be predicated on the outcomes to those measures.

## Participate in Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Participate as a whole collective impact team in the marketing of its vision and activities. This means that high-level organization members find and/or create opportunities to meet the public—students, parents, and other organizations—to share the vision, the goals, and the



practices of their efforts. It is this listening to and participating with one another that reinforces the common message and outcomes they have come together to create and support.

### **Maintain Continuous Communication**

Finally, it is suggested that for collective impact activities to be most effective, regular meetings with representatives from all levels of participation should occur. For example, a broad-reaching transition project in Wichita, Kansas, brought together the state Kansas Rehabilitation Services, the Kansas Health Policy Authority, and the Wichita Public School District #259. Meetings that included director-level administrators from all three organizations—as well as representatives of the teachers and rehabilitation counselors working in the field/classroom—were held monthly. This was seen as the best way to ensure a consistent and reliable method of keeping all participants, regardless of their role, in step with one another. In general, team members must communicate routinely and in such a way that they inform one another about what is actually going on in the field and in each organization. Clearly, sometimes what is needed in the field requires decisions and actions at the organizational level in order to improve practices and outcomes. Similarly, if the organizations have rules and regulations that dictate activities in a formal way, those requirements will inform practices in the field. Regardless of which level is the focus or the determinant of the practices in the field, the point remains that these are all attempts at collective actions. A minimum requirement for the collective impact team as a whole should be monthly meetings. Some members of the team should anticipate meeting more frequently than that.

Get students with disabilities ready for integrated, competitive employment with this practical guide, a must for transition coordinators, special educators, and employment specialists. This book embraces **Employment First** in its approach to career planning, which emphasizes integrated, competitive employment as the first and preferred option for all people, regardless of their disability.

You'll find **tried-and-true strategies** for helping students navigate each step of their transition, from beginning the early stages of career preparation (as young as Grade 7) to exploring job opportunities with local businesses and sustaining employment. Discover how to

- Put together a **-collective impact team-** to support students' transition to employment
- Apply **four recommended practices** to help students achieve good employment outcomes
- Implement a **person-centered planning process** that puts the student in the driver's seat
- Help students identify their **passions, interests, and learning styles**
- Support students in exploring careers by using **online tools and internship opportunities**
- Facilitate successful **collaboration with adult services agencies**
- **Work with your local business community** to connect students with potential employers
- Provide students with the **supports they need for success** on the job

You'll also get invaluable tools like the **Implementing Transition Action Plan (ITAP)**, a step-by-step quick-guide to help you plan, individualize, and implement the transition process described in the book. With this expertly organized guidebook, you'll empower your students to pursue the career of their choice—and provide them with the tools they'll need for long-term success in the workplace.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Wendy Parent-Johnson, Ph.D.,

is Executive Director of the Sonoran UCEDD, a Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities and Professor in the Department of Family & Community Medicine at the College of Medicine, University of Arizona.

**Laura A. Owens, Ph.D.,** is a professor at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee in the Department of Teaching and Learning and President of TransCen, Inc. (TCI), an organization that provides employment services to individuals with disabilities. **Richard Parent-Johnson, Ph.D.,** a sociologist, retired as a senior research associate at the Center for Disabilities in the Sanford School of Medicine, University of South Dakota.

• P A U L • H •  
**BROOKES**  
PUBLISHING C<sup>o</sup>®  
[www.brookespublishing.com](http://www.brookespublishing.com)

#### Includes more than a dozen tools and forms:

- Implementing Transition Action Plan (ITAP)
- Job Observation Assessment Form
- Employment Proposal
- Internship Business Partner Agreement
- Worksite Analysis
- Employee Progress Report
- and more!

“This book reflects optimism for employment outcomes for students with disabilities as well as the importance of student-centered approaches that result in post-school employment. It is full of practical strategies for making that happen.”

—Richard Luecking, Ed.D., Center for Transition and Career Innovation, University of Maryland

“An outstanding handbook on how to transition from school into employment...the guide that every high school special education teacher should have on their desk for planning and implementation.”

—Paul Wehman, Ph.D.,  
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond

The Brookes  
Transition to  
Adulthood Series

#### The Brookes Transition to Adulthood Series

This book is part of The  
Brookes Transition to

Adulthood Series—short, research-to-practice guidebooks developed for all professionals helping young people with disabilities lead successful, fulfilling adult lives.

ISBN-13: 978-1-59857-358-9  
ISBN-10: 1-59857-358-6



9 781598 573589 >