The Art of Possibility
Seamless Transition from School to Work and Adult Life

Richard Luecking
TransCen, Inc.
WORK IS GOOD!
What we believe:

There’s a job for everyone who wants one, regardless of disability, need for support, or economic vitality of their community.
What we know

• Work experience is valuable for all categories of youth with disabilities

• Youth with any category of disability can perform work that is valuable to employers
What we know

- Successful high school work experience = higher adult employment rates

- Continued post-school support is necessary for some categories of youth in order to sustain employment success
What is possible?

- Work experience success for all categories of students receiving secondary special education
- Post secondary employment success for nearly all categories of youth exiting special education
What is the norm?

- Sporadic or episodic work experiences during secondary school
- Poor post-school employment success, especially for:
  - Youth with developmental disabilities
  - Youth with significant support needs
Transitions Scenarios

- Youth exits school with no work experience
- Youth exits school with work experience, but no post-school supports available
- Youth exits school with work experience and seamless linkage to adult system supports
Why the disparity?

Educational and adult service systems are seldom in synch

• entitlement vs. eligibility is only part of the story

• Early, pre-exit collaboration between systems is not common

• Resource integration is rare
Minimizing the disparity

- Willingness to “blend” and “braid” systemic resources
One proven approach

Transition Service Integration for youth with significant support needs
Transition Service Integration

Target Group

- individuals with moderate to profound intellectual disabilities, many of whom also have a secondary sensory or physical disability

Partnerships

- Local school district, VR, state DD agency, adult service provider/hybrid agency (and Intermediary)
Transition Service Integration

• Transition instruction entirely community-based transition

• Paid employment, integrated workplaces

• Non-work activities in normalized settings
Transition Service Integration

- Individual choice of schedules and employment options
- Adult agency employment specialists working with school personnel
- Cost-sharing resources of school system, state VR, state funded DD agencies
Transition Service Integration

Intended Outcomes

- No Service Disruption: first day after school exit looks the same as last day of school
  - Same jobs
  - Same community activities
  - Same staff support
Kyndal at Sinai Hospital

- Loves to be with people
- Good interpersonal skills
- Has job in telecommunications department
Colin

- Enjoys people
- Basic reading skills
- Number recognition
- Likes to use his hands
- Interested in retail
- Likes to be organized
- Physically strong
- Likes to move around
What these are NOT

- Unpaid work experiences
- Jobs they later gave up when they left school
- Jobs they obtained after entering the adult service systems (VR and/or DD system)

BUT, they are jobs they got while in publicly supported special ed, and kept when they exited.
Outcomes

- 60% employed at school exit
- 71% employed one year after school exit
- 89% experienced seamless transition to adult system
What does it take?

• Blending and braiding resources
• Identifying points of success for all elements of the collaborating systems
• Flexible applications of governing regulations of collaborating systems
• Often, an intermediary can bring collaborators together
Implications for Practice

- Develop curriculum that includes opportunities to develop and internalize work behaviors throughout secondary school years
- Increase opportunities for employer-based, paid work experiences prior to school exit
Implications for Practice

• Develop mechanisms for direct collaborations with post-school support services well before school exit

• Develop collaborations between service systems that share costs and resources
Collaborations: What do schools need?

- IEP compliance
- Collaboration to begin joint service BEFORE school exit
Collaborations: What do funders need?

- **VR:** Rehab closures
- **MR/DD:** SE goals met
- **School systems:** IDEA compliance
Collaborations: What do adult agencies need?

- Advance referrals – well before school exit
- Opportunity to get to know youth before school exit

IDEAL:
- Employment and supports in place for youth BEFORE school exit
What do youth and families need?

- Opportunities for self-directed IEPs
- Individualized, person centered service
- Responsive support
- JOBS!
The Ideal

Youth are jointly served by school system, VR, CRPs BEFORE school exit.
The Result

Seamless transition from students to employed adults
Resources

• Service integration at the point of transition for youth with significant disabilities: A model that works  
  www.ncset.org

• TransCen, Inc. www.transcen.org
Contact information

Richard Luecking
TransCen, Inc.
451 Hungerford Drive, Suite 700
Rockville, MD 20850
rluecking@transcen.org