GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The overall goal of Show-Me-Careers is to “scale up and sustain evidence-based practices in Missouri that support seamless transitions to integrated employment.” A Leadership Consortium comprised of representatives from systems partners and other key stakeholders directs the work of the project. State-level systems change efforts are initiated by this Consortium and informed by a set of six Guiding Principles adopted in the project’s first year, as well as by data and feedback from eight Pilot Communities selected to demonstrate and scale-up best practices in seamless transition to employment.

The six Guiding Principles agreed upon by the Leadership Consortium are grounded in current research and best practices regarding transition to integrated employment. The Guiding Principles provide a framework through which to identify, expand, and share effective school to work practices. They will also allow the Consortium to review and identify funding, policy, and other changes that are needed to support the expansion of these practices statewide. The attached Guiding Principles are not designed to address the full range of variables that impact successful school to work transitions for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Rather they provide a compass to help guide and focus our efforts on those that we believe are the most critical and where we can have the most impact on a state and community level. In addition, the Guiding Principles are not exclusive from one another. For example creating early work experience opportunities requires family involvement, the creation of business partnerships, and the support of system partners. The Show-Me-Careers Consortium is committed to working in partnership with others across Missouri to expand and share effective practices related to the core Guiding Principles.

Show-Me-Careers Guiding Principles
- Early Work and Career Planning
- Business Partnerships
- Youth Development
- Family Involvement
- Integration of Systems
- Post-Secondary Training and Education

Show-Me-Careers Consortium
- UMKC Institute for Human Development (lead organization)
- Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council
- Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities
- Missouri Division of Workforce Development
- Missouri Office of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation
- Missouri Office of Special Education
- Governor’s Council on Disability
- People First of Missouri
Career Planning and Early Work Experiences
When youth with disabilities have access to person-centered career planning and early work experiences, they are more likely to achieve seamless transition to community employment.

Why This Principle is Important
Career planning and early work opportunities provide young people with the real life experiences needed to make informed choices regarding their career aspirations. In many ways, this principle lays the groundwork for all the others: Effective development of work-based experiences both requires and contributes to self-determination and social capital on the part of youth, needs strong family involvement, is supported through collaboration by agencies and systems, and requires business partnerships.

Promising/Emerging Practices Related to this Principle
Research has demonstrated that work-based learning is one of the best ways to improve post school outcomes for youth with disabilities (Fabian 2007, Cimera 2010; Test et al., 2009; Landmark, Ju, and Zhang, 2010; Hughes, Moore, & Bailey 1999). A 2011 study of 388 youth found that paid work and family expectations were the greatest predictors of post-school community employment (Simonson, 2011). Additionally, the Adolescent Readiness Center in Washington, DC has found that transition services should start as early as middle school to impact attitudes toward work and build job readiness skills (Wolf-Branigan, 2007). The importance of work is also supported by several extensive reviews of transition literature and practices that have validated early work experience as a key factor in post-school success.

Nationally, successful interventions such as the Project LEAP, Project Search, the Youth Transition Demonstration (California) and the School to Work Transition Program (Mississippi) use early work experience as one of the building blocks of effective transition practice. These and similar programs offer a few best practices regarding early work experiences:

• **Students need information about career options.** This can be provided through tools including career planning supports, career assessments, information about job requirements and income/benefits potential, and training on job-search and workplace skills.

• **Students need specific work-based experiences.** A variety of options exist, including job shadowing, site visits, community service, part-time jobs linked to academic content at school, and internships.

• **Students need person-centered planning.** Person-centered planning is widely accepted as a best practice in transition. This kind of individualized career preparation and planning has been linked with stronger employment and quality of life outcomes.

• **Students benefit from customized employment approaches** such as supported employment, micro boards, job sharing, or self-employment. Customized employment has been linked to higher pay, more hours, and greater job satisfaction (Rogers et al., 2008; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003).
Youth Development

When students have the opportunity to build and demonstrate self-determination skills, including the capacity to both increase and leverage social capital, they achieve better transition outcomes.

Why This Principle is Important
Students who gain self-determination skills in high school have been shown to achieve stronger post-school outcomes related to employment, independent living, post-secondary education, and quality of life (Morningstar et al., 2011; Test & Carter, 2011; Stewart et al., 2011; Wehmeyer & Powers, 2007). Social capital has been identified as a key component of self-determination, as well as a predictor of positive transition outcomes. In particular, expanding the social relationships of students with disabilities and connecting them to important social structures enhances their opportunities to make choices and decisions that impact employment. (Trainor, 2008; others).

Promising/Emerging Practices Related to this Principle
Research has shown that students who are more self-determined are more likely to achieve positive adult outcomes, including being employed at a higher rate and earning more per hour than peers who are not self-determined (Lindstrom, Doren & Miesch, 2011; Palmer & Wehmeyer, 2003; Test & Grossi, 2011). Self-determination instruction during high school, especially in the skills of goal setting, self-efficacy, motivation, and self-management, has been linked with both successful employment and success in post-secondary education (Lindstrom, Doren & Miesch, 2011; Morningstar et al., 2010; Hughes & Carter, 2011; Wehmeyer, 2011).

Youth with disabilities often do not have adequate access to opportunities to build social capital. For economically disadvantaged and/or minority youth, this lack of social capital can be compounded by their families’ and communities’ lack of capital, as well. There is increasing evidence that this lack of personal relationships and community connections is a major factor in poor employment and post-secondary education outcomes for transitioned-aged youth with cognitive and intellectual disabilities (Morningstar, Turnbull, & Turnbull, 1995; Trainor, 2008). Models such as the Transition to Independence Process, the Self-Determined Model of Instruction, the Transition Support Model, and the Career Transition Program emphasize self-determination components, such as goal-setting, social capital, self-awareness, and self-advocacy, with promising results. Specific strategies include:

- Infuse self-determination instruction into both academic content and transition planning
- Provide opportunities, such as work-based experiences and access to general education classes, that have been shown to increase social capital
- Provide teachers and other professionals with training to develop and measure both self-determination and social capital
Family Involvement

When parents are actively involved in planning for their child’s future, from the earliest years onward, employment and post-secondary education outcomes improve.

Why This Principle is Important

Parents’ high expectations for their children, knowledge about career development opportunities and workplace supports, and active participation in transition planning are key components of successful transition (NCWD/Y, 2006). Increasingly, family advocacy, expectations and support are understood as predictors of student readiness to enter and succeed in post-secondary employment and/or education (Lindstrom, Doren & Miesch, 2001; Simonsen, 2010; Morningstar et al., 2010).

Promising/Emerging Practices Related to this Principle

The quality and quantity of parental involvement has long been known to influence transition outcomes (Freeman et al., 2011, Wolf-Branigan, Schuyler & White, 2007, Baer et al., 2003). Research into substantiated best practices in transition finds that adults with disabilities earn more, work more hours, and live more independently if their families were at least moderately involved in the transition process (Landmark, et al., 2010). This is in part because a large percentage of both people with disabilities and those without disabilities find employment through family connections (Trainor, 2008; NCWD/Y, 2006).

Recent research suggests that family-centered transition planning results in greater self-determination and career decision-making ability for youth with DD (Hagner, 2012). It is also recognized that school personnel need more training on the importance of family involvement and on how to effectively recruit, orient, and partner with families (Morningstar, Kim, & Clark, 2008). In one recent study, parents cited a lack of information and guidance as the greatest barrier to understanding transition options (Griffin, McMillan & Hodapp, 2011). In particular, the needs and preferences of families from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds must be understood and incorporated into transition practice (Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Trainor, 2008).

Examples of successful family involvement include the parent training component of Minnesota’s Project C3 and the Mississippi Model Youth Transition Innovation (Luecking & Wittenburg, 2009; ODEP, 2006). These projects provide intensive training for families as well as a variety of avenues for parents to participate in transition planning. Specific strategies suggested by these and other notable programs include:

- From the child’s earliest years, provide education and support for parents to see employment as an attainable and desirable outcome and to learn about resources
- Train school and VR personnel in multiple ways to involve families, including the effective identification and leveraging of the social capital that families possess
- Provide Social Security and Medicaid work incentive information to families so they understand that employment will not jeopardize their child’s benefits
- Involve families in transition planning meetings and also through targeted workshops, fairs, resource materials, mentors, and other means to support and engage parents.
Integration of Systems
When students have access to an integrated system of supports, they are more likely to experience a seamless transition from school to career

Why This Principle is Important
Models that bring together the school, vocational rehabilitation and state DD systems, as well as coordinating with employers and community providers, show the strongest transition outcomes. Coordination across all areas of students’ lives – academics, transportation, health care, recreation/social life, benefits, employment, etc. – is increasingly recognized as a key to successful and sustainable transition outcomes. In particular, the school and adult service systems must coordinate efforts to ensure a smooth and seamless transition from school to career, with no break in services.

Promising/Emerging Practices Related to this Principle
The earlier that integration across life areas occurs, the better; many successful projects underscore the importance of starting transition planning and work experience when students are as young as 13 or 14 (Schuyler & White 2007; Hughes 2008; Trainor, 2008; Moon, Simonsen & Neubert, 2011; Stewart et al., 2011). Federal or state level barriers to cross-system collaboration, such as funding streams or contradictory mandates, have been creatively addressed through policy, while local entities are working to remove obstacles and create paths to cooperation (Wehman, 2011. Hall et al., 2011). A 2009 review by Test, et al. found that interagency collaboration was a predictor of both post school employment and post secondary education, especially when more than 2 agencies or systems were involved in the transition process.

The Transition Service Integration Model, started in 2006 in California, is one of the best known service integration models, with employment rates of over 65%, compared to well under 40% nationwide. Other notable initiatives include Jobs by 21 (Washington) and the School to Work Transition Program (Mississippi). Several strategies that highlight the benefits of collaboration include:

- Establish students in paid competitive jobs with all necessary supports during the last year of school so that they move seamlessly into adult life in the same job
- Include VR, DDD, and other relevant community provider representatives in transition planning meetings
- Facilitate opportunities for students to build relationships with employers and adult service providers starting early in high school
- Pursue innovative funding solutions such as blending or braiding to meet the needs of transitioning youth. Share the costs of paid work experience between schools and adult service systems.
- Develop MOUs, regular meetings, shared goals, defined roles and responsibilities, and common measures of success regarding transition outcomes for collaborating agencies.
Employer Engagement / Business Partnerships
When Employers are engaged as active partners in community school-to-career initiatives the outcomes for both employers and job seekers are improved

Why This Principle is Important
Employers have a powerful role to play in improving employment outcomes for youth with disabilities. Employers provide unpaid internships and paid work experiences in integrated settings. Engaged early in the transition process, employers can provide valuable perspective on the soft and hard skills needed for job success. Youth who participate in occupational education and special education in integrated settings are more likely to be competitively employed than students who have not participated in such activities (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Carter et al., 2009; Luecking & Fabian, 2000; Test et al., 2009). While some work experiences can lead to permanent, competitive employment, even short-term work experiences can be valuable as a way for young people to develop skills, contacts, and awareness about career options.

Promising / Emerging Practices Related to this Principal
The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability/Youth says that the workforce development system has two primary customers: employers and job seekers. The challenge for workforce development programs and transition services is meeting the needs of both of these consumers. Specifically, businesses want providers of education and training services to:

- Understand and respect the needs of business;
- Provide skilled workers and support in hiring and retaining qualified job seekers;
- Coordinate efforts with and through employer led industry sector organizations and general business organizations.

So, successful models for transition to employment involve employers as part of the planning process, respond to their needs and concerns, and provide necessary training and education for businesses about hiring people with disabilities (Wolf-Branigan, 2007). In addition, there is a clear need for schools to gain resources and training on how to effectively engage employers (Carter, et al., 2009)

When schools and adult service providers seek innovative partnerships with employers, they can often find strategies to mitigate real or perceived barriers to integrated employment for transitioning youth (DeCoursey & Styles, 2007). Successful initiatives have focused on building relationships and communicating with employers through strategies including:

- Using business-to-business communications to recruit employers
- Articulating the business case for hiring people with disabilities
- Finding out employers’ workforce needs and tailoring strategies to meet them
- Providing ongoing support and follow-up to both employers and employees
- Making employers, youth, and families aware of available employment supports
**Post-Secondary Education and Training**

When students with disabilities receive adequate academic and transition planning supports they are prepared to succeed in post-secondary educational settings

**Why This Principle is Important**

For students with and without disabilities, post-secondary education (PSE) is strongly correlated with earnings, job satisfaction, and opportunities for career advancement (Brand & Xie, 2010; College Board, 2006; Fleming & Fairweather, 2012; Kaye, 2010; Zaftt, Hart & Zimbrich, 2004). Yet young people with developmental disabilities often miss out on the preparatory coursework and counseling that assist other students to aim for, apply for, enter, and succeed in post-secondary education (Flexer et al., 2011; Griffin, McMillan & Hodapp, 2010).

**Promising/Emerging Practices Related to this Principle**

Research shows that students with DD can and do achieve in higher education settings when they get adequate support during high school, including high expectations from parents and teachers, access to general education courses, self-determination training, and assistance with financial and benefits planning (Fleming & Fairweather, 2012; Lindstrom, Doren & Miesch, 2011; Test et al., 2009). In particular, recent literature focuses on the critical role of self-determination skills such as motivation, coping, goal-setting, and self-efficacy in predicting success in post-secondary education (Lindstrom, Doren & Miesch, 2011; Morningstar et al., 2010; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003).

For students with ID/DD, information and education targeting their families is doubly important, as many parents may not be aware of the PSE options for their child (Fleming & Fairweather, 2011; Griffin, McMillan & Hodapp, 2010). **Think College** offers a number of educational and practical resources for families, students and professionals. Other strategies recommended to prepare students for college or post-secondary technical/career training include:

- Seek out and put in place necessary accommodations and supports before the student leaves high school
- Encourage students and families to consider college as a goal, and align students’ academic program with this goal
- Explore financial options with families and connect them with resources that can help
- Partner with colleges/training institutes to arrange student visits, disability awareness training, and expanded accommodations for students with disabilities

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