

# Work-Based Learning and Work Experiences

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# What We Know

- Paid work experiences while in secondary education is the most compelling predictor of post-school success (Luecking & Fabian, 2001; Test et al. , 2009; Carter et al., 2010; Sima, et al. in press)
- This finding applies across disabilities, geography, and economic conditions (Gold, Fabian & Luecking, 2013)

# How do we know this?

- Research from the Center on Transition to Employment for Youth with Disabilities and other recent research  
(Sima, et al., in press; Wehman, et al., in press; Gold, et al., 2013)
- National Youth Transition Demonstration project (Fraker, et al., in press)
- State System Change Projects

# Types of Work Experiences



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## Less Intensive

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- Career Exploration/Work Site Tours
- Job Shadowing
- Informational Interviews
- Work Sampling

# Types of Work Experiences

## More Intensive

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- Service Learning
- Volunteering
- On-the-Job Training
- Internships – Paid and Unpaid
- Apprenticeships
- Competitive, Paid Employment

# Why is Work-Based Learning Important?

- Work experience during school is the strongest indicator of successful work after school – IT LEADS TO OUTCOMES
- Students exit more ready to get a job, making it easier for adult agencies to provide services more quickly
- It provides real world assessment

# Career Exploration

## Examples

- Work Site Tours
- Talks with Employers
- Field Trips

## When to Consider

- As youth begin awareness of adult occupational opportunities

## Function

- Initial Exposure to jobs and careers



# Job Shadowing

## Examples

- Staff arranged shadowing
- Take your child to work day
- Disability Mentoring Day

## When to Consider

- When youth begin to sample work and workplace interests

## Function

- Observation of work environment
- Exposure to jobs and careers

# Work Sampling

## Examples

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- Rotation through various community workstations
- Job task sampling
- Career Assessment
- Any unpaid workplace experience

# Work Sampling

## When to Consider

- When youth begin exposure to workplace environments and expectations and as a prelude to more intensive work experiences

## Function

- Job task sampling
- Exposure to work environments
- Identification of potential supports and accommodations

# Service Learning

## Examples

- Volunteer for community and social programs
- Formal volunteer service in a structured community service program

## When to Consider

- As adjuncts or alternatives to other work experiences

## Function

- Learning the responsibility of following through
- Taking directions
- Community involvement

# Internships

## Examples

- Formal arrangement with an employer to learn identified work skills
- Formal time limited work experience paired with course instruction
- Paid or unpaid student co-op

## When to Consider

- As adjuncts to a specific course of study, most commonly during late high school or in post secondary education or training

# Internships

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## Function

- Intensive career or job preparation
- Prelude to a career choice
- In-depth exposure to a job and workplace

# Apprenticeships

## Examples

- Trade related paid or unpaid work with a certified skilled journeyman

## When to Consider

- As an integrated component of specific occupational training

## Function

- Building occupational skills related to trade certification

# Paid Employment

## Examples

- Part time jobs
- Full time jobs
- Jobs related to course of study and/or transition plan
- Adjunctive or unrelated experiences to school and course work, such as after school, weekend and summer jobs



# Paid Employment

## When to Consider

- Latter secondary school years and postsecondary education

## Function

- Building a resume
- Earning money
- Continuing to build work skills
- Identifying workplace and vocational preferences

# Benefits of WBL to students

- Career discovery: skills, interests, needs, environmental preferences
- Learn which supports work on the job
- Develop employability skills and work habits
- Understand WORK expectations
- Links classroom learning to work: from learning to earning
- Builds resume

# Marketing “Preparation” or the Work Experience

- Offers low risk to employers who can preview youth workers
- Offers youth low risk opportunity to explore careers
- Fears, concerns, accommodations, issues can be worked through during the low-risk period
- Meets the needs of both youth and employer

# Benefits to these businesses for taking on a youth for a work experience

- They can get an early view of the upcoming workforce
- They can try out a student in a time-limited trial
- When a student works out, they can now hire a new employee that is fully trained, eliminating the training costs
- They are collaborating with their community in a very public way – which will be recognized by customers
- They receive value-added support of the transition personnel

# What should a WBL program include?

- **Discovery:** talents, likes, dislikes, skills, support needs, where I fit in, interests (Positive Personal Profile)
- **Exploration:** where can I do the things I like and am good at?
- **Trial and error:** the ability to learn by doing
- **The real world:** learn it where you do it...no simulations in fake environments
- **Meaningful experiences:** related to discovery, realistic expectations, personal development
- **Business partnerships:** who recognizes and needs the students' talents to improve their business?

# What constitutes a Quality Work Experience?

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- Structure
  - Trained professionals in the right dedicated positions
  - Time and flexibility
  - Built-in support
  - School coursework tied to career experiences
  - Transportation

# What constitutes a Quality Work Experience?

- Processes
  - Systematic career assessment and discovery (individualized and community-based)
  - Soft skills training
  - Provide a variety of experiences: general exploration, job shadowing, work sampling, service learning, internships, volunteer work, paid employment
  - Support and follow-along by trained professionals: on-the-job support, follow-along consultation with businesses, developing partnerships

# Who needs to be on board?

- School systems: Transition services
  - Dedicated employment staff with flexibility
  - Scheduling and transportation to support youth in the community
- Vocational Rehabilitation: Transition Services
  - Funding, resources and connections to agency support
- Adult Service Agencies (VR & I/DD)
- Business partners
- Families



# What are the goals of WBL?

- Discover student skills, talents, interests, dislikes, support needs: Assessment
- Learn what type of work environment is best for each student – where do they thrive?
- Give students exposure to real work
- Give employers exposure to talented youth
- Develop work and soft skills
- **To make it easier to get students paid work in the final year of high school**

# Roles and Responsibilities of STAFF

- Orient students to the workplace, their roles, & their responsibilities
- Communicate expectations for job performance, behavior, & social interactions
- Explain consequences for inappropriate behaviors
- Help student communicate support needs
- Orient employers to their roles as mentors & supervisors
- Communicate with student, employer & family on a regular basis

# Roles and Responsibilities of EMPLOYER

- Communicate expectations for job performance, behavior and social interactions
- Provide direction
- Explain consequences for inappropriate behavior
- Make use of each student's support strategies
- Discuss progress in performance
- Teach skills needed for successful job performance
- Communicate with students and school personnel on a regular basis

# Roles & Responsibilities of STUDENTS

- Perform job responsibilities
- Communicate needs and suggest support strategies
- Adhere to job workplace guidelines and procedures
- Comply with expectations for job performance, behavior and social interactions
- Show respect, be responsible, and follow through on commitments
- **Learn** as much as possible about the work environment and the job

# 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
- 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

# Transition Scenarios

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- 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

# A Model: Transition Service Integration

- Transition instruction entirely community-based
- Variety of work experiences that lead to paid employment, integrated workplaces
- Individual choice of schedules and employment options based on what was learned during WBL experiences
- Adult agency employment specialists working with school personnel
- Cost-sharing resources of school system, supported employment funders, adult agencies

# 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
  - Culmination of a variety of WBL experiences: job shadowing, information interviews, internships, volunteer work



# Kyndal at Sinai Hospital



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

# Things to watch out for

- Setting up false expectations with stipend pay for work that is not quite real
- Rotating everyone through the same sites only
- Keep a dynamic list of business partners
- Fair Labor Standards Act violations
  - <http://www.dol.gov/elaws/esa/flsa/docs/volunteers.asp>

# QUESTIONS & COMMENTS