Transition Matters: Connecting Youth with Disabilities to Work and Community Experiences
The Aspirations of Youth on the Edge of Adulthood
Supporting Young People with Disabilities to Flourish
Young Adults Working for Pay Since High School

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1/2 Parent and Youth Interviews
Postsecondary School Enrollment for Young Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual Impairment</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech/Language</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthopedic Impairment</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disability</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disturbance</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disabilities</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NLTS2 Wave 2 Parent and Youth Interviews
The Purpose of Special Education

...to ensure that **all children with disabilities** have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living...

“Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.”

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004)
The Need for Compelling Research

• More than 400,000 students with disabilities exit high school each year.

• Post-school outcomes have improved substantially, but too many youth and young adults with disabilities are still not flourishing.

• Educators report needing effective, but feasible, strategies for supporting youth well in high school and beyond.

• Although an array of promising and evidence-based transition practices shown through research to make a real difference in the lives of youth with disabilities, there is much still we don’t know about high-quality transition services.

• Transition services have been federally mandated for only two decades.
Improving Employment and Community Participation for Youth with Severe Disabilities

Support for this research was provided by the National Center for Special Education Research (R324S060023)
A National Perspective on Student Outcomes

1510 students with intellectual disability, autism, or multiple disabilities
Employment Outcomes for Young Adults with Severe Disabilities

What are the post-school employment outcomes?

• Only 26% held paid, community jobs up to two years after high school

• Almost 43% of jobs were segregated and most involved low pay and hours

What factors are associated with employment after high school?

• Having a paid job while still in high school

• High parental expectations

• Having stronger social skills

• Having greater independence skills
The (Untapped) Possibilities of Summer Employment

• It is what youth do…

• More job openings

• Academics vs. work

• Reduces learning loss

• Provides *earlier* work experiences

• Provides *more* work opportunities
Our Development Process

**Phase 1**
To what extent are youth with disabilities involved in employment and other community experiences during the summer months?
What factors are associated with youth participation in these activities?

**Phase 2**
What are the key barriers to and facilitators of youth employment?
What recommendations do stakeholders have for improving summer opportunities for youth?

**Phase 3**
How might we design transition services and supports to increase employment and other experiences for youth with disabilities during the summer months?
Summer Employment Experiences of Youth

100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

Learning Disabilities
Emotional Disturbance
Intellectual Disabilities
Significant Disabilities

High teacher expectations
Work experience during the school year

Youth Without Disabilities
Not Working
Working

36%
60%
45%
85%
64%
40%
35%
15%
Efficacy and Feasibility of School & Community Strategies
Summer-Focused Planning

Community Connectors

Employer Liaisons

Resource Mapping

Adolescent Summer Employment

Community Conversations
Summer Employment Outcomes for Youth

Youth Without Disabilities

- Intervention: 74%
- Comparison: 29%

- Not Working: 26%
- Working: 71%
### Summer Employment Outcomes for Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intervention Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hourly Pay</td>
<td>$6.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Hours Per Week</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Support for Youth</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Youth Work During School?</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Breadth of Employment Connections

- Cleaning
- Childcare
- Food Service
- Clerical
- Animal Care
- Grounds Maintenance
- Lawn Mowing
- Computers
- Other
Outcomes for Students with Emotional Disturbance

- Did Not Reach: 18% (Comparison) 3% (Intervention)
- Not Working: 53% (Comparison) 0% (Intervention)
- Paid Community Job: 29% (Comparison) 0% (Intervention)

Youth Without Disabilities: 56%
Other Key Findings

• Teachers were supportive of summer employment, but lacked effective strategies for making linkages to local employers.

• Parents saw the value of early work experiences for their children, but were uncertain of how to make these connections on their own.

• Employer networks such as chambers of commerce were willing to partner with high schools to support career development, but no established models for partnering with schools existed.

• Schools offered career development and vocational activities, but few students with severe disabilities participated in these offerings.
The Need for Research Characterized by Rigor, Relevance, and Reach
For More Information

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