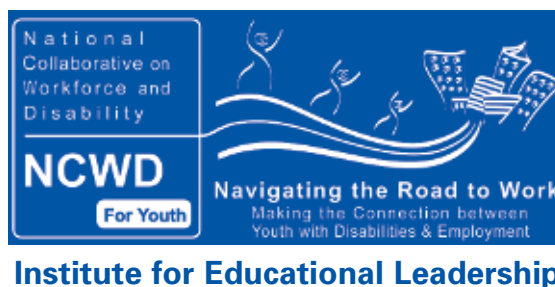


HIGH SCHOOL/HIGH TECH PROGRAM GUIDE

A Comprehensive Transition Program
Promoting Careers in Science,
Technology, Engineering
and Math for
Youth with Disabilities





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Acknowledgements

The original High School/High Tech (HS/HT) Program Manual was produced in 1994 under the leadership of the President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (PCEPD) and included information, processes and forms provided by people such as Dr. Charles McNelly of United Cerebral Palsy in Prince Georges County, Maryland. The second version of the Manual was also produced by PCEPD. The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth), under a grant from the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) within the U.S. Department of Labor, wrote the third edition in an effort to expand and improve upon existing HS/HT programs and facilitate the creation of new HS/HT programs. We would like to acknowledge the contributions of Lee Miller, President and CEO of the Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Donna Mundy, State Coordinator for HS/HT in Florida, and Lisa Cuzzo and George Tilson of TransCen, Inc. in Maryland for their assistance in creating the earlier editions of the HS/HT Program Manual. The fourth edition of the manual, now referred to as the “HS/HT Program Guide,” still contains much of their work.

HS/HT is recognized as one of the most successful strategies for assisting youth with disabilities as they transition from school to post-school activities, including entry into postsecondary education and engaging in the workforce. With significant support from ODEP, HS/HT has spread to numerous states, and interest in the program has increased significantly. The extensive experiences of the ODEP-funded grantees and resultant evolution of the HS/HT program from a locally administered and implemented program to a state administered and locally implemented program have provided a wide array of administrative models,

service strategies, and individual success stories, as well as numerous examples of positive systemic changes. Capturing this wealth of information necessitated a significant expansion of the HS/HT Program Guide. In addition, continued refinement of ODEP’s and NCWD/Youth’s *Guideposts for Success*, which comprise the key design features for today’s HS/HT programs, necessitated an extensive rewrite of the chapters on School-Based Preparatory Experiences and Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences. The resultant HS/HT Program Guide is greater in depth and breadth, providing extensive information that existing programs can use for program improvement and that new and developing programs can use to guide their implementation efforts.

This Guide is full of information and materials used nationwide by HS/HT programs. We would like to thank the HS/HT representatives from around the country for providing detailed information on their programs and examples of partnerships, service strategies and success stories, as well as examples of systemic change facilitated by HS/HT programs. And, a special thanks goes to Joan Wills, Director of Center for Workforce Development at the Institute for Educational Leadership, who provided oversight for the project and direction on compiling all of this information so that it was both logical and comprehensive.

The dedication and commitment of HS/HT representatives have made the lives of thousands of youth with disabilities better, helping them to successfully transition into post-school activities such as postsecondary education and employment – in many cases employment in emerging technology-based industries. To all – keep up the good work!!!

Preface

The diverse and complex needs of today's youth cannot be met by any one family, school district, government program, or private organization acting alone. The successful transition of all youth to adulthood and a productive, independent, self-sufficient life demands coordination and collaboration across programs, agencies, and systems, along with an integrated approach to service delivery. For youth with disabilities it has long been recognized that integration in mainstream programs is the most desirable and effective educational strategy. However, there is also recognition that at certain times youth with disabilities may also benefit from targeted support services. High School/High Tech (HS/HT) is a targeted program for youth with disabilities.

Why This Guide Was Developed

This is the fourth edition of a national Guide to support HS/HT. This edition contains updated evidence-based research and lessons learned from experience in multiple states and localities. The primary objectives of this Guide are to promote program improvement and expansion for existing HS/HT programs; to help programs establish the state infrastructure to support HS/HT; and to both encourage and assist in the creation of new HS/HT programs. To that end, this Guide

- provides the basic information needed to create and support a HS/HT program;
- introduces strategies for creating a state infrastructure to support the expansion of HS/HT throughout the country;
- provides information on existing HS/HT programs;

- introduces new resources, practices, and related activities to assist both existing and developing programs as they strive to improve and expand;
- explores ways to fund and sustain HS/HT programs;
- suggests ways to promote and market HS/HT programs; and
- provides insight into the ways practice, research, and policy can work together to promote stronger, more successful HS/HT programs.

This Guide is NOT intended as a stand-alone cookbook for program success. Rather, it simply provides a programmatic shell and suggestions regarding implementation strategies and program activities for HS/HT. One key ingredient in all HS/HT programs is creativity. Another is partnerships, and a third is resourcefulness. Each HS/HT site is similar in terms of its overall goals, objectives, and program design. However, programs may vary significantly, depending upon these key ingredients and the availability of technology and resources in a given community.

How to Use This Guide

This Guide should serve as a primary resource for state coordinators for HS/HT and site operators. It is organized so that all sites, no matter what their stage of development, will be able to find the information and resources they need to implement an effective HS/HT program.

New sites can use this Guide as a roadmap for developing a locally-based HS/HT program. This Guide will also assist states in establishing the

infrastructure for a statewide HS/HT program. Additionally, existing sites can use the information to create a state infrastructure and to strengthen their existing local sites.

The Guide also provides useful statistical information on the need for intervention when youth begin transitioning to adulthood. The Guide includes research findings, facts, and statistics that can be used in the development of grants to support HS/HT.

Finally, the Guide includes a variety of information that state and local HS/HT staff can use as they work directly with youth, such as how to construct an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) that are in keeping with the student's skills, abilities, capabilities and interests.

This Guide is divided into two parts that contain a total of eleven chapters. Part I is High School/High Tech—The Basics. Part II is High School/High Tech—Putting It All Together.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the history and evolution of HS/HT, highlights reasons for focusing on youth with disabilities and on careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (referred to as the STEM careers), and introduces the *Guideposts for Success*.

Chapter 2 provides detailed information on the first *Guidepost—School-Based Preparatory Experiences*.

Chapter 3 provides detailed information on the second *Guidepost—Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences*.

Chapter 4 provides detailed information on the third *Guidepost—Youth Development and Leadership*.

Chapter 5 provides detailed information on the fourth *Guidepost—Connecting Activities*.

Chapter 6 provides detailed information on the fifth *Guidepost—Family Involvement and Supports*.

Chapter 7 addresses the steps necessary to launch a HS/HT program, highlighting issues that need to be addressed at both the state and local levels.

Chapter 8 provides tips on finding the fiscal and human resources necessary to implement a HS/HT program.

Chapter 9 outlines the importance of evaluating a HS/HT program and using that information to manage the program for performance excellence.

Chapter 10 addresses things to consider in marketing a HS/HT program.

Chapter 11 provides definitions of key terms applicable to HS/HT and transition services for youth with disabilities.

Stories about successful HS/HT students, examples of systemic changes facilitated by various HS/HT programs, and tips from lessons learned are sprinkled throughout the Guide. These vignettes represent only a small sampling of the successes experienced and lessons learned by HS/HT programs throughout the country.

Also included throughout the chapters are online resources related to specific elements of the *Guideposts for Success* (described in detail in Chapter 1). Recognizing that websites change frequently, every possible effort has been made to compile accurate and current information at the time of printing. These links are provided only as examples of the many useful resources available on the Internet.

Individual chapters are followed by

- exhibits containing supporting research;
- information on related topics;
- tips for implementation;
- sample tools, forms, written communications and agreements; and
- other information and items that should be helpful, particularly for developing HS/HT programs.

The Supporting Research Exhibits reflect a synthesis of over 30 years of research on promising and effective practices to improve transition services for youth with disabilities. The synthesis was conducted by two national technical assistance centers: The National

Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), and the National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth), funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). The five components for transition success that emerged from the research, many of which were derived from early implementation of HS/HT, formed the foundation for both the National Alliance on Secondary Education and Transition's (NASSET)

Standards and NCWD/Youth's and ODEP's *Guideposts for Success*. The NASSET Standards established a common and shared framework to help school systems and communities identify what youth need in order to achieve successful participation in postsecondary education and training, civic engagement, meaningful employment, and adult life. Building on this work, the synthesis in the Supporting Research Exhibits in this Guide summarizes findings from research, demonstrations and promising and effective practices related to each of the five components of the *Guideposts for Success*.



PART I

High School/High Tech
The Basics

CHAPTER 1:

The History and Evolution of HS/HT

This chapter provides a brief history of the HS/HT program, and information on emerging career opportunities and the widespread emphasis on technology in today's economy, as well as an overview of the reasons for focusing on transition-age youth with disabilities. It also introduces the *Guideposts for Success*, a comprehensive framework for providing transition services developed by NCWD/Youth in collaboration with ODEP.

Over the years, HS/HT has evolved from a demonstration program found in a few selected localities to an established program with multiple sites in a number of states. During the 2005-06 school year, nine states (Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma and South Carolina) had an established state infrastructure supporting local implementation of HS/HT. In those states, a total of 135 local HS/HT sites were serving students in over 350 schools.

The History of HS/HT

HS/HT developed out of concern that too few students, especially those with disabilities, were being prepared for technological and science-based careers. In 1983, business executives and local leaders in Los Angeles, California, became interested in reaching out to students in the early stages of their education to expose them to the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in jobs related to science and technology. With the leadership of the Atlantic Richfield Company, and the support of the Los Angeles Unified School District,

America's first intervention program designed to promote training for science and technology jobs among youth with disabilities was established. This first program grew slowly, as sustainability proved to be a challenge.

In 1986, the program was adopted by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (PCEPD). The mission of PCEPD was to facilitate the communication, coordination, and promotion of public and private efforts designed to facilitate employment of people with disabilities. Building upon this mission and the strong public/private partnership that began in Los Angeles, HS/HT program leaders developed relationships with businesses, education and nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. These relationships helped HS/HT grow and expand across the country.

In the mid-1990s the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) supported the expansion of HS/HT through grants to establish projects in California, Florida, Maryland, Ohio, and Texas. Some of these funds were also used to host the first national meeting of HS/HT representatives. Soon afterwards, NASA awarded a grant to establish HS/HT in Georgia.

In the late 1990s, HS/HT grew rapidly. During this time, the initiative's focus shifted from sites with local leadership to sites united by state leadership. The state-based model, first initiated in Georgia, provided HS/HT sites with access to the state-controlled resources they needed to develop and sustain their operations.

The Evolution of HS/HT

In 2000, Congress disbanded PCEPD and aspects of its work were incorporated into a sub-cabinet level policy agency known as the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) housed within the U.S. Department of Labor. Congress established ODEP in order to provide national leadership on disability-related employment policy. Some of PCEPD's programs, including HS/HT, became part of ODEP's research demonstration initiatives.

Through these early research demonstrations, ODEP learned that, in order to successfully move to the world of work, all youth need

- access to high quality standards-based education regardless of the setting,
- information about career options,
- exposure to the world of work,
- opportunities to develop social, civic, and leadership skills,
- strong connections to caring adults,
- access to safe places to interact with their peers, and
- support services to allow them to become independent adults.

In light of this research, and based on input from stakeholders and experience working with local demonstration grants, NCWD/Youth, in consultation with ODEP, developed the transition design features that later became known as the *Guideposts for Success* for transition-age youth. The transition design features/*Guideposts* focus on what all youth, including youth with disabilities, need, and are intended to provide a common language that diverse individuals, organizations and funding streams can use to provide effective transition service delivery and facilitate positive transition outcomes. They provide a common framework around which states and local communities can assess their current workforce development system, plan strategies for improving it, and evaluate the results of implementing these strategies. While the basic tenets of the design features have remained the same, the nomenclature and categorization used have varied slightly over time.

Through funding local HS/HT projects, ODEP learned that truly expanding HS/HT would require the commitment of a state-level entity to provide technical assistance and coordinate programs throughout the state. As a result, beginning in 2001, ODEP awarded grants to a number of states to develop the infrastructure necessary to support the state-wide expansion of HS/HT.

In addition to the movement towards a state infrastructure, HS/HT programs also evolved in other areas. For example, HS/HT evolved from a program that focused primarily on summer employment and internships to a year-round program that incorporated activities conducted in-school, after-school, on the weekends, and during the summer. Another change was the expansion of program activities from primarily work-based learning experiences to a much wider range of activities that encompassed such things as tutoring, computer training, and youth development and leadership activities. Connecting students to community resources became another important part of HS/HT. With the continued refinement of the *Guideposts* and the addition of a fifth design feature/*Guidepost* (i.e., family involvement and support), HS/HT programs expanded their program elements to include activities to engage parents, family members, and other caring adults in various aspects of transition planning.

Program Overview

The HS/HT program was created as a means of improving postsecondary outcomes for transition-age youth with disabilities. Among other strategies, the program achieves its objectives by maintaining high expectations, exposing youth to high growth industries, facilitating youth development and leadership, and encouraging the involvement of family members and caring adults.

1. HS/HT is designed to address the needs of transition-age youth (ages 14-24) with all types of disabilities.
2. HS/HT focuses on exposing transition-age youth with disabilities to careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (the STEM careers) and other technology-related professions.

3. HS/HT is a year-round program that provides a sequential progression of activities that are both age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate. Activities may be conducted in school, after school, on weekends, and during the summer.
4. HS/HT incorporates a variety of activities addressing a wide range of needs identified in the *Guideposts for Success* to create a comprehensive program of transition services.
5. HS/HT provides students with disabilities with appropriate college and career planning information and guidance, and encourages youth to pursue additional training and education to prepare for the STEM careers.
6. HS/HT provides employers with a potential source of educated, qualified employees.

To maximize its impact, HS/HT must continue to enroll more students with disabilities in existing sites, expand the program to new sites, and ultimately be made available to youth with and without disabilities. To that end, the contents of this Guide are driven by the belief that

- multiple public and private stakeholders must act in concert (e.g., forming partnerships and blending and braiding resources) to alter the conditions that inhibit the ability of youth with disabilities to engage successfully in employment; and
- the design of HS/HT programs must be evidence-based, rooted in high expectations, and incorporate promising and effective practices that promote the personal development of young people and expose them to multiple career options.

Why Focus on the STEM Careers?

When the first HS/HT program emerged, people began recognizing that youth with disabilities represented an untapped source of labor. Armed with the knowledge and skills relevant to emerging industries, these youth could help fill important positions in the labor market. To succeed in today's technology-driven global economy, however, these youth must be exposed to the education and training necessary to enter into careers

related to science, technology, engineering, and math (the STEM careers).

The pressing need to fill positions in STEM careers is widely acknowledged. During a 2005 hearing before the Education and the Workforce's 21st Century Competitiveness Subcommittee, members of the U.S. House of Representatives and witnesses outlined current trends hampering advancement in the math and sciences. Witnesses testified on evidence indicating that America's global lead in science and technology was slipping. Witnesses agreed on the importance of effective K-12 science and math education in maintaining America's technological competitiveness. They further noted that American culture does not currently encourage young people to pursue careers in math and science.

Demand for individuals with high-tech skills continues to increase—regardless of the strength of the economy. Some of the fastest growing careers in the world today rely on math, science, and technology skills. “According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, jobs requiring science, engineering, or technical training will increase 24 percent between 2004 and 2014 to 6.3 million jobs nationally” (Texas Education Agency, 2006).

Acknowledging this reality, President Bush introduced the American Competitiveness Initiative in his January 2006 State of the Union Address. This initiative included proposals to improve math and science education in America's schools in order to advance our nation's economic competitiveness. The focus on more rigorous math and science learning follows numerous reports indicating that students in the United States under-perform in relation to their counterparts in emerging growth countries in these areas of academic pursuit. In keeping with this initiative, the Deficit Reduction Act that President Bush signed into law in February 2006 created Academic Competitiveness Grants and National SMART Grants to provide additional need-based aid for first- and second-year college students who complete a rigorous high school curriculum and for third- and fourth-year college students who choose to major in the fields of math, science, engineering, or critical foreign languages. In addition, the Academic Competitiveness Council (ACC) was established in the Deficit Reduction Act to assess the effectiveness of the Federal investment in

STEM education. In April 2006, the President issued an Executive Order creating the National Math Panel to evaluate the scientific evidence related to teaching and learning math, and to make recommendations on how to improve student readiness for and success in, algebra and higher-level math courses. For more information on the American Competitiveness Initiative, visit <http://www.ostp.gov/html/budget/2008/ACIUpdateStatus.pdf>.

HS/HT programs recognize that today more than ever, youth with disabilities have the potential to meet the needs of our current industries and the employment needs of our emerging economy.

Why Emphasize Technology?

The evolution of computers in the workplace has helped to level the playing field for people with disabilities. Technology that was once uncommon is now commonplace, giving a boost to the productivity of all employees and further allowing individuals with disabilities to readily integrate into the workforce. Technology has also become an aspect of almost every job in today's economy.

Like any future member of the workforce, students with disabilities can benefit greatly from being well versed in basic science, math, and technology. Due to a collective history marked by low expectations, limited exposure to pre-requisite courses, and limited access to individualized supports, youth with disabilities are not generally viewed as good candidates for the STEM careers, despite the fact that many can and have succeeded in such careers.

Helping high school students explore their options and plan for their future is a challenging business. Often, students do not know how to plan for what will happen today, let alone after high school or college. Using a variety of progressive activities throughout the year designed to promote personal growth and development, self-determination, self-advocacy skills, and informed decision-making, HS/HT programs creatively expose youth with disabilities to the world of work with a focus on opportunities found within the STEM careers. Such exposure will assist these students to better prepare for their futures and to compete in a technology-driven society.

Why Focus on Youth with Disabilities?

Transition from youth to adulthood is an awkward period in life which presents challenges for almost every young person today – this is even more so for youth with disabilities. The facts are painfully clear:

- Special education students are more than twice as likely as their peers in general education to drop out of high school.
- Youth with disabilities are half as likely as their peers without disabilities to participate in postsecondary education.
- Current special education students can expect to face much higher adult unemployment rates than their peers without disabilities.
- The adjudication rate into the justice system of youth with disabilities is four times higher than for youth without disabilities.
- The pregnancy rate for youth with disabilities is much higher than the national average; among females with learning disabilities, for example, 50 percent will be pregnant within three years of exiting school.
- Young adults with disabilities are three times more likely to live in poverty as adults than their peers without disabilities.

The picture is even grimmer for youth with significant disabilities: less than one out of ten attain integrated employment; five out of ten experience indefinitely long waits for post-school employment services; and most of these individuals earn less than \$2.40 per hour in sheltered workshop settings (www.ncwd-youth.info).

Add to these statistics that fact that the employment rate of Americans with disabilities of working age in 2000 was only around 56 percent and the situation appears to be bleak. The most viable strategy for reversing these stubborn statistics lies in focusing attention on the transition needs of youth with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities.

While these facts seem to paint a bleak picture for the future of youth with disabilities, things have improved somewhat over the last decade. A comparison of data from two studies, one completed in 1987 (the National Longitudinal Transition Study), and the second from 2003 (the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2), reveals important findings. In 2003, youth with disabilities were found to be less likely to participate in postsecondary vocational training programs than in 1987. However, by 2003 youth with disabilities showed increased performance in

- school completion rates,
- participation in community groups,
- attendance at postsecondary education facilities, and
- entering and maintaining employment.

We know there are solutions. For example, research shows that work experience during high school (both paid and unpaid) helps youth with disabilities get jobs at higher wages after they graduate. Also, students who participate in occupational education and special education in integrated settings are more likely to be competitively employed than students who have not been educated in such settings. Unfortunately, most young people with disabilities do not have the opportunity to participate in structured high-quality programs designed to help them make informed choices about careers.

We often hear youth with disabilities and their parents lament about the “belief system” problem. Evidence shows that a lack of high expectations for youth with disabilities leads many professionals in schools and other institutions, including businesses, to assume that people with disabilities cannot meet the knowledge and skills requirements of today’s workplace, especially for careers with attractive growth opportunities. There is a serious cost to this lack of high expectations that is difficult to quantify – but is very real nonetheless.



At the HEART of HS/HT is a belief system based on HIGH EXPECTATIONS.

HS/HT programs have found that exposing youth with disabilities to the world of work and the STEM careers assists them in developing self confidence, self-esteem, and leadership skills. Participating students have demonstrated success in advancing to the next grade, graduating from high school with regular diplomas, and moving on to additional training, postsecondary education, and gainful employment.

Records from August of 2006 clearly demonstrate the success of the HS/HT program. According to a detailed breakdown of data from the seven states where HS/HT was funded by ODEP (Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio and Oklahoma), only 12 of 2,840 students who participated in HS/HT dropped out of school. This is particularly noteworthy given that the national drop out rate for students with disabilities is 28 percent (National Longitudinal Transition Study-2, National Center for Special Education Research, 2005). Approximately 900 of these 2,840 students participated in some type of formal work-based experience, e.g., internships and/or full or part-time employment. Research has demonstrated the benefits of such work-based learning experiences in improving post-school outcomes for youth (see Exhibit 3.1). Although the percentage of students with disabilities matriculating to postsecondary education increased from 3 percent in 1978 to 19 percent in 1996 (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Dukes & Shaw, 1999), the matriculation rate for HS/HT students far exceeds the rate for student with disabilities in general. Of the more than 750 HS/HT students in these seven states who had graduated from high school as of June 2006, more than 540, or approximately 72 percent, went on to postsecondary education.

Postsecondary education can be a critical factor in leveling the playing field for youth with disabilities. When students complete postsecondary education,

including vocational-technical training, they significantly improve their chances of securing gainful and satisfying employment and achieving financial independence. Students with disabilities who earn Bachelor of Arts degrees have almost equal success in attaining subsequent employment as non-disabled students (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education, November 29, 2000; Harris eSurvey, 2000; HEATH Survey, 1998).

HS/HT is an effective educational and career development intervention that is making a positive impact on the lives of youth with disabilities today. The program sets high expectations for youth and focuses on their skills, abilities, and assets. HS/HT creates a welcoming and encouraging environment by sponsoring peer group activities that are engaging, fun, informative, and that promote personal growth, development, and self-determination.

The Guideposts for Success: The Key Components of HS/HT

The creation of ODEP opened up new opportunities to develop strong partnerships that promoted and supported the expansion of HS/HT programs throughout the country. To further this support, ODEP awarded a five-year contract to NCWD/Youth to, among other things, provide technical assistance and support to HS/HT sites nationwide. It charged NCWD/Youth with identifying the key factors that contribute to the successful transition to adult life for all youth, as well as with finding those additional factors that can positively impact transition outcomes for youth with disabilities. ODEP's intent was to use the results of this effort to create a comprehensive framework for transition services that would then be used as the key components for the HS/HT national program model.

After undertaking an extensive review of nearly three decades of research, demonstrations and promising practices, including the experiences of HS/HT programs, NCWD/Youth, in conjunction with ODEP, created a set of guiding principles and identified a comprehensive set of services, supports and activities that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need to succeed in transitioning from high school to adult life.

The resulting framework, referred to as the *Guideposts for Success*, provides a

- statement of principles,
- direction that will lead to better outcomes for all youth, and
- method for organizing policy and practice.

The *Guideposts* are based on a number of important assumptions, including

- high expectations for all youth, including youth with disabilities;
- equality of opportunity for everyone, including nondiscrimination, individualization, inclusion, and integration;
- full participation through self-determination, informed choice, and participation in decision-making;
- independent living, including skills development and long-term supports and services;
- competitive employment and economic self-sufficiency, which may include supports; and
- individualized, person-driven, and culturally and linguistically appropriate transition planning.

The *Guideposts* describe what is needed for comprehensive transition service delivery at both the program and policy level. They can be used in many ways. For example, the *Guideposts* can be used for resource mapping to determine exactly what transition services are available in a community and to identify gaps in transition services. They can also be used to assist a young person with a disability in determining what should go into his/her IEP, including the special education and related services the school should be providing. In addition, parents can use the *Guideposts* to evaluate whether the services their sons or daughters are receiving are such that they are most likely to lead to post-school success.



The fact that the *Guideposts for Success* are based on a comprehensive review of relevant literature, research, and evidence-based practices is important because there is increasing pressure to invest public dollars only in programs that show reliable results and incorporate effective practices.

The remainder of this section provides a brief introduction to each of the five categories of the *Guideposts for Success*. Exhibit 1.1 provides a chart that displays all five categories of the *Guideposts* and the individual components under each *Guidepost*. More detailed information on each category can be found in Chapters 2 through 6, along with a brief synthesis of the literature review for each category and information on relevant online resources.

1. School-Based Preparatory Experiences

School-based preparatory experiences include the activities and services undertaken in collaboration with and in support of the youth's educational program. Activities under this *Guidepost* include participating in academic programs based on clear state standards; using curriculum and program options based on universal design for school and work; participating in community-based learning experiences; and receiving support from and by highly qualified staff. While HS/HT does not have control over what happens within the educational environment, it can actively promote the things that are needed to create a high quality education environment and support activities that complement what students are learning and experiencing in school. The HS/HT activities undertaken in support of this *Guidepost* should be conducted in environments where youth feel accepted

and nurtured, and should facilitate academic pursuits that provide exposure to and encourage pursuit of the STEM careers. This *Guidepost* is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

2. Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences

Career preparation and work-based learning experiences include a range of activities that expose students with disabilities to the STEM careers and build towards participation in on-the-job experiences. These experiences include such things as vocational exploration, career assessments, industry site visits, job shadowing, internships, entrepreneurial ventures, and paid employment (full or part time). For youth with disabilities, activities designed to help them learn to find, formally request, and secure appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations in education, training and employment settings fall under this *Guidepost*. Whatever the activity, the lessons learned during such activities should be reviewed to ensure that the young person makes the connection between what s/he is learning in the HS/HT program and in school generally, and what is expected in the world of work. This *Guidepost* is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

3. Youth Development and Leadership

Youth development and leadership activities help young people become self-sufficient and productive members of society. The activities and services under this *Guidepost* include such things as developing relationships with supportive adults, developing independent decision-making skills, engaging in service-learning opportunities, and learning self-determination and self-advocacy skills. Each of these elements is also interwoven and fostered throughout all of the *Guideposts*. This *Guidepost* is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

4. Connecting Activities

This *Guidepost* examines the need to connect youth to the programs, activities, services, and supports they will need to access as they transition to the next phase in life. The ultimate goal is to engage in employment

that will provide for economic self-sufficiency. The focus is on services and activities requiring support from other organizations, such as tutoring, mentoring, assistive technology, personal assistance services, and transportation. Youth participating in HS/HT programs must connect with other agencies and services, particularly as they pursue options in postsecondary education and the STEM careers. This *Guidepost* is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.



5. Family Involvement and Supports

The involvement of parents, family members, and other caring adults promotes the social, emotional, physical, academic, and occupational growth of youth, which usually translates to better post-school outcomes. The activities and services under this *Guidepost* include having parents and caring adults take an active role in transition planning, and having knowledge of the rights and responsibilities under various disability-related laws. This *Guidepost* is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

EXHIBIT 1.1: GUIDEPOSTS FOR SUCCESS

GENERAL NEEDS	SPECIFIC NEEDS
<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #0056b3;">School-Based Preparatory Experiences</p>	<p>In order to perform at optimal levels in all education settings, all youth need to participate in educational programs grounded in standards, clear performance expectations and graduation exit options based upon meaningful, accurate, and relevant indicators of student learning and skills. These should include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic programs that are based on clear state standards; • career and technical education programs that are based on professional and industry standards; • curricular and program options based on universal design of school, work and community-based learning experiences; • learning environments that are small and safe, including extra supports such as tutoring, as necessary; • supports from and by highly qualified staff; • access to an assessment system that includes multiple measures; and • graduation standards that include options. <p><i>In addition, youth with disabilities need to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use their individual transition plans to drive their personal instruction, and use strategies to continue the transition process post-schooling; • have access to specific and individual learning accommodations while they are in school; • develop knowledge of reasonable accommodations that they can request and control in educational settings, including assessment accommodations; and • be supported by highly qualified transitional support staff that may or may not be school staff.

EXHIBIT 1.1: GUIDEPOSTS FOR SUCCESS

GENERAL NEEDS	SPECIFIC NEEDS
<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">2</h1> <p style="margin: 10px 0;">Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Experiences</p>	<p>Career preparation and work-based learning experiences are essential in order to form and develop aspirations and to make informed choices about careers. These experiences can be provided during the school day or through after-school programs and will require collaboration with other organizations. All youth need information on career options, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • career assessments to help identify students’ school and post-school preferences and interests; • structured exposure to postsecondary education and other life-long learning opportunities; • exposure to career opportunities that ultimately lead to a living wage, including information about educational requirements, entry requirements, income and benefits potential, and asset accumulation; and • training designed to improve job-seeking skills and work-place basic skills (sometimes called “soft skills”). <p>In order to identify and attain career goals, youth need to be exposed to a range of experiences, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunities to engage in a range of work-based exploration activities such as site visits and job shadowing; • multiple on-the-job training experiences, including community service (paid or unpaid) that is specifically linked to the content of a program of study and school credit; • opportunities to learn and practice their work skills (“soft skills”); and • opportunities to learn first-hand about specific occupational skills related to a career pathway. <p><i>In addition, youth with disabilities need to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the relationships between benefits planning and career choices; • learn to communicate their disability-related work support and accommodation needs; and • learn to find, formally request, and secure appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations in education, training and employment settings.
<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">3</h1> <p style="margin: 10px 0;">Youth Development & Leadership</p>	<p>Youth development is a process that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them gain skills and competencies. Youth leadership is part of that process. In order to control and direct their own lives based on informed decisions, all youth need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with adults through formal and informal settings; • peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities; • exposure to role models in a variety of contexts; • training in skills such as self-advocacy and conflict resolution; • exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, including community service; and • opportunities that allow youth to exercise leadership and build self-esteem. <p><i>In addition, youth with disabilities need</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mentors and role models including persons with and without disabilities; and • an understanding of disability history, culture, and disability public policy issues as well as their rights and responsibilities.

EXHIBIT 1.1: GUIDEPOSTS FOR SUCCESS

GENERAL NEEDS	SPECIFIC NEEDS
<div style="font-size: 48pt; font-weight: bold; color: white;">4</div> <div style="color: #0056b3; font-weight: bold; margin-top: 10px;">Connecting Activities</div>	<p>Young people need to be connected to programs, services, activities, and supports that help them gain access to chosen post-school options. All youth may need one or more of the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mental and physical health services; • transportation; • tutoring; • financial planning and management; • post-program supports through structured arrangements in postsecondary institutions and adult service agencies; and • connection to other services and opportunities (e.g., recreation, sports, faith-based organizations). <p><i>In addition, youth with disabilities may need</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acquisition of appropriate assistive technologies; • community orientation and mobility training (e.g., accessible transportation, bus routes, housing, health clinics); • exposure to post-program supports such as independent living centers and other consumer-driven community-based support service agencies; • personal assistance services, including attendants, readers, interpreters, or other such services; and • benefits planning counseling including information regarding the myriad of benefits available and their interrelationships so that they may maximize those benefits in transitioning from public assistance to self-sufficiency.
<div style="font-size: 48pt; font-weight: bold; color: white;">5</div> <div style="color: #0056b3; font-weight: bold; margin-top: 10px;">Family Involvement & Supports</div>	<p>Participation and involvement of parents, family members, and/or other caring adults promote the social, emotional, physical, academic, and occupational growth of youth, leading to better post-school outcomes. All youth need parents, families, and other caring adults who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have high expectations that build upon the young person’s strengths, interests, and needs and foster their ability to achieve independence and self-sufficiency; • remain involved in their lives and assist them toward adulthood; • have access to information about employment, further education, and community resources; • take an active role in transition planning with schools and community partners; and • have access to medical, professional, and peer support networks. <p><i>In addition, youth with disabilities need parents, families, and other caring adults who have</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an understanding of their youth’s disability and how it affects his or her education, employment, and/or daily living options; • knowledge of rights and responsibilities under various disability-related legislation; • knowledge of and access to programs, services, supports, and accommodations available for young people with disabilities; and • an understanding of how individualized planning tools can assist youth in achieving transition goals and objectives.

CHAPTER 2:

School-Based Preparatory Experiences

This chapter explores the first *Guidepost for Success*, School-Based Preparatory Experiences. Based on the continued refinement of this *Guidepost*, this chapter is a significant revision of the original “Preparatory Experiences” chapter in the last edition of the HS/HT Program Manual. The rewrite is due in part to the recognition that preparation for STEM careers requires more attention to academic preparation. In addition, evolving HS/HT practices around the country are increasingly involving students in a multi-year program and a growing number of programs are implementing HS/HT during the school day as a credit course.

While HS/HT programs are locally housed in any number of places (schools, Career Technical Education programs, Independent Living Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation offices, One-Stop Career Centers, etc.), and may involve activities during the school day, after-school, on weekends, and during the summer, HS/HT is intended to be an enrichment program that complements what students are learning in school. School-based preparatory experiences identify those things that are necessary to ensure a high quality educational system and are primarily the responsibility of the schools.

In order to perform at optimal levels in all education settings, all youth need to participate in educational programs grounded in standards and clear performance expectations with graduation exit options based upon meaningful, accurate, and relevant indicators of student learning and skills development.

While these elements of an effective educational system are the responsibility of the schools, HS/HT can play an important role in reinforcing what is being taught within the general and special education curriculum. In addition, HS/HT can provide access to educational options and extra supports and assistance that are needed by some students to succeed in school. HS/HT activities need to be carefully structured to supplement what students are learning in school and ensure that youth with disabilities are getting what they need to prepare for a successful role in the workforce, with an emphasis on preparation for postsecondary education and entry into the STEM careers. In addition, HS/HT program coordinators can use the information that they gather through having an ongoing, long-term personal relationship with a student with a disability to assist the school in identifying the most effective ways to accommodate the needs of that student in the educational setting.

Component 1: Programs Based on Standards

For educational programs, the *Guideposts* call for academic programs that are based on clear state standards, and career and technical education programs that are based on professional and industry standards. While HS/HT programs have no direct control over such standards, HS/HT representatives can help support these concepts. When such standards are being developed or revised, or when high school reform efforts are underway, the program coordinator

can ask for a seat at the table and provide input into such initiatives in an effort to ensure that no child is left behind, particularly youth with disabilities.

HS/HT activities can also be designed to guide youth in the selection of programs of study that are grounded in state, professional, and industry standards, and that provide the educational prerequisites for pursuit of the STEM careers. HS/HT staff may need to recruit people who are working in STEM careers to volunteer to look at the courses students are taking in school to ensure that they include the prerequisites and are sufficiently rigorous to prepare them for the careers they are interested in pursuing.

Component 2: Qualifications of Teachers and Transition Staff

High quality educational experiences require access to and supports from highly qualified staff. This is another area where, although the schools have the lead role, HS/HT can play a supportive role. While the country is currently experiencing a significant shortage in qualified special education teachers, both the No

Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 stress the importance of teacher qualifications. Thus, schools and educational agencies must provide for appropriate professional development to ensure high quality teachers. Being in touch with both the educational system and a variety of community resources, HS/HT staff may be able to assist schools and educational agencies in identifying existing opportunities for professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals, both in general education and special education.

Students with disabilities need to be supported by highly qualified transition support staff that may or may not be school staff. Many schools employ specialized staff functioning as transition coordinators for special education and 504 students (i.e., students with physical or emotional disabilities, or who have impairments such as Attention Deficit Disorder, that restrict one or more major life activities for which accommodations are needed). Many do not. Even when a school employs specialized transition staff, they may not be aware of all the resources available in the community to assist students with disabilities as they



transition to adult life. To ensure access to the full range of transition services, HS/HT can assist schools by linking students with disabilities to qualified transition staff employed by other agencies such as postsecondary education institutions, One-Stop Career Centers, and Vocational Rehabilitation agencies.

Component 3: Assessments and Graduation Standards

School-based preparatory experiences also include access to an assessment system that includes multiple measures and graduation standards that include options. IDEA 2004 requires State Education Agencies (SEAs) to use universal design principles in administering assessments (see more about universal design under *Component 4*). NCLB requires schools to include students with disabilities in their standardized assessments to measure student achievement. In early April 2007, final regulations were published addressing the inclusion of students with disabilities in tests to determine the achievement of high academic standards. Prior to the publishing of these regulations, states were permitted to provide 10 percent of special education students (i.e., those with the most significant disabilities) with alternative tests to measure their academic achievement and have those results counted toward the school's annual progress under NCLB.

Under the new regulations, a school is allowed to give another 20 percent of students with disabilities modified tests to measure their academic achievement. These modified tests are targeted for students whose disabilities are less severe but who are still having difficulty and are unable to keep pace with grade-level academic achievement. States can define modified academic achievement standards so long as those standards (1) are aligned with the state's academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled; (2) are challenging for eligible students, although they may be less difficult than the grade-level academic achievement standards; (3) include at least three achievement levels; and (4) are developed through a documented and validated standards-setting process that includes broad stakeholder input. Prior to the issuance of these regulations, these students had to be given either the same tests as their non-disabled counterparts or the alternative tests being given to

students with the most significant disabilities. For many students with disabilities, these tests would either be too difficult or too easy. It is believed that the new regulations which address this middle ground will provide greater flexibility for and more accuracy in tracking academic achievement. With the issuance of these regulations, approximately 30 percent of students with disabilities will now be able to take more applicable tests.

HS/HT program coordinators should monitor students to ensure they are being included in the school's assessment system and that, as appropriate, these students have access to the accommodations they need to participate successfully in the school's standardized assessments. In some cases, program staff may be more familiar with the needs of a particular student and may be able to offer suggestions on the most effective ways to accommodate a particular student during assessments. When a school determines that a student with a disability cannot participate in the school's standardized assessment system, the HS/HT program coordinator may want to ensure that any alternative measures being used constitute an appropriate measure of that student's accomplishments.

Another key component of a high quality educational system is the existence of graduation standards that include options. As discussed in Exhibit 2.1, such options can unfortunately have negative consequences for the young people who do not receive regular diplomas. An alternative diploma or certificate of participation may not be of much value when a young person begins looking for work, particularly in the STEM careers. While graduation standards are the responsibility of the educational system, a HS/HT program coordinator may want to advocate on behalf of a student to ensure that he or she is being provided with appropriate graduation options.

Component 4: Universal Design for Learning

All learners, including students with disabilities, need an education that provides access to and participation and progress in the general education curriculum. IDEA 2004 promotes the idea of universal design by requiring education agencies to support the use of

technology, including technology with universal design principles. It also requires State Education Agencies (SEAs) to use universal design principles in administering standardized assessments.

To ensure a high quality education, particularly for students with disabilities, curriculum and program options must be based on universal design of school, work and community-based learning experiences. According to the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), universal design for learning (UDL) means teachers need to customize their teaching to address individual differences. This may include such things as

- *multiple means of representation* to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge;
- *multiple means of expression* to provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know; and
- *multiple means of engagement* to tap into learners' interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn.

A comprehensive approach to UDL applies these alternative approaches to different aspects of education, including the development of objectives/benchmarks, instructional materials, teaching methods, and assessments (<http://www.cast.org/research/udl/index.html>).

For example, “a traditional approach to instructional methods would be to provide a brief lecture and create workgroups for research, note taking, and an oral presentation. The UDL approach would recognize that all the students may not respond to a lecture and would consider the use of media with the lecture and other ways to enhance and illustrate the lesson in as interactive a manner as possible” (Wills & Sabia, n.d.).

HS/HT programs need to be familiar with and incorporate aspects of UDL as they prepare their program of activities, especially given that HS/HT targets youth with all types of disabilities, some of whom need accommodations and/or use assistive technology. Chapter 5, *Connecting Activities*, explores the need to determine individualized accommodations to ensure a student’s meaningful participation in

HS/HT activities and as they apply to settings other than educational settings. Exhibit 2.2 contains an Assistive Technology Checklist that can be used to assist students as they explore their needs for reasonable accommodations and assistive technology in a variety of settings.

Online Resources to Consider

Alliance for Technology Access (ATA) is a national network of technology resource centers, organizations, individuals, and companies that provide public education, information and referral, capacity building in community organizations, and advocacy/policy efforts, enabling people to acquire and use standard, assistive, and information technologies. An interactive information service provides quick and efficient access to information on assistive technology tools and services to consumers, families, and service providers worldwide. Visit <http://www.ataccess.org/default.html>.

Association of Tech Act Projects (ATAP) is a national, membership organization comprised of Statewide Assistive Technology (AT) Programs funded under the Assistive Technology Act. It promotes the collaboration of AT Programs with persons with disabilities, providers, industry, advocates, and others at the state and national level and seeks to increase the availability and utilization of accessible information technology and AT devices and services for all individuals with disabilities in the United States and territories. Visit <http://www.ataporg.org/>.

Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) is a nonprofit organization that works to expand learning opportunities for all individuals, especially those with disabilities, through the research and development of innovative, technology-based educational resources and strategies. Frequent visits to the CAST website keep the reader abreast of advancements in the application of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. Visit <http://www.cast.org>.

National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum (NCAC) was established by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) to provide a vision of how new curricula, teaching practices, and policies can be woven together to create practical approaches

for improved access to the general curriculum by students with disabilities. Visit <http://www.cast.org/policy/ncac/>.

Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D)

is a nonprofit volunteer organization, and the nation's educational library serving people who cannot effectively read standard print because of visual impairment, dyslexia, or other print disabilities. Their mission is to create opportunities for individual success by providing and promoting the effective use of accessible educational materials. Visit <http://www.rfbid.org/>.

Component 5: Supporting Learning Environments That Are Small and Safe and Include Extra Supports Such as Tutoring

To ensure a high quality education environment, the *Guideposts* also call for learning environments that are small and safe and include extra supports such as tutoring. Although there have been lots of discussions about the value of smaller classroom sizes, there is no national trend towards smaller classes. As a result, this is an area where HS/HT can have a real impact.

To support students in making the most of their high school experience and to increase the likelihood of their success in post-school activities, HS/HT programs can

- reinforce the lessons learned in school with after-school and summer programs;
- incorporate creative and engaging activities that are designed to supplement what students are learning in the classroom;
- involve students in small and large group discussions;
- provide opportunities for students to develop their listening skills and practice their oral and written communication skills in small group settings where they feel safe;

- teach students active listening skills and expose them to the spoken and unspoken rules of conversation and group discussions (e.g., the role of body language, being polite, not interrupting, taking turns, raising hands to speak, focusing attention on the speaker, etc.);
- encourage students to reflect on where and when they should use their listening skills and encourage them to practice their listening skills (e.g., at home, in school, in church, while watching a movie or listening to the radio, etc.);
- ask students to present information to groups of students and to summarize information from oral presentations in writing;
- involve students in writing exercises and introduce students to prewriting strategies (e.g., developing a focus, developing an outline to ensure the proper sequencing of ideas, creating diagrams, etc.);
- incorporate activities that expose students to different types of writing (e.g., creative writing, journalism, reflective compositions, etc.) and the use of correct punctuation and grammar;
- encourage students to try new things such as working in teams and experimenting with different presentation styles in a setting where individualized attention and additional support is readily available;
- help students connect what they are taught in school to the world of work and the expectations they will face as adults; and
- incorporate service-learning activities to demonstrate the application of math and science in the community.



On June 10, 2006, Florida HS/HT students from Levy, Bradford, and Putnam Counties were able to participate in a fun, hands-on, and educational field trip to Disney's Magic Kingdom. Students attended the Youth Education Series Program called, "World of Physics: Energy and Waves." Students experienced the Magic Kingdom through the eyes of a theme park scientist. On the interactive tour youth studied selected attractions to showcase the physics concepts of optics, acoustics, and magnetism in a real world context. Students were able to go behind the scenes of several attractions, including the Haunted Mansion! They had a wonderful time exploring the park after the tour. For some HS/HT students, this was their first trip ever to Disney or to any theme park. In addition, new friendships were made among the three groups.

The local HS/HT coordinator in Toledo, Ohio, encourages her students to participate in a Blogging Program where they are involved in online journaling activities. This activity was designed to coincide with the university chat rooms that are popping up around the country. Each week the coordinator posts one of the links distributed by NCWD/Youth and asks the HS/HT students to explore and critique the site. The goal is to expand the activity statewide for all HS/HT students in Ohio.

Funds appropriated under Title V, Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) may be used for supplemental educational services, which are defined as additional academic instruction designed to increase the academic achievement of students in schools that have not met state targets for increasing student achievement (adequate yearly progress) for three or more years. These services may include tutoring and after-school services, as well as activities to promote consumer, economic, and personal finance education. Consequently, this is a potential source of funding for tutoring services in some schools and, if the HS/HT program has a strong tutoring component, possibly a source of funding to help ensure the sustainability of HS/HT.

Providing Extra Support for Developing Computer Skills

With an emphasis on exposing students to high-tech careers, HS/HT programs incorporate many opportunities for students to practice the computer skills they are learning in school and develop additional skills. The HS/HT experience includes opportunities to do research online (e.g., exploring different careers and their prerequisite qualifications); develop documents online (e.g., resumes, marketing materials, etc.); create prototype websites, databases, and graphics; and troubleshoot hardware and software problems. Exhibit 2.3 includes a list of websites that provide interesting and engaging ways to reinforce what students are learning in school, particularly with regard to math and science. Some HS/HT programs partner with local community colleges to give participants the opportunity to take computer courses or use a college computer lab while they are still in high school. Some programs take students to local One-Stop Career Centers to learn about online computer training programs. In a few cases, the emphasis on computer literacy is so embedded in HS/HT that some schools have incorporated the HS/HT program into the school's general educational curriculum as a for-credit course.

Tech-Now in Oklahoma uses a standardized curriculum for HS/HT throughout the state. Tech-Now partners with a number of schools to provide the HS/HT curriculum as a for-credit class during the school day (i.e., Computer 1 or Technology 1). Students participate in the class five days a week, for 55 minutes a day. Students who complete a full year of the program receive a minimum of half of a Carnegie credit that can be applied towards Oklahoma's standard graduation diploma. The Carnegie Unit is 120 hours of class or contact time with an instructor over the course of a year at the secondary school level. In some Oklahoma schools, students participating in Tech-Now can earn two complete credits towards their graduation requirements.

The State HS/HT Coordinator in Colorado worked with a representative of the Denver Public Schools to embed the *Guideposts* into the Alternative Cooperative Education Program (ACE) curriculum. The ACE curriculum includes both general and specific occupational competencies that must meet the state's education standards and the Colorado workplace competencies. HS/HT launched a pilot program in Denver Public Schools for one semester, working together with the ACE teachers to further enrich the curriculum and bring HS/HT into the classroom in instances where at-risk students could not participate in out-of-school activities. These in-school sessions constituted a five-credit course. To further this effort, a two-day ACE State Conference included a session where HS/HT students talked about their experiences in the program and the value they saw in HS/HT. The agenda also included a session exploring ways to further embed the *Guideposts for Success* into the ACE curriculum. As a result of this effort, the *Guideposts for Success* were embedded into the ACE curriculum throughout the state after just one semester of the pilot program. In addition, a full year HS/HT after-school program with bi-weekly sessions is still being provided as a continuum for the in-school program and as an additional resource for at-risk and special education students. To view Standards 1-4 of the ACE curriculum, visit www.coloradoace.org, go to "Educator Resources" and click on "Standards."

Component 6: Helping Students Use Individualized Transition Plans (ITPs) to Drive Their Personal Instruction

In order to be successful in post-school activities, a special education student needs to use the IEP and ITP required under IDEA to drive the personal instruction s/he receives while still in school. IDEA 2004 requires the development of an ITP for each special education student who has turned 16 years of age. The ITP is the part of the IEP that focuses on what the student needs to prepare successfully for the transition from the secondary educational setting to adult outcomes. Transition services are a set of coordinated activities that assist students with disabilities as they move from school into self-determined, post-graduation activities

including postsecondary education, vocational training, competitive employment, supported employment, continuing and adult education, independent living, adult services, and participation in the community. Students with mild disabilities may only need limited services in one or two areas, while students with severe disabilities may need extensive services in all areas.

From a legal standpoint, the IEP team is required to consult with the student and his/her parent(s) in determining the transition services the student will receive. These services can include an array of educational and vocational options, some occurring within the school setting, some in the community, and some through other service providers. Available vocational options range from work-related high school classes to entry-level work in the community with assistance through a transition program.

Transition services are based on students' needs, preferences, and interests and include instruction, related services, community experiences (e.g., volunteer work and service-learning), functional vocational evaluations/assessments when appropriate, employment, independent living objectives, and daily living skills.

To determine the transition services to be included in an ITP, the student should go through a transition planning interview to identify his/her strengths, skills, abilities, capabilities, interests, and needs. The IEP team is then responsible for developing an ITP based on that interview. The ITP is designed to accomplish the student's stated post-school goals based on this interview. The ITP is part of the student's IEP and includes important information about the student, including

- post-high school goals;
- interests, strengths, and vocational goals;
- activities to help reach goals in the areas related to career development, self-advocacy, interpersonal/social skills, and independent living;
- school and post-school services that will facilitate the accomplishment of those goals;
- notice of rights a year before reaching age of majority; and
- recommendations for the next year.

The HS/HT program coordinator needs to know what is in a student’s IEP and ITP to make sure it is in line with the student’s expressed interests and goals. Through an ongoing personal relationship with a student and the student’s school, the HS/HT coordinator can help the student formulate appropriate goals and objectives for the future.

The HS/HT coordinator can also work with the student to complement what the school is doing to address the student’s remedial needs and to identify the most appropriate supports and services (e.g., accommodations, assistive technology, tutoring, etc.) that will help the student succeed in accomplishing his/her post-school goals. Through self-advocacy training, the HS/HT coordinator can help a student develop the skills needed to advocate for his/her goals

and objectives within the IEP process and for the services and supports that will ensure his/her academic success.

In some cases, school personnel and members of the IEP Team may not be aware of all of the resources available in the community to assist a student through the transition process. The HS/HT program can be a great source of this type of information. In addition, HS/HT coordinators can use the *Guideposts for Success* to assist a student through the transition process. The comprehensive framework for transition services contained within the *Guideposts* can help students think through all aspects of their goals for the future and help them identify the services and supports they may need to accomplish those goals.

Embedding the *Guideposts for Success* in RFP Instructions

The Michigan Department of Education’s Office of Special Education & Early Intervention Services (MDE/OSEIS) provides annual transition grants to all 57 county-level intermediate school districts (ISDs). The Request for Proposals (RFP) instructions for the 2006-07 grants suggested a number of appropriate fundable activities or strategies that the ISDs could implement to help them comply with State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicators. These SPP indicators track the percentage of youth aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes coordinated, measurable, annual goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the student to meet their postsecondary goals, and the percentage of youth with IEPs who are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school. The list of fundable activities included community resource mapping, *Guidepost* activities and HS/HT activities. More than half of the 57 ISDs named community mapping as one of their proposed activities and about 18 percent sought funding for *Guideposts* and/or HS/HT activities.

Using Career Planning Portfolios to Record Student Accomplishments

An important aspect of the school-based preparatory experiences is getting students to learn how to reflect on their school work, extracurricular activities, and life experiences in a way that demonstrates their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Some programs use this information to assist students in creating Career Planning Portfolios. A Career Planning Portfolio is a comprehensive collection of student work that illustrates the student’s efforts, progress, and achievements throughout high school. It is a tool to help students and parents with educational and career decision-making. A portfolio is sequential and usually addresses five different levels of development: self-awareness, educational and career exploration, educational and career planning, achievement, and transition. A portfolio can provide an alternative method of assessing a student’s performance and provide reliable and valid information on the student’s accomplishments. As a student completes new course work and becomes involved in new activities, these accomplishments are added to the portfolio and are used to identify connections between post-high school plans, high school course plans, extracurricular activities, and guidance activities. (Exhibit 2.4 provides a sample Portfolio Assessment Criteria Checklist.)



Online Resources to Consider

Academic Preparation includes information on learning style assessments, goal setting, high school transition, SAT preparation, career portfolios, how different degrees can be used in finding a job, labor market trends, anger management, etc. Some lesson plans and activities are free and some are available for a fee. Visit <<http://www.reynoldsindiana.net/TCS/TCS%20Lesson%20Plans/>>.

Education World is a free resource available to educators, school administrators, and others involved in educating children. It includes a search engine dedicated solely to educational websites; original content, including lesson plans; practical information for educators; information on how to integrate technology in the classroom; and articles written by education experts. The goal of Education World is to make it easy for educators to integrate the Internet into the classroom. Visit <<http://www.education-world.com/>>.

All-Learners: The Website for Exploring Inclusive Education lists and connects to a wide variety of resources for educators, administrators, and parents who are working to provide an inclusive education to all students. Visit <<http://www.infinitec.org/all-learners/resources.html#Anchor-Math-23522>>.

P.R.O. Filer Personal Portfolio & Filing System is an innovative tool designed by students for students that provides a way to organize important documents, keep records of school and community learning opportunities, and create a personal portfolio to showcase the student's accomplishments. Published by the Institute on Community Integration, the P.R.O. Filer includes a manual and dividers for storing information about accomplishments, education, finances, support services, transportation, vocational/work issues, etc. Visit <ici.umn.edu/all/helptool.html#profiler>.

Getting Organized

There are several tasks that HS/HT staff can undertake to ensure that students are able to access the educational programs, services, and supports available at their schools, and to identify HS/HT program

components that will complement and supplement what the students are learning in school. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it is a good place to start.

- **Review** existing information on each HS/HT student (e.g., school records, the IEP, and the ITP). Don't forget, you will need written permission from parents to access information found in school records, medical records, etc.
- **Determine** whether a student needs tutoring and, if so, the type of tutoring that would best meet the needs of that particular student and identify where those services are available in the local community.
- **Poll** HS/HT participants to identify their interests as they apply to science, technology, engineering, and math, and to identify what they are being taught in school. Use this information to identify activities of interest to students and to complement what the students are learning in school.
- **Use the information** you have gathered to identify the individualized supports each student needs to promote his/her academic achievement and to determine the nature of any group activities to be undertaken by the HS/HT program.
- **Identify** assistive technology, materials in alternate formats, or other reasonable accommodations that might be needed by your students. Ask each student directly about his/her needs and preferences.
- **Recruit** volunteers who are working in STEM careers to talk to HS/HT students about the prerequisite courses needed to enter particular STEM careers.
- **Partner** with the schools where your HS/HT students are located and ask to be invited to appropriate IEP, 504, or transition planning meetings, as well as other appropriate general education-related activities.
- **Stress** the importance of good grades and, based on the student's plans for the future, stress the importance of taking prerequisite courses in high school.



Supporting Research: School-Based Preparatory Experiences

To gain the knowledge and skills necessary for success in a variety of settings, all students—including students with disabilities—must have access to educational curriculum and instruction designed to prepare them for life in the 21st century (Murnane & Levy, 1996). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) underscores this assumption, as does federal legislation in the areas of workforce development, youth development, postsecondary education, and other areas. This assumption was the basis, in part, for some of the amendments included in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) when it was reauthorized in 1990, 1997, and 2004. Under IDEA, states must provide students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum, including the identification of performance goals and indicators, information on how to access the general curriculum, access to general or alternate assessments, and access to public reporting of assessment results. All of these requirements are embedded within a context of standards-based education, in which standards for what students should know and be able to do are defined at the state level, appropriate standards-based education is provided, and success in meeting expectations is measured through large-scale assessment systems.

The need for access requirements in legislation was supported by research demonstrating a lack of educational success (or a lack of any information about educational success) for many students with disabilities (e.g., McGrew, Thurlow, & Spiegel, 1993; Shriner, Gilman, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 1994-95), the all too common provision of an inappropriately watered-down curriculum (Gersten, 1998), or a curriculum undifferentiated for students with disabilities (McIntosh, Vaughn, Schumm, Haager, & Lee, 1993). According to Nolet and McLaughlin (2000), the 1997 IDEA reauthorization was “intended to ensure that students with disabilities have access to challenging curricula and that their educational programs are based on high expectations that acknowledge each student’s potential and ultimate contribution to society.” Within the educational context of the late 1990’s and early 2000’s, this meant that all students with disabilities, regardless of the nature of their disability, need to have access to standards-based education.

Providing meaningful access to the general curriculum requires a multifaceted approach. Appropriate instructional accommodations constitute one piece of this picture (Elliott & Thurlow, 2000). Other elements include the specification of curriculum domains, time allocation, and decisions about what aspects of the curriculum to include or exclude (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2000). The process of specifying the curriculum in a subject matter domain requires cataloging the various types of informa-

tion included in the domain (facts, concepts, principles, and procedures) and setting priorities with respect to outcomes. Allocation of time for instruction should be based on established priorities. Decisions about what to include or exclude in curricula should allow for adequate breadth (or scope) of coverage, while maintaining enough depth to assure that students are learning the material. Universal design is another means of ensuring access to the general curriculum (Orkwis & McLane, 1998). When applied to assessment, universal design can help ensure that tests are usable by the largest number of students possible (Thompson, Johnstone, & Thurlow, 2002).

Research indicates that a variety of instructional approaches can be used to increase access to the general curriculum and standards-based instruction (Kame’enui & Carnine, 1998). Approaches such as differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 1999), strategy instruction (Deshler et al., 2001), and technology use (Rose & Meyer, 2000) are showing that access to the curriculum can be substantially improved, with positive outcomes for students with disabilities.

Other researchers have examined the teaching, learning conditions and strategies in schools that lead to positive outcomes for students (Wagner, 1993). Gersten (1998), the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (2004a), and Nolet and McLaughlin (2000) note that students with disabilities and other at-risk students need access to the full range of curriculum options, rather than watered-down versions, if they are to meet content and performance standards. Research by Tralli, Colombo, Deshler, and Schumaker (1999) indicates that many low-achieving students can be taught strategies that will raise their performance to meet content standards.

A meta-analysis of findings looked at independent evaluations of 65 school tutoring programs and found the programs positively impacted the academic performance and attitudes of the people being tutored. The students who received tutoring outperformed students in a control group on exams. They also developed positive attitudes about the subjects that were the focus of tutorial programs. The positive effects also extended to the youth who serve as tutors, as they gained a better understanding of and developed more positive attitudes toward the subjects addressed in the tutorial programs (Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982).

In two studies of “at-risk” junior high school students and students with learning disabilities who were failing classes found participation in after-school tutoring programs impacted the students’ ability to earn average or better than average grades on quizzes and tests when they were supported by trained

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adult tutors (Hock, Pulvers, Deshler, & Schumaker, 2001).

In an examination of the development and evaluation of two demonstration peer tutoring programs during two semesters in 1995 during which more experienced students tutored novice students, both types of participants benefited greatly. Both parties benefited in terms of improved understanding and performance in the subject matter, heightened confidence and improved study skills, and the development of lasting friendships (Beasley, 1997).

Other academic and non-academic components that have been linked to positive youth outcomes include

- a broad spectrum of work-based learning components such as service-learning, career exploration, and paid work experience (American Youth Policy Forum & Center for Workforce Development, 2000; Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1997; National Commission on the High School Senior Year, 2001);
- academic and related standards (Nolet and McLaughlin, 2000) and a full range of postsecondary options (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004a);
- universally designed curricula and materials (Bowe, 2000; Orkwis & McLane, 1998) including culturally appropriate strategies (Hale, 2001);
- instructional approaches that include the use of technology (Rose & Meyer, 2000) and learning supports including advising and counseling (Aune, 2000); and
- a move to smaller learning communities (Darling-Hammond, Aness, & Ort, 2002; Stern & Wing, 2004).

Basing Assessment on Appropriate Standards

States and districts have become engaged in identifying content standards and setting performance standards for what students should know and be able to do in the 21st century (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003). While these standard-setting efforts may not have initially considered students with disabilities (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Gutman, & Geenen, 1998), as time has passed, many states have reconsidered their standards in this light. This reconsideration occurred, if for no other reason, because the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, the bill that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) required states to develop alternate assessments for those students who are not able to participate in general assessments. The alternate assessments, like the general assessments, are to be aligned to state standards.

NCLB requires that students with disabilities participate not only in assessments, but also in accountability systems. The purpose of these requirements is to ensure that schools are held accountable for access to the general curriculum, high expectations, and improved learning. Such requirements have heightened the importance of access to the general curriculum for all students with disabilities, while also raising concerns about access to transition-related curricula and experiences (Furney, Hasazi, Clark/Keefe, & Hartnett, 2003).

Research (Thurlow, Elliott, & Ysseldyke, 1998) and reviews of standards-based approaches (Elmore & Rothman, 1999; McDonnell, McLaughlin, & Morison, 1997; Thurlow & Johnson, 2000) indicate that assessments and standards must be aligned and that all youth, including those with disabilities, must be included in large-scale assessments and other accountability measures to ensure that accountability systems are valid. Further, schools should provide the supports and resources to help all students meet challenging standards (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2004). Assessment accommodations, alternate assessments, and other performance indicators should be addressed within accountability systems (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004a; Thurlow et al., 1998), and assessment results should be used in individualized educational planning. Standards should also look beyond purely academic goals and include the knowledge and skills required for desired postsecondary outcomes (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004a).

NCLB requires that educational decisions be based on student performance data and research-based instructional strategies, and that performance data be shared with parents and other stakeholders. Components of this data-based decision-making process that have been identified through research and best practice reviews include: (a) reporting data in understandable language and in useful categories (Halpern, 1990; Hogan, 2001); (b) sharing data and analyses with a broad range of stakeholders and the general public (Halpern, 1990; Hogan, 2001); (c) including stakeholders in the process of developing data collection instruments (Florio & DeMartini, 1993; Halpern, 1990; Hogan, 2001); and (d) using data to evaluate programs and develop additional programs and services (Halpern, 1990; Hogan, 2001).

Improving School Completion

The prevalence of students dropping out of school is one of the most serious and pervasive problems facing special education programs nationwide. The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) found that more than a third of students with disabilities exited school by dropping out. The NLTS data also revealed that factors such as ethnicity and family income are

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related to dropout rates, and that some groups of special education students are more apt to drop out than others. Of youth with disabilities who do not complete school, the highest proportions are among students with learning disabilities and students with emotional/behavioral disabilities (Wagner et al., 1993).

National data indicate that there has been some improvement in the overall graduation rate of students with disabilities in the United States. Between the 1995-1996 and 1999-2000 school years, the percentage of youth with disabilities graduating with regular diplomas, as reported by states, grew from 52.6 to 56.2 percent. During the same period, the percentage of students with disabilities reported as having dropped out of school declined from 34.1 to 29.4 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). While these data are encouraging, the dropout rate for students with disabilities still remains twice that of students without disabilities.

In the United States, dropout prevention programs have been implemented and evaluated for decades, but the empirical base of well-researched programs is scant, and well-done evaluations of dropout prevention programs specifically targeted towards students with disabilities are rare. Perhaps the most rigorously researched secondary level program for students with disabilities at risk of dropping out is the Check & Connect program (Christenson, 2002; Sinclair, Christenson, Evelo, & Hurley, 1999). Using randomized assignments to experimental and control groups, researchers found significant positive effects of their program. Check & Connect includes the following core elements: (a) a monitor/advocate who builds a trusting relationship with the student, monitors the student on risk indicators, and helps problem-solve difficult issues between the student and the school; (b) promotion of student engagement with the school; (c) flexibility on the part of school administrative personnel regarding staffing patterns and use of punitive disciplinary practices; and (d) relevancy of the high school curriculum to students.

Two common components of successful secondary dropout prevention programs are work-based learning and personal development/self-esteem building (Farrell, 1990; Orr, 1987; Smink, 2002). Of equal importance, however, is tailoring or contextualizing these and other intervention components to the particular school environment (Lehr et al., 2003). Finally, early intervention also appears to be a powerful component in a school district's array of dropout prevention strategies.

Professional Development as a Means to Improve Educational Results

Training and professional development for educators and other stakeholders have been identified as critical components of school reform and improving student achievement and other outcomes. Research studies and analyses of best practices have identified the following essential components of training and development programs: (a) ensuring that school personnel have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively perform their duties (Joyce, 1990); (b) incorporating student performance data and effective strategies for improving student achievement into professional development (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1996; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2001); (c) including educators, family members, and other stakeholders on school leadership teams (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004b); (d) person-centered planning activities for youth, such as involving youth in individualized school and career related decision-making and planning (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004b); and (e) collaborative leadership (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2001).

Many new teachers are entering the field without the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to support transition. Miller, Lombard, and Hazelkorn (2000) report that few special education teachers have received training on methods, materials, and strategies for developing meaningful IEPs that include goals and objectives on transition or that specifically address students' transition needs through curriculum and instruction. Further, many special education teachers underutilize community work-experience programs and fail to coordinate referrals to adult service providers.

Beyond pre-service training, high-quality continuing professional development is needed to ensure that teachers are up-to-date and fully able to support students in the transition from school to adulthood. Miller et al. (2000), in a national study, found that nearly 8 out of 10 teachers (79 percent) reported receiving five hours or less of in-service training regarding inclusion of students with disabilities in their districts' school-to-work programs. Further, nearly half (49 percent) indicated they had received no in-service training related to practices for including students with disabilities in regular education classes and activities. These findings are consistent with the report published by the National Center for Education Statistics regarding the preparation and qualifications of public school teachers (Lewis et al., 1999). This report notes that fewer than 2 out of 10 teachers (19 percent) spent more than eight hours per year on professional development activities to address the

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needs of students with disabilities, despite the fact that teachers report that professional development of longer duration is more effective. The promotion of improved levels of collaboration between general education and special education is in response to another area of need. General education classroom teachers, work-study coordinators, career and technical education instructors, and high school counselors all play an important role in supporting the transition of students with disabilities. These general education personnel need training and other support to help them work effectively with students with disabilities. A recent study of personnel needs in special education (Carlson, Brauen, Klein, Schroll, & Willig, 2001) found that general educators' confidence in serving students with disabilities was dependent on their relationship with special education teachers: those who often received instruction-related suggestions from special educators felt significantly more confident.

Basing Graduation Requirements on Meaningful Measures and Criteria

Requirements that states set for graduation can include completing Carnegie Unit requirements (a certain number of class credits earned in specific areas), successfully passing a competency test, passing high school exit exams, and/or passing a series of benchmark exams (Guy, Shin, Lee, & Thurlow, 1999; Johnson & Thurlow, 2003; Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Anderson, 1995). A study conducted by Johnson & Thurlow (2003) found that 27 states had opted to require that students pass state and/or local exit exams in order to receive a standard high school diploma. This practice has been increasing since the mid-1990s (Guy et al., 1999; Thurlow et al., 1995). States may also require any combination of the above requirements.

Variability in graduation requirements is complicated further by an increasingly diverse set of diploma options. In addition to the standard high school diploma, options now include special education diplomas, certificates of completion, occupational diplomas, and others.

Many states have gone to great lengths to improve the proportion of students with disabilities passing state exit exams and meeting other requirements for graduation. Strategies have included grade-level retention, specialized tutoring and instruction during the school day and after-school, and weekend or summer tutoring programs. While these may be viewed as appropriate interventions and strategies, there is little research evidence supporting these practices. Available research indicates, for example, that repeating a grade does not improve the overall achievement of students with disabilities (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1992; Holmes, 1989).

The implications of state graduation requirements must be thoroughly understood, considering the negative outcomes students experience when they fail to meet state standards for graduation. The availability of alternative diploma options can have a considerable impact on raising graduation rates. However, the ramifications of receiving different types of diplomas need to be considered. A student who receives a non-standard diploma may find their access to postsecondary education or meaningful employment is limited. It is also important for parents and educators to know that if a student graduates from high school with a standard high school diploma, the student is no longer entitled to special education services unless a state or district has a policy allowing continued services under such circumstances. Most states do not have such policies.



Assistive Technology Checklist

(Please check any accommodations you use or need to complete the tasks in bold.)

WRITING

Mechanics of Writing

- Pencil/pen with adaptive grip
- Adapted paper (raised line, highlighted lines)
- Slant-board
- Typewriter
- Portable word processor
- Computer
- Other _____

Alternate Computer Access

- Keyboard with easy access or Access DOS
- Keyguard
- Arm support (e.g., Ergo Rest)
- Track ball/track pad/joystick
- Alternate keyboard (e.g., IntelliKeys, Discover Board, TASH)
- Mouth stick/head pointer
- Head mouse/head master/tracker
- Switch with Morse code
- Switch with scanning
- Voice recognition software
- Word prediction (e.g., Co:Writer) to reduce keystrokes
- Other _____

Composing Written Material

- Word cards/work book/word wall
- Pocket dictionary/thesaurus
- Electronic/talking electronic dictionary, thesaurus/spell checker (e.g., Franklin Bookman)
- Word processor with spell checker/grammar checker
- Word Processor with word prediction (e.g., Co:Writer) to facilitate spelling and sentence construction
- Talking word processor for multi-sensory typing
- Voice recognition software
- Multimedia software for expression of ideas (assignments)
- Other _____

Communication

- Communication board/book with pictures/objects/letters/words
- Eye gaze board (eye gaze communication)
- Simple voice output device (e.g., BigMack, Cheap Talk, Voice in a Box, MicroVoice, Talking Picture Frame, Hawk)
- Voice output device with levels (e.g., 6 Level Voice in a Box, Macaw, Digivox, DAC)
- Voice output device with dynamic display (e.g., Dynavox, Speaking Dynamically with laptop computer/ Freestyle)
- Voice output device with icon sequencing (e.g., AlphaTalker Liberator, DAC)
- Device with speech synthesis for typing (e.g., Cannon Communicator, Link, Write:Out Loud with laptop computer)
- Other _____

READING, STUDYING, AND MATH

Reading

- Changes in text size, spacing, color, background color
- Use of pictures with text (e.g., Picture It, Writing with Symbols)
- Book adapted for page turning (e.g., page fluffers, 3-ring binder)
- Talking electronic device to pronounce challenging words (e.g., Franklin Bookman)
- Scanner with talking word processor
- Electronic books
- Other _____

Learning/Studying

- Low tech aids to find materials (e.g., index tabs, color coded folders)
- Highlight text (e.g., markers, highlight tape, ruler, etc.)
- Voice output reminders for assignments, steps of task, etc.
- Software for manipulation of objects/concept development (e.g., Blocks in Motion, Toy Store)—may use alternate input device, (e.g., switch, touch window)
- Software for organization of ideas and studying (e.g., Inspiration, Claris Works Outline, PowerPoint, etc.)

EXHIBIT 2.2

- Recorded material (books on tape, taped lectures with number coded index, etc.)
- Other _____

Math

- Abacus/math line
- Calculator/calculator with print out
- Talking calculator
- Calculator with large keys and/or large LCD print
- On screen calculator
- Software with templates for math computation (may use adapted input methods)
- Tactile/voice output measuring devices (e.g., clock, ruler)
- Other _____

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

- Adaptive eating devices (e.g., foam handle on utensil)
- Adaptive drinking devices (e.g., cup with cut out rim)
- Adaptive dressing equipment (e.g., button hook, reacher)
- Other _____

Mobility

- Walker
- Grab rails
- Manual wheelchair
- Powered mobility toy (e.g., Cooper Car, GoBot)
- Powered wheelchair with joystick, head switch or sip/puff control
- Other _____

Environmental Control

- Light switch extension
- Use of powerlink and switch to turn on electrical appliances (e.g., radio, fan, blender, etc.)
- Radio/ultra sound/remote controlled appliances
- Other _____

Positioning & Seating

- Non-slip surface on chair to prevent slipping (e.g., Dycem)
- Bolster, rolled towel, blocks for feet

- Adapted/alternate chair, side lyer, stander
- Custom fitted wheelchair or insert
- Other _____

Vision

- Eye glasses
- Magnifier
- Large print books
- Screen magnifier (mounted over screen)
- Screen color contrast (e.g., CloseView)
- Screen magnification software (e.g., CloseView, Zoom Text)
- CCTV (closed circuit television)
- Screen reader (e.g., OutSpoken)
- Braille keyboard and note taker (e.g., Braille N Speak)
- Braille translation software
- Braille printer
- Other _____

Hearing

- Hearing aid
- Classroom amplification
- Captioning
- Signaling device (e.g., vibrating pager)
- TDD/TTY for phone access
- Screen flash for alert signals on computer
- Other _____

Comments

Adapted from the Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative's Technology Checklist. Visit <<http://www.wati.org/loanlibrary/techchecklist.html>>.

Portfolio Assessment Criteria Checklist

Does this portfolio:

- Involve the student in the selection of best pieces
- Include raw data and summarizing data
- Show no conflict in purpose
- Involve the collection of student samples over time
- Involve the student in a self-reflection process
- Include contents different from a cumulative folder
- Include contents generated from multiple procedures
- Include the teacher's own instructional reflections
- Show evidence of teacher and student collaboration in setting goals
- Incorporate student-teacher conferences
- Involve the student in the self-assessment process
- Incorporate tasks that are performed in authentic contexts
- Include a mutually agreed upon criteria for evaluation

Source: Florida HS/HT Sample Curriculum (2006).



Websites with Activities, Lesson Plans, and Curricula Addressing Science and Math

Ask Dr. Math provides answers to math questions found in homework, puzzles, math contests, and math education. Questions and answers are listed by school level and specific math skill. Questions from students can be submitted through e-mail. Visit <<http://forum.swarthmore.edu/dr.math/dr-math.html>>.

Busy Teachers' WebSite K-12 contains valuable resources for teachers. Visit <<http://www.ceismc.gatech.edu/BusyT>>.

Cyberinfrastructure examines the convergence of three realities—the spread of the Internet, the shrinkage of computers, and the accumulation of databases—that have led researchers to envision a planet-wide grid of computing, information, networking, and sensor resources. Learn about projects to develop the emerging cyber-infrastructure. Discover resources for teaching and learning about information technology. Sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF), visit <http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/cyber/index.jsp>.

Junior Solar Sprint and Hydrogen Fuel Cell Car Competitions focuses on designing and building solar and hydrogen fuel cell cars. Explore components of solar cars, conduct experiments to improve car performance, find activities for measuring solar cell output, tips on vehicle construction and transmission design, and formulas for calculating vehicle performance. See a list of regional competition sites and find out how to integrate solar vehicle activities into the curriculum. This site is sponsored by the Department of Education. Visit <http://www.nrel.gov/education/jss_hfc.html>.

Kids' Space at the Internet Public Library contains ideas on and help with science projects and allows students to go on virtual field trips. Visit <<http://ipl.sils.umich.edu/div/project-guide/>>.

NASA Connect: Sun-Earth Day features teacher guides and other resources for studying sun-earth connections and celebrating Sun-Earth Day. In "Ancient Observatories," students measure the movement of the sun and find solar noon. In "Venus Transit," students learn about scale models and the "Astronomical Unit," which is used to determine distances from the earth to other planets and stars. In "Dancing in the Night Sky," students learn about the Aurora Borealis, or the Northern Lights. This site is sponsored by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Visit <<http://sunearthday.nasa.gov/2006/events/broadcasts.php>>.

National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Virtual Museum features the work of a federal agency that has helped keep U.S. technology at the leading edge. Visit the online exhibits to learn about the standardization of women's clothing, weights and measures (crucial to industrialization), technology development during World War II, the first government computer with an internal program, OCR machines, the weathering of stone, and more. This site is sponsored by the U.S. Commerce Department's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Visit <<http://museum.nist.gov/>>.

National Science Foundation: Where Discoveries Begin contains ideas for classroom activities and resources that promote science, math, and technology. Visit <<http://www.nsf.gov/news/classroom/>>.

New York Times Learning Network is a free service for students in grades 3-12, their teachers, and parents. Students can read the day's top stories, take a news quiz about today's world, and play special crossword puzzles. Teachers can access a daily lesson plan for grades 6-12, as well as access archived and thematic lesson plans. Parents can enhance their children's understanding of current events using conversation starters and joining online discussions. The site is updated Monday through Friday throughout the year. Visit <<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/index.html>>.

NIDA Goes Back to School is a source of free information about the latest science-based drug abuse publications and teaching materials. Students can learn about the science behind drug abuse. Sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, this site includes publications, curriculum and a "Teen Site," <teens.drugabuse.gov>. Visit <<http://www.backtoschool.drugabuse.gov/>>.

Path of Totality: Measuring Angular Size and Distance examines the natural phenomena that create a total eclipse. NASA scientists and engineers introduce a satellite used to make artificial eclipses in order to learn about the sun's corona. Students measure the angular size and predict the angular distance of objects in the sky. This site is sponsored by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Visit <http://connect.larc.nasa.gov/programs/2005-2006/path_of_totality/>.

Preview the Heart takes students on a virtual tour of the heart. Visit <<http://sln2.fi.edu/biosci/preview/heartpreview.html>>.

EXHIBIT 2.4: WEBSITES WITH ACTIVITIES, LESSON PLANS, AND CURRICULUM

ScienCentralNews provides the latest news on developments in life sciences, physical sciences, and technology. You can sort articles by topic, e.g., genetics, animals, the brain, chemistry, physics, earth, oceans, astronomy, climate, engineering, biotechnology, computers, nanotechnology, and others. See articles on cancer-causing genes, music for pain, fat vaccine, biofuel energy, no-mow grass, liquid armor, fouled beaches, phones and driving, auto-focus eyewear, activity breaks, memory, and more. Visit <<http://www.sciencentral.com/>>.

Smithsonian National Zoological Park is used to teach people to engage in conservation of wildlife, water, and habitats. It provides fact sheets and photos for many of the 2,400 mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, fish, and invertebrates at the National Zoo and the Zoo's Conservation and Research Center, including species at the Zoo that are endangered or threatened. Visit <<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/default.cfm>>.

Smithsonian: Science and Technology explores the Apollo 11 mission to the moon, Arctic wildlife, migratory birds, stars and black holes, sky watching, the Galapagos Islands, invasive species, views of earth, milestones of flight, shade grown coffee, species of Indian River Lagoon, polio, and much more. Visit <http://www.si.edu/science_and_technology/>.

Sun-Earth Day is a series of programs and events throughout the year that culminates with a celebration of the spring equinox. "Eclipse: In a Different Light" shows how eclipses have inspired people to study the sun-earth-moon system. Join this journey of exploration and discovery in preparation for a total solar eclipse. This site is sponsored by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Visit <<http://sunearthday.nasa.gov/>>.

Teacher Talk contains resources for teachers. Visit <<http://education.indiana.edu/cas/tt/tthmpg.html>>.

Teacher Workshops provides materials from dozens of teacher presentations on literacy, math, science, history, and the arts at the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher-to-Teacher Summer Workshops. Topics include reading, writing, algebra, computation, data, geometry, peer teaching, earth systems, cells, physical science, labs, science mysteries, historical literacy, arts, reading, and more. Visit <<http://www.t2tweb.us/Workshops/Sessions.asp>>.

Teachers Helping Teachers provides additional resources for teachers. Visit <<http://www.pacificnet.net/~mandel>>.

The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World provides opportunities for students to go on virtual field trips. Visit <<http://ce.eng.usf.edu/pharos/wonders/>>.

The Structures of Life takes you into the world of "structural biology"—a branch of molecular biology that focuses on the shape of nucleic acids and proteins (the molecules that do

most of the work in our bodies). Learn about the structures and roles of proteins, tools used to study protein shapes, how proteins are used in designing new medications (for AIDS and arthritis), and what structural biology reveals about all life processes. Find out about careers in biomedical research. This site is sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Visit <<http://publications.nigms.nih.gov/structlife/>>.

The Weather Channel is devoted to providing the current weather, weather outlooks and forecasts, and "weather whys" on every state in America. Visit <<http://www.weather.com>>.

TryScience is a gateway to the excitement of contemporary science and technology through on and offline interactivity with more than 400 science and technology centers worldwide. A partnership of IBM Corporation, the New York Hall of Science (NYHOS), the Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC), and science centers worldwide, TryScience provides opportunities to investigate, discover, and try science. Visit <<http://www.tryscience.org>>.

U.S. Antarctic Program aims to understand the world's coldest, windiest, driest, and harshest continent (Antarctica)—its ecosystems and its effects on global processes such as climate. Learn about important discoveries. See articles about a killer crater found under the ice and the melting of polar ice sheets. This site is sponsored by the National Science Foundation. Visit <<http://www.usap.gov/scienceAndEducation.cfm>>.

Visualization Projects includes simulations of more than 40 phenomena: sea ice and CO₂, climate change (230-year period), clouds and precipitation, coral reef evolution (starting 21,000 years ago), universal fire shape, fire twirl and burst behavior, tornadoes, thunderstorms, typhoons, El Niño events, greenhouse gases and sulfate aerosols, polar vortex breakdown, CO₂ and temperature, CFCs in the ocean, cloud evolution (7-day period), daily weather in the U.S., and more. Visit <<http://www.vets.ucar.edu/vg/categories/all.shtml>>.

Volcano World allows you to tap into a volcanologist who can greatly enrich the learning experiences of students through information, photographs, data, and interactive experiments involving volcanoes. Visit <<http://volcano.und.nodak.edu>>.

Zero Gravity provides an attractive teaching environment for getting students interested in science. This unique program enables students to design and conduct science experiments in a zero-gravity environment. The Weightless Flights of Discovery program teaches educators how to relate zero-gravity experiments to science, engineering, technology, and mathematics curriculum development. Registration is free. Visit <<http://www.eschoolnews.org/news/showStoryts.cfm?ArticleID=6376>>.

CHAPTER 3:

Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences

This chapter examines the second *Guidepost*, Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences, and includes information on assessments, developing soft skills, exposure to postsecondary education options, industry site visits, job shadowing, and internships opportunities as core activities. This chapter also includes information on entrepreneurship, an optional activity that has been developed by a few and should be explored by all HS/HT programs because of the unique opportunity it affords and the many useful lessons that can be learned. It is important to keep in mind that each *Guidepost* is co-dependent on the other *Guideposts*, a fact that will become clear when developing a HS/HT program based on the *Guideposts*.

Component 1: Career Assessment

Career assessment is the process through which students explore career options for the purpose of identifying those that are compatible with their personal goals, interests, and abilities. It is a key step in a continuous process to help young people make informed choices about their futures. HS/HT program operators must collect information regarding the young person's likes, dislikes, interpersonal relations, skills, abilities, capabilities, interests, personality traits, and responses to specific environmental conditions. The career assessment process differs for each student.

To address different learning styles, cultural differences, language barriers, academic difficulties, and challenges, there are three basic types of assessment that are used to assist youth in this process: formal assessment, informal assessment, and work-based learning experiences.

Formal (standardized) assessments are those that are typically administered, scored, and interpreted only by people who have been trained to do so (e.g., psychologists, vocational evaluators, qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors, etc.). While there are four key domains of assessment (i.e., Educational Domain, Psychological Domain, Vocational Domain, and Vocational and Medical Domain), HS/HT should be primarily interested in assessments within the vocational domain to address this *Guidepost*.

To learn more about formal assessments, check out one of NCWD/Youth's most popular and requested documents reflecting the most up-to-date developments in assessments entitled, *Career Planning Begins with Assessment: A Guide for Professionals Serving Youth with Educational & Career Development Challenges*. This revised version of the Assessment Guide can be purchased from NCWD/Youth or downloaded for free at http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/assessment.html.

Informal assessments include, but are not limited to, online inventories, interviews with youth and family

members, and career portfolios. They are typically conducted in unstructured settings to help individuals identify their career interests, improve their performance, and identify possible learning disabilities. The HS/HT program operator may gather information about the young person by interviewing the youth and/or members of his/her family, observing the youth in class, and reviewing records and other formal assessment results. Often, information gathered during informal assessments leads to referrals for formal assessments and becomes part of the formal assessment record when preparing comprehensive reports or career profiles. (See Exhibit 3.2 for *Sample Online Career Assessment*.)

HS/HT program operators can get additional information about a young person's interests, skills, and abilities by conducting their own informal career assessment activities. Exhibit 3.3 provides examples of informal assessment activities that HS/HT programs can undertake to determine the career interests and basic work performance skills of participating students.

"I love art! It's my passion!!" says Beth W., a junior at a high school in Frankford, Delaware. She has the talent to support her passion too! Beth is a Delaware HS/HT student who has become one of approximately 10 featured artists at the school. Her work is on display for all students, faculty, and visitors to see. Her section of the "gallery" includes a self-portrait, a portrait of our 16th President, Abraham Lincoln, and a still life. Beth participated in a HS/HT activity called "Smart Options" (purchased software that is used to research job clusters) and discovered that she loves painting and drawing and that she is an image-, logic- and music-smart person. She enjoys arts and crafts, building model houses and planes, and reading short stories, fiction, and *Chicken Soup* books. She hopes to pursue a career in fashion design or art so that she can put her talents to use. Beth learned a lot about herself while participating in HS/HT and is looking forward to having a career that matches her strengths and interests.

Component 2: Structured Exposure to Postsecondary Education and Other Life-Long Learning Opportunities

An increasing number of jobs in today's labor market require education and/or training beyond high school. While many people view vocational training beyond high school as an appropriate option for youth with disabilities, a college education is not always seen in the same light. Unfortunately, due to low expectations, many people do not expect youth with disabilities to go to college. When these low expectations are communicated to youth, either directly or indirectly, such youth are not likely to view postsecondary education as an option. This situation can and should change, and HS/HT programs can be a major factor in facilitating such a change.

The exploration of postsecondary education options is an important aspect of every HS/HT program. There are several options within the realm of postsecondary education: career and technical education, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities. Technical schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities differ in three important areas: (1) the type of programs offered, (2) the type of degree earned, and (3) the cost of attending. In addition to looking at career and technical education options, HS/HT coordinators should assist their students in exploring the differences in two-year community colleges, four-year colleges and universities.

Online Resources to Consider

ACT Prep Course Options, sponsored by The Princeton Review, provides information on the ACT test and options for preparing for the ACT test based on a student's learning style. The options include: classroom courses, online courses, private tutoring, small group tutoring, and books. Visit <http://www.princetonreview.com/college/testprep/testprep.asp?TPRPAGE=2&TYPE=ACT-HOME>.

College MatchMaker can be used to search for two- and four-year schools, colleges and universities that meet individual needs. Visit http://apps.collegeboard.com/search/adv_typeofschool.jsp.

College Preparation Timeline will help you prepare a time line as you consider and think about applying for college. Visit <http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:5PD3aj_igsoJ:www.uwcu.org/products/studentloans/Student_Loan_timeline.pdf+college+preparation+timeline&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=1>.

Colleges and Technical Schools provides ideas on questions to ask before enrolling in a career college or a technical school (e.g., is the school accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or licensed by the state in which it is located). This section of the Department’s website can help in choosing the right school to meet one’s career goals. Visit <<http://www.ed.gov/students/prep/college/consumerinfo/index.html>>.

Financial Aid for College provides information on the “Free Application for Federal Student Aid.” Visit <<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>>.

Getting Ready for College: Advising High School Students with Learning Disabilities provides information specific to youth with learning disabilities who are preparing for college. This resource is sponsored by the HEATH Resource Center. Visit <<http://www.kidsource.com/Heath/gr.html>>.

Peterson’s College Search provides information about majors at two-year and four-year colleges. Visit <<http://www.petersons.com/ugrad/select/u2majors.html>> and <<http://www.petersons.com/ugrad/select/u4majors.html>>.

Post-ITT: Postsecondary Innovative Transition and Technology Project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, contains a collection of resources and activities established to aid students, parents, educators, and disability services coordinators in the task of planning for a student’s transition from secondary to postsecondary education. It contains activities and planning worksheets for students as well as a teacher’s manual. Visit <<http://postitt.org/>>.

SAT Preparation is the College Board website that includes all kinds of information on the SAT test, including an SAT Preparation Center, an SAT Subject

Test Center, and a Learning Center. It also includes information on planning for, finding, applying for, and paying for college. Visit <www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html>.

The American Association of Community Colleges provides information on two-year colleges. Visit <<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/>>.

The Community College Resources at the College Board website provides information on two-year colleges. Visit <<http://www.collegeboard.com/communitycollege/>> and <<http://www.collegeboard.com/article/0,,4-21-0-48391,00.html>>.

Component 3: Exposure to Career Opportunities

Exposure to career opportunities is the process of exposing youth to information about the job market; job-related skills; minimum requirements such as education level; characteristics of different work environments; and the overall culture of specific occupations. Unfortunately, most young people, including youth with disabilities, have little knowledge of the range of jobs and careers that make up today’s labor market. Also at issue is that youth with disabilities have historically been steered towards certain types of jobs based on low expectations. These jobs, often referred to as the “6 F’s”, include food (food services), filth (garbage or custodial jobs), filing (administrative/clerical work), flowers (grounds keeping), fetching (errand boy/girl), or folding (housekeeping and retail stockroom work). While all work is worthwhile and these types of jobs are frequently first jobs for youth, many of these jobs offer little in the way of a career ladder. As a result, youth with disabilities end up looking at jobs rather than careers.

HS/HT programs are changing these trends by providing students with disabilities with opportunities to explore a wide range of careers, including the STEM careers. HS/HT activities are structured specifically to help youth with disabilities see the STEM careers and other technology-focused professions as options that are available to them.

The following are some suggested ways to expose HS/HT students to the wide array of opportunities within the STEM careers and to the pervasiveness of the use of technology in many of the jobs in today's labor market.

1. Guest speakers are an important part of the HS/HT year-round program. They can offer participants specific information about the STEM careers; guidance in identifying and planning for future goals; and a chance to discuss the skills necessary for successfully engaging in different types of work. It is critically important to include professionals with disabilities among the guest speakers you recruit. Beyond that, the range of speakers and topics is limited only by the interests of the audience and the creativity of the program operator. Guest speaker workshops or presentations can be held in various sites—at the local high school or university, a worksite, or other community location. You may be able to get additional support for your HS/HT program by extending invitations to family members and guardians.

- Contact your local Chamber of Commerce or other business organizations involved in promoting business/education partnerships. They may have a speakers bureau that can provide you with ideas about potential speakers. To find your local Chamber, visit <http://www.uschamber.com/default>. Asking employers to speak at a HS/HT event is a great way to get them in the door. They are more likely to commit to additional activities once they learn more about the program.
- Include a wide variety of topics, including the following: marketable technology skills; technology careers; work ethics and soft skills; information on how to talk to a supervisor; how to discuss your disability with an employer; how to ask for a reasonable accommodation in the workplace; benefits planning; finding and securing financial aid; setting attainable goals; the value of internships (both paid and unpaid); tips for your first internship or job; study skills; computer literacy; motivation; resume writing; and independent living options.

HS/HT students enrolled in a Transition course at South High School in Colorado were taught how to advocate for themselves as they explored job opportunities and careers during the Cherry Creek Mall Career Quest. The event used a “Mission Impossible” theme, where the “mission” was to meet as many possible employers and learn as much about their professions as possible. Prior to the event the teacher prepared the students with lessons and role-plays such as how to meet a potential employer, how to introduce themselves for the first time, and how to dress professionally. Participating students had the chance to explore a variety of jobs such as health care professions, technical professions, telecommunications, retail sales and management, public safety, and the publication industry. Students used a “Career Collector Card” to record information on each job, including the name of the company, the company representative’s contact information, the prerequisite education/degree(s) for the job, the experience needed to be hired, the expected salary, and information on what the student liked and didn’t like about the job. The cards, which also provided prompts to the student as to what questions to ask, were designed to be used as a resource later when

the student actually looked for work. Two students were paired up with an adult who accompanied them. Adults consisted of HS/HT coordinators, educators, and family members.

Each student pair received a “mission” that had the names of the businesses and the people they were to seek out to interview. The adults were encouraged to hang back and let the students take the lead in asking questions and talking to employer representatives. Students were encouraged to seek out more businesses that were not on their list and collect more cards if they had time. Some participating employers agreed to take participating students on a tour of their facilities and to talk to them more in depth about the jobs available there. Students got excited about opportunities they had never considered. Employers were engaged in sharing information with the students about their jobs and encouraging them to pursue their goals. Students increased their self-confidence and motivation as they began to venture out on their own without adult encouragement. Students developed social and problem-solving skills as they had to approach strangers and ask probing questions.

- Brief your speakers on disability etiquette including using acceptable language; speaking directly to the person, not to the person’s interpreter; reading a Power Point presentation out loud if anyone in the audience is visually impaired; and not leaning on the chair when talking to a person who uses a wheelchair. (See Exhibit 3.4 for additional suggestions related to disability etiquette.)

Create obtainable goals and objectives for each event where a guest speaker is part of the program.

1. The primary goal of this event is...
2. The learning objectives (for HS/HT program participants) are...
3. The expected outcome of this event is...
4. The intended audience is...
5. As a follow-up, I will...
6. As a follow-up, HS/HT participants will...

2. Informational interviews are one of the best sources for gathering information about what is happening in a specific occupation or industry. Young people can initiate an informational interview by contacting professionals working in that particular field and asking questions about the careers associated with that field. Remember, the purpose of an informational interview is to obtain career information, not to get a job. (Exhibit 3.5 outlines Steps to Follow to Conduct an Effective Informational Interview and Exhibit 3.6 provides 20 Questions for an Effective Informational Interview.)

Top 5 reasons to conduct informational interviews:

1. Explore careers, clarify career goals, and identify career strengths and needs;
2. Discover unadvertised opportunities;
3. Expand personal networks;
4. Build confidence for future job interviews; and
5. Reveal up-to-date career information.

3. Research-based activities include scanning professional magazines, periodicals, newspapers, and the Internet. These are all excellent ways for young people to learn about specific occupations while using critical academic skills to gather and sort through such information.
4. Community resource mapping is another way to acquaint youth with the culture, resources, barriers, and potential partners within their community. Consider creating a scavenger hunt and include clues relating to local businesses and employment opportunities (i.e., the local Chamber of Commerce), transportation (including accessible transportation), community resources (recreational, religious, etc.), human resources (public and private service agencies, community colleges, etc.), and employment and training services (One-Stop Career Centers, the state Vocational Rehabilitation agency, Independent Living Centers, etc.).

Remember to follow up with your speakers, those granting informational interviews, and any partners who have provided research-based activities. Write a letter of thanks and ask each young person to write one as well.

Online Resources to Consider

In addition to researching job openings in the newspaper and on the Internet, these links may be helpful in assisting HS/HT students as they explore different career paths.

America’s CareerInfoNet is a One-Stop Career Center that contains a wealth of information on the knowledge, skills, abilities, and tasks for selected occupations; skills credentialing; informed career decision-making; training and education; labor market trends; and career tools. It also contains links to career videos and state-specific career information. Visit <[http://www.acinet.org/acinet/default.asp?soccode=&stfips=>](http://www.acinet.org/acinet/default.asp?soccode=&stfips=).

America’s Job Bank is the nation’s largest online labor exchange. Businesses can post job listings, create customized job orders, and search resumes. Job seekers post resumes and search for jobs that fit their career goals. Visit <<http://www.ajb.org>>.

America's Service Locator helps people find a range of local services including workforce centers, unemployment benefits, job training, education opportunities, and other workforce services. Visit <<http://www.ServiceLocator.org>>.

Birkman Quiz helps students explore their personality and skills. The quiz can help guide students as they embark on career planning. Visit <http://www.princetonreview.com/cte/quiz/career_quiz1.asp>.

CareerBuilder puts jobs in front of poised job seekers, wherever they are – at home or at work – in print and on the Internet. It is one of the nation's leading recruitment resources, with presence in more than 130 local newspapers. Visit <<http://www.careerbuilder.com>>.

Career Exploration provides online exploration activities related to vocational and technical careers at the Vocational Information Center's website. Each career path page includes links to various career descriptions as well as links to educational sites relating to the specific career, such as tutorials, directories, associations, industry news, glossaries, and related academics. Visit <<http://www.khake.com/page2.html>>.

Career Interests Game is sponsored by the University of Missouri. Based on Dr. John Holland's theory that people and work environments can be loosely classified into six groups (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional), the Career Interests Game is designed to help match an individual's interests and skills with relevant careers. It focuses on how personalities fit into specific work environments and careers. Sample jobs are directly linked to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook website for detailed job outlook information. Visit <<http://career.missouri.edu/students/explore/thecareerinterestsgame.php>>.

Career Key is an online interest assessment that measures skills, abilities, values, and interests. It allows the user to identify promising jobs and locate accurate information about them. Visit <<http://www.careerkey.org/english/>>.

Career Voyages is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education that provides information on high growth, in-demand occupations along with the skills and education needed to attain those jobs. It includes information on training and education available to assist people in preparing for these occupations and to help people advance in different careers. Visit <<http://www.careervoyages.gov/>>.

Hire Disability Solutions, LLC is a national organization that specializes in job services and placement for individuals with disabilities, in collaboration with the online job search site Monster.com. The career resources section of their website contains information for job seekers with disabilities and for businesses seeking information on hiring individuals with disabilities. It permits the posting of resumes and job opportunities, and contains information on workplace accessibility and various pieces of legislation that impact the employment and education of individuals with disabilities. Visit <<http://hireDS.com>>.

JobWeb, sponsored by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, includes links to Find an Employer, Search JobWeb, Articles Library, Contact JobWeb, Shop JobWeb, Online Career Fair, Resumes & Interviews, Career Development, Internships/Co-ops, Salary Information, Job Market Research, and After College. Also included is an "Ask the Expert" section which houses archived questions related to disability. Visit <<http://www.jobweb.org/>>.

LifeWorks, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health's Office of Science Education, explores careers in health and medical sciences. See interviews with more than 70 professionals and learn what their typical workday involves and why they chose their career. Find out which careers match your interests and skills. Visit <<http://science.education.nih.gov/LifeWorks>>.

NCDA is the National Career Development Association, a division of the American Counseling Association (ACA). NCDA provides service to the public and professionals involved with or interested in career development. Internet links provide information on self-assessment, career development process, occupational information, employment trends, military

information, distance education, etc. Visit <http://www.ncda.org/>.

O*NET is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and provides the general public with broad access to a large database of occupational information and labor market research. It includes information on skills, abilities, knowledge, work activities, and interests associated with approximately 1,000 occupations. Visit <http://online.onetcenter.org/>.

Teacher’s Guide to the Occupational Outlook Handbook is a handbook sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics that describes hundreds of occupations. For each occupation, it tells what workers do, what the working conditions are, the training and education needed, earnings potential, and expected job prospects. Job search tips, state-specific job market information, articles about specific occupations and industries, and additional career information are also included. Visit http://www.bls.gov/oco/teachers_guide.htm.

U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics provides detailed information on the job market, including trends and forecasts for the future. Visit <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>.

Vocational Information Center is a central online location for career and technical education students and educational professionals to access links, resources, and lesson plans in areas such as: career activities, preparing for career and school (including portfolios and related resources), applied academics (including math and science), exploring different industries, and work-related activities. Visit <http://www.khake.com/page94.html>.

Your Employment Selections (YES!) is a motion-video, Internet-based job preference program for youth and adults with disabilities. It allows youth and adult participants with limited or no reading skills to watch videos of jobs, to listen as a narrator describes key tasks in each job, and to select preferred ones. Produced by the Technology, Research, and Innovation in Special Education (TRISPED) Project at Utah State University, the program includes videos for 120 different jobs. Visit <http://www.yesjobsearch.com/index.cfm>.

The following websites are examples of STEM related jobs and careers.

Architects, visit <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos038.htm>.

Astronauts, visit <http://liftoff.msfc.nasa.gov/academy/astronauts/wannabe.html>.

Meteorologists, visit <http://www.weatherwizkids.com/becoming.htm>.

Music Production, visit <http://cnvi.com/applause/>.

Pharmacists or Toxicologists, visit <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos079.htm> and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toxicology>.

Professional Chefs, visit <http://www.princetonreview.com/cte/profiles/dayInLife.asp?careerID=32>.

Veterinarians, visit <http://netvet.wustl.edu/vcareer.htm>.

Web Development/Information Technology, visit http://www.dashes.com/ani/2005/09/06/web_development.

Zoo Keepers, visit <http://www.jobprofiles.org/> (look under the “Ag and Nature” tab).

Component 4: Developing Work-Readiness Skills

Work-readiness skills are the basic “soft skills” that complement the technical knowledge and skills (e.g., reading comprehension, mathematics, science, computer skills, etc.) needed to perform a job. Work-readiness skills have consistently been documented by employers as the weakest link between graduates of both high school and college and the world of work. In 2006, four organizations (The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management) collaborated on a survey of over 400 employers across the United States to determine the skill sets employers were seeking when bringing new employees into the workforce, particularly when hiring recent graduates from high schools, community colleges, technical schools and four-year colleges. According to their findings

employers value applied skills (e.g., professionalism/work ethics, oral and written communication skills, teamwork/collaboration, and critical thinking/problem-solving), more than educational attainment and basic knowledge of specific subjects such as math and reading comprehension. The survey also indicated growing frustration among employers over the lack of these applied skills in the new people entering the workforce.

Soft Skills Development Activities

“Soft skills” refer to the cluster of personality traits, social graces, language skills, personal habits, work habits, and attitudes that are characteristic of people across all occupations to varying degrees and that are necessary to succeed in the workplace. Soft skills, which complement a person’s ability to perform the technical requirements of a job, include a variety of things that can be learned such as good oral communication skills, honesty, self-motivation/taking initiative, creativity, organizational skills, problem-solving skills, a willingness to learn, teamwork/collaboration skills, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, flexibility/adaptability, ability to work under pressure, dependability, punctuality, customer service skills, and social etiquette skills (e.g., dressing and acting appropriately).

Although it is important to interweave learning soft skills into educational activities generally, there is often not enough time in the school day to emphasize all these important skills. Consequently, HS/HT programs need to devote substantial time and resources to addressing this well recognized weakness in all youth in order to help youth with disabilities compete in the world of work. After-school and summer activities sponsored by HS/HT provide excellent opportunities to assist youth with disabilities in developing these all important work-readiness skills.

In developing HS/HT activities/curriculum to address the development of soft skills, opportunities should be provided for students to practice the following:

- **Teamwork.** Encourage team projects and team activities, such as writing a quarterly newsletter, jointly interviewing potential guest speakers, working as part of a team that is creating something,

undertaking a community services project, or creating a website.

- **Communication.** Organize opportunities for students to practice presenting themselves to employers. Ask guest speakers to provide mock interviews for students. Videotape these interviews and provide immediate feedback. Take students to a local career fair where they can gain experience talking to potential employers. Have students present a project they have completed.
- **Problem-Solving.** Arrange for students to create and manage hands-on projects. Present students with a problem and divide them into groups to solve it. Ask the groups to report back to the larger group.
- **Customer Service.** Provide role-playing opportunities that allow students to respond to requests from potential “customers” through face-to-face contact, email, and telephone.
- **Social and Business Etiquette.** Model socially effective work behaviors like good manners, appropriate body language, arriving on time to work or meetings, appropriate dress, and good grooming. It is important to clearly communicate the expectation for social and business etiquette.

It is particularly important to address these skills prior to approving any HS/HT student’s participation in an internship (either paid or unpaid). Acquiring these soft skills can be a critical factor in ensuring the success of an internship or of a job placement.

Florida HS/HT received \$10,000 from Darden Restaurants to provide customer service workshops and support paid summer internships for HS/HT students.

Job Search Skills Activities

Students can also benefit greatly from opportunities to explore and expand their job search skills. HS/HT coordinators should assist students in learning about the different types of resumes and help them develop an effective resume. All youth may not understand that conveying their experiences such as baby sitting, caring for a neighbor's animals, or cutting grass can provide valuable information to employers. Additionally, emphasize the value of volunteer work and community service, as such experiences are also viewed as basic work experience.

Suggested Activities

- **Create Resumes:** Have sample resume templates available on a computer. As some young people will have more work experience than others, make functional (skills-based) resume templates available in addition to chronological ones.

“Experience” resumes may include

- name, address, phone/fax numbers, e-mail address;
- career objective;
- education (dates, institution, city, degree/major, specialties);
- employment (dates, company, city, job title, details of position, description of accomplishments—include internships and volunteer jobs!);
- summary of qualifications;
- languages;
- computer skills (programs you can operate);
- awards received;
- interests/activities; and
- references (supervisors and teachers).

“Skills” resumes may include

- name, address, phone/fax numbers, e-mail address;
- career objective;
- functional skills summary (includes skills from school, positive personality traits, grades if good, special projects, etc.);
- volunteer experience (dates, locations, city, details of position, description of accomplishments—include in-school jobs!);
- languages;
- computer skills (programs you can operate);
- awards received;
- interests/activities; and
- references (from supervisors and teachers).

- **Write Cover Letters:** Basic job seeking skills also include developing an appropriate cover letter that highlights things relevant to the job being sought. HS/HT programs should provide opportunities for youth to draft cover letters for specific jobs of interests and to respond to questions that are likely to be asked during interviews for different types of jobs.
- **Practice Interviews:** Students often practice mock interviews in groups of twos and provide feedback to one another. In some programs, HS/HT staff videotape these mock interviews as a means of providing constructive feedback. It is particularly useful when peers provide concrete examples of what the young person did well and identify areas for improvement. Some HS/HT programs ask employers to come in, conduct the mock interviews, and provide feedback to participating students.
- **Discuss Disclosure:** Don't forget to discuss issues surrounding disability disclosure and what a young person might expect during a job interview with regard to their disability. Talk about appropriate and inappropriate questions regarding one's disability. Discuss disability disclosure as it applies to a job interview as opposed to actual acceptance of a job and the need to request reasonable accommodations.

Deciding if and when to disclose a disability is a highly personal decision and can be challenging. Much depends on individual preference and the disability involved. **Program operators should never disclose a HS/HT participant's disability to an employer.** It is up to the young person to disclose this information. Training may be needed in order to practice disability disclosure. (See Exhibit 3.7 for information on Disability Disclosure: Advantages and Disadvantages.)

When practicing disability disclosure, help the young person focus on what s/he CAN do (abilities)—and what s/he has to OFFER a potential employer. The more positive a young person is, the more s/he will convey, “I am a qualified candidate for this position.”

A great source of information on disability disclosure is the *411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities*, produced by NCWD/Youth. This workbook is designed for youth, and adults working with them, to learn about disability disclosure. It helps young people make informed decisions about whether or not to disclose their disability and understand how that decision may impact their education, employment, and social lives. Based on the premise that disclosure is a very personal decision, the workbook helps young people think about and practice disclosing their disability. This workbook guides adults as they help young people disclose. The workbook can be used in one-on-one situations or in classrooms and group settings. The *411* can be purchased or downloaded free of charge at http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/411.html.

Online Resources to Consider

Below are some links that can assist HS/HT students as they prepare resumes, write cover letters, prepare for job interviews, and think about disclosing their disabilities.

Career City: Ten Key Ingredients of the Cover Letter provides assistance in developing a cover letter. Visit <http://www.careercity.com/hot/index.asp?f=getinter/cvltr/10keys.asp>.

Guide to Resume Writing takes the user through the preliminary steps to building and writing a resume with the following online “teaching” tools: How to prepare an effective resume; Action words; Sample resumes; and What employers want. Visit http://www.jobweb.com/Resumes_Interviews/resume_guide/restips.html.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a service of the Office of Disability Employment Policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. JAN’s mission is to facilitate the employment and retention of workers with disabilities by making information on job accommodations, self-employment, and small business opportunities readily available to interested parties. The website includes information on disability disclosure. Visit <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>.

Jobsmart: Resumes & Cover Letters provides assistance in developing a resume. Visit <http://jobsmart.org/tools/resume/index.htm>.

Life Skills for Vocational Success (LSVS) contains over 60 lesson plans for educators, counselors, job coaches, and other professionals working to increase the employability of people with disabilities. Lessons focus on social skills, decision-making skills, employability, money management, transportation, health, family responsibilities, basic understanding of the law, and telephone skills. Visit <http://www.workshopsinc.com/manual/index.html>.

So You Wanna Write a Cover Letter? provides assistance in developing a cover letter. Visit <http://www.soyouwanna.com/site/syws/coverletter/coverletter.html>.

Using the Internet to Get a Job provides instruction on how to create an electronic resume. Visit <http://www.oakton.edu/resource/stuserv/netjobs/resumes/>.

WorkabilityIV is a pre-employment program for San Jose State University students with disabilities. The website includes rules for a good disclosure. Visit <http://www.work4.sjsu.edu/jobsearchtips/disclosure/disclosure.html>.

Component 5: Industry Site Visits and Tours

Industry site visits and tours typically involve a group of young people (accompanied by adult chaperones) visiting various job sites to be exposed to and learn about real-life work environments. Such visits give students an overview of many facets of a particular business or industry and often provide them with their first exposure to the day-to-day operations of technology-related careers. The itinerary for any site visit should depend on the interests of the students involved and on the host organization’s programs or facilities. Visits and tours are generally scheduled for a few hours or one full day. No matter how much time is spent at the site, it is crucial to work closely with the host organization’s representative to develop a clear understanding of expectations and intended outcomes.

It is also important to inform the staff hosting the visit about any accommodations that might be needed by participating students. Finally, it is extremely important to clearly communicate to students your expectations of them during an industry site tour.

Site visits and tours can be especially enriching and motivating for students. For example, talking with a company employee may spark a student's interest in a particular occupation, while seeing a research lab in action may help another student develop a better overall understanding of science careers and methods to conduct investigations and research.

As an added benefit, contact with host organization representatives can be a foundation for strong, lasting relationships that may result in additional involvement in the future such as providing internships or other enrichment opportunities for youth. Site visits provide opportunities for employers to view young people with disabilities as potential members of the future workforce.

Examples of HS/HT Site Visits and Industry Tours

- **Medical technology facilities at hospitals**
- **Science and natural history museums**
- **Planetariums and observatories**
- **Aerospace firms**
- **Medical instrument manufacturing companies**
- **Bio-engineering research firms**
- **Biomedical research firms**
- **Electric utility companies**
- **Bank data centers**
- **TV and radio stations**
- **Chemical manufacturing plants**
- **Agricultural research facilities**
- **Marine research facilities**
- **Technology training institutes**
- **Universities**
- **NASA space flight facilities**
- **Computerized libraries**
- **Private research and development laboratories**
- **Government laboratories and research facilities**

What to Do When Coordinating Site Visits and Industry Tours

1. Ask your industry representative to
 - provide a tour of the facility,
 - explain the responsibilities of various departments of the organization,
 - describe a typical day of an employee in the organization,
 - answer questions about the site specifically and the industry in general, and
 - provide an opportunity for youth to talk with a variety of employees.
2. HS/HT program operators should
 - identify the goals and learning objectives of the visit,
 - create an interesting and enriching visit for young people,
 - relate the visit to high-tech careers,
 - mesh the visit with other program components,
 - create an itinerary including time required (door to door) and lunch or refreshment necessities,
 - decide how many participants can be accommodated on the visit,
 - obtain signed permission forms from parents or guardians,
 - arrange overnight accommodations if necessary,
 - conduct an accessibility assessment to make sure the site is "disability friendly,"
 - coordinate transportation and chaperones,
 - determine follow up assignments for students, and
 - plan an evaluation of the visit.



3. HS/HT participants should

- research the company (industry) in advance and develop a list of relevant questions,
- articulate the purpose of the site visit as well as appropriate rules for behavior, and
- complete any follow up assignments.

The possibilities for HS/HT site visits should originate from your community or region. If some youth are interested in careers not available within your geographic location, consideration should be given to developing a field trip to another community—even for one youth if s/he has taken responsibility for researching that particular career. This may require working with the parents, finding funds to support travel expenses, and coordinating transportation. In the spirit of HS/HT, geography should not be a limiting factor, if at all possible. Also, consider a virtual site visit where a telephone call with a representative of an industry of interest is combined with a guided tour of their website.

Ohio HS/HT has partnered with a local business, the IDEAL Group, Inc., to expand their use of technology. The mission of the IDEAL Group is to promote and support the use of mainstream market forces to drive the design of more accessible information and communications technology. Among other things, this company provides a means for groups to meet online and conduct fully-accessible conferencing, training, and collaboration services over the Internet. In conjunction with HS/HT, the IDEAL Group is conducting state partnership meetings over the Internet and facilitating e-mentoring relationships between HS/HT students in Ohio and mentors from other countries. In addition, they are experimenting with technology-based virtual job interviews, job shadowing, industry site tours, and tutoring activities. This exciting new use of accessible Internet technology is something other HS/HT programs may want to explore. For more information on the technology used to conduct these experimental activities, visit <<http://www.onlineconferencingsystems.com>>.

Component 6: Job Shadowing

Job shadowing is a motivating activity designed to give youth an up-close look at the world of work and to bridge the gap between academics and the adult world. During a job shadow, students accompany employees as they do their work, providing an opportunity for the students to learn about a specific occupation or industry. Job shadowing gives students the opportunity to explore various facets of a career field and can help students select or narrow their career focus. A job shadow is a good way to team an experienced worker with a student, and to provide students with adult role models. Often times, job shadows can lead to internships or mentoring opportunities.

Youth should be required to note different aspects of the workers' activities and performance so they can be discussed during follow-up or debriefing meetings with other HS/HT participants and program operators.

When setting up job shadowing experiences, be sure to delineate for all parties involved the expectations of the activity, such as ensuring that the youth is able to observe actual work and not just be taken on a tour of the facility. Remember, job shadowing is a valuable way for a student to gain closer insight into a particular technical job or a facet of that job.

What to Do When Coordinating Job Shadowing Opportunities

1. Ask the business or community partner to
 - explain to the HS/HT program staff what will be observed;
 - clarify logistics, responsibilities, safety, health, security, and/or confidentiality issues related to the employment site with the program staff;
 - identify an employee who wishes to provide the job shadow experience;
 - brief that employee on the goals of the activity; and
 - ensure the employee will be doing something from which the youth can see and learn.

For a number of years, Jake was an active Boy Scout in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In addition to the leadership and other skills Jake has developed as a result of scouting, his mother believes that his involvement with MiConnections of Kent County (a local site HS/HT site in Michigan) helped him gain even more self-confidence. During the summer of 2006 Jake worked as a camp counselor and lived away from home for the first time in his life. This experience gave him the opportunity to earn the last badge he needed to become an Eagle Scout.

Jake has dyslexia and, for years, his classroom was a special education resource room. He was referred to MiConnections during his freshman year and immediately began participating in a number of activities including an outdoor challenge course with team-building exercises and a tour of the Michigan Works! One-Stop Career Center and the Tassell Michigan Technical Education Center. Jake and other MiConnections youth toured Grand Valley State University, including a visit to their environmental lab located on a boat on Lake Michigan. They shadowed scientists conducting experiments to study the lake's water quality. Jake also toured a community media center and, as a result, took a class in video production.

In the spring of 2006, Jake and a couple of friends from the video production class traveled to Lansing to the state capitol building to attend a disability awareness rally. They filmed the rally and then produced a video. During the rally, there was a tornado warning and everyone in the capitol needed to be evacuated, including a large number of people with mobility problems which created a real challenge. Jake took the lead with his friends, figured out an alternative evacuation route and assisted a number of rally members in exiting safely. He later received a Medal of Merit awarded by the Governor for his quick thinking and successful efforts to get people to safety.

Jake's parents believe that his MiConnections involvement directly led to full inclusion in general education classes during his sophomore year. Although he began the school year utilizing the resource room services, his self-confidence and positive attitude were so strong that his reading level dramatically increased to the point that he could handle a full schedule of general education classes. During the year, he also participated in an assessment for the career technical center and entered the automotive technology program in the fall of 2006.

2. HS/HT program operators should

- coordinate the job shadowing experience with the business or community partner;
- take care of administrative details for the work-based learning experience, including abiding by any federal, state, and/or local policies, requirements and regulations. Check with your local Chamber of Commerce or school district to obtain this type of information;
- design activities that relate academic content to the job shadowing opportunity;
- prepare the students in advance by clarifying and reviewing any logistics, responsibilities, safety, health, security, and/or confidentiality issues; and
- arrange for transportation.

3. HS/HT program participants should

- provide a positive attitude and a commitment to learning more about the targeted job being observed,
- dress properly and abide by appropriate rules for behavior,
- ask questions (see sidebar on next page), and
- write a letter of thanks to the individual shadowed.



Sample job shadow questions for students

1. What is your title or position?
2. What are your responsibilities in this position?
3. What were the minimum requirements for your job?
4. How are technology, computers, and electronics used in your job?
5. What training, education, and experience do you have?
6. What is your work environment like? Stressful? Laid back?
7. What is the hardest part of your job?
8. What do you like the most about your job?
9. What do you like least about your job?
10. What do you think makes you successful at your job?
11. Do you have opportunities for professional development?
12. Are there opportunities for advancement at your company?
13. What suggestions do you have for someone who wants to get a job like yours?

Time Commitment

Generally, a job shadowing experience will last from three to six hours in the course of one day, although some may last as long as a week. Often the job shadow will last an entire day. In addition, the person coordinating the job shadow may expect to spend two to five hours helping to arrange the job shadowing opportunity. This time may include speaking to department heads, supervisors, and employees within the organization about the job shadow; reviewing details with the school staff coordinator; and preparing any pertinent background information.

Online Resources to Consider

Disability Mentoring Day (DMD), sponsored by the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), is a nationally coordinated effort to secure job shadowing opportunities for youth with disabilities. Although DMD began as a single day set aside in October, (i.e., National Disability Employment Awareness Month), localities now have the option of coordinating a kickoff event such as a career fair in October, as a means of introducing youth with disabilities to employers who may subsequently be willing to become involved in a year-round relationship such as mentoring or job shadowing. In several states, HS/HT functions as the coordinator for the statewide effort. Visit <http://www.dmd-aapd.org/>.

Groundhog Job Shadow Day, sponsored by the National Job Shadowing Coalition, gives students an up-close look at the world of work. The program, which is a joint venture of America's Promise-Alliance for Youth, Junior Achievement, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Labor, begins each year with a nationwide kickoff and continues throughout the school year. As students all over America "shadow" workplace mentors through a normal day on the job, they get to see firsthand how the skills learned in school relate to the workplace. Additional sponsors and supporters (e.g., Hyatt, Monster.com, and the News Corporation) have joined the effort during the program's ten-year history as the program has grown to have more than one million students and 100,000 businesses participate nationwide. For more information, visit <http://www.jobshadow.org/>.

Job Shadowing includes information and resources related to job shadowing experiences. It includes a sample Student Evaluation Form, Student Reflection Form, questionnaire to determine what a student learned during a job shadowing experience, and thank-you letter to an employer, as well as tips for succeeding in the workplace. Visit <http://asai.indstate.edu/Guiding%20All%20Kids%20-%20Lesson%20Plans/Job%20Shadowing.doc>.

Florida Disability Mentoring Day: A Growing Success

In October 2006, The Able Trust which houses the Florida HS/HT program partnered with several organizations (i.e., the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Darden Restaurants, Clear Channel Radio, Volunteer Florida, and the Florida Mentoring Partnership) to host Florida's fifth annual Disability Mentoring Day (DMD). More than 700 students and job seekers with disabilities were matched with business professionals to learn about careers in technology, communications, law, finance, healthcare and other careers in their areas of interest. In addition to the hosting organizations, NASA, Kennedy Space Center, the Florida Supreme Court, SunTrust Bank, the Florida's Governor and Lieutenant Governor's offices, and many other businesses participated. More than 100 volunteer community liaisons from across the state successfully paired student and job seekers with business professional, allowing students the opportunity to experience first-hand workplace activities in their fields of interest. The event began with a kick-off celebration in Miami where Marc Buoniconti, son of NFL Hall of Fame linebacker Nick Buoniconti and Ambassador for the Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, served as Honorary Chair for the celebration.

Florida DMD is part of the American Association of People with Disabilities' (AAPD) national, broad-based effort to promote career development for students and job seekers with disabilities by matching them with employers for an on-site job shadowing experience, a day of opportunity for students and job seekers with disabilities to shadow a business mentor. As a result of Florida DMD, several students and job seekers were offered internships, employment, volunteer opportunities and continued mentoring relationships.



Component 7: Volunteer Work and Service-Learning

Work-based learning experiences involve both paid and unpaid work opportunities. While volunteer work and service-learning opportunities are generally unpaid, they still represent excellent ways to expose students to the soft skills associated with the world of work and give them opportunities to develop the basic skills needed to get and keep a job. Recognizing the value of volunteer work, many high schools and middle schools now require each student to participate in a certain number of hours of volunteer work as a requirement for graduation. Service-learning has also become very popular. It offers opportunities for students to get involved with their communities in a tangible way by integrating service projects with classroom learning. Service-learning engages students in the educational process, using what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems.

When youth are involved in volunteer work and/or service-learning, they can make the connection between what they are learning in school and how it will apply in the world of work. They get to observe the practical application of science, math, writing skills, and oral communication skills in different areas of community work, thereby enriching the content of student learning. Volunteer work and service-learning are a developmentally appropriate way for youth to begin exploring different types of jobs and, in some cases, to re-affirm their career choices. Such opportunities can be used to begin building a young person's resume. Some HS/HT programs use such opportunities as one of the progressive steps a HS/HT student must go through to be eligible to participate in a paid internship.

Online Resources to Consider

Learn and Serve America, sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Services, supports and encourages service-learning throughout the United States, and enables over one million students to make meaningful contributions to their community while building their academic and civic skills. For more information, visit <http://www.learnandserve.org/>.

Component 8: Internships

An internship is a situation in which a student works for an employer for a specific period of time to learn about a particular industry or occupation. Activities undertaken by interns may include special projects, a sample of tasks from different jobs, or tasks from one specific job. Internships provide opportunities for youth to obtain direct exposure to different careers in a structured paid or unpaid work setting.

Through internships, students see a variety of applications of what they are learning. They discover more about their talents and their skills. Although internships are intended to provide a structured work experience for youth in a career field that is of interest to them, participation in an internship may help a young person discover that they are really not interested in a particular type of work. Such experiences can be extremely valuable in formulating initial career choices. Although internships are usually short-term, typically lasting for a few weeks to a few months, youth benefit by developing an understanding of what is required to be a successful employee as they are introduced to the performance expectations of the “real world.”

Internship programs often generate both formal and informal workplace mentors. A formal mentor relationship requires a pre-assigned match (see Chapter 5, Connecting Activities). Informal mentor relationships tend to be established at the worksite and may be coordinated by the employer for the duration of the internship. They may also be unprompted, more naturally occurring relationships that develop without direct, guided involvement from the HS/HT program operator. These relationships may be based on work or non-work issues and may develop from casual relationships and interactions.

Although developing and monitoring internships requires a significant investment of time, it is one of the most important predictors of success after school. Internship experiences (both paid and unpaid) are an ongoing, regular component of career development in the HS/HT program. Some HS/HT programs have explored the idea of internships for school credit.

Cyrus B, a high school senior with moderate mental retardation, was an active participant in the Florida HS/HT program for four years. Cyrus was involved in a couple of summer internships, but working with the City Gas Utility Department was different. His attitude, personality, and skills were a great match for the overall work culture of the department. As a result, the work crew and supervisor were impressed with his skills and work ethic. The department attempted to hire him full time. Although Cyrus’ job application and resume looked great, he unfortunately did not have enough years of experience for the position. Through continued efforts of the HS/HT project coordinator, the City Manager’s Office, the City Gas Utility Department and the City’s HR Department, a temporary position was created for this young man! The supervisor and crew were delighted to have him back as part of the team. After working for two years in this temporary position, Cyrus was offered a permanent position with the city and was promoted to an assistant supervisor position in less than three years. Cyrus has remained involved with the local HS/HT site selling tickets for a fundraiser. He will also serve as a mentor for new HS/HT interns who are placed with the City Gas Utility Department.

In developing effective internships experiences, most HS/HT programs do some or all of the following:

- Establish criteria for students’ participation in both paid and unpaid internships. For example, paid internships may be used as rewards by reserving them for participants who have shown responsibility by regularly attending HS/HT meetings and events, maintaining a specific grade point average, and participating in an orientation to internships.
- Institute criteria that explain the differences between paid and unpaid internships and that lay out the order of internships (for example, requiring successful completion of an unpaid internship before becoming eligible for a paid internship).
- Identify students who are interested in participating and have demonstrated the level of maturity necessary to successfully complete an internship. Most HS/HT programs reserve internships for

students who are juniors or seniors in high school.

- Advise students on available internship opportunities and help them select options they will find stimulating and relevant to their interests. Remember that the quality of the work activity is paramount.
- Draft an “Agreement” or “Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)” to use with employers who are willing to provide internship opportunities. You may obtain a sample MOU from the local Chamber of Commerce, a school-based partnership, or a Vocational Technical Center, and adjust it to meet the needs of HS/HT. (See Exhibit 3.8 for a Sample Internship Learning Agreement.)
- As necessary, determine who will pay for any assistive technology that the student requires. The employer may pay for this directly or it can be done through collaboration with a Vocational Rehabilitation agency or the school.
- Educate work supervisors at the internship sites about the HS/HT program and the goals of the internship program. This might be accomplished through one-on-one meetings with an employer who has agreed to provide an internship, or by holding a breakfast meeting for employers who might be willing to provide internship opportunities.
- Ask the young person, his or her parents, and the employer to complete a letter of agreement specifying the terms of the internship. (See Exhibit 3.9 for a Sample Internship Agreement.)
- Communicate with both the employer and the HS/HT student during the course of the internship to monitor the youth’s progress and the satisfaction of both the youth and the employer. A work log should be used to record the hours the student is involved in the internship, as well as relevant weekly activities. (See Exhibit 3.10 for a Sample Internship Work Log and Exhibit 3.11 for a Sample Internship Time Sheet.)
- Celebrate accomplishments and the employer’s contributions. For example, host an appreciation breakfast or lunch to recognize and thank the youth and employers who have been involved in internships.

- Send thank-you letters to key personnel at the worksites of all interns and encourage the interns to send letters as well.
- Develop methods to evaluate the internship from the youth’s, parent’s, and employer’s perspective. Evaluation data could be gathered using student/employer evaluation and feedback forms. (See Exhibits 3.12 - 3.14 for sample evaluation/survey forms.)
- Analyze the evaluation data, share it with your advisory council and partners, and make changes or improvements as determined necessary.

Some Additional Strategies for Developing HS/HT Internships

1. Ask the business or community partner to
 - explain to the HS/HT program staff the various areas and departments within the organization;
 - identify what would be available and appropriate for an internship;
 - identify and provide training to youth on any logistics, responsibilities, safety, health, confidentiality, and/or security issues related to this experience;
 - establish what the student will do and what the expected outcomes will be;
 - instruct, supervise, support, and evaluate the youth during the internship; and
 - involve the union (if any) in planning.
2. HS/HT program operators should
 - coordinate the internship with the business or community partner;
 - take care of administrative details for the internship experience, making sure to attend to any federal, state, and/or local policies, regulations, and/or requirements;
 - work with the employer and youth to set clear objectives for the internship;



- prepare the youth in advance by reviewing any logistics, responsibilities, safety, health, confidentiality, and/or security concerns;
- assist youth in connecting workplace experiences to coursework;
- provide support to the youth and employer by being a program-based mentor; and
- assist the youth in arranging transportation.

3. HS/HT participants should

- sign a formal agreement stipulating the rules, behaviors, dress, and task expectations of the worksite;
- request assistance from the designated supervisor as needed;
- view themselves as employees with the responsibilities and consequences associated with actually holding the job; and
- keep a journal of experiences and tasks, especially if earning credit for school.

Time Commitment

An internship may be full-time or part-time and last anywhere from 3 to 18 weeks. In addition, the person coordinating the internship for the organization may spend time in establishing the objectives of the experience. This may include speaking to department heads, supervisors, and employees within the organization about the internship; reviewing details with the school staff coordinator; preparing any pertinent background information; and mentoring the youth.

Summer is a logical time for youth to engage in both unpaid and paid internships, though they can occur throughout the year - particularly if your site serves a large number of out-of-school youth, if students are in a school that uses block scheduling, or if the internship is a part of a career-technical education program of study. When an internship is part of career-technical education, it is often undertaken as a for-credit experience that is applied towards the student's graduation requirements. The internship duration varies depending on the number of hours worked each

week and the worker's and internship supervisor's preferences. Ideally, the young person should work at least 25 hours per week during the course of a summer internship, for a minimum of six weeks.

John C. started with HS/HT in March of 2004. He was a senior at Fairview High School in Boulder, Colorado, and graduated in May of 2004. He was the first student to receive a HS/HT summer internship in Boulder and he was very excited when the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) offered him this opportunity, particularly when John was able to leave a bussing job at a local restaurant to work at NOAA. NOAA offered him two different positions in their office, equaling 40 hours a week and starting at \$10 an hour. One of the requirements of working at NOAA is that personnel need to be enrolled in college courses. John was extremely excited to find out that NOAA was willing to pay for his college courses, and eagerly signed up for classes at Front Range Community College and Colorado University Continuing Education Courses.

John's mother sent a letter to the HS/HT state coordinator and his local HS/HT coordinator, indicating that HS/HT had saved her son's life. The program gave him opportunities that he had never received in school where, because of his "hidden disabilities," he had gotten lost in the system. John continued to work part-time at NOAA and go to community college for two years until his family relocated to Massachusetts. Because of John's great work, NOAA took on another summer internship for a HS/HT student in 2005 and 2006, and plans to continue supporting HS/HT in the future.

Selection of an internship should be made by the youth, in consultation with the HS/HT program operator. Internships should be a coordinated effort of employers, youth, and program management. In many sites, youth apply for and are interviewed for an internship position just as they would for any job. When helping a young person identify and select an internship opportunity, remember that the quality of the work activity is more important than the quantity of work experience. In most cases, the young person

will be working at the employer's worksite, although telecommuting from home may be a viable option in some situations.

Benefits Associated with Internships

Internship benefits for HS/HT students include

- learning skills, including computer skills, directly related to jobs in the STEM careers;
- gaining self-confidence;
- earning a paycheck, often for the first time, and learning how to manage the money earned;
- gaining an understanding of the benefits of work and how individual effort contributes to a common goal;
- gaining an understanding of how what they are learning in school is relevant to the world of work;
- learning to use public transportation or to travel independently;
- developing a resume and obtain recommendations;
- learning about the importance of punctuality, appropriate attire, and professional behavior;
- establishing relationships that may lead to internships and permanent or future employment;
- meeting people who are successful in the STEM careers;
- receiving feedback from supervisors and co-workers about college choices and future training plans;
- learning what careers are not of interest;
- learning accommodation needs in the work world;
- connecting with workers who have disabilities; and
- obtaining credit towards graduation requirements as appropriate.

Internship benefits for employers include

- providing assistance for permanent staff on projects;
- undertaking projects postponed for lack of time and/or staff resources;

- developing awareness about the potential for youth with disabilities to be successful, productive workers;
- increasing the organization's overall comfort with persons with disabilities;
- improving their understanding of reasonable accommodations in the workplace; and
- fulfilling a corporate community responsibility role.

Internship benefits for partnering funding sources include

- increased awareness about the capabilities of youth with disabilities;
- gaining information about individual participants' skills and achievements; and
- developing a better understanding of the academic and work-related requirements of the business community, particularly high-tech employers.

Source: Goddard/NASA Space Flight Center/UCP Prince George's & Montgomery County (Maryland) and the National Employer Leadership Council.

Online Resources to Consider

Work-Based Learning is one way youth can identify interests, strengths, skills, and needs related to career development. To access the brief, *Work-Based Learning and Future Employment for Youth: A Guide for Parents and Guardians*, by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), visit <http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=1222>.



When Sean D. rolled into the National Weather Service (NWS) office in Greenville, South Carolina, during the summer of 2005, he didn't know much about the weather except that it happens every day. Then a rising senior at Hillcrest High School, Sean was the NWS office's first HS/HT student intern and the first person with a disability to work there. Injured in a car accident in 2003 when he was just shy of 15, he sustained a spinal cord injury and became a wheelchair user. Computers were Sean's passion.

Sean worked about eight hours a week during the summer of 2005, learning the ropes, doing callbacks to verify the accuracy of warnings, and issuing a couple of severe weather alerts. DiCarlo, the meteorologist who served as Sean's mentor, saw Sean's potential and encouraged him to create a program on lightning safety. The PowerPoint slide show that Sean created was presented to the Spartanburg County School Districts. "Lightning safety has been on the back burner recently," DiCarlo said. "This will help raise awareness."

DiCarlo was so impressed with Sean's work that he found some money in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) student

temporary employee program to hire him for the spring semester. During the summer of 2006, Sean was invited back to the NWS, this time participating in an internship funded under a partnership between NCWD/Youth and NOAA.

In line with his interest in engineering, Sean enrolled in Piedmont Technical College in the fall of 2006. He hopes to also attend ITT Tech and eventually, would like to go to Clemson University. "I'd recommend this program to anybody," Sean said. "It gets you out there and gives you real job experience. You get more of a picture of a real job than you would in a fast food place. And you meet great people." Sean's father was also enthusiastic about his son's opportunity. "I can't say enough about the program or the people," he said. "Sean's been through a lot and it's good to see him involved in this."

According to DiCarlo, the HS/HT program benefits NOAA by providing a source of future employees. "NOAA is a large organization. We employ oceanographers, hydrologists, climatologists, meteorologists and people with a wide range of other skills," said DiCarlo. "Most high school kids are not thinking along those lines."

Component 9: Entrepreneurship

Business ownership has always maintained its place in our country as part of the American dream. Entrepreneurial firms contribute to the U.S. economy in two ways. They provide change and competition, while also providing opportunities for many people to enter the mainstream economy. The U.S. economy's recent success comes from change and competition as large firms adapt to new conditions (Kuratko, 2003). As new firms are created to capture new opportunities, this has led more women, minorities, immigrants, and other populations to enter the economy. In fact, minority groups and women are increasing their business ownership at a much higher rate than the national average (U.S. Census Bureau 2005).

Interest in entrepreneurship and self-employment is

everywhere. Youth, including those with disabilities, can gain self sufficiency through self-employment and entrepreneurship. A poll conducted by Junior Achievement (JA) in 2005 found that 68.6 percent of teenagers interviewed wanted to become entrepreneurs, even though they knew that it is a difficult proposition. While entrepreneurship and self-employment are not for everyone, such activities can help in the development of a young person as they transition to becoming an adult.

Some HS/HT programs have experimented with entrepreneurial ventures to provide their students with a different view of employment. The possibility of earning money and the responsibility associated with running a business can be great motivators and incentives for youth. In addition, by sponsoring HS/HT students, small businesses provide an opportunity for youth to learn entrepreneurial and organizational skills.

Young people can create and operate a small business often with a consultant from the local business community, through Junior Achievement, or under the auspices of a school-based enterprise in retail, construction, hospitality, and a variety of other careers. Although there are many enterprises developed without the assistance of business, the support of local businesses is invaluable to youth. In thinking ahead to leadership development activities, business consultants can also serve as role models and mentors.

As HS/HT continues to grow and expand, many programs have adopted a multi-year program model. Within these multi-year programs, a program-sponsored small business is a particularly effective way to link students, curriculum, and the world of work. A HS/HT small business venture is a work-based learning opportunity in which a group of youth produces goods or services for sale, participates in multiple aspects of a business, and relates service and production activities to academics. Thus, these small businesses provide “real world” experiences in which youth play key roles as they produce and deliver products and services. Properly designed, a HS/HT entrepreneurial venture can effectively teach youth both academic and work-related skills. As young entrepreneurs design and operate businesses, they learn and apply academics while practicing leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and analytic thinking skills. Their collective and individual performance has a decisive impact on the business’ operation.

1. If you choose to work with an outside business or community partner to support your business, identify an individual who is willing to
 - consult with the HS/HT program on running a business in a school environment and on a school schedule,
 - describe the basic management skills necessary to run the identified business,
 - assist the HS/HT program operator and youth in learning about the industry,
 - collaborate with HS/HT staff to determine the participation of students in the program-based enterprise, and
 - serve as a resource for HS/HT staff.

HS/HT Entrepreneurship Ventures in Oklahoma

A growing number of Tech-Now sites in Oklahoma have incorporated entrepreneurial projects into their HS/HT program. At Midwest City High School (MCHS), Tech-Now students have developed a business using computers and multi-media tools to design individual sports cards for their athletic programs. The students photograph the athletes in their uniforms and compile a brief bio sheet of information to be printed on the cards. In partnership with the district’s Career Tech Center, they print and cut the cards. They opened an activity account and developed a contract to split the profits with the individual sports programs. At the end of the school year, the students voted to use some of their profits to award one of the participating students a scholarship for college. The recipient of the scholarship chose to attend a local junior college.

Students at MCHS also decided to use Tech-Now’s digital cameras and Corel Photo Paint to design 2006 Christmas Calendars. Each student designed personalized calendars to give away as Christmas gifts. They also designed MCHS Tech-Now t-shirts to sell to family and friends, and used the profits to pay for a group trip after the holidays.

Tech-Now students at Wagoner High School started an early morning Cappuccino Café. They sell cups of cappuccino to students and teachers to raise money for their Tech-Now field trips. This entrepreneurial effort has sparked interest in the program throughout the school and has given the students an opportunity to earn money and recognition.

Students at Piedmont High School used Tech-Now’s digital camera, chroma key process, and digital editing equipment to take individual and group photographs during the school Christmas Dance. The students provided a variety of unique backgrounds and sold the printed pictures for \$5.00 a piece. The money they earned was used to pay for an out-of-state trip to Chicago.

2. HS/HT staff will need to

- assist youth to research appropriate and interesting business opportunities;
- contact local small business entities and invite them to speak at a HS/HT activity;
- locate start-up funding to get entrepreneurial activities up and running;
- find staff (paid or volunteer);
- connect the activities outlined in developing the business to the student's academic program;
- maintain ongoing communication with any employer partners; and
- identify and assist in the development of training on safety, health, and/or security concerns.

Entrepreneurial Success in Ohio

At the Easter Seals Work Resource Center (WRC) in Cincinnati, Ohio, HS/HT students teamed up with adult learners to create a successful business, the Fish and Flowers Project. Fish and Flowers began when participants in WRC's SmartLab began learning about hydroponics and aquaponics. Through research on the Internet and at local gardening centers and aquarium stores, the students decided to combine the two areas and came up with a product they call "Fish and Flowers," a vase with a fish and plant that together live in a symbiotic relationship. In order to participate in the Fish and Flowers program, students develop a business plan that includes researching the price of materials, creating a timeline, and marketing their product. All products are sold and proceeds go back toward the hydroponics lab. The success of this program is due in large part to the peer-to-peer teaching. Through the project, the students hone their skills in the areas of researching, keeping spreadsheets, working under a deadline, performing customer service, and working with a diverse team. In 2003 and 2004, the students turned this entrepreneurship into a service-learning project after they received a grant to donate Fish and Flowers vases to low-income residents in a nursing home and a Shriners Hospital as a part of National Youth Service Day.

Time Commitment

The time commitment necessary to pursue an entrepreneurship will depend on the nature of the program-based enterprise being developed. In some cases, the HS/HT staff assigned to the program-based enterprise will need to work within the school's schedule. In addition, given the nature of the business and its location, it may not be possible to run the business year-round. It will be very important to clearly define the extent and hours of the business.

Young people who work in small business entrepreneurs learn and apply a myriad of business skills that employers seek in new applicants. For example, youth

- use current technology found in many businesses (spreadsheets, databases, online sales);
- learn to develop a business plan;
- become familiar with real-world business practices (e.g., ordering supplies, controlling inventory, implementing standard accounting and money management practices, developing and carrying out marketing/advertising strategies, developing and maintaining positive customer relations);
- learn and implement quality control procedures as applied both to the product/service and to the mathematical, written, and verbal processes used for operation;
- form, sustain, and work within teams;
- supervise and provide feedback about the performance of others;
- communicate effectively with a wide range of individuals, including both peers and adults in the community;
- make key decisions regarding products/services;
- conduct marketing and feasibility studies;
- work with HS/HT staff and local business leaders to create business plans;
- develop governing structure, personnel policies, and hiring policies, practices, and procedures;

- screen, interview, and select new or additional participants;
- help design incentive structures for participating students;
- determine how, when, and by whom the product/service will be produced and delivered (including costs, price structures, production, advertising, and distribution); and
- deal effectively and appropriately with the myriad of interpersonal, communication, scheduling, and other issues inherent in a new business venture.

Online Resources to Consider

Abilities Fund is the first and only nationwide community developer targeted exclusively to advancing entrepreneurial opportunities for Americans with disabilities. Services are designed specifically for individuals with disabilities interested in business ownership and the organizations that serve them. Services focus on three primary markets: entrepreneurs with disabilities, microenterprise development organizations, and vocational rehabilitation agencies and other disability-related organizations. Visit <<http://www.abilitiesfund.org/>>.

Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO) is the national association of organizations committed to microenterprise development. AEO provides its members with a forum, information, and a voice to promote enterprise opportunities for people and communities with limited access to economic resources. A listing of programs can be found on the website at <<http://www.microenterpriseworks.org/>>.

Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education is a national membership organization that provides leadership and advocacy for the growth of the field of entrepreneurship education as a lifelong learning process. Visit <<http://www.entre-ed.org/index.htm>>.

Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation works with partners to encourage entrepreneurship across America and to promote entrepreneurial success at all levels. The Foundation works to further understand the phenomenon of entrepreneurship, to advance entrepreneurship education and training efforts, to promote entrepreneurship-friendly policies, and to

assist entrepreneurs and others in commercializing new technologies that promise to improve the economic welfare of our nation. Visit <<http://www.kauffman.org/>>.

Junior Achievement (JA) uses hands-on experiences to help young people understand the economics of life. In partnership with business and educators, JA brings the real world to students, opening their minds to their potential. Visit <<http://www.ja.org/>>.

Mind Your Own Business was created by the U.S. Small Business Administration and Junior Achievement to provide a place where people can go to help turn their entrepreneurial dreams into reality. The site outlines five easy steps to business ownership and includes information on the challenges and rewards of being an entrepreneur. Visit <<http://www.mindyourownbiz.org/default.shtml>>.

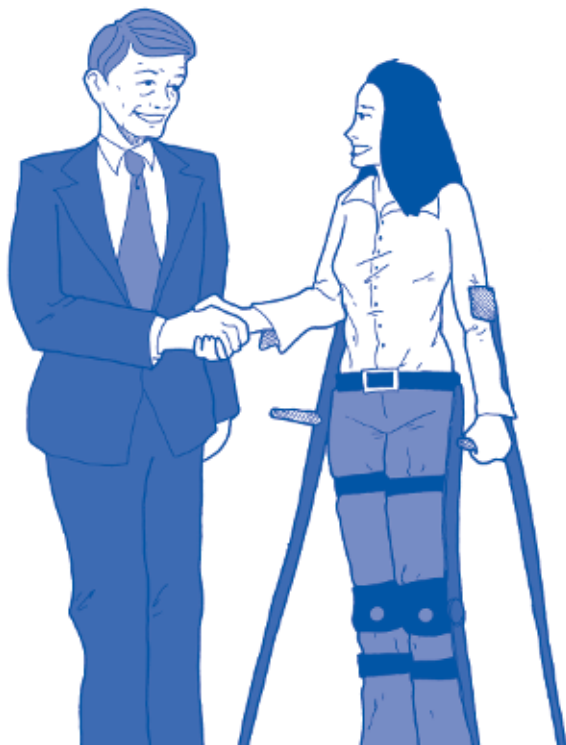
Self-Employment for People with Disabilities Listserv was established by Diversity World to promote the development of more self-employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It is intended to be a networking forum for entrepreneurs with disabilities and individuals or organizations who have an interest or role in this arena. Members are invited to post comments and questions and promote related events, publications, organizations and similar resources. Visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pwd_self-employment>.

Small Business and Self-Employment Service (SBSES) has a group of consultants who can provide ongoing business development supports and links to specific mentoring resources in your area. Contact them directly for additional information at 1-800-526-7234, or visit <<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/sbses/index.htm>>.

START-UP/USA (Self-Employment Technical Assistance, Resources, & Training) is a partnership between Virginia Commonwealth University and Griffin-Hammis and Associates, LLC. It is funded by a cooperative agreement from the Office of Disability Employment Policy in the U.S. Department of Labor. START-UP/USA provides technical assistance and disseminates resources nationally to individuals interested in pursuing self-employment. It sponsors a live web cast series with successful entrepreneurs sharing their secrets for success. Visit <<http://www.start-up-usa.biz/>>.

The **Future Entrepreneurs Program** contains downloadable curriculum from the Council of Entrepreneurial Development. It includes seven lesson plans on entrepreneurship, including What is an Entrepreneur?; Finding a Business Opportunity; Market Research; Introduction to Marketing—Product, Price, Place; Introduction to Marketing—Promotion and Advertising; Starting up Your Business—Finances, Personnel, and Location; and Sales and Customer Service. Visit <http://www.cednc.org/initiatives/student_programs/future_entrepreneurs/>.

Road to Self-Sufficiency: Guide to Entrepreneurship for Youth with Disabilities is a publication by NCWD/Youth that promotes the benefits of entrepreneurship education and self-employment for all youth, including youth with disabilities. It also provides tools to assist those working in this area in providing quality programs. This Guide may be purchased from NCWD/Youth or downloaded from their website at <<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>>.



Getting Organized

The following things will help you create exciting and rewarding work-based opportunities and learning experiences for HS/HT participants.

- **Familiarize** yourself with your local labor market statistics and the STEM employment opportunities in your community.
- **Contact** business leaders in your community through organizations such as the local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Lions Club, Business Leadership Network (BLN), Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), and industry associations such as the Information Technology Association of America. Ask questions such as
 - ~What are the key information technology skill requirements for most of your businesses?
 - ~What is your preferred process for establishing a partnership with education and training programs?
 - ~What would you expect from such a partnership?
- **Team** with career and technology coordinators in your local public schools to pool your work-based/job search partnering resources.
- **Familiarize** yourself with the local business media to seek potential work-based partnerships and publicity.
- **Seek** a variety of employer partners that represent a diverse range of companies (large corporations, small business, self-employment situations, private companies, non-profits, faith-based organizations, state and local government agencies, etc.).
- **Evaluate** the disability-friendliness of potential employer partners. Is the building physically accessible? Are the rest rooms accessible? Is Braille on the elevator panels? Has the organization offered disability awareness training to staff?
- **Provide** employers with information about working with youth with disabilities (e.g., tax incentives, etc.) that can be obtained from your local Business Leadership Network (BLN), local One-Stop Career Center, or Vocational Rehabilitation office.

Supporting Research: Work-Based Learning Experiences

There are many effective strategies HS/HT program operators may employ to provide youth with meaningful work-based experiences. Moving outside of traditional classroom settings to community and workplace environments is an invaluable experiential component of career development for young people, regardless of whether they have disabilities. A number of studies about effective strategies to improve postsecondary outcomes for youth with disabilities have emphasized the importance of providing students with work-based learning experiences and opportunities. In addition, a number of proven and promising work-based experiences have been shown to strengthen the relationship between educational experiences and adult world employment expectations, including site visits, job shadowing, volunteer work, and paid and unpaid internships, as well as other activities such as entrepreneurial opportunities and apprenticeships.

There has been considerable attention given to transition planning and the postsecondary outcomes of youth with disabilities since the enactment and subsequent reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). An examination of the postsecondary outcomes of youth with disabilities indicates legislative initiatives have yet to achieve their intended impact (Luecking & Fabian, 2000). Persistently low employment rates continue to be experienced by youth with disabilities as they exit secondary schools.

Effective career development approaches that integrate academic and non-academic components include (a) a process for career planning and goal setting (Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997; Goldberger, Keough, & Almeida, 2001), (b) alignment of school-based career preparatory experiences with employer and occupational requirements and with postsecondary education plans (Bremer & Madzar, 1995; Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003; Haimson & Bellotti, 2001), and (c) teaching of basic skills needed for career success and growth (Haimson & Bellotti, 2001; Luecking & Fabian, 2000; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997).

If youth with disabilities are to develop the knowledge and skills that will enable them to be fully enfranchised within the workforce, they need full, meaningful, and equitable access to opportunities offered by high-quality, work-based experiences established to prepare all students for careers. Substantial evidence supports the value of work experience as a critical educational intervention that is effective in improving the postsecondary employment of youth with disabilities. Some experts call for expanded work experience opportunities in high school for all youth (Benz & Lindstrom, 1997).

Goldberger and Kasis (1996) highlight several benefits of work-based learning (a) providing an authentic laboratory for developing and exercising complex problem-solving skills; (b) providing a reality check about different types of work settings and work roles; (c) providing an appreciation for the importance of learning as an aspect of what constitutes work; and (d) assisting in the development of youth contacts with employers, mentors, and career pathways, which provide support and possible job connections.

Substantial evidence exists to support the value of work experience as a critical educational intervention effective in improving the postsecondary employment of youth with disabilities (Blackorby & Wagnor, 1996; Colley & Jamison, 1998; Kohler, 1993; Kohler & Rusch, 1995; Luecking & Fabian, 2000; Morningstar, 1997; Rogan, 1997; Wehman, 1996).

Many employers who have experience in hiring individuals with disabilities have indicated that the presence or absence of a disability was not a particular concern when making hiring decisions. One study found that regardless of the nature or severity of the disability or the need for accommodations, approximately 77 percent of youth who completed a standardized work-based internship program in high school were offered ongoing employment by their host companies, even though the companies were under no obligation to retain the interns beyond the internship period (Luecking & Fabian, 2000).

As the number of schools that are partnering with employers to create work-based experiences for youth is increasing, participating businesses are beginning to see the value of work-based learning experiences for youth in terms of better-prepared future employees, reducing the costs associated with recruitment, and reductions in employee turnover (Wills, 1998). In addition, working closely with employers helps schools define the knowledge and skills necessary for graduates to successfully perform in college and the workplace (Achieve, 2004).

A great deal is known about the value of using the environment to enhance and solidify learning. A growing body of research has suggested that training in context is important for skills to be useful and maintained over time in work and community settings (Bransford et al., 1999; Clark, 1994; Gaylord-Ross & Holovet, 1985; Halpern, 1992; McDonnell et al., 1997; Snell & Brown, 1993). Based on the analysis of several career and technical education programs that served and graduated youth with disabilities, Phelps (1992) concludes that effective approaches to contextual learning for students with disabilities include the following elements: (a) providing

EXHIBIT 3.1

students with teamwork or cooperative learning experiences comparable to those they would encounter in community or work settings, (b) increasing the meaning of academic learning through real-world applications, and (c) using experiential learning (e.g., job shadowing experiences, school-supervised work experiences, internships) to connect school- and work-based learning.

The extent to which youth with disabilities participate and succeed in postsecondary education is also directly related to well-established and systematic work-based experiences instituted throughout a school career. Findings by Wagner et al. (1993), suggest that youth participation in work-based learning experiences holds high promise for improving secondary school performance and postsecondary outcomes.

Other research supports including (a) school-supervised work experience programs with varying amounts of on-site training in community employment sites and assessments of student performance across a range of training alternatives (Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997; DeStefano & Wermuth, 1992; Kregel & Wehman, 1996; McDonnell, Ferguson, & Mathot-Bucker, 1992; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997; Phelps & Wermuth, 1992), (b) part-time paying jobs during the school year and summer that are coordinated directly with instructional and career

exploration goals for individual students (Benz & Halpern, 1993; Benz et al., 1997; Fourqurean & LaCourt, 1991; Phelps & Wermuth, 1992; Scuccimarra & Speece, 1990; Sitlington & Frank, 1990), and (c) structured internship experiences that have been found to be beneficial for youth with disabilities regardless of their demographic characteristics, disability type and severity, and educational placement (Luecking & Fabian, 2000). Evaluations of the effects of internships on youth outcomes reveal an increase in technical competence and a better understanding of how the academic concepts the students learn in school relate to their work experiences (Wang & Owens, 1995 a & b).

In summary, numerous studies about effective strategies for improving postsecondary outcomes for youth with disabilities have emphasized the importance of providing students with work-based learning experiences and opportunities. Work-based experiences have been shown to strengthen the relationship between educational experiences and the expectations of employers. Thus, one can reasonably conclude that the integration of work-based learning into traditional academic programs will have a positive impact on the educational, attitudinal, and employment outcomes of youth.



Sample Online Career Assessments

Online career assessments can be fun and informative, but many have not been evaluated for reliability and validity, including those that are abbreviated versions of pencil and paper tests. Many sites do not provide interpretations of results. Be sure that the results are considered along with other career preparation activities and information.

Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment—These free assessments evaluate youth life skills. They are completed online and automatically scored. Visit <http://www.caseylifeskills.org/pages/assess/assess_index.htm>.

The Career Key—This assessment tool was developed to help people with career choices—career changes, career planning, job skills, and choosing a college major or educational program. It is based on the best science and practices of career counseling, and the most complete and accurate information available. It has been used by career counselors for over 20 years. Millions of students and adults use this website. More than 1,000 schools, colleges, libraries, and career services link to it. Visit <www.careerkey.org/english>.

Type Focus Personality Type Profile—This quick and easy 66-question assessment reports a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and offers a bit of career direction. Visit <<http://www.typefocus.com>>.

This list of online assessments is for informational and educational purposes only and should NOT be interpreted as a recommendation for any test instrument.



Examples of Informal Career Assessment Activities

The following represent some examples of informal career assessment activities that HS/HT staff can use with students to identify their career interests, explore their work styles, and gauge their understanding of the soft skills needed to succeed in the workplace.

1. Create generic interest surveys and structured interviews using questions and prompts such as the following to obtain information about HS/HT participants.
 - List three occupations of interest.
 - What do you see yourself doing after high school?
 - List two jobs at which you think you could succeed.
 - What skills would you like to learn while still in school?
 - What do you do in your free time?
2. Use rating scales to assess school and work performance. For the purpose of the HS/HT program, these questions might be in the areas of employment, independent living, and personal/work-related skills. Rating scales might include a self-assessment where the young person assesses his or her skills independently. Alternatively, a parent/guardian or other appropriate representative (such as a teacher or transition counselor) may be asked to complete a short form with a list of specific questions about the young person's performance in other environments. Rating scales can be purchased commercially or can be easily developed by program operators. Consider questions targeted to obtain information on such things as
 - Attendance and punctuality
 - ___ Misses less than 3 days per quarter
 - ___ Misses 4-5 days per quarter
 - ___ Misses 6-7 days per quarter
 - ___ Misses 8-9 days per quarter
 - Communication skills
 - ___ Freely expresses thoughts and needs
 - ___ Expresses thoughts and needs with prompts
 - ___ Experiences difficulty expressing thoughts and needs
 - Initiative
 - ___ Seeks out work as needed without needing to be asked
 - ___ Will do extra work if asked, asks questions to clarify
 - ___ Completes duties as assigned without prompting
 - ___ Requires prompts to move to the next task assignment
 - Quality of work
 - ___ Displays consistent quality of work; independently spots and corrects mistakes
 - ___ Displays consistent quality of work/usually does not spot errors
 - ___ Displays inconsistent quality of work
3. Consider creating informal work samples to discover pre-existing knowledge (or present levels of performance) in the following areas:
 - Computer operations such as word processing, spreadsheets, and PowerPoint;
 - Math skills and technical writing; and
 - Ability to follow tasks requiring multiple-step directions.
4. Notice environmental conditions when engaging participants in activities, noting under what conditions they work best. For instance, does the young person prefer and/or perform best when
 - In a group or alone?
 - In a noisy or quiet environment?
 - Receiving visual (written) or auditory (spoken) directions?
 - In a fast paced or a more relaxed pace?
 - Completing routine or varied multiple tasks?

EXHIBIT 3.3

5. Use the Internet for career-related, interest, and personality assessments. Since some relevant websites will be more useful and applicable than others, HS/HT program operators should preview all websites prior to use by program participants in an effort to determine the value, the time needed for administration, etc. When deemed appropriate, online assessments are not only convenient and fun, but also provide for computer and technology-related learning experiences as well as opportunities for observing the computer or keyboarding skills of youth participating in HS/HT (see Exhibit 3.2).
6. Consider disability-related accommodation needs. Some youth with disabilities may require specific accommodations in order to generate accurate assessment results. Questions to consider during the career assessment process include:

Does the student have the physical and/or sensory abilities to perform the tasks? If not, what modifications or accommodations are needed to enable the student to perform the tasks? If needed, are the modifications readily available, and if not, how long will it take to secure or develop them?

How should instruction be delivered, or is the purpose to learn more about how the individual learns best? Is the use of picture cues, lists, or other such prompts needed? If so, are these already in place or will they need to be developed during the course of the assessment?

Has an accommodation been documented in the young person's Individualized Education Program, Individualized Transition Plan, 504 Plan, Individualized Plan for Employment, etc. (if necessary)?



Disability Etiquette

Speak directly to the person, rather than to a companion or sign language interpreter who may be present.

Offer to shake hands when introduced. People with limited hand use or an artificial limb can usually shake hands and offering the left hand is an acceptable greeting.

Always identify yourself and others who may be with you when meeting someone with a visual disability. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking. When dining with a friend who has a vision disability, ask if you can describe what is on his or her plate.

If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen or ask for instructions.

Treat adults as adults. Address people with disabilities by their first names only when extending that same familiarity to all others. Never patronize people in wheelchairs.

Do not lean against or hang on someone's wheelchair. Bear in mind that people with disabilities treat their chairs as extensions of their bodies; so do people with guide dogs and service dogs. Never distract a work animal from his or her job without the owner's permission.

Listen attentively when talking with people who have difficulty speaking and wait for them to finish. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers or a nod of the head. Never pretend to understand; instead repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond.

Whenever possible, place yourself at eye level when speaking with someone in a wheelchair or on crutches.

Tap a person who has a hearing disability on the shoulder or wave your hand to get his or her attention. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to establish if the person can read your lips. If so, try to factor the light source and keep hands, cigarettes, and food away from your mouth when speaking. If a person is wearing a hearing aid, don't assume that he or she has the ability to discriminate your speaking voice. Never shout at a person; speak in a normal tone of voice.

Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as "See you later" or "Did you hear about this?" that seem to relate to a person's disability.

Source: Irene M. Ward & Associates. (1994). The ten commandments of communicating with people with disabilities.

Steps to Follow to Conduct an Effective Informational Interview

1. Identify the occupation or industry you wish to explore.

In what occupation are you interested?

2. Prepare for the interview. Read something about the field prior to the interview. Decide what information you would like to know about the specific job. Prepare a list of questions that you would like to have answered.

3. Identify people to interview. Start with a list of people you already know—friends, relatives, teachers, neighbors, members of your church, etc. Look through the Yellow Pages for additional ideas. Try to get a contact person's name before calling a specific business.

4. Arrange for the interview. Contact the person to set up an interview by telephone, by e-mail, or by having someone who knows the person make the appointment for you.

5. Conduct the interview. Dress appropriately, arrive on time, be polite, and professional. Refer to your list of prepared questions, stay on track, but allow for discussion. Before leaving, ask your contact to suggest names of others who might be helpful to you and ask permission to use your contact's name when contacting these people.

6. Follow up. Immediately following the interview, record the information gathered. Be sure to send a thank-you note to your contact within one week of the interview.

Note: After considering the information you have received, you may want to adjust your job search, resume, and/or career objective to reflect what you learned about the job and about your continued interest in that area of work.

Source: Job Service Wisconsin, Wisconsin Department of Industry Labor and Human Relations.



20 Questions for an Effective Informational Interview

Prepare a list of your own questions for your informational interview.

The following are some sample questions for your consideration.

1. On a typical day in this position, what do you do?
2. What training or education is required for this type of work?
3. What personal qualities or abilities are important to being successful in this job?
4. What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?
5. How did you get your job?
6. What opportunities for advancement are there in this field?
7. What entry-level jobs are best for learning as much as possible?
8. What is the salary range for various positions in this field?
9. How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
10. Is there a demand for people in this occupation?
11. What special advice would you give a person entering this field?
12. What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field?
13. What are the basic prerequisites for different jobs/positions in this field?
14. Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
15. What do you think of the experience I've had as it would apply to my entering this field?
16. From your perspective, what are the problems you see working in this field?
17. If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same career path for yourself? Why? What would you change, if anything?
18. With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research before I make a final decision?
19. What do you think of my resume? Do you see any problem areas? How would you suggest I change it?
20. Whom should I talk to next? When I contact him/her, may I use your name?

Source: Job Service Wisconsin, Wisconsin Department of Industry Labor and Human Relations

Disability Disclosure: Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages of Disclosure

- Disclosure allows a young person to receive reasonable accommodations so that s/he can pursue work, school, or community activities more effectively.
- Disclosure provides legal protection against discrimination (as specified in the Americans with Disabilities Act).
- Disclosure reduces stress, since protecting a “secret” can take a lot of energy.
- Disclosure gives a young person a clearer impression of what kinds of expectations people may have of him/her and his/her abilities.
- Disclosure ensures that a young person is getting what s/he needs in order to be successful (for example, through an accommodation or medication).
- Disclosure provides full freedom to examine and question health insurance and other benefits.
- Disclosure provides greater freedom to communicate should a young person face changes in his/her particular situation.
- Disclosure improves a young person’s self-image through self-advocacy.
- Disclosure allows a young person to involve other professionals (for example, educators and employment service providers) in the learning of skills and the development of accommodations.
- Disclosure increases a young person’s comfort level.

Disadvantages of Disclosure

- Disclosure can cause a young person to relive bad past experiences that resulted in the loss of a job or negative responses from his/her peers.
- Disclosure can lead to the experience of exclusion.
- Disclosure can cause a young person to become an object of curiosity.
- Disclosure can lead to a young person being blamed if something doesn’t go right.
- Disclosure can lead to a young person being treated differently than other youth.
- Disclosure can bring up conflicting feelings about a young person’s self-image.
- Disclosure can lead to a young person being viewed as needy, not self-sufficient, or unable to perform on par with peers.
- Disclosure could cause a young person to be overlooked for a job, team, group, or organization.
- Disclosing personal and sensitive information can be extremely difficult and embarrassing.

Source: National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. (2005). The 411 on disability disclosure: A workbook for youth with disabilities.



Sample Internship Learning Agreement

This agreement must be read, understood, and signed by the intern and the person who will be acting as the intern’s supervisor. It will also be signed by HS/HT staff and the parent, if appropriate, to ensure that all parties concur with the goals and expectations of the internship. (Please attach additional sheets if necessary.)

Name of Student: _____

Company/Organization: _____ Dept. _____

Address of Internship Location: _____

Name of Contact Person: _____ Title: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

The internship is set up for a minimum of ____ hours per week for ____ weeks.

Internship Schedule:

Begins ____/____/____ Ends ____/____/____ Planned Absences: _____

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

The student will report to:

Name: _____ Title: _____

Telephone Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Internship Goals/Learning Objectives:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

General Responsibilities and Duties: _____

Specific Projects and Products: _____

Student:

I, _____, agree to the following expectations:

- 1. To attend regularly and on time for my assigned internship.
- 2. To adhere to the regulations of the organization in which I am interning.
- 3. To notify my supervisor on days that I will be absent.
- 4. To notify my HS/HT program operator if any problems or concerns arise.

Supervisor:

I, _____, agree to do the following:

- 1. Provide assignments and duties that contribute to the learning experience of the student.
- 2. Provide mentoring for the student.
- 3. Provide assessment and feedback to the HS/HT program operator, as requested.
- 4. Notify the HS/HT program operator at any time if work performance is unsatisfactory or there are any problems with the placement.
- 5. Notify the HS/HT program operator if the supervising manager changes.
- 6. Review the youth’s training progress at regular intervals to determine whether the internship should become paid (i.e., if it is an unpaid internship).

Internship Training Plan

The following specific resources and strategies will be used to achieve the goals listed in the internship agreement:

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

Goal 3: _____

Comments: _____



Sample Internship Agreement

For many youth, this will be the first internship and for others it may be the first paid internship experience. Please read this information carefully. Print or type all information.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Home Telephone: _____ Work Telephone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

In case of an emergency, please contact: _____

Emergency phone number(s): _____

READ AND INITIAL EACH STATEMENT BELOW:

_____ I will arrive at my job site at my scheduled time.

_____ I will work a maximum of ____ hours per week and record my hours correctly on my time sheet.

_____ If I obtain a paid internship, I will receive payment only for the actual amount of time I have worked during the pay period.

_____ I will dress appropriately according to the standards set by my job site.

_____ My supervisor's name is: _____.

_____ My mentor's name, if different than my supervisor, is: _____.

_____ I will make every effort to attend all special activities that have been planned for me.

_____ I will take the appropriate time allowed for lunch and check in with my supervisor/mentor before I leave and when I return.

_____ If I am sick, I will immediately contact my supervisor/mentor at _____.

_____ If an accident or injury occurs, I will notify my supervisor/mentor and the HS/HT program operator immediately.

_____ I will not make or receive personal phone calls from the worksite or use worksite equipment or supplies for personal use. I understand that if I am assigned to a computer workstation, I will not abuse my privileges by using my system for games, chat rooms, or sending unauthorized electronic messages.

_____ I understand that I may be suspended or released from my job if I have three or more unexcused absences, have repeated tardiness, leave work without permission, or break any of the behavior standards of the organization.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Adapted from the Florida HS/HT Summer Internship Manual.

Sample Internship Work Log

Please copy this form (one for each week).

Complete and return to _____
 at the end of ____ each work week ____ or every two weeks of work.

Intern Name: _____

Week(s) of: _____

Duties Performed: _____

New Skills Learned: _____

Comments: _____

Dates Worked:

(Month/Day/Year)	Hours (from – to)	Total Hours

Total Hours Worked:

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Name (Print): _____

Adapted from the Florida HS/HT Summer Internship Manual.

Sample Internship Time Sheet

Name: _____

Employer: _____

Work Location: _____

Supervisor/Mentor: _____

	Date (mm/dd/yy)	Time in	Lunch *	Time out	Total Hours
<i>Example</i>	10/10/02	9:00	12-12:45	3:00	5.25
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					

**Lunch breaks are NOT working hours & should not be included in Total Hours recorded.*

Total Hours: _____

Your time should be calculated as follows:

- 1 hour = 1.0
- 3/4 hour = .75
- 1/2 hour = .50
- 1/4 hour = .25

I certify that the above information is true and correct.

HS/HT Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor/Authorized Signature: _____ Date: _____

All time sheets are due to the HS/HT program operator on _____ (day), by _____ (time).

Adapted from the Florida HS/HT Summer Internship Manual.

Sample Internship Evaluation

To be completed by the supervisor/mentor:

HS/HT Participant's Name: _____

Business Name: _____

Duties—List the top four job duties below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

On the list below, rate the young person using the following number scale. Please compare to your average employee:

4 = Exceptional 3 = Above average 2 = Average 1 = Below average N/A = does not apply

Work Habits and Skills

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>___ 1. Constructive criticism. Takes it in stride and tries to improve.</p> <p>___ 2. Appearance: Clean and wears suitable clothing to work each day.</p> <p>___ 3. Attendance: Shows up and regularly returns from lunch and breaks on time.</p> <p>___ 4. Attitude: Shows interest and pride in work and is willing to complete assigned tasks.</p> <p>___ 5. Communication: Asks job-specific questions and interacts appropriately.</p> <p>___ 6. Creativity: Demonstrates the aptitude to create new procedures if necessary.</p> <p>___ 7. Follows instructions: Performs tasks assigned and follows procedures step by step.</p> <p>___ 8. Follows rules: Obeys all work-site regulations and safety rules.</p> <p>___ 9. Independence: Able to work without supervision.</p> | <p>___ 10. Initiative: A self-starter, willing to go on to the next step or asks for more work.</p> <p>___ 11. On task: Pays attention to the task (even if routine) and keeps busy the entire work day.</p> <p>___ 12. Problem-solving skills: Makes appropriate decisions when needed.</p> <p>___ 13. Quality: Completes tasks in a timely manner and of acceptable quality.</p> <p>___ 14. Remembers instructions: Performs routine tasks on a daily basis without prompting.</p> <p>___ 15. Social skills: Interacts well with other co-workers; demonstrates cooperation and maturity.</p> <p>___ 16. Use of equipment: Uses and cares for all equipment properly.</p> |
|---|---|

OVERALL RATING: _____

Additional Comments: _____

Supervisor's or Mentor's Name & Title: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for completing this evaluation & providing a youth-based internship. Your participation in our HS/HT program is appreciated!

Adapted from the Florida HS/HT Summer Internship Manual.

Sample Mid-Internship Youth Survey

(to be completed by the HS/HT Student.)

Please take a few moments to complete this survey. We will use this information to plan the rest of your internship experience.
Please return it to the HS/HT program operator.

What have you learned (or observed) about the use of technology on your job or within the agency where you are working?

What types of technology have you used while participating in this internship? _____

What skills have you developed or improved through your participation in this High School/High Tech summer internship? _____

Are there any opportunities you would like to explore in the remaining weeks of this internship? _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Job Site: _____

Job Position: _____

Adapted from the Florida HS/HT Summer Internship Manual.

Sample Internship Parent Survey

Please complete this survey and return it to: _____

Were your expectations for your son/daughter's HS/HT internship met?

(Circle one) YES NO

If "no" please explain: _____

Describe the benefits your child received from his/her participation in this internship. _____

Describe the benefits you received from his/her participation in this internship. _____

Would you recommend a HS/HT summer internship to other parents and students? (Circle one) YES NO

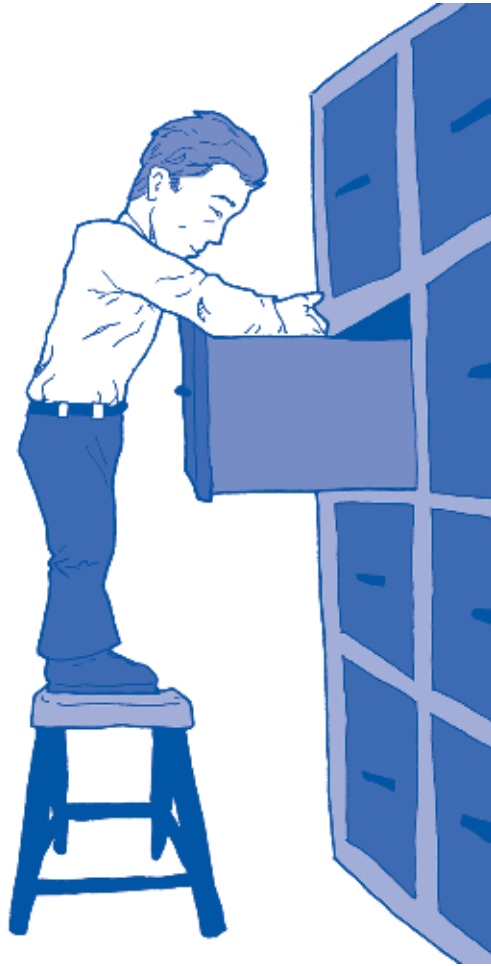
Please explain why or why not: _____

What changes would have made this internship more beneficial for your son/daughter? _____

Your Name: _____ Date: _____

Student Name: _____ Job Position: _____

Adapted from the Florida HS/HT Summer Internship Manual.



CHAPTER 4:

Youth Development and Leadership

This chapter examines youth development and leadership activities within HS/HT programs. Youth development and leadership are not isolated events that occur only at an annual workshop or at periodic meetings. Opportunities to develop personal and leadership skills must be cultivated into a variety of HS/HT activities and events.

Often, and mistakenly, the terms “youth development” and “youth leadership” are used interchangeably. Based on research of existing definitions, NCWD/Youth has adopted the following working definition of youth development and youth leadership.

“Youth development is the process that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences, which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Youth leadership is an important part of the youth development process.”

“Youth leadership is both an internal and an external process leading to (1) the ability to guide or direct others on a course of action, influence their opinion and behavior, and show the way by going in advance; and (2) the ability to analyze one’s own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and vocational goals, and have the self-esteem to carry them out.”

Source: National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. (January 2005). Youth Development and Youth Leadership in Programs. InfoBrief, Issue 11.

Although research shows that youth who participate in youth development and leadership experiences are more likely to do well in school, be involved in their communities, and positively transition through adolescence to adulthood, youth with disabilities have often been isolated from mainstream youth development programs.

Component 1: Putting Youth in Control of Their Destiny

The idea of taking control of one’s life can be very exciting, but it can also be very overwhelming. There are three skills that youth with disabilities should learn to utilize to better take control of their lives and start making informed decisions about their future: self-determination, informed choice, and self-advocacy.

Self-Determination

Self-determination refers to being in charge of one’s own life to the greatest degree possible. It means having the freedom to plan one’s life and the authority to control the resources one has to the maximum extent possible. It also means taking responsibility for the consequences of one’s choices. Self-determination may also include the responsibility of participating in and contributing to one’s community.

Self-determination can be broken down into a number of component parts, including

- making choices,

- taking responsibility for making decisions,
- actively engaging in problem-solving,
- setting and attaining goals,
- doing a self-evaluation,
- pursuing self-instruction,
- becoming self-aware,
- seeking self-knowledge, and
- practicing self-advocacy.

Within the various individualized planning processes outlined in various pieces of legislation, self-determination should play a major role in determining what goes into a written plan. For example, when a special education student reaches high school (if not sooner), s/he should be involved in selecting individuals to serve on his/her IEP team and individualized transition team; setting the agenda for meetings; and to the extent possible, taking the lead in running these meetings. When a young person is determined eligible for VR services, s/he should receive the support necessary to exercise informed choice as decisions are made about which employment goals to pursue, the services needed to reach those goals, and the providers of these services. Similarly, if a young person is receiving services through a One-Stop Career Center, s/he should be involved in decisions about the nature and duration of the services to be received.

Clearly, a young person may be able to exercise self-determination in some areas of life, and not in others. In some instances, HS/HT staff will need to work with their students to identify the decisions they can control now as well as those that they will want to control later in life.



The Youth Advisory Committee for the National Council on Disability has identified the following ways that youth can be more self-determined:

- **having confidence and believing in one's self,**
- **identifying what one's dreams and goals are,**
- **clearly communicating and sharing one's wants and needs,**
- **knowing one's strengths and limitations,**
- **having a positive attitude,**
- **learning from mistakes,**
- **taking responsibility for one's choices,**
- **being aware of one's rights,**
- **having opinions about everything that affects you,**
- **knowing how and when to ask for help,**
- **setting realistic and achievable goals,**
- **making educated decisions, and**
- **never giving up!**

Informed Choice

Informed choice refers to having the right information to make the right decision at the right time. It also means being able to understand the big picture and come up with new and appropriate solutions when faced with problems. In order to make an informed choice, a young person must obtain relevant information in an understandable and developmentally appropriate format. Young people must explore and be able to recognize potential consequences of different choices (i.e., both good and bad) and be ready to accept responsibility for their choices.

HS/HT youth development and leadership activities need to be organized to capture the fundamentals of effective youth development programming. This includes providing supportive adults and peers through role modeling; supporting youth development through goal setting, self-advocacy training, and conflict resolution; and offering opportunities for leadership development. Setting goals, solving problems, and making wise decisions are not just skills for leaders, but are necessary skills for leading a successful life. They are also skills which are of utmost importance to success in the workplace.

Another important aspect of informed choice is the “freedom to fail.” It is safe to assume that all program staff would like to see the youth they are working with be successful. However, a supportive environment is also one that encourages a variety of learning experiences, including the learning that comes from failing at a task. Though meaning well, sometimes programs will either lower expectations for students with disabilities or create a system of permanent safety nets to avoid upsetting or disappointing students with disabilities or their parents. It is important that programs allow for both risk-taking and failure in the learning process and help students review mistakes, refine goals, and revise their plans when things do not go well. The entrepreneurship activities discussed in the career exploration and work-based learning chapter are examples of one type of activity that would promote risk-taking.

Online Resources to Consider

Teaching Self-Determination in Alaskan Schools: A Toolkit for Teachers, a project sponsored by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, has developed a toolkit for teachers, parents, students, and other professionals who are interested in promoting self-determination within home, school and community settings. Visit <http://www.alaskachd.org/toolkit/index.html>.

Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination Synthesis Projects, sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC), synthesizes information on research results and best practices related to self-determination and self-advocacy interventions. The effort is to improve, expand, and accelerate the use of this knowledge by the professionals who serve children and youth with disabilities and the parents who rear, educate, and support their children with disabilities. Visit http://www.uncc.edu/sdsp/resource_list/sd_lesson_plans.asp.

Self-Determination: Supporting Successful Transition is a brief that outlines research on self-determination, suggesting that youth with disabilities who actively direct their own lives are more likely to successfully transition into adult life. It addresses the development of self-determination skills and student-led IEP meetings and includes descriptions and contact

information for several self-determination curricula as well as helpful web links. Visit www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=962.

Self-Advocacy

Expressing one’s desires, needs, and rights is an essential component of youth development. It is also a pre-requisite to becoming a responsible, independent adult. Self-advocacy involves making decisions and communicating one’s desires and needs to others. As a young person moves from high school to post-school activities, self-advocacy skills take on a new importance. While in school, young people tend to rely heavily on the support of their parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and other adults to help them make choices and obtain needed services and supports. As a young person with a disability leaves high school, s/he needs to be preparing for increased independence in order to be better equipped to make his/her own decisions in the future. The more a young person takes control of the choices and decisions made while still in school, the easier it will be to make choices and decisions after leaving high school.

Providing the opportunity and training for young people to practice self-advocacy can benefit youth with disabilities in many ways as they transition from school to higher education or to a career. Such training can help youth with disabilities

- set goals and become more involved in developing their IEPs while in school, particularly the transition component of the IEP;
- explore, identify, and pursue occupational interests;
- make informed academic, career, and life decisions;
- seek education, training, and employment that fulfill their aspirations, challenge them, and make the most of their abilities;
- identify and develop beneficial mentoring relationships, service-learning opportunities, internships, and other learning experiences;
- obtain needed accommodations/modifications in academic, work, and social situations;
- understand their rights and seek legal protection if needed;

- have the confidence they need to live independently;
- become effective mentors and role models; and
- become leaders within local, state, and national disability communities and in the larger society.

One of the most critical features of self-advocacy skills for youth with disabilities involves disability disclosure—to both employers and postsecondary educational institutions. Disclosure of a disability is always a choice. Youth must make individual decisions about disclosure for each job lead pursued. HS/HT staff should help young people with disabilities ponder this question: “Does disclosure of my disability at this time and in this way support my objectives?”

Online Resources to Consider

The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities was designed by people with disabilities to walk youth through the experience of disclosure. Created by NCWD/Youth, it helps young people make informed decisions about whether or not to disclose their disability and understand how that decision may impact their education, employment, and social lives. The Workbook is available for purchase from NCWD/Youth or it can be downloaded free of charge at http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources/_&_Publications/411.html.

The Self-Determination Synthesis Project, at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, has created lesson plan starters based on data-based research studies in which students or adults were taught a new

A Georgia HS/HT student with anhydrosis and epilepsy graduated from high school in May of 2006. Although this young woman had a true desire to work, she was very limited in what she could do because her environment must be carefully controlled. Her body does not regulate her temperature, allowing her to overheat quickly. When her core reaches a certain temperature, she has a seizure and loses consciousness. This can be a life or death situation.

Although her mom was very protective, this young woman was very intelligent and was convinced she could be successful at work. Working in partnership, HS/HT, the One-Stop Career Center, and VR were able to find an employer who had met this young woman and was willing to let her try doing data entry from her home. This young woman’s ability to explain to the employer and to the WIA staff exactly what her disability was and how it affected her ability to work was a key factor in making this placement happen. When the WIA staff expressed concern about the lack of supervision in a home-based employment situation, she was able to explain how her progress would show that she was, indeed, working. While staff at the One-Stop Career Center were initially hesitant to support a home-based placement, they became very supportive once they completely understood the parameters of the job and this young woman’s disability.

When it became evident to this young woman that she would need an additional accommodation because of her limited stamina, she approached her employer and advocated to be able to set her own hours. She explained that if she worked too long one day (which she tried to do at the beginning), she would pay for it the next day. She needed to learn to pace herself, as no one could do it for her.

In the end, the situation worked very well, and was a win-win situation for everyone involved. The young woman won as she was paid for her work and she finally began to see her potential and to value her capabilities. The employer was satisfied as his work was completed on a timely basis. He was pleased with the quality of the work, and developed a wonderful relationship with his new employee. The WIA system won, particularly as they moved into the 21st Century and began viewing telecommuting as an appropriate job choice that can accommodate the needs of many individuals with disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation won as this young woman’s VR counselor received critical information about this woman’s work tolerance, stamina, ability to follow instructions, motivation, and family support. And, of course, HS/HT won as one of their graduates entered the workforce.

self-determination skill or set of skills. The lesson plan starters were developed based on the description of the intervention and data collection procedures provided in each study and each includes lesson objectives, setting and materials, lesson content, teaching procedures, evaluation methods, and, if a published curriculum is referenced in the lesson plan, cost and contact information for the curriculum. Visit <http://www.uncc.edu/sdsp/sd_lesson_plans.asp>.

“What’s self-determination, and why is it important?” is a brief that outlines research on self-determination, suggesting that youth with disabilities who actively direct their own lives are more likely to successfully transition into adult life. It addresses the development of self-determination skills and student-led IEP meetings and includes descriptions and contact information for several self-determination curricula as well as helpful web links. Visit: <<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=962>>.

Component 2: Supportive Adults

Role Models

A role model is a person whose behavior in a particular position is imitated by others. For youth, career role models are often people with whom they have contact in everyday life or see in the media - teachers, parents, nurses, doctors, clergy, police officers, athletes, musicians, and actors. Many youth do not meet or spend time with adults who work in high-tech occupations such as the STEM careers - people who could become important role models. HS/HT can help make this connection so young people can experience first-hand what it feels like to work in a STEM field or a high-tech industry.

Role models can help youth

- gain understanding of specific high-tech occupations and education/training requirements for entering those occupations,
- learn about the personal experiences of people in STEM careers and other high-tech occupations,
- ask questions about the STEM careers, particularly specific areas of interest,

- learn about the importance of leadership by meeting leaders in a particular field,
- interact with successful adults with disabilities, and
- make valuable networking contacts with people working in fields of interest.

Role models can be either adults or experienced peers, and they can be persons with or without disabilities. Role models can be found in many settings, including business and industry, government agencies, secondary schools, colleges and universities, professional or trade associations, volunteer organizations, and student leadership organizations or clubs. Youth can also find examples of role models in books, in trade or popular magazines, and on the Internet.

Online Resources to Consider

Career Scientists Who Are Disabled Role Models

offers career stories about scientists with disabilities. It provides information on what their job duties entail and what accommodations they used to successfully perform their work. Visit <<http://www.as.wvu.edu/~scidis/organize/fsdrole.html>>.

Mentors

NCWD/Youth defines mentoring as, “a trusting relationship, formalized into a program of structured activities, which brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee.”

Mentors are good listeners, people who care, and people who want to help young people bring out the strengths they already possess. In the broader definition, a mentor is an experienced person who goes out of their way to help another person reach important life goals. The “formal” mentor agrees to an ongoing planned partnership that focuses on helping another reach a specific goal over a specific period of time. HS/HT program operators can effectively partner with local and state community organizations in order to provide formal mentors.

Research shows that successful mentoring relationships last for a minimum of one year. Although hybrids of

mentoring models exist, there are four basic types of mentoring models.

Traditional One-to-One Mentoring—A mentoring model in which one adult is paired with one young person. Typically, there will be an extensive matching process to ensure a strong relationship, and it is expected that the commitment will be for one year or longer.

Peer Mentoring—A mentoring model in which peers from a similar developmental stage provide support and advice to mentees. Peers can be close in age or farther apart, depending on the circumstances.

Group Mentoring—This form of mentoring matches one or more adults with a group of youth in a structured setting. This could include an individual or group of adult volunteers working with several youth in a school or a faith-based program, or a group of employees from one company working with students from a local school in a work-based mentoring program.

E-Mentoring—A contemporary model commonly used in schools in which one (or more) youth is (are) matched with a mentor. The youth and mentor regularly exchange e-mail messages for a designated period of time. In ideal circumstances, e-mentoring includes occasional face-to-face meetings to provide a more personal connection. In many instances, a program coordinator (often a teacher) will monitor all correspondence and meetings.

HS/HT coordinators can help youth meet role models and potentially recruit mentors by

- inviting successful high-tech professionals to speak at meetings;
- inviting college students who are planning to enter STEM and high-tech careers to speak to groups of HS/HT students;
- organizing, or helping HS/HT participants organize, a career fair at which youth can meet with professionals in the STEM careers and other high-tech occupations or with students in related academic programs;

- encouraging youth to conduct informational interviews with representatives of disability groups such as staff at Independent Living Centers and leaders of various disability and social service organizations;
- encouraging youth to conduct informational interviews with various workers at their internship sites or with adults who work in the STEM careers and other high-tech occupations;
- encouraging HS/HT participants to share information about role models;
- asking youth to research and write about a leader in a high-tech field of interest;
- asking youth to identify and correspond by mail or e-mail with role models in a selected field to learn about how those people entered the field, what their work entails, and how they progressed in their profession;
- finding ways for youth to participate in professional conferences attended by role models in a field of interest, or to serve on student committees of professional or trade organizations; and
- tapping into an existing mentoring program or creating your own e-mentoring program.

In recent years, e-mentoring programs have become more and more popular. E-mentoring programs share many of the most important characteristics of traditional mentoring, including caring relationships; an experienced person fostering the skills of a young person; ongoing, regular communications; relationships characterized by trust, warmth, and support; clear boundaries of the parameters of the mentoring relationship; and administration by an organization that oversees the mentoring relationship. However, e-mentoring differs from traditional mentoring in a number of ways, including

- communication occurs mostly through e-mail, rather than face-to-face;
- relationships are often time-limited;
- screening and monitoring procedures may differ;
- mentors can often engage in e-mentoring during their work day;

- e-mentoring offers the convenience of communicating online; and
- relationships can span geographic boundaries.

There are several ways to approach e-mentoring. Similar to regular mentoring, e-mentoring can focus on one-to-one mentoring in which each young person has a mentor. E-mentoring can also be a situation in which various mentors provide guidance to a group of people. For example, teachers sometimes recruit experienced professionals to guide complex classroom projects. It can also be project-based learning in which a mentor works with a student to complete a specific project. It can take the form of curriculum-based mentoring in which the teacher posts discussion questions relevant to curriculum for the mentor and mentee(s) to discuss. It can also take the form of unstructured interactions in which mentors and mentees allow the relationship to unfold in keeping with common interests. Or, it can be any combination of these.

Online Resources to Consider

Connecting to Success E-Mentoring Program is an electronic mentoring program designed to promote the successful transition of youth with disabilities to adult life and to help schools, community organizations, and businesses make valuable connections to youth with disabilities. Visit <<http://ici1.umn.edu/ementoring/default.html>>.

Creating an E-Mentoring Community Information Brief was published by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) to explain the University of Washington’s DO-IT e-mentoring program. The brief explains how DO-IT creates and sustains an e-mentoring community to promote the success of youth with disabilities in school, careers, and other life experiences. Visit <<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=3170>>.

Maryland Mentoring Partnership has created mentoring materials geared for employer-youth mentoring partnerships. A mentoring binder was compiled by the Baltimore Giving Project and revised by the Maryland Mentoring Partnership with assistance from Big Bang Products. Visit <<http://www.marylandmentor.org/>>.

Paving the Way to Work: A Guide to Career-Focused Mentoring for Youth with Disabilities is a mentoring guide developed by NCWD/Youth specifically to address the needs of youth with disabilities during their transition from school to work. Visit <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/mentoring.html>.

The National Center for Mentoring Youth with Disabilities, sponsored by Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD), provides opportunities to learn about best practices, connect with others who are committed to similar work, learn about upcoming conferences, and receive training and technical assistance. Visit <<http://www.pyd.org>>.

Component 3: Opportunities for Personal Growth

Youth development and leadership activities are not reserved for young people who strive to be president of the student council or take on other types of high-visibility positions. Rather, they are a means through which any young person can learn the skills necessary to improve his/her own life. By developing and expanding skills related to personal growth, youth will be better prepared to

- explore and identify their personal goals, strengths, assets, skills, interests, challenges, and accommodation/modification needs;
- assume responsibility for, initiate, and follow through with personal education, transition, and career plans;
- identify and access people and resources that will help them succeed in school and as they transition to postsecondary education, work, and other adult activities;
- become involved in activities that promote positive change in a range of environments;
- advocate for themselves and others at work, at home, and in their communities;
- maintain high personal expectations, a positive personal identity, and high self-esteem;
- engage in self-determination, make effective decisions, and successfully resolve personal or community problems;

- develop strong, effective relationships with adults and other youth;
- respect and interact well with people from other cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds; and
- diagnose and resolve conflicts that arise in diverse community settings.

Brett, a young man with cerebral palsy, entered Oklahoma’s HS/HT program, Tech-Now, in the fall of 2002. At that time he was very shy and would not look people in the eyes when he spoke to them. All he talked about was his brother who was a football player with many accomplishments. During Brett’s second year in Tech-Now, his HS/HT site instructor arranged for him to work in the front office of his school. Brett was terrified, but with strong encouragement from his instructor, he agreed to try it. According to Brett, his first two weeks were very difficult, but he quickly got the hang of the job and found he loved it. This experience opened his eyes to the things he could do and how successful he could be.

As Brett went through the Tech-Now program he gained a great deal of confidence and began seeing the value of his accomplishments. He says he went from being shy about talking to anyone at all to being comfortable with talking to anybody. In the spring of 2005, Brett was selected to attend the Oklahoma Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities. During the following school year, Brett was asked to speak at the Governor’s Conference and was paid a stipend. He was also asked to speak at three statewide competitions. Brett also participated in a panel presentation at Oklahoma’s first-ever Transition Institute and he participated in a Vocational Rehabilitation workshop.

Brett graduated from high school in May 2006 and completed the Tech-Now program. He received a \$1,000 scholarship for college for his participation in the Tech-Now Statewide Competition. He was also asked to participate in the Youth Leadership Forum as an alumnus. When Brett entered community college in the fall of 2006, he continued working with Tech-Now as an aide. After graduating from college, Brett hopes to get a job as an advocate for individuals with disabilities or a special education teacher.

Goal Setting

Learning to identify and explore both personal and academic strengths is an essential skill for young people. Taking the next step and setting pragmatic goals based on this personal exploration is fundamental to positive youth development. To be active participants in their HS/HT program, youth with disabilities need to learn the skills necessary to develop goals and a plan for achieving those goals. Periodically, young people should step back and evaluate whether they have met their goals.

Successful efforts to promote goal setting and attainment should focus on the following steps:

- identifying specific long-term goals;
- breaking the long-term goals into short-term, attainable objectives;
- articulating (describing) these goals;
- taking actions necessary to achieve a desired outcome;
- monitoring progress and adjusting the strategy and goal as needed; and
- establishing a new plan when goals have been attained.

When assisting HS/HT participants in setting career and life goals, keep in mind the following:

- goals should be specific, measurable, and attainable;
- goals should focus on something the youth wants to achieve;
- goals should have specific, reasonable starting and finishing dates;
- goals should be written (or typed); and
- youth should be encouraged to track their progress on each goal.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is the process through which individuals address a problem, get to the root of the disagreement, and apply problem-solving methods in a way that simultaneously achieves everyone’s goals. It is

a constructive approach to resolving interpersonal and inter-group conflicts. A major part of youth development and leadership is learning how to handle conflicts that arise in different settings. When handled appropriately, conflict can often help to clarify issues, increase involvement, promote personal growth, and strengthen relationships.

Conflict resolution skills can support leadership development efforts by helping youth to

- form more caring relationships with peers and adults;
- listen and communicate more effectively and assertively;
- collaborate to achieve shared goals;
- develop social and emotional competence;
- improve problem-solving skills;
- manage anger;
- become more aware of bias and different viewpoints;
- develop and promote multicultural understanding;
- build productive, healthy adult lives; and
- learn to negotiate and compromise.

In addition, collaborative conflict resolution can enhance the self-confidence, competence, self-worth, and empowerment of the involved individuals, thereby increasing their capacity to respond to conflict in the future. HS/HT program operators can help students learn valuable conflict resolution skills by participating in conflict resolution training, serving as conflict resolution facilitators and coaches, and serving as role models. HS/HT program coordinators should look for opportunities for HS/HT students to access conflict resolution curricula or participate in related training programs, and encourage youth to use conflict resolution skills in all aspects of their lives.

The following are some suggestions for incorporating personal growth skills into HS/HT:

1. Offer workshops, training, and experiential learning opportunities that focus on
 - social skills development;
 - goal setting and attainment;

- problem-solving and decision-making;
- understanding and expression of rights;
- school-to-work transition planning;
- identification of needed accommodations and modifications;
- conversation, listening, and nonverbal communication skills training; and
- identification of self-advocacy mentors and role models.

2. Integrate role-playing into different self-advocacy training situations. Role-playing gives youth the opportunity to practice confronting specific situations in a supportive environment. In addition, it provides them with opportunities to observe how others act when interviewing for a job, negotiating a salary, obtaining a needed accommodation at school, arranging for time off from school to participate in a job shadowing activity, or convincing an employer of the need for an internship program at his/her work-site. Consider holding a debate on “To disclose...or not to disclose...your disability.”
3. Hold a discussion among HS/HT participants on topics of personal growth.

Examples of Discussion Topics Addressing Personal Growth and Youth Development

- **Ability to work with others to accomplish goals**
- **Vision and social responsibility**
- **Awareness of one’s strengths/weaknesses**
- **Ability to motivate others**
- **Integrity and honesty**
- **Determination and perseverance**
- **Demonstration of personal values through behavior**
- **Sensitivity to the community**
- **Respect for diversity and individual differences**
- **Effective problem-solving and decision-making skills**
- **Ability to communicate**
- **Critical thinking**
- **Conflict resolution**
- **Willingness to share power**
- **Honesty**
- **Accountability**

Online Resources to Consider

ChoiceMaker Self-Determination Curriculum & Lessons are designed to teach secondary students the self-determination skills they need to be successful in adult life. Visit <http://web.uccs.edu/education/special/self_determination/cmcr_curriculum.htm>.

Conflict Resolution provides lesson plans, activities, and role playing exercises to explore building community, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. Visit <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/hsht/conflict_resolution.doc>.

Component 4: Leadership Opportunities

One way to help youth with disabilities develop leadership skills is to encourage them to get involved in school clubs, student chapters of professional organizations, disability interest/advocacy groups, and programs offered at community-based organizations.

A group of HS/HT students in Salisbury, Maryland, visited local facilities throughout the county to determine if they were accessible to people with disabilities. The information they gathered was used to create an “Accessibility Guide” for the local area. The students received community service hours for their efforts.

Service-Learning

While service-learning was discussed in Chapter 3 as an aspect of work-based learning experiences, it is examined here as a method for the development of youth leadership skills. Providing services to the community gives youth with disabilities a chance to apply academic and social skills while also meeting real community needs. Service learning challenges students to address issues in their community, while increasing their self-esteem and growing personally, socially, and intellectually. Service learning also encourages the inclusion of a “youth voice” in the community through engaging the perspectives and ideas of young people.

By adding a service and volunteer component to the HS/HT program, participants will learn more about their communities while their knowledge of science,

math, and technology foster positive change. Thus, students develop an ethic of civic responsibility and learn that conditions can be changed. In addition, participation in service and volunteer related activities introduces students to additional career paths and provides a broader context for making decisions about future employment.

Research shows that the benefits of service-learning include increased commitment to schoolwork, improved school-community relations, and better interpersonal relations. Service learning also allows nonprofit organizations to get involved in partnerships with HS/HT. A HS/HT service-learning project might “adopt” a local river, study ecology and biology, and make recommendations to the conservation commission in the community to preserve the quality of the water.

“WE LEAD” is a collaborative youth leadership project of the Center for Creative Leadership, sponsored by the Michigan Developmental Disability Council in partnership with the ARC of Kent County and MiConnections of Kent County. This statewide initiative was piloted by students with disabilities in Kent County for four weeks in 2005. The first week focused on leadership development and disability awareness. During the second week, a group of non-disabled youth joined the students with disabilities for team-building activities. In addition, a group of Boy Scouts and youth from the Grand Rapids Mayor’s Youth Council joined the group for leadership training. The third and fourth weeks focused on developing and implementing a service leadership project. Staff from Lighthouse Communities, a local community resource, talked to participating youth about the needs of a number of local communities. The youth selected a neighborhood beautification project in one of the poorest and most crime-ridden neighborhoods in Grand Rapids. The youth planned all aspects of the project, forming small committees, contacting the media, securing transportation, hiring caterers, developing a marketing plan, and making difficult decisions about how to allocate the limited resources available for the project. To conclude the project, the youth planned a cookout for neighborhood residents and for their public servants (e.g., policemen, firemen, and EMTs). The MiConnections staff involved in WE LEAD credited the youth for the success of this venture.

In Florida, the Able Trust's HS/HT program and AmeriCorps's Volunteer Florida Project have a formal agreement (Project Impact) whereby students enrolled in HS/HT will be introduced to national, state, and local volunteer service opportunities by being included in AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve, and Senior Corps projects operated through local volunteer centers. Leon County HS/HT students joined AmeriCorps volunteers and community members in creating a mural for the HOPE Community. HS/HT participants learned about homelessness and how to work as a team, as they increased their self-esteem and grew personally, socially, and intellectually. Under this agreement, both partners benefit as the Volunteer Florida Project gains access to a new pool of potential volunteers and HS/HT is able to increase the access that youth with disabilities have to existing youth leadership development programs.

Online Resources to Consider

Service-Learning Resources for Teens, Parents, and Teachers is sponsored by the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, a program of Learn and Serve America and the Corporation for National and Community Service. Youth, parents, and teachers can visit it to explore service-learning, find project examples, and investigate opportunities in service-learning. Visit http://www.servicelearning.org/resources/kids_teens/index.php.

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentors can provide coaching, listening, and advice in a formal or unstructured, manner. When HS/HT students become peer mentors, they learn leadership skills. A peer mentor may be a senior or recent HS/HT graduate who has proven his/her abilities to be successful while participating in the HS/HT program and who is interested in helping others. Outcomes of peer mentoring may include increased positive personal relationships, improved academic skills, and development of or improvement in other important life skills such as increased self-advocacy skills. Peer mentors can keep peers posted on upcoming workshops and encourage them to get involved with other HS/HT activities. Many

universities are implementing peer-mentoring programs that link older students with incoming, first-year students.

Program operators can integrate peer mentoring into HS/HT programs by

- running a workshop on how peer mentoring works,
- matching peers with mentors who have similar interests,
- finding good matches early on by creating social opportunities where people can meet and mingle, and
- encouraging youth to serve as role models or tutors for local elementary and middle school students.

Leadership Training

Many programs nationwide help promote youth leadership development. Although the following programs focus specifically on leadership development for youth with disabilities, youth in HS/HT should be encouraged to participate in all types of leadership development programs.

- The Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) assists states in providing youth leadership training for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities. Students selected as delegates attend a four-day event in their state capitals to develop leadership, citizenship, and social skills. By providing a framework of history and an atmosphere of encouragement, the forums offer peers opportunities to learn from one another as they explore common challenges and experiences. For more information, visit the website for the Association of Youth Leadership Forums at <http://www.montanaylf.org>.



West Virginia YLF Sponsors Bill to Create Disability History Week

Research has shown that youth with disabilities need “an understanding of disability history, culture, and disability public policy issues as well as their rights and responsibilities” in order to successfully transition to adulthood. Youth Leadership Forums (YLF) are convening in 23 states to help youth and emerging leaders with disabilities access critical information such as this. These youth leaders are letting America know that it’s their right to learn their history!

In the summer of 2005, West Virginia’s first-ever YLF emphasized the history, culture, and community of the disability movement. The delegates, a group of young people with different disabilities, backgrounds, and experiences, were brought together for a single mission: empowerment. During a mock legislative session held in the actual West Virginia House chambers, these youth presented the “Justin and Yoshiko Dart Disability History Week” bill to Speaker of the House, Bob Kiss. The bill would dedicate the third week in October (Disability Employment Month) as Disability History Week to educate all children in public schools about the importance of the disability civil rights movement. Speaker Kiss was very impressed and offered to sponsor a real bill in the next legislative session. The bill, which was written and promoted by the youth, passed the West Virginia House and Senate in the spring, and was signed into law in the summer of 2006.

- The National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN), which is dedicated to advancing the next generation of disability leaders, provides a national voice for young leaders with disabilities and special health needs. Originally sponsored by several federal agencies and led by the U.S. Department of Education, NYLN promotes leadership development, education, employment, independent living, and health and wellness among young leaders. Now a non-profit organization, the Network’s activities include an annual National Youth Leadership Conference, mentoring opportunities, and more. For more information, visit <http://nyln.org/>.
- Youth Information Centers (YICs) are 15 organizations funded through the Projects of National Significance (PNS) grant program authorized under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) and administered by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. These youth-led organizations received grants to develop information, resource and training centers for youth (ages 13-17) and emerging leaders (ages 18-30) with developmental disabilities. For more information, visit <http://www.addyic.org>.

Organizational Leadership

Leadership development helps young people develop the necessary skills to take charge of their lives and make a positive impact in their communities. Active involvement in leadership organizations provides members with opportunities to develop, practice, and refine their leadership skills. Young people who show initiative and interest should be encouraged to run for offices in youth organizations, civic groups, and student clubs, and to become members of the HS/HT advisory board.



Encourage youth to research and become active in organizations such as

- Junior Achievement
- Career-Technical Education Student Clubs
- Boys & Girls Club
- National Council on Youth Leadership
- 4-H Teen Leadership
- Prudential
- National Youth Leadership Network
- National Youth Leadership Council
- Youth Leadership Forum
- Girl Scouts of America
- Boy Scouts
- Rotary International
- Young Leaders On-Line
- Awesome Youth Leadership Training
- Rising Stars Program
- After-school clubs

Online Resources to Consider

Boys and Girls Clubs of America contains program descriptions of services to promote and enhance the development of boys and girls up to age 18. Club programs and services promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and influence. Visit <<http://www.bgca.org/>>.

Do Something is a “website community” where young people learn, listen, speak, vote, volunteer, ask, and take action to make the world a better place. It provides a place for young people to connect and to be inspired, supported, and celebrated. It contains resources and information on community projects to help youth turn ideas into action. Visit <<http://www.dosomething.org/>>.

National 4-H Headquarters provides information on 4-H Programs of Distinction, youth development programs that are occurring in communities across the United States. Search the program abstracts database and read the in-depth program descriptions. Visit <<http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/index.htm>>.

National League of Cities Sponsors Youth as City Leaders is a place for young people from all around the country who are active in the life of their city or town to connect with each other. The website also serves as a resource to youth who would like to be engaged in public policy in their community. Visit: <http://www.nlc.org/iyef/networks___assistance/7164.cfm>.

National Youth Development Information Center (NYDIC) contains information on youth development in the areas of funding, research, program development, career development, evaluation, policy, and more. It is a project of the National Collaborative for Youth. Visit <<http://www.nydic.org/nydic>>

The Innovation Center for Community & Youth Development connects thinkers and leaders of all ages to develop fresh ideas, forge new partnerships, and design strategies that engage young people and their communities. Visit <<http://www.theinnovationcenter.org/>>.

Getting Organized

To prepare for leadership development activities, HS/HT program operators should consider the following:

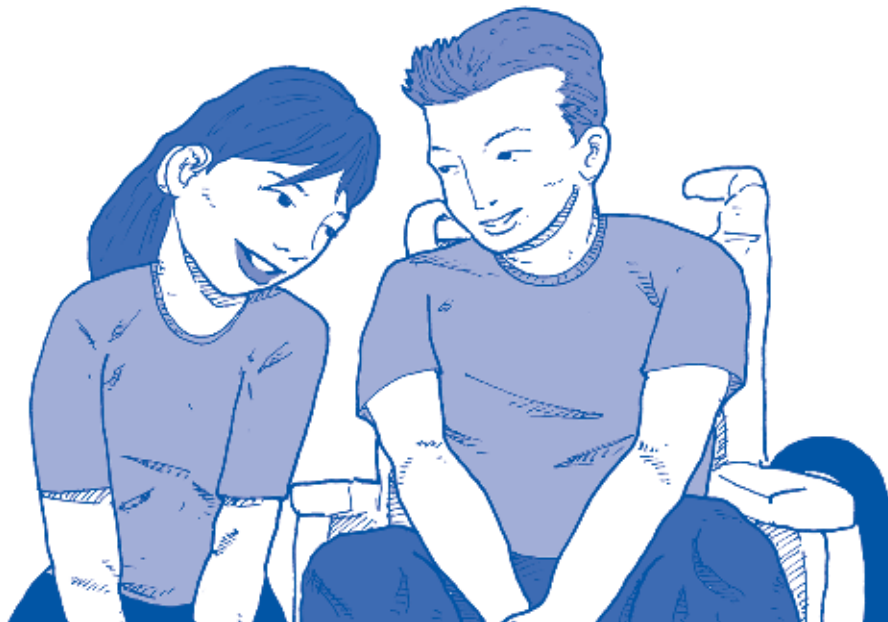
- **Create and maintain** a database of contacts when networking to set up various preparatory and work-based experiences. HS/HT staff will have ample opportunities to meet potential role models and possible mentors for youth.
- **Invite** your local Workforce Investment Board and Youth Council to provide a workshop on leadership roles within the community and work with the Youth Council to develop a set of coordinated leadership development opportunities for all youth as required under the Workforce Investment Act.
- **Identify** community instructors from institutions of higher learning, civic organizations, faith-based groups, and others who would be willing to serve as instructors in the areas of goal setting, self-advocacy, and conflict resolution.

- **Involve** HS/HT students in a resource mapping exercise to identify the services available in the community and the gaps in local services, and use this information to identify a range of service-learning opportunities. (See Exhibit 7.5 in Part II of this Guide for a tool that can be used to conduct a resource mapping exercise.)
- **Promote** social and recreational opportunities for HS/HT participants along with the local recreation departments, the YWCA/YMCA, and Independent Living Centers.
- **Involve** HS/HT youth in designing service-learning and other activities and projects.
- **Encourage** seasoned HS/HT participants and graduates to serve as peer mentors for new participants in HS/HT.
- **Invite** HS/HT youth to be voting members of your advisory council.
- **Use** HS/HT youth as ambassadors for your program.

HS/HT Student Advisory Committee

Most HS/HT programs have involved students with disabilities in some type of advisory capacity to provide guidance for the program. For example, Colorado HS/HT has convened a Student Advisory Committee that is led by students and functions for students. The quarterly meetings provide opportunities for leadership training that focuses on mentoring and advocacy. Participating students take a proactive role in designing, implementing and marketing their own HS/HT program. The students are also responsible for developing goals and establishing measurable outcomes and timelines for achieving them.

In Delaware, HS/HT students are encouraged to participate in Student Leadership Advisory Committees (SLACs) and other types of advisory committees, including Student Business Leadership Groups.



Supporting Research: Youth Development and Leadership

Youth with disabilities will learn to make informed decisions about their future when offered the opportunity to develop their leadership skills. In a survey of five national program initiatives focusing on youth and leadership development, common program elements included, but were not limited to (a) providing hands-on experiential activities; (b) involving youth in developing and implementing activities; (c) seeking opportunities for youth to experience success and to try new roles; (d) emphasizing knowledge of self, strengths, and weaknesses; and (e) offering connections to community and other youth-serving organizations.

Youth Develop Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes That Enable Them to Learn and Grow

Ferber, Pittman, and Marshall (2002) identified five areas in which youth development should be promoted

- learning (developing positive basic and applied academic attitudes, skills, and behaviors);
- thriving (developing physically healthy attitudes, skills, and behaviors);
- connecting (developing positive social attitudes, skills, and behaviors);
- working (developing positive vocational attitudes, skills, and behaviors); and
- leading (developing positive civic attitudes, skills, and behaviors).

While noting the limited amount of quality research on youth development and leadership (Benson & Saito, 2000; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Edelman, Gill, Comerford, Larson, & Hare, 2004), a number of studies and program evaluations have identified components of effective youth development programs and curricula. These components include: strong relationships with adults (Boyd, 2001; James, 1999; Moore & Zaff, 2002; Woyach, 1996); training in mediation, conflict resolution, team dynamics, and project management (Edelman et al., 2004); new roles and responsibilities based on experiences and resources that provide opportunity for growth (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003); and teamwork and peer networking (Boyd, 2001; Woyach, 1996).

Youth development is best promoted through activities and experiences that help youth develop competencies in social, ethical, emotional, physical, and cognitive domains (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The Konopka Institute (Komro & Stigler, 2000) identified components of

effective youth development programs, including: decision-making; interaction with peers; acquiring a sense of belonging; experimenting with their own identity, with relationships to others, and with ideas; and participating in the creative arts, physical activity, and health education. The American Youth Policy Forum conducted a national review of 50 evaluations of youth interventions and identified nine basic principles of effective youth programming and practice, including (a) high quality implementation; (b) high standards and expectations for participating youth; (c) participation of caring, knowledgeable adults; (d) parental involvement; (e) taking a holistic approach; (f) viewing youth as valuable resources and contributors to their communities; (g) high community involvement; (h) long term services, support, and follow-up; and (i) including work-based and vocational curricula as key components of programming (James, 1999).

Understanding the Relationship between Strengths and Goals, and Having the Skills to Act on That Understanding

Research on social-emotional learning has found that instruction in self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making result in greater attachment to school (Blum, McNeely, & Rinehart, 2002; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Greater attachment to school, in turn, leads to less risky behavior, more developmental assets, better academic performance, and improved long-term outcomes such as higher graduation rates, higher incomes, lower arrest rates, and fewer pregnancies (Blum, Beuhring, & Rinehart, 2000; Wilson, Gottfredson, & Najaka, 2001).

Youth who participate in organizational leadership roles, planning activities, extra-curricular activities, and presentations, show higher levels of self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and self-determination (Edelman et al., 2004; Larson, 2000; Sagawa, 2003). Other components of effective youth development programs include discussing conflicting values and formulating value systems (Konopka Institute, 2000); developing ethics, values, and ethical reasoning (Boyd, 2001; Woyach, 1996); developing personal development plans; assessing individual strengths and weaknesses; and skill-building in goal-setting, planning, and self-advocacy (Edelman et al., 2004). Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) identified similar self-determination and self-advocacy skills needed by students with disabilities such as communicating interests and preferences, setting achievable goals, planning and time management, problem-solving, negotiating and persuading, leadership skills, and self-monitoring and reinforcement.

Youth Develop the Knowledge and Skills to Demonstrate Leadership and Participate in Community Life

A study by Woyach (1996) identified 12 principles for effective youth leadership programs, including knowledge and skills related to leadership; the history, values, and beliefs of communities; leadership styles; awareness, understanding, and tolerance of other people, cultures and societies; experiential learning and opportunities for genuine leadership; and service in the community, country, and world. Boyd (2001) and Ferber et al. (2002) also found experiential learning, such as service-learning projects, to be an effective method for teaching leadership skills and applying academic skills.

Additional experiential learning or on-the-job leadership experiences that have proven to be effective include mentoring and counseling, formal leadership training programs, internships, special assignments, and simulations or case studies (James, 1999; Lambrecht, Hopkins, Moss, & Finch, 1997); activities that convey information about life, careers, and places beyond the neighborhood, as well as community service opportunities (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995); and activities providing a sense of connection to the community, problem-solving and social skills, and after-school recreation programs (Komro & Stigler, 2000).

Effective youth leadership experiences identified by research include placement in a variety of challenging situations with problems to solve and choices to make under conditions of manageable risk; and placement in a supportive environment with supervisors who provide positive role models and constructive support, and mentors who provide counseling (James, 1999; Lambrecht et al., 1997). For many youth, leadership skills are developed during structured extracurricular (recreational and social development) activities, such as clubs, service organizations, sports programs, and fine arts (Larson, 2000; Wehman, 1996). Few youth with disabilities participate in these types of activities and groups unless teachers, families, and other advocates facilitate these conditions (Amado, 1993; Halpern et al., 1997; Moon, 1994). Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) found that students with disabilities who have self-determination skills have more positive educational outcomes and have a greater chance of being successful in making the transition to adulthood, including achieving employment and community independence. For youth with disabilities, the importance of developing self-advocacy skills has been well-documented (Agran, 1997; Sands & Wehmeyer, 1996; Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1994; Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998).

Successful youth development programs also must be able to adapt to the social, cultural, and ethnic diversity of the youth they serve and the communities in which they operate (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Programs that promote understanding and tolerance in their participants have been shown to promote the development of positive social behaviors, attitudes, and skills (Edelman et al., 2004; Ferber, Pittman & Marshall, 2002).

Youth leadership is part of the youth development process and has internal and external components, such as the ability to analyze one's own strengths and weaknesses, set and pursue personal and vocational goals, guide or direct others on a course of action, influence the opinions and behaviors of others, and serve as a role model (Wehmeyer et al., 1998). Evaluations of youth development programs have demonstrated that young people who participate in youth leadership and civic engagement activities consistently get the supports and opportunities needed for healthy youth development (Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, 2003).

Youth Have the Ability to Make Informed Decisions

Parents, educators, and researchers agree on the need to promote self-determination, self-advocacy, and student-centered planning. Self-determination—the combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior—has become an important part of special education and related services provided to individuals with disabilities (Abery & Stancliffe, 1996). Such skills include self-advocacy, social skills, organizational skills, community and peer connections, communication, conflict resolution, career skill building, and career development and computer/technological competency (Martin & Marshall, 1996; Wehmeyer, Kelchner, & Richards, 1996). Research has found that helping students acquire and exercise self-determination skills is a strategy that leads to more positive educational outcomes. For example, Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) found that one year after graduation, students with learning disabilities who received self-determination training were more likely to be employed at a higher rate and earn more per hour, when compared to peers who had not received the training. Youth development programs foster self-determination by increasing participants' capacity for independent thinking, self-advocacy, and development of internal standards and values (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002).

With the passage of the 1990 amendments to IDEA, transition services were required to take into account students' needs,

EXHIBIT 4.1 (CONTINUED)

interests and preferences. To accomplish this goal, students had to participate in planning for their future. The IDEA regulations of 1997 required that all special education students be invited to their IEP meetings when transition goals are discussed. The 2004 amendments to IDEA went even further in ensuring that youth and their parents have meaningful opportunities to participate in transition planning. As a result, the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has played a major role in advancing a wide range of self-determination strategies through sponsored research and demonstration projects.

Although many students with disabilities attend their IEP meetings (Hasazi, Furney, & DeStefano, 1999; Johnson & Sharpe, 2000), a significant number remain uninvolved. This raises questions as to whether students are not being extended opportunities for involvement, or are simply choosing not to attend. Effective student participation in the IEP process requires that students have the skills to move their lives in the directions they choose, and have the support of their school, family and the adult service system in accomplishing their goals.

A common element of exemplary self-determination programs is the presence of an individual committed to the philosophy of self-determination and dedicated to integrating self-determination practices into schools. Exemplary programs also

commonly have strong administrative support. Without administrative support, student self-determination programs are often limited to individual classrooms and teachers who are dedicated to this effort despite limited resources (Wood & Test, 2001).

Educators, parents, and students consistently recommend that self-determination instruction begin early, well before high school. This recommendation is consistent with published recommendations for self-determination instruction (Wood & Test, 2001). Natural opportunities for making choices occur throughout life, and increased opportunities to express preferences and choices, beginning in early childhood, can heighten an individual's sense of self-esteem and self-direction. Izzo and Lamb (2002) suggest that schools seeking to encourage self-determination and positive post-school outcomes for students with disabilities should (a) empower parents as partners in promoting self-determination and career development skills, (b) facilitate student-centered IEP meetings and self-directed learning models, (c) increase students' awareness of their disabilities and needed accommodations, (d) offer credit-bearing classes in self-determination and careers, (e) teach and reinforce students' internal locus of control, (f) develop self-advocacy skills and support student application of these skills, (g) infuse self-determination and career development skills into the general education curriculum, and (h) develop and implement work-based learning programs for all students.



Qualities of an Effective Mentor

The National Mentoring Center has identified ten important features of successful mentors' attitudes and styles.

1. **Be a friend.** Don't act like a parent. Don't try to be an authority figure. Don't preach about values. DO focus on establishing a bond, a feeling of attachment, a sense of equality, and the mutual enjoyment of shared time.
2. **Have realistic goals and expectations.** Focus on the child or youth and his or her overall development. Especially early on, center your goals on the relationship itself. Throughout the relationship, emphasize friendship over performance.
3. **Have fun together.** Many youth involved in mentoring programs have few opportunities for fun. Having fun together shows your mentee that you are reliable and committed. Focusing on "fun" activities early in the relationship can lead to more "serious" activities later.
4. **Give your mentee voice and choice in deciding on activities.** Give a range of choices concerning possible activities. Create an "idea file" together. Listen. Emphasize to your mentee that her or his enjoyment is important to you. Negotiate. Feel comfortable about setting clear limits on the amount of money you will spend.
5. **Be positive.** Offer frequent expression of direct confidence. Be encouraging even when talking about potentially troublesome topics, such as grades. Offer concrete assistance.
6. **Let your mentee have much of the control over what the two of you talk about—and how you talk about it.** Don't push. Be sensitive and responsive to your mentee's cues. Understand that young people vary in their styles of communication and their habits of disclosure. Be direct in letting your mentee know that she or he can confide in you without fear of judgment or exposure. Remember that the activities you do together can become a source of conversation.
7. **Listen.** "Just listening" gives mentees a chance to vent and lets them know that they can disclose personal matters to you without worrying about being criticized. When you listen, your mentee can see that you are a friend, not an authority figure.
8. **Respect the trust your mentee places in you.** Respond in ways that show you see your mentee's side of things. Reassure your mentee that you will be there for him or her. If you give advice, give it sparingly. If you give advice, be sure it is focused on identifying solutions. If, on occasion, you feel you have to convey concern or displeasure, do so in a way that also conveys reassurance and acceptance. Sound like a friend, not like a parent.
9. **Remember that your relationship is with the youth, not the youth's parent.** Maintain cordial but distant contact with family members. Keep your primary focus on the youth. Resist families' efforts to extract help beyond providing a friendship for the youth. Be nonjudgmental about the family.
10. **Remember that you are responsible for building the relationship.** Take responsibility for making and maintaining contact. Understand that the feedback and reassurance characteristic of adult-to-adult relationships is often beyond the capacity of youth.

Source: Jucovy, Linda. (2001, April). Building relationships: A guide for new mentors. Technical Assistance Packet #4. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, National Mentoring Center.

CHAPTER 5:

Connecting Activities

This chapter examines the connecting activities necessary to assist HS/HT participants as they transition to their next phase in life—one that will hopefully include additional technical training, postsecondary education, and/or work leading to economic self-sufficiency. As such, this chapter focuses on the services and activities requiring support from individuals or organizations outside of the educational setting, such as tutors to improve academic performance, assistive technology to address accommodation needs, and transportation. Youth participating in HS/HT programs will also need to work with other agencies as they pursue options in postsecondary education and high-tech careers.

Component 1: Mental and Physical Health Services

Although all students need easy access to mental and physical health services, students with disabilities may require such services on a more regular basis. To address the needs of youth with disabilities, including those with mental health needs, HS/HT program coordinators need to work closely with the schools to make sure the mental and physical health services they have are readily accessible to students with disabilities. Consider that youth with mental health needs often face unemployment, underemployment, and discrimination when they enter the workforce. Employment data indicate that individuals with serious mental illness have the lowest level of employment of any group of people with disabilities. Large numbers of youth with

both diagnosed and undiagnosed mental health needs who are transitioning into young adulthood, to the world of work, and to postsecondary education are therefore likely to experience significant difficulties. Research has also shown that youth with mental health needs are over-represented in the foster care and juvenile justice system, in school disciplinary cases, and among high school dropouts.

Recently, a growing number of strategies and resources have been emerging to support youth with mental health needs in achieving independence, self-sufficiency, employment, and postsecondary education goals. Research is showing that, similar to youth with other types of disabilities, youth with mental health needs clearly benefit from exposure to career preparation and related youth development activities such as mentoring. As these youth have gained entry into the workforce, their experiences have shown that youth with mild to moderate mental health needs often require minimal or no employment supports.

While HS/HT staff may be able to identify youth who may be in need of mental and physical health services, staff may not have the expertise or credentials to provide such services. Therefore, they need to be knowledgeable about the mental and physical health services that are available in the community, and know how to refer youth participating in HS/HT to those services when deemed appropriate. In some cases, this may mean working with medical facilities and community mental health groups to ensure that their services are fully accessible to youth with disabilities.

HS/HT staff should also be aware of the “Healthy and Ready to Work” (HRTW) initiative funded as part of the Social Security Act, Title V Maternal and Child Health Block grant to states, under the Division of Services to Children with Special Health Care Needs. One goal of HRTW is to help states develop effective mechanisms to achieve a system of care for children and youth with special health needs and their families by 2010. The following six national performance measures (NPM) serve as a guide to states in meeting this HRTW goal. The performance measures include

- early and continuous screening,
- families and youth as partners in decision-making,
- medical home,
- health insurance,
- organization of services, and
- transition to adulthood.

The needs of transitioning youth are infused throughout all six performance measures, with a particular emphasis on the sixth measure, “transition,” which looks at the percent of children with special health care needs, ages 0 to 18, whose families report the community-based service system is organized so they can use it easily. Examples of how this is measured include such things as sponsorship of Youth Advisory Councils, youth developing skills and becoming spokespeople; staff members talking directly to youth; youth involved in independence building and work experiences; person-centered planning and mentoring programs; work opportunities; independent living training, transportation and technology; and connecting youth to other youth and adult mentors. For additional information visit the HRTW National Resource Center at <<http://www.hrtw.org>>.

In addition to generic health and mental health services, youth with disabilities, particularly those with significant disabilities, may need personal assistance services (PAS). Depending on the nature and severity of the disability, a young person may need assistance in locating attendants and personal assistance services, readers, interpreters, or other such specialized services.

Ohio HS/HT has a relationship with the Ohio Bureau for Children with Medical Handicaps. The Bureau assists with the costs of various assistive technologies to address the needs of youth with physical and sensory disabilities to keep these youth in school. A representative of the Bureau serves on the HS/HT State Leadership Council.

Online Resources to Consider

Center for Personal Assistance Services provides research, training, dissemination, and technical assistance on issues of personal assistance services (PAS) in the United States. The information covers: the relationship between formal and informal PAS and caregiving support, and the role of assistive technology (AT) in complementing PAS; policies and programs, barriers, and new models for PAS in the home and community; PAS workforce issues related to development, recruitment, retention, and benefits; and workplace models of formal and informal PAS and AT at work. Visit <<http://www.pascenter.org/>>.

Children’s Medical Services Transition Handbook provides assistance in planning for medical needs during the transition from high school to adult life. Visit <<http://www.cms-kids.com/CMSNTransition.htm>>.

Medical Training Curriculum to Improve Care for Persons with Physical Disabilities, produced by the World Institute on Disabilities (WID), contains curriculum and a video developed for medical professionals to guide improved healthcare quality for individuals with physical disabilities. The curriculum, *Treating Adults with Physical Disabilities – Access and Communication*, can be downloaded free of charge at <<http://www.wid.org/news/FinalCurriculumGuide4.doc>>.

Medicines in My Home was developed to help middle school students learn about the safe and effective use of over-the-counter medicines. The website, which is sponsored by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), is designed for use in health education courses. Visit <<http://www.fda.gov/medsinmyhome/>>.

Personal Assistance Services in the Workplace, a publication by the Job Accommodation Network, discusses personal assistance services in the workplace (WPAS) and answers frequently asked questions about WPAS, including its use as an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It contains examples of WPAS to accommodate job applicants and current employees with limitations due to sensory, cognitive, physical, or mental health impairments. It provides a list of WPAS resources and a glossary of WPAS-related terminology. Visit www.jan.wvu.edu/media/PAS.html.

Tunnels and Cliffs: A Guide for Workforce Development Practitioners and Policymakers Serving Youth with Mental Health Needs, a publication by NCWD/Youth, was developed as part of ODEP's initiative to help workforce practitioners, administrators, and policymakers enhance their understanding of youth with mental health needs and the supports necessary to help them transition into the workforce successfully. It includes practical information and resources for youth service practitioners at local One-Stop Career Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, youth programs funded under the Workforce Investment Act, school transition programs, and mental health agencies. It also provides policy makers with information to help them address system and policy obstacles in order to improve service delivery systems for youth with mental health needs. The Guide can be purchased from NCWD/Youth or downloaded for free at www.ncwd-youth.info/.

What's Health Got to Do with It?, published by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, provides high school-level Health Care Transition Curriculum and a related teacher's guide. Download the curriculum for free from the University of South Florida's website. Visit <http://usfpeds.hsc.usf.edu/adolescent/>.

Component 2: Transportation

Although there are 62 federal programs that fund transportation services, transportation continues to be one of the biggest barriers to full integration and employment facing individuals with disabilities. It is also one of the greatest challenges facing HS/HT

programs. Students need access to transportation to participate in HS/HT events, particularly when they are scheduled on weekends and during the summer. Even when HS/HT is conducted as an after-school club, students do not always have access to transportation to get home. For example, some schools reserve their after-school activities buses solely for use by students participating in sports. HS/HT students also need transportation to participate in industry site visits, job shadowing activities, internships, and part-time employment. Unfortunately, providing transportation can become a drain on the fiscal resources of a HS/HT program.

Logistics regarding transportation for HS/HT activities must be planned well in advance, as youth often need transportation to and from activities and public transportation is not always an option. Individual arrangements must be made using creative approaches that provide dependable, affordable transportation, such as car pools, volunteers, bicycles, negotiated discounts with taxi companies, and subsidies from cities or counties.

To address the transportation challenges facing HS/HT, students and all of the partners need to work together to find transportation solutions so that youth will be able to fully participate in program activities. Each HS/HT site needs to check with their state's department of transportation and with local government offices to determine if their community is involved in initiatives designed to improve access to transportation for persons with disabilities.

For youth with disabilities, particularly those who are blind or visually impaired, access to community orientation and mobility training can be critically important to facilitating independence. Such youth may need assistance in finding accessible bus routes, negotiating bus routes or the subway system, finding accessible housing, and getting to the local health clinic. HS/HT programs should include travel training as a component of the program so youth can learn to travel on public transportation. This can be done by asking someone from an adult disability organization (e.g., a Center for Independent Living) or a program for the visually impaired (e.g., the National Federation of the Blind or the American Council of the Blind) to lead a session on travel training.

Vocational Rehabilitation can also be an excellent resource. Many states offer accessible transportation programs with reduced fares for people with disabilities. Consider inviting representatives of public transportation centers to participate.

Consider the following:

- If public transportation is an accessible option, work with the family and ask them to practice with the young person.
- If the student has a valid driver's license and a mode of transportation, he or she can supply transportation.
- Parents/guardians might be able to provide a car pool.
- The job site might have information available on car pooling.
- Conduct your HS/HT activities after-school during the same time frame as other clubs and sports activities so that students can use the school's after-school activities bus.
- Partner with a school system to secure a school bus during off-school hours to provide transportation within the district. Depending on the circumstances, the HS/HT program may be asked to pay the salary of the school bus driver for the time spent transporting students, or the school district may cover this cost.
- Partner with a disability community organization that provides transportation to its clients.
- If HS/HT program staff use their cars to provide transportation for students, make sure they have appropriate liability coverage.

Online Resources to Consider

CTAA, the Community Transportation Association of America, has a publication, "Linking People to the Workplace: Transportation Strategies and Practices," that provides technical assistance, practices, and strategies to assist workforce development professionals and other professionals in providing accessible transportation services for low-income

individuals and persons with disabilities in their communities. Visit: <<http://www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/toolkit/index.asp>>.

Easter Seals Project ACTION (Accessible Community Transportation in Our Nation) promotes cooperation between the transportation industry and the disability community to increase mobility for people with disabilities. Project ACTION maintains a clearinghouse and offers various resources, training and technical assistance, including those specifically designed to facilitate the use of public transportation for students and young adults with disabilities. One such resource, "Public transportation: The route to freedom," a transportation education program for students with disabilities in grades 8-12, provides curriculum developed to teach students in secondary schools about concepts, skills, and behaviors necessary to use public transportation. Visit <http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ESPA_resources_supporting_young_adults>.

United We Ride, a five-part collaborative initiative of the U.S. Departments of Transportation, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education, is designed to break down the barriers between programs and set the stage for local partnerships that generate common sense solutions to transportation challenges. Their *Framework for Action* is a self-assessment tool that states and communities can use to identify areas of success and highlight the actions needed to improve the coordination of human service transportation. This tool can be used to conduct resource mapping exercises to assess the transportation systems in communities. Visit <<http://www.unitedweride.gov/>>.

Component 3: Academic Tutoring

Tutoring was discussed in Chapter 2 as a part of School-Based Preparatory Experiences. The content of this chapter focuses on HS/HT's role in connecting students with disabilities with tutoring resources available in the community that they can access after they leave the program. Since tutoring is available through many organizations in the community, including schools, HS/HT program staff will need to "scan the environment" to identify and access the tutoring services that work best for a particular HS/HT

student. Below are some suggestions on where to find tutoring services.

- If the young person is currently enrolled in high school, check with the school's guidance department for a list of qualified tutors.
- Tutors may also be obtained through local adult education programs and institutions of higher education.
- Link to after-school programs (often supported by Federal funding under the 21st Century Learning Communities Act).
- Link current participants with other youth who have successfully completed coursework or who have graduated from high school and exited the HS/HT program.
- There may be business-community partnerships or community-at-large mentors who may be qualified and interested in providing tutoring services.
- Program staff can work with school personnel, community organizations, and youth and families to identify areas where academic supports are needed.

Component 4: Financial Planning

Like any young person, HS/HT students can also benefit from training in or exposure to financial planning and management. In some cases, HS/HT students might participate in classes or training programs available to anyone. In other cases, financial planning can be built into a HS/HT activity. For example, participants may be asked to select a job and then be given a salary based on the comparable salary of people currently employed in that job. The students could then be asked to develop a personal budget for one month, including tracking expenditures for rent, utilities, food, transportation, insurance, clothing, and recreation. This exercise is particularly enlightening for youth who have never had responsibility for paying their bills.



Tech-Now in Oklahoma conducts a week-long Summer Institute every year for HS/HT students from across the state. One of the activities included is a visit to the Oklahoma City Zoo. The day begins with a presentation by a staff person who talks about the history of the Zoo and the costs associated with buying and maintaining different animals. Following the presentation, students are divided into groups and given specific resources to plan and develop their own zoo. The resources include 200 acres of land, 4 buildings, a lake, and \$95,000 to purchase animals. Each group develops a layout for their zoo and purchases animals from the bank which is run by parents and sibling. However, once a purchase has been made, the animal cannot be sold back to the bank. Rather, students are encouraged to negotiate with other groups if they decide they want a different animal. Among other things, participating students learn how to work in groups, plan a budget, and negotiate with others.

Delaware HS/HT Partners with Junior Achievement

In Delaware, HS/HT and Junior Achievement (JA) co-sponsored a one-week Career Rally at JA's headquarters which houses an Enterprise Village and Finance Park. Participating youth came from community centers, summer youth programs, a program for economically disadvantaged youth, and HS/HT. Youth participants were involved in activities to explore careers, economic development, and personal finance. The afternoons were spent at site visits to technology-based industries (e.g., the Fraunhofer Center for Molecular Biotechnology, Hologic Direct Radiography, and WL Gore's GoreTex Plant) learning about a vast array of high-tech careers. This partnership has benefited both HS/HT and JA as they collaborated to meet common goals. JA wanted to serve more at-risk youth and HS/HT wanted to expand the access its students had to existing youth development programs and programs dealing with basic employability skills. In addition, the HS/HT coordinators were trained to use the JA curriculum, "Success Skills." Since both organizations are pleased with this evolving partnership, which is opening doors between students with disabilities and local businesses, their goal is to expand the program to two weeks.

Component 5: Connecting to Continuing Education Opportunities and the Workforce

Another important linkage HS/HT programs can assist with is connecting youth with postsecondary education and adult services workforce preparation programs. It is important, however, that the youth drive this process by being the primary decision makers concerning their own learning and future work endeavors. When youth carry this responsibility, they learn more about the range of their own strengths and abilities. This knowledge can then translate into a greater sense of confidence and personal adjustment, as well as academic and professional success.

Postsecondary Education

While Chapter 3 (Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences) emphasized educating HS/HT participants on available postsecondary options in the context of what they would need to pursue their career-related goals, this chapter emphasizes the importance of actually linking the youth to postsecondary institutions themselves, including career and technical training facilities, while they are still involved with HS/HT.

Upon leaving secondary school, the protections and services mandated by the IDEA no longer apply to the educational settings in which students with disabilities may find themselves. However, the protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act do apply to postsecondary education programs. Most community colleges and four-year colleges and universities have responded to the requirements of the ADA and Section 504 by establishing Offices of Disability Support Services (DSS or a similar name) to address the needs of students with disabilities. However, students with disabilities are not automatically referred to the DSS office.

Although DSS offices provide services free of charge, a student with a disability must initiate contact with the DSS office and establish eligibility for services prior to receiving accommodations and/or specialized services and supports while enrolled at the institution. This means a student must disclose his/her disability in order to receive services. If the student chooses not to disclose, accommodations will not be provided.

Although not standardized, the eligibility criteria used by DSS offices are primarily based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and ADA guidelines. Examples of eligibility criteria for disability-related support services include

- verification of diagnosis and severity of the disabling condition prepared by a qualified professional, and
- a detailed description of how this impairment significantly limits a major life activity in an educational setting.

Since each category of disability may require different documentation to prove eligibility, students should be instructed to contact the DSS office at the schools they are considering to get information on the school's specific documentation guidelines. For example, almost all postsecondary institutions require documentation of a learning disability or a mental health condition to have been verified within the last five years. However, this timeframe may vary from institution to institution.

Consider some of the following activities as ways to introduce HS/HT students to the range of postsecondary education options:

- contacting local community colleges and universities and inviting their admissions officer to talk with students about the school's admission requirements;
- discussing with the students different options for financing postsecondary education, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), different types of scholarships, and possible assistance from Vocational Rehabilitation;
- conducting site visits to as many community colleges, colleges, and universities as possible;
- arranging for youth with disabilities to meet with Disability Support Service representatives from local colleges and universities;
- connecting the youth and the program to faculty interested in helping steer the participants into technology-based jobs and promising STEM careers;
- finding mentors from postsecondary institutions to work with HS/HT participants;

- developing a feeder program arrangement for postsecondary projects that are promoting careers in the STEM careers for youth with disabilities, such as those sponsored by the American Association of Advanced Sciences;
- negotiating the use of computer laboratories on campus for use by the HS/HT participants;
- arranging visits to college and trade fairs;
- assisting youth in identifying specific college and training programs related to their career interests and experiences;
- using college facilities for HS/HT summer programs; and
- writing letters of recommendation for youth to be used in college applications.

Maryland HS/HT has a local site located at the University of Maryland (UMD). The UMD site sponsors a summer program where HS/HT students stay on campus for three weeks. During this time the students experience campus life, become familiar with Disability Support Services, participate in campus social life and recreational activities, and take one course in a high tech area for three college credits. This program is followed by an internship where each student receives a stipend. The internship may or may not extend into the school year.

Online Resources to Consider

America’s Career Resource Network (ACRN) consists of state and federal organizations that provide information, resources and training on career and education exploration. ACRN provides useful information on financial aid resources for post-high school education. Visit <<http://www.acrnetwork.org/>>.

Financial Aid Center, sponsored by Career OneStop, has information on financial assistance for college students. It also has resources for workers who need training. Visit <<http://www.careeronestop.org/FINANCIAL/FinancialAidHome.asp>>.

U.S. Department of Education’s Federal Student Aid (FSA) Programs are the largest source of student aid in

America. They provide about 70 percent of all student financial aid. Visit <<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp>>.

Connecting to Workforce Preparation Programs

Students with disabilities may need assistance in securing services from adult service providers who administer workforce preparation programs. The most significant difference between receiving disability services in school and receiving services post-school is that school-based services are mandated through federal civil rights laws while adult services are not. It is important to prepare youth for the transition from entitlement to services prior to graduation from high school to eligibility-based services available through the adult services system. Accessing such services can be time consuming and difficult.

Connecting activities to help youth access adult services and workforce preparation programs might include:

- visiting a local One-Stop Career Center and helping youth identify existing job openings in the community (see Exhibit 5.2 for detailed information on the services available through One-Stop Career Centers and on how to locate the One-Stop Career Center nearest you);
- helping youth identify staff positions within companies that provide internships;
- helping youth develop lists of personal resources and references, such as workplace mentors and collaborating partner organizations;
- assisting students in developing resumes and completing job applications;
- arranging meetings with local VR Counselors to determine the young person’s eligibility for VR services prior to exiting high school (see Exhibit 5.3 for detailed information on the services and supports available through the VR program and on how to locate local VR offices); and
- identifying other community-based job placement resources that youth might access.

Component 6: Connecting to Other Programs and Opportunities

Connecting to Programs Available to All Youth

Young people enjoy being involved in recreational activities, participating in team sports, and becoming members of clubs. Youth with disabilities are no different; however, they may need assistance in making connections with programs available to all youth. Consequently, HS/HT coordinators should explore what is available in the community in terms of recreational activities, sports, clubs and other opportunities of interest and approach those programs about including HS/HT students. Several HS/HT programs have developed partnerships with groups like Junior Achievement, AmeriCorps, Job Corps, and Youth Leadership Forums. Some HS/HT sites have sponsored teams of students to enter in competitions where youth with disabilities have not previously participated.

Online Resources to Consider

Intelitek contains educational product lines such as Mechatronics and Automation, and covers subjects such as CAD, CAM, CNC, robotics, machine vision, FMS, CIM, hydraulics, pneumatics, PLC, sensors, and process control data acquisition. Intelitek offers blended e-learning solutions designed to prepare students for careers in technologically advanced business environments. Intelitek's products are used in FIRST®

FRC, robotics competitions. Visit <http://www.intelitek.com/default.asp>.

Connecting to Disability-Specific Programs

HS/HT students can also benefit from connections to disability-specific programs, services, and supports such as those available through Independent Living Centers (ILCs) and other consumer-driven, community-based support service agencies. In some places, HS/HT sites are housed in ILCs, to easily facilitate such connections. In other places, a visit to the local ILC or a presentation by staff from an ILC can facilitate such connections. To locate the ILC closest to you, visit <http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory/index.html>.

HS/HT students may also benefit from connections to Parent Training Centers, which are located in every state. These Centers provide training and information to parents of infants, toddlers, school-aged children, and young adults with all types of disabilities and the professionals who work with these families. This assistance helps parents participate more effectively with professionals in meeting the educational needs of their children and youth. The Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers (the Alliance) coordinates the delivery of technical assistance to the Parent Training Centers and the Community Parent Resource Centers through six regional centers located in New Jersey, North Carolina, Florida, Ohio, Colorado, and California. For more information, visit <http://www.taalliance.org/PTIs.htm>.

Florida HS/HT Students Receive First Challenge Award at FIRST VEX Robotics Competition

The Palm Bay High "Piratech" Robotics team participated in the Southeastern U.S. FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) VEX Midlevel Robotics Competition. HS/HT students made up half of the team. Palm Bay High School is currently the only school in Brevard County providing this new midlevel robotics program to students.

After completing their engineering design process, the Palm Bay High "Piratech" Engineering Team built their competition robot and took it to the Gwinett Center in Duluth, Georgia, for the competition. The students placed second for autonomous robotic control and third overall in elimination matches. After a successful and

grueling day of competition one of the robot's gears failed in the final alliance playoffs, rendering its manipulator useless, and placing the team in sixth place in that round. Nevertheless, the team was nominated for the FIRST Challenge Award, FIRST's most prestigious award, in recognition of their gracious professionalism in helping work on two other teams' robotic systems and computer controls which led those teams to first and second places. They were also recognized for their display of engineering design, problem-solving and teamworking abilities. As a result, the team was invited to participate in the FIRST National Competition.

HS/HT students receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits should be made aware of benefits-planning counseling services. SSI is a federal income supplement program designed to help individuals who are aged, blind, and/or disabled, who have little or no income. It provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. For more information on SSI, visit <<http://www.ssa.gov/notices/supplemental-security-income/>>.

Medicaid is a federally-funded, state-run program that provides medical assistance for individuals and families with limited incomes and resources. It pays for health care costs, including, among other things, doctor and dentist services, clinic and hospital services, home health care, family planning services, mental health care, prescription drug coverage, and optometrist services and eyeglasses. For more information on Medicaid, visit <<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/home/medicaid.asp>>.

Since eligibility for both SSI and Medicaid is based on being low income, determining the impact of employment on cash assistance and on access to specific services, such as personal attendant care, is an important consideration for some youth with disabilities as they plan for the future. You can find benefits planning information in a number of places. Federally-funded Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA), formally called the Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach (BPAO) programs, can be found throughout the country in a number of organizations. Visit <<http://www.ssa.gov/work/WIPARFA.html>>. The goal of the WIPA Program is to better enable SSA beneficiaries with disabilities to make informed choices about work. Many State VR agencies also have benefits planners on staff. A benefits planner can help

- explain what will happen to the benefits someone receives when they go to work;
- assist individuals in planning for work and greater independence;
- assist individuals in taking advantage of work incentives (such as Plans for Achieving Self-Support, known as PASS Plans) that will increase the amount of income available to them;
- tell individuals about programs that may allow them to keep necessary cash or health benefits when they go to work or school;
- explain notices received from Social Security that are often difficult to understand; and
- teach individuals how to report their earnings, if necessary, to Social Security.

Online Resources to Consider

To locate the WIPA Program in your state, visit <<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work/ServiceProviders/WIPADirectory.html>>.

To learn more about PASS Plans, visit <<http://www.rcep7.org/~ssawork/glossary/PASS.html>>, or <http://www.disabilitybenefits101.org/ca/programs/income_support/pass/faqs.htm>.

Component 7: Assistive Technology

Assistive technology (AT) was referenced in Chapter 2, School-Based Preparatory Experiences, as it applies to universal design for learning and the need for AT while a young person is still in high school. Here, AT is examined as it applies to individualized accommodations that can ensure the meaningful participation of young adults in programs and activities within their communities.

Thousands of AT devices are available, ranging from very simple, low-cost or low-tech products—such as calculators or book holders—to high-tech solutions such as voice-activated speech synthesizers. In addition to helping students succeed in school, such devices allow youth with disabilities to maintain or improve their functional capabilities, become more independent, and pursue opportunities for postsecondary education and employment. AT devices are compensatory tools, not luxuries or a means to gain unfair advantage over others. Rather, AT helps to create a level playing field for youth with disabilities.

AT devices can be purchased off the shelf from the local computer or hardware store, or they can be designed especially for youth with disabilities and marketed through catalogues or speciality stores. In addition to

devices, the term “AT” also refers to related services such as assessments, training, maintenance, and repair of equipment and devices. AT assessments are used to identify what particular devices would help an individual with a disability based upon the evaluator’s opinion of the individual’s functional strengths and abilities, preferences, and the proposed usage. A proper AT assessment also addresses the related services needed to support use of the device. Assessments and other services are critical to the successful selection, acquisition, and use of appropriate AT.

You can identify what types of AT devices or services a young person will need as s/he participates in HS/HT activities by considering the following:

- Ask the youth what devices or services they have used in the past. What worked and what didn’t work?
- Review any vocational and/or AT assessments the student has had. If the student has not had an AT assessment, recommend that s/he include the need for an AT assessment in his/her Individualized Transition Plan, IEP, or 504 Plan.
- Interview parents and teachers to see how needs were successfully addressed at home and in school.
- Use the checklist in Exhibit 2.2 to get a clear understanding of the range of assistive technology devices, materials, and services that have been or can be used by a particular student. As you will see, this checklist can be used to explore a student’s need for reasonable accommodations in a variety of settings.
- Help the young person find needed assistive technology by searching for adaptive equipment on the Internet, making a referral to the Statewide Assistive Technology Project, and/or working with a community-based organization that specializes in assistive technology.

Commercial AT can significantly enhance the quality-of-life, independence, and employability of youth with disabilities. While a lot of AT is cheap and easy to obtain, some is relatively expensive and, as a result, many individuals can not afford it. While schools will often purchase the AT that a student needs to facilitate learning, most schools maintain ownership of the AT.

In some cases, students with disabilities are even precluded from taking the school’s AT home with them to complete homework assignments. In almost all cases, students who graduate from high school no longer have access to the AT that contributed to their success and independence while they were in school.

In Maryland, several localities have included a voluntary assistive technology (AT) addendum to their local transitioning agreements between the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and the local school systems. The purpose of the AT addendum is to document how DORS and the local school system will work collaboratively to assure that AT devices and services are provided to assist VR-eligible students with disabilities in transitioning from school to postsecondary education and employment. Since early intervention and identification are key, students in need of AT for their transition are to be identified to DORS during the fall of their next-to-last year of high school. School system staff are to coordinate with DORS to arrange for necessary AT assessments and allow for this to occur during school hours. Prior to purchase of any device, the school system will confer with DORS to ensure that both parties agree that the AT is appropriate for the student and, in the case of computer equipment, that it is compatible with school system information technology policies and can be used in school. Third party resources and DORS funds are used to purchase the equipment, the school system is to provide training on the use of the equipment, and DORS is to provide technical support for the equipment. The goal is for the student to receive AT equipment no later than November of their final year in school. The equipment is to be included in the student’s IEP or 504 plan, and in his/her Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) negotiated with DORS. The equipment will then go with the student when s/he leaves school. By beginning to use the equipment while still in school, the student can make any adjustments during the transition period and then be comfortable with it when s/he moves in to postsecondary education and, ultimately, employment.

Free AT is available to help to mitigate these situations. The Ohio HS/HT program has dedicated and maintains a portion of its website to include links to various sources of free AT. Access this valuable information at <<http://www.onlineconferencing.com/at.htm#top#top>>.

Online Resources to Consider

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) specializes in helping people find the accommodations needed to succeed in the workplace and maintains an extensive database for Internet searches. JAN staff are available to research various assistive technology solutions for callers. Visit <<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>>.

Statewide Assistive Technology Projects, authorized under the Assistive Technology Act, provide an array of AT services and have a range of AT equipment available for people to try. Many have AT loan or recycle programs. Visit <<http://www.resna.org/taproject/at/statecontacts.html>>.



Getting Organized

There are several organizational tasks HS/HT staff may wish to pursue when connecting youth with different types of support services.

- **Plan** an active role for HS/HT participants throughout ALL connecting activities (i.e., having students make phone calls to gather information, set up appointments, etc). This will increase each student's level of self-sufficiency for the future and promote the concepts of self-determination, informed choice, and self-advocacy.
- **Find out** what tutoring programs are available through the school system and in the community.
- **Poll students** to determine how many are participating in tutoring programs, have visited their local One-Stop Center, have contacted VR, have visited a college campus, etc.
- **Solicit** peer tutoring support from existing participants and from graduates of the program. Find out if any of these people have areas of academic "expertise" and are willing to work with other HS/HT students.
- **Coordinate** mentoring efforts locally by contacting other programs in the community.
- **Assure** that assistive technologies are provided to meet the individualized needs of each participant. If you feel a student may benefit from assistive technology but has not explored the issue, contact the Statewide Assistive Technology Project to set up an opportunity for the student to explore using different assistive technology devices.
- **Develop** a transportation plan for each participant (with their input), arranging for travel training, and, for orientation and mobility training if appropriate.
- **Obtain** information, including the eligibility criteria, on the youth, adult, and VR programs available through local workforce organizations.

Supporting Research: Connecting Activities

While a number of federal initiatives encourage cross-agency collaboration and service integration, research and practice show that effective cross-agency collaboration and service integration are difficult to implement. As a result, the literature has more references to impediments to collaboration than effective practices.

Fosler (2002) found a variety of cross-sector collaborations between government, business, and nonprofits ranging from ad hoc problem-solving to long-range and ongoing development of civic capacity. Components of effective collaboration included process and membership elements, but key among them was strong, facilitative leadership (Blank & Lombardi, 1991; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Gray, 1991; Lashway, 1995; Lasker & Weiss, 2003). Chrislip & Larson (1994) noted that when collaboration is appropriate, it can provide a process for addressing shared challenges, build a deeper sense of shared responsibility for a collective future, and restore hope for creating, revitalizing, nurturing, and connecting effective communities.

The Service Integration Network (SINET) found that (a) defining and ensuring equitable treatment for disadvantaged families, (b) reducing tensions among institutional cultures, and (c) ensuring fiscal and programmatic accountability and assessing program performance, were requirements for effective cross-agency service integration (Corbett & Noyes, 2004, p. 28). Factors affecting integration of TANF and WIA employment services included legal issues and alignment of policies and procedures, but the greatest barriers to comprehensive family services were non-legal issues such as leadership, vision, resources, and information sharing (Greenberg & Noyes, 2004, p. 31). Research also suggests that barriers to service integration may include the collective beliefs of front-line staff, mutual mistrust, and a belief that staff members were powerless to change an ineffective system. “Managers will be able to accomplish better, more integrated service delivery only by understanding how to shape the deeper structures in human service organizations that determine or constrain action” (Sandfort, 2004, p. 35).

A significant structural barrier for people from diverse cultures is the lack of cultural competence found in most organizations. The National Council on Disability (NCD, 2003c) found that, “people with disabilities who are also from diverse cultures are significantly hampered in realizing outcomes of full participation in all aspects of society due to a host of barriers to the benefits of civil and human rights. A small but growing body of research on this issue indicates that barriers include the lack of culturally appropriate outreach, language and communication

barriers, attitudinal barriers, and the shortage of individuals from diverse cultures in the disability services profession.”

Organizational factors in schools are associated with better transition outcomes for youth with disabilities and include innovative, effective, and enduring partnerships among a variety of key stakeholders. The importance of stakeholder collaboration and systems linkages to support student achievement and post-school outcomes was recognized in early work on transition concepts and challenges (e.g., Halpern, 1985; Will, 1984), and it remains critically important still (e.g., Hasazi, Furney, & DeStefano, 1999; Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, Luecking, & Mack, 2002).

The report by the U.S. General Accounting Office (July 2003b, p. 3), *Special education: Federal action can assist states in improving postsecondary outcomes for youth*, identified a number of problems impeding youth transition to postsecondary education and employment, including poor linkages between schools and youth service providers, and a lack of community work experience while in high school. Although states developed action plans to increase services such as vocational training, and community work experience for youth with disabilities, other “non-educational” problems such as transportation were less likely to be addressed.

Frieden (2003) also found evidence of “a failure of secondary and postsecondary schools to establish paths of communication and concert their efforts.” The challenge to locate and advocate for services and accommodations can be quite frustrating as various systems feature limited resources, inconsistent terminology, disconnected agencies, inconsistent laws, and conflicting eligibility requirements (Whelley, Hart, and Zafft, 2002). Ultimately, without a successfully functioning transition program from secondary to postsecondary education, youth with disabilities find themselves burdened with additional disadvantages (Frieden, 2003).

Other research suggests that systems can work more effectively with schools in order to improve student achievement of meaningful secondary and post-school outcomes through: (a) the use of written and enforceable interagency agreements that structure the provision of collaborative transition services (Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, Luecking, & Mack, 2002); and (b) the provision of a secondary curriculum that prepares youth for success in work, postsecondary, and community living environments (Hasazi, Furney, & DeStefano, 1999). Promising collaboration strategies have been proposed to link secondary education systems with employers and community employment services funded under WIA (Luecking, Crane, & Mooney, 2002;

EXHIBIT 5.1 (CONTINUED)

Mooney & Crane, 2002) and with postsecondary education systems (Flannery, Bigaj, Slovic, & Dalmau, 1999; Hart, Zimbrich, & Whelley, 2002; Stodden & Conway, 2003).

Research suggests that responsive and knowledgeable personnel can be developed and supported through: (a) the establishment of key positions funded jointly by schools and adult agencies to deliver direct services to students (Luecking & Certo, 2002); and (b) the development and delivery of interagency and cross-agency training opportunities (Furney, Hazasi, & DeStefano, 1997). Several studies called for new models of support provisions that are personally responsive, flexible, and individualized, as well as coordinated with instruction and integrated with the overall support needs of the student (Burgstahler, 2002; National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Supports, 2000b; Stodden & Dowrick, 2000; Stodden & Conway, 2003). Many students with disabilities in postsecondary education require case management assistance or the skills, knowledge, and time to manage their own services and supports (National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports, 2000a; Stodden & Dowrick, 2000; Stodden, Jones, & Chang, 2002).

Lack of interagency collaboration and coordination has been found to impede access to necessary support services for youth with and without disabilities. These include

- legally required educational services to youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system that are not being provided due to limited resources, inadequate record-keeping, and a lack of culturally appropriate disability-related services for the large number of racial/ethnic minorities in this population (NCD, 2003);
- youth with mental health needs housed in juvenile detention centers without adequate services due to a lack of available community residential treatments, inpatient psychiatric care, outpatient mental health care, and foster care services (Special Investigations Division, Committee of Government Reform, 2004);
- a lack of special education services for children who are homeless (Jackson, 2004);
- bureaucratic delays that could be reduced by improved service coordination through the formation of community partnerships that can integrate resources and offer informal approaches to meet the needs of children in foster care and the families that care for them (Vandivere, Chalk, & Moore, 2003, p. 6);
- a lack of supportive housing for homeless populations (Greiff, Proscio, & Wilkins, 2003) that include transitioning youth;

- “overlapping, fragmented, or confusing services among transportation programs that did not coordinate” (U.S. GAO, 2003a, p. 4); and
- confusion among youth and their families about similar and complementary transition services provided by VR, WIA, and Ticket-to-Work programs due to differing eligibility requirements; lack of expertise in serving youth with disabilities at workforce centers; waiting lists for VR services; concerns about losing public assistance; and lack of awareness that these federal resources exist (GAO, 2003b, pp. 4-5).

NCD (2003a, p. 53) observed that “interagency information-sharing appears likely to increase in coming years, and the general, and seemingly reasonable assumption appears to be that this sharing would result in beneficial outcomes. At the same time, the comments obscure the considerable complexity involved in the way both federal and states laws can determine what information can and cannot be shared within and among various agencies.”

Stodden, Dowrick, Gilmore, & Galloway (2001, pp. 20-21) note that the literature “lacked the voice of the student and their family members, a circumstance that is indicative of the pervasive deficit-based approach of providing service to those with disabilities as opposed to collaborating with such individuals and families, as experts of their own abilities, to create effective strength-based supports...Similarly, the literature rarely focused on the needs or perspectives of teachers who often feel they are victims of federal policy and research priority development.”

Luecking & Mooney (2002, p. 2) found that employers, who typically feel unprepared to adequately support the employment needs of individuals with disabilities, were also left out of the partnering equation although quality service from employment specialists was a contributing factor in the successful employment of youth with disabilities.



Making Connections to One-Stop Career Centers

This exhibit focuses on the services and supports available at One-Stop Career Centers through the programs authorized under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). Within the federally-funded One-Stop system, adult services are divided into three categories: (1) Core Services, (2) Intensive Services, and (3) Training Services.

Core Services are available to all adults 18 years of age and older, and include, but are not limited to

- determination of eligibility to receive additional services beyond the services defined as WIA core services;
- outreach, intake, and orientation to information on the array of services and training opportunities available through the workforce system;
- initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, and abilities, as well as an assessment of the need for any specialized or supportive services;
- job search and placement assistance, and where appropriate, career counseling;
- consumer information regarding the availability of supportive services (e.g., transportation services) in the local area and referrals to such services;
- information on how to apply for unemployment compensation claims;
- assistance in establishing eligibility for programs and services not funded under WIA;
- statistical employment information relating to local, regional, and national labor market areas, including job vacancy listings, information on the job skills required for these positions, and information relating to local occupations in demand, the skills required, and earnings potential;
- information on the performance and program cost of eligible providers of training services; and
- follow-up services, including workplace counseling for participants who meet certain eligibility requirements.

Although Core Services are generally viewed as “adult services,” many One-Stop Career Centers provide these same services to youth between the ages of 14 and 18.

Intensive Services are available to adults who are eligible for WIA adult services that have received at least one core service and are

- unemployed and have been unable to obtain employment through core services, and have been determined by the

One-Stop staff to be in need of more intensive services to obtain employment; or

- who are employed, but who are determined by One-Stop staff to be in need of intensive services in order to get or keep a job that allows them to become economically self-sufficient.

Intensive services include, but are not limited to

- comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs, which may include diagnostic testing;
- in depth evaluations to identify the barriers a participant might face in securing employment and to help identify the participant’s employment goals;
- development of an individual employment plan to identify appropriate objectives and the right combination of services to assist someone in achieving their employment goal(s);
- group counseling;
- individualized career planning;
- case management for participants seeking intensive and training services;
- short-term pre-vocational services including development of skills in learning, communications, interviewing, punctuality, personal hygiene and dress, and professional conduct to prepare the participant for unsubsidized employment or training;
- assistance in keeping a job and moving to a better position within a company after initial placement on the job; and
- supportive services such as childcare, transportation, and assistance with work- and training-related expenses.

Training Services for eligible individuals are provided through a type of voucher, referred to as an Individual Training Account (ITA), which allows participants to choose among eligible training providers pre-approved by Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) through a competitive process based upon performance-related information. These accounts are equivalent to vouchers that can be used to secure services from any eligible training provider. At a minimum, a participant must receive at least one intensive service before receiving training services. A determination of the need for training services will be identified in the participant’s service plan, comprehensive assessment, or through other intensive services. Training services include

EXHIBIT 5.2 (CONTINUED)

- occupational skills training, including training for non-traditional employment;
- on-the-job training;
- programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs;
- training programs operated by the private sector;
- training to upgrade skills and retrain for a different job;
- education on how to establish and operate your own business;
- adult education and literacy activities provided in combination with other training services; and
- customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ individuals upon successful completion of the training.

Supportive Services may be provided under certain circumstances to enable an individual to participate in program activities and to secure and retain employment. Examples include assistance covering

- local transportation costs,
- childcare and dependent care costs,
- housing and food, and
- relocation and out-of-area job search expenses.

Retention Services (or Follow-Up Services) include services that are classified as post-employment or job retention services and include such things as supportive services, counseling, and certain kinds of training. These services are expected to assist an individual in maintaining and succeeding in a job, as well as assisting in increasing their salary and moving towards greater economic self-sufficiency.

WIA emphasizes that general employment and training services can meet the needs of people with disabilities. The legislation and regulations state specifically that One-Stop Career Centers are to be designed to serve all people, including people with disabilities.

WIA Youth Services

Youth with disabilities typically receive services under the youth funding stream in Title I of WIA. WIA youth services are available for youth ages 14 to 21. Eligibility is based on being low-income and one or more of the following:

- deficient in basic literacy skills;
- a school dropout, homeless, a runaway, or a foster child;
- pregnant or a parent;
- an offender; and/or
- an individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment.

Even if the family of a youth with a disability does not meet the income eligibility criteria, the youth may be considered a “family of one” if the youth’s own income meets the income criteria. In addition, up to five percent of the youth served in a local area can be exempted from the low-income requirement, if they meet certain criteria.

Youth activities are available to youth who are in-school as well as youth who are not. WIA requires that 30 percent of youth funds be used to address the needs of out-of-school youth. The WIA definition of “out-of-school” includes youth who have dropped out of school, as well as youth who have graduated from high school or hold a GED but are deficient in basic skills, unemployed, or underemployed. To be defined as “out-of-school,” the young person must not be enrolled in school or any alternative educational program when s/he registers for WIA services; however, the young person may be placed in an educational program, such as a GED program or alternative school, as part of the service strategy after registration.

Youth services are available through One-Stop Career Centers, but are frequently delivered throughout local communities by eligible youth service providers chosen by LWIB through a competitive process.

Online Resources to Consider

America’s Service Locator can be used to find the One-Stop Career Center nearest you. Visit <http://www.servicelocator.org>.

DisabilityInfo.gov is the federal government’s one-stop website for information of interest to people with disabilities, their families, employers, service providers, and many others. It provides information regarding services for people with disabilities, including One-Stop Career Centers. Visit <http://www.disabilityinfo.gov>.

The U.S. Workforce Website contains information about WIA and can be used to locate the One-Stop Career Center nearest you. Visit <http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/training/onestop.htm>.

Making the Connection to Vocational Rehabilitation

State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies (VR) have a wealth of resources related to employment options for individuals with disabilities. VR assists individuals with disabilities who are experiencing barriers to employment. The intended outcome of the receipt of VR services is the attainment of employment that is consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

Although anyone who has a disability can apply for VR services, to be eligible for VR services a person must

- be an individual with a physical or mental impairment that makes it difficult to get or keep a job;
- expect to get or keep a job as a result of the services and supports received from VR; and
- require VR services to prepare for or engage in employment that is consistent with his/her abilities, capabilities, and interests.

Thus, to establish eligibility for VR services, a person must provide information about his/her disability, any barriers to employment resulting from the disability, and information demonstrating the ability to benefit from VR services. VR must also collect documentation that proves the person can legally work in the U.S. Individuals who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are automatically eligible for VR services as long as they are pursuing employment. However, these individuals must still go through the process of applying for services.

Similar to special education services, VR services are individualized based on the needs of eligible individuals. Once a person has been determined eligible, a VR counselor will assist that person in identifying appropriate vocational goals and in identifying the services and supports needed to achieve those goals. Individuals applying for VR services may be asked to participate in formal evaluations or assessments to identify their strengths, abilities, capabilities, and interests as they apply to employment.

Once a person has completed these assessments, a VR counselor will work with him/her to identify one or two career choices that are in keeping with the assessment results. The counselor should also provide the person with information on the array of services VR has to assist individuals in pursuing employment goals. This type of information is extremely important for VR consumers to exercise their right to informed choice throughout the VR process.

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

An IPE is a written agreement between the eligible individual and the VR agency. The IPE describes an eligible individual's vocational goals, lists the services and supports that will be needed to accomplish those goals, explains how those services and supports will be provided or purchased, and identifies the providers of those services.

The services and supports that an individual may receive from VR may include

- evaluations and assessments to determine the extent of the individual's disability and the types of services and supports s/he will need to pursue competitive employment and to overcome functional limitations resulting from the disability;



- vocational evaluation, counseling, and guidance services to explore the individual’s interests, skills, abilities, potential, and limitations;
- work adjustment training to help the individual understand his/her vocational needs and abilities, and to identify the types of jobs and careers that s/he is likely to handle successfully;
- job-related services (job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up, and follow-along services);
- specialized support services such as interpreters, note-takers, transcription services, TTYs, Braille, and large print materials, when such things are needed to communicate with the individual’s counselor, participate in a training program, or engage in work;
- vocational training and other types of training, including assistance in pursuing a college education;
- assistive technology devices and services;
- transportation services;
- supported employment services;
- assistance in setting up a small business;
- independent living skills training that supports an employment goal; and
- transition services.

Transition Planning with VR Involvement

The following definition of “transition services” applies to the VR program and outlines the scope of services that a VR agency may provide to transition-age youth who have been determined eligible for services.

Transition services are defined as, “a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation” [29 USC 705(37)].

As clearly indicated in this definition, Congress intended that VR agencies be involved in transition planning for special education students. For a variety of reasons, the way VR approaches transition services varies significantly from state to state. Thus, VR’s involvement in transition planning may range from getting to know a young person in order to provide transition services at a later date, to actually providing services while the youth is still in school. If a youth with a disability is still in school and is not involved with VR, the youth may want to consider applying for services or talking to his/her teacher or guidance counselor about involving a VR counselor in his/her transition planning.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is required to include a transition component, referred to as the Individualized Transition Plan (ITP), for special education students beginning at age 16. It makes sense to include a VR counselor in the development of the IEP whenever employment issues are being addressed. VR counselors have a great deal of expertise in addressing barriers to employment resulting from disabilities. They are also familiar with different types of vocational and functional assessments that can help a young person identify his/her strengths, abilities, skills, functional limitations, and vocational interests. In addition, VR counselors should be familiar with the programs and services in the local community available to assist youth in overcoming barriers to employment and in finding and keeping a job. Based on differences in VR agencies, counselors in some states will join students’ transition teams and attend ITP meetings two or three years before a special education student leaves high school. In other states, counselors are not likely to get involved in ITP meetings until students have started their senior year of high school.

There Are No Guarantees

Although VR agencies are funded by the federal government, they are operated by the states and have lots of flexibility in how they use their federal funds to meet the employment and training needs of individuals with disabilities. For example, some VR agencies will assist an eligible youth with the costs of college without looking at the income and resources available to the youth’s family. Others will look at the income and resources of the youth’s family prior to providing financial assistance for college. In a state that looks at the person’s family’s income and resources, the person may be asked to pay for part or all of his/her college expenses depending on the family’s financial situation.

EXHIBIT 5.3 (CONTINUED)

Since most VR agencies do not have the resources to serve everyone who could potentially benefit from services, the length of time that a person has to wait to actually receive services may be determined by an “Order of Selection” (OOS). An OOS is a system of prioritization that requires the VR agency to serve eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities first, when the agency’s resources are not adequate to serve all who might be eligible for assistance. Thus, even if a person is determined eligible for VR services, s/he may have to wait for some time before receiving assistance if s/he lives in a state where VR is under an OOS.

Getting Help Using VR

A VR consumer has the right to appeal any negative decisions affecting his/her eligibility for and access to VR services whether s/he is applying for services, or has been determined eligible and is receiving services. A negative decision is, for instance, a finding that a person is not eligible for VR services, a decision that an eligible individual will not receive a specific service that the individual believes s/he needs to achieve his/her vocational goals, or the termination of services that an eligible person is already receiving. VR has both formal and informal processes for appealing such decisions. VR counselors

are required to provide VR applicants and consumers with information on these processes. If a consumer has gone through the informal mediation process offered by the state VR agency and is not happy with the outcome, s/he has the right to go through a formal appeals process.

Anyone who feels they need assistance in pursuing either the informal mediation process or the formal appeals process may request assistance from the state’s Client Assistance Program (CAP). CAP receives money from the federal government to assist VR applicants and consumers when they disagree with something VR has done in connection with their requests for assistance. VR is required to provide information on how to contact CAP when a person applies for services and when s/he signs an IPE.

Online Resources to Consider

To locate the VR office nearest you, visit <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/SBSES/VOCREHAB.HTM>, or <http://www.rehabnetwork.org>.

To obtain contact information for the CAP in your state, visit http://www.ndrn.org/aboutus/PA_CAP.htm.



CHAPTER 6:

Family Involvement and Supports

This chapter examines the fifth and final *Guidepost*, Family Involvement and Supports, and its positive effect on youth with disabilities, particularly with respect to success in school and improved post-school outcomes. Research has shown that the involvement of parents, family members, and/or other caring adults promotes the social, emotional, physical, academic, and occupational growth of young people, and leads to better post-school outcomes (see Exhibit 6.1 for the supporting research for this *Guidepost*).

A family has many relationships within its structure. Families are systems that undergo change (e.g., marriage, divorce and remarriage, birth of a sibling, chronic health issues, disability, and the death of family members). In the context of this *Guidepost*, family relationships are viewed very broadly and may consist of immediate family members (mother, father, step-mother, step-father, siblings, and grandparents), blood relatives (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.), relationships from adoptions, and close family friends. Young people may have many roles in a family: son or daughter, brother or sister, grandchild, cousin, niece or nephew, and friend.

For any number of reasons in today's busy and stressful society, parents and family members may not be very involved in the lives of youth. Parents differ significantly in both their ability and willingness to get involved in the lives of their children. This is particularly true for youth living in poverty. According to Hashima & Amato (April, 1994), "it has been well

documented that economic hardship influences how parents interact with their children." They note that "many studies have revealed that as a family's economic situation worsens, parents exhibit less nurturance and more inconsistent discipline towards their children."

For a variety of reasons, parents and family members of low-income youth may have limited involvement in their children's educational endeavors. In low-income families that are single parent homes, the parent may not be able to attend school functions due to a lack of time or the inability to afford a babysitter to care for siblings. Even in two-parent households, both parents may be working, sometimes multiple jobs, resulting in their being unable to attend school functions or help with homework. Some low-income families do not own a car and do not have access to public transportation. Often times, parents and family members would like to be involved in the lives of their children but do not know how to without incurring costs that they simply cannot afford.

Using the data from the second National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS-2), Wagner, Cameto, and Guzmán (2003) found that more than one-third (37 percent) of youth with disabilities live in poverty, which is significantly more than the 20 percent of youth in the general population whose households are below the federal poverty line. They also found that just under one-third (31 percent) of youth with disabilities live in single-parent households. Further, when compared to the general population, youth with

disabilities were twice as likely to live with a head of household who did not have a high school diploma (21 vs. 10 percent) and were significantly more likely to be unemployed (17 vs. 11 percent). These factors can have a significant impact on the aspects of family involvement and supports outlined in the *Guideposts for Success*.

The Social Response

Rapidly changing demographics, combined with the disproportionate number of minority students served in special education, furthers the need for programs and staff to create a climate conducive to increasing the involvement of family members. Sometimes the goals of a program, such as independent living, self-determination, and self-sufficiency, may clash with the cultural values of the family. In some cultures parental involvement in a school or an education program is viewed as inappropriate. Since culture can play such an important role in family involvement and support, HS/HT program coordinators need to be informed about the cultures of the students they are serving. In some cases, it may be necessary to identify a cultural broker from a particular community to help make necessary connections to the parents of youth enrolled in HS/HT.

Despite the many impediments to family involvement, it is important that HS/HT program coordinators make every effort to enlist the support of parents, family members, and other caring adults as their support greatly contributes to the successful transition of youth to adulthood. One way to do this is to provide parents and family members with examples of how they can support their children in their academic endeavors and in their social and emotional development. For example, HS/HT program coordinators might suggest that parents and family members

- read to or with their children,
- assist their children with their homework assignments and/or monitor the completion of homework assignments,
- spend time with their children going over materials and instructions provided by teachers,
- tutor their children,

- help their children develop good study habits,
- ask about what their children are learning in school each day,
- ask about their children's social relationships at school,
- use TV shows and commercials to demonstrate good/bad behavior and discuss morals,
- regularly discuss things that happen in the news with their children,
- assign their children regular chores around the house,
- talk to their children about their vocational interests,
- emphasize the importance of volunteer work and community service, and
- talk with their children about options for postsecondary education and training after high school.

Component 1: High Expectations

For many youth, achieving success depends to a large extent on the expectations of those closest to them. When parents and family members communicate low expectations to a young person, that youth is not likely to expect much of him or herself. Conversely, if the caring adults in a young person's life have high expectations for that youth, s/he is likely to strive to meet those expectations.

As our culture still tends to have low expectations for youth with disabilities, HS/HT program coordinators need to communicate the value of high expectations to participants' family members. Help parents build upon their son/daughter's strengths, abilities, capabilities, and interests in communicating the young person's potential. Of course, merely having high expectations is not enough. HS/HT program coordinators must encourage parents and family members to communicate those expectations, not only to their sons and daughters on a regular basis, but also to their sons' and daughters' teachers, guidance counselors, and other professionals.

The local coordinator for Hendry/Glades HS/HT site in Florida schedules monthly meetings with the parents of HS/HT students. Flyers are taken home by the students. While the parents are meeting in one room, participating youth are meeting as the Student Advisory Council in another room. During the later part of each meeting, the parents and students come together as a single group where the parents share their issues, the students report on their discussion, and the date for the next meeting is set. This process has proven to be an effective way to open up communication between the teens and their parents. The next day the local coordinator calls the parents who missed the meeting and provides them with a progress report on their sons/daughter's involvement in HS/HT. This lets them know they were missed.

The local coordinator believes this is a vital part of the site's success. It provides regular communication with parents and multiple opportunities to remind parents how important it is to tell their sons/daughters that they are proud of them. The average attendance at these monthly meetings is 23-25 people, a notable accomplishment given that the site covers two counties with some parents traveling as much as 70 miles roundtrip to attend. The coordinator rotates the sites for these meetings to be fair to those who must travel such distances.

One effective way of getting parents and family members to see their children's potential is to invite HS/HT students who have successfully transitioned to adult life to talk to the parents of participating youth. As these youth describe how HS/HT helped them overcome different challenges to complete high school and enter postsecondary education or employment, they can help the parents of participating youth see new possibilities for their children's futures.



Component 2: Ensuring Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum and Understanding How a Youth's Disability Might Impact His/Her Education, Employment, and Daily Living Options

HS/HT program coordinators can play an important role in helping parents and family members understand the importance of ensuring that their children have access to and are progressing in the general education curriculum. Parents may need to be encouraged to be proactive in providing the school with information on their son's/daughter's strengths, particularly as those strengths can be used to master aspects of the school's curriculum. The HS/HT program coordinator, therefore, should help parents gain a better understanding of their children's strengths, particularly as they apply to vocational interests, teamwork, leadership skills, and other transition skills needed for independent living..

HS/HT program coordinators can help parents understand how their child's disability might impact his/her learning, potential for employment, options for daily living, and opportunities for socialization experiences. If the program coordinator has been working with the young person over a period of time, s/he may be more familiar with the types of accommodations that will work best for that particular youth in an educational setting. When such information is shared with parents, they are better prepared to work with teachers and members of the child's IEP team to advocate for the use of the most effective instructional strategies and the most appropriate individualized supports to promote that student's participation and progress in the general curriculum. When a problem arises, the HS/HT coordinator may be able to assist the parent in determining the source of the problem, in identifying activities that can be undertaken at school and at home to address the problem, and in identifying services available in the community to address the problem.

The Information Families Want and Need

Surveys conducted by the PACER Center (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights) in 2001 indicate that families seek information on a variety of issues including

- helping youth develop self-advocacy skills;
- balancing standards-based academic instruction with functional life skills training;
- inclusive education practices at the secondary level;
- postsecondary options for young adults with developmental and cognitive disabilities;
- pre-employment experiences and employment options that lead to competitive employment;
- financial planning;
- resources available to youth through the workforce investment, vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, and Social Security systems;
- better collaboration with community resources;
- housing options; and
- interacting with the juvenile justice system.

In addition to helping parents understand various aspects of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the HS/HT program coordinator can also assist parents in understanding the provisions under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act that apply to including students with disabilities in the state's standardized assessments, and when a student might be considered for alternative or modified assessments. Parents who understand the interplay between IDEA and NCLB and the issues related to including students with disabilities in assessments can play a critical role in ensuring that their children are included in standardized or alternative assessments, as deemed appropriate, and in ensuring that their children have access to needed accommodations during assessments.

Component 3: Taking an Active Role in Transition Planning

The 2004 amendments to IDEA place new emphasis on

transition planning for special education students. Of particular importance to HS/HT is the fact that they clarify the all too often misunderstood fact that one of the goals of special education is employment. For the first time, states receiving funding under IDEA are required to report on the "percentage of youth aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the child to meet the postsecondary goals." Referred to as "Indicator 13," measures of success in meeting this indicator examine a variety of factors, including the following:

- Is (are) there a measurable postsecondary goal or goals that cover(s) education or training, employment, and, as needed, independent living?
- Is (are) there annual IEP goal(s) that will reasonably enable the child to meet postsecondary goal(s) outlined in the IEP?
- Are there transition services in the IEP that focus on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child to facilitate his/her movement from school to post-school?
- For transition services that are likely to be provided or paid for by other agencies, is there evidence that representatives of applicable agencies were invited to the IEP meeting (i.e., with the consent of the parents and/or youth)?
- Is there evidence that the measurable postsecondary goals were based on age-appropriate transition assessment(s)?
- Do the transition services include courses of study that focus on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child to facilitate his/her movement from school to post-school?

Furthermore, IDEA 2004 requires states to report on the "percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school" (Indicator 14).

In addition to the transition planning that must now occur within the IEP team and be recorded in the IEP, youth with disabilities and their parents and family

members can benefit greatly from learning how to use individualized planning tools to assist the youth in achieving their transition goals and objectives. HS/HT program coordinators can help youth with disabilities and their parents and family members identify individualized planning tools that are designed for transition-age youth. Program coordinators can also help youth and their family members better understand how to use these planning tools to drive the development of the transition component of the young person's IEP.

HS/HT coordinators should encourage parents to become active members of the various "planning" teams that are working with their sons/daughters. For example, they should be encouraged to become active members of their child's IEP team, attending meetings and providing information on the child's disability, learning style, accomplishments, strengths, interests, likes, dislikes, etc. The HS/HT coordinator may be able to assist youth and their parents in coming up with specific recommendations regarding additional people to include as members of the IEP team when transition planning begins. By providing youth and their parents with information on employment options, the importance of and options for further education and training, and the services and supports available through the adult services systems and in the community, the HS/HT program coordinator has provided them with the tools they need to be active participants in transition planning. As needed, the HS/HT program coordinator can serve as an important source of information regarding medical, professional, and peer support networks that are available to assist young people as they try to establish their independence and work towards self-sufficiency.

While HS/HT program coordinators will want to encourage parents to get involved in identifying the annual IEP goals for their children and the ways that their children's progress towards meeting those goals will be measured, they should also encourage parents to assist their children in pursuing self-determination to the maximum extent possible. Ultimately, the student should be the driving force throughout the transition planning process. The HS/HT program coordinator can point out the benefits of the multiple opportunities for the student to use his/her skills in self-determination, self-advocacy, and informed decision-

making within the transition planning process. The HS/HT coordinator can help parents identify the types of information that a young person would need to facilitate his/her ability to make informed decisions, and then encourage them to step back and let the student take the lead in making the decisions that will impact the rest of his/her life.

The local coordinator in Gainesville, Florida, encourages parents and family members to attend workshops conducted by HS/HT and to participate in IEP meetings, particularly when people have been invited to talk about postsecondary options, financial aid, and scholarship information. The local coordinator is also in contact with parents and guardians throughout the year regarding transition planning. In addition to regular communication by phone and written updates, parents and family members are invited to participate in kick-off events, career counseling sessions, and annual holiday parties. At these events, parents are encouraged to talk about the change that HS/HT has made in their sons' and daughters' lives, including how they have improved both academically and in their attitudes towards college and their future careers. In April 2007, this site conducted its first-ever family field trip, held over a weekend so everyone could attend.

Component 4: Having Information on Programs, Services, Supports, Accommodations, Rights, and Responsibilities

Some youth with disabilities need to access programs, services, supports, and accommodations that are not found within the school setting (e.g., medical, mental health, independent living, and employment services). HS/HT program coordinators can serve as a valuable source of information on what is available in the community, and can assist youth and their parents as they try to access needed programs, services, supports, and accommodations.

HS/HT program coordinators can provide young people and their families with critically important

knowledge about the rights and responsibilities associated with specific disability programs as outlined in disability-related legislation. Some HS/HT programs provide orientation and/or training programs to help parents understand the educational and related services available to special education students under IDEA, and to familiarize them with a student's rights and responsibilities under both NCLB and IDEA. Such training usually includes information on, among other things, the standardized assessments called for under NCLB, provisions related to accommodations and alternative assessment for students with disabilities under NCLB, and the mediation and appeals processes spelled out in IDEA. This type of information will enhance the ability of family members to advocate on behalf of their children within the educational system and teach their children how to advocate for themselves.

As a student moves into the transition years, both the family and the student need to become familiar with the programs and authorizing legislation and governing regulations that apply to programs that are available to assist people with disabilities as they move from entitlement to services in the special education setting to the "eligibility-based" adult services delivery system. For example, HS/HT staff provide youth and their families with information on the services available to all youth through each state's system of One-Stop Career Centers (see Exhibit 5.2) and on the services and supports offered through state VR agencies to assist individuals with disabilities in securing employment (see Exhibit 5.3). Many program coordinators encourage participating youth and their parents to seek the involvement of VR counselors when IEP meetings are dealing with vocational issues.

HS/HT program coordinators can also help youth and their family members understand the issues surrounding disability disclosure outside of the secondary school setting and the implications of disclosing one's disability in different settings, including postsecondary education, employment, and social settings. Since many young people with disabilities enter postsecondary educational settings with no understanding of how to obtain needed accommodations, HS/HT programs commonly include exposure to Disability Support Services in the orientation they provide to postsecondary education.

The HS/HT program in Columbus, Georgia, uses *The 411 on Disability Disclosure*, produced by NCWD/Youth in collaboration with ODEP, to help parents and students learn to shift responsibility for disclosure from the parents to the students. Meetings are planned where parents and students are brought in to discuss the students' future career plans. The discussion looks at the feasibility of accomplishing the students' vocational goals and the steps that are needed to accomplish those goals. Since some students have no interest in self-disclosure, this group setting is used to discuss the benefits of disclosure, particularly as it applies to maximizing one's college experiences. This approach, which is used to help graduating seniors explore disability disclosure, has proven to be quite enlightening to all who participate.

Getting Organized

There are many things that HS/HT programs can do to assist family members in taking an active role in a young person's education and transition planning, and to support a young person's involvement in HS/HT.

Keep Parents, Family Members, and Caring Adults Informed

- **Conduct** an evening session designed specifically to inform parents and family members about the HS/HT curriculum and activities.
- **Plan** a transition class that will inform parents and family members about the requirements under NCLB and IDEA and the services and supports available through special education, and to help them understand what to expect in the IEP process.
- **Invite** parents and family members to a presentation by a Disability Program Navigator where they can learn about the services and supports available in the community and the employment and training programs that can help a young person find and keep a job.

- **Develop/disseminate** informational flyers on a variety of topics (e.g., the IEP and other individualized planning tools, rights and responsibilities under disability laws, the steps to applying for postsecondary education, etc.).

Get Parents, Family Members, and Caring Adults Involved

- **Encourage** parents to participate in HS/HT activities by asking them to serve as chaperones, facilitators, presenters, or trainers.
- **Ask** parents to provide transportation to HS/HT events.
- **Encourage** parents to participate with the student in conferences and workshops being sponsored by HS/HT.
- **Invite** parents to serve on the HS/HT board of directors or advisory body.
- **Encourage** parents to serve as ambassadors for the program when interacting with other parents in their community.
- **Involve** parents and family members in fundraisers and recruitment efforts.

Ask Parents, Family Members, and Caring Adults to Supplement What You Are Doing

- **Ask** parents to keep track of the HS/HT activities in which the student is involved.
- **Ask** parents to engage the student in discussions about his/her HS/HT experiences.
- **Ask** parents to talk with their sons/daughters about the results of vocational exploration and assessment activities undertaken as part of the HS/HT program.
- **Ask** parents to provide the students with information about any jobs they have had; what it took to get those jobs; and what responsibilities were involved in each job.
- **Ask** parents to help their children explore options for additional training and education beyond high school, particularly postsecondary education.

Ask Parents, Family Members, and Caring Adults to Promote High Expectations and Self-Determination

- **Ask** parents to undertake activities to foster self-determination and develop decision-making skills by providing information on options and encouraging youth to make their own decisions.
- **Ask** parents to encourage their children to increasingly take on responsibilities such as inviting people to participate on their IEP teams, leading their IEP teams, scheduling meetings with service providers and support personnel, and completing their homework assignments without assistance.
- **Ask** parents to provide their children with information on options for postsecondary education and employment, and to discuss those options with their sons/daughters to help them identify the pros and cons of each option. The ultimate goal is for the young person to make his/her own decisions based on the information that has been gathered.

The mother of one of the Tech-Now students in Oklahoma has been extremely involved in the program, including providing snacks for the weekly meetings at the local site at Memorial High School. After attending Tech-Now's 2006 state competition, this mother realized the significant impact the program was making in her daughter's life and insisted that her daughter continue in Tech-Now during her senior year. Although this mother and daughter had never considered postsecondary education as a viable option, both are now seriously considering the possibility and the daughter is looking into the programs at Tulsa Tech.



Supporting Research: Family Involvement

Demonstrating Commitment to Family Involvement and the Family's Role in Supporting High Achievement and Post-School Results

A number of research studies, literature reviews, and program evaluations have linked family involvement and support to positive outcomes for youth with and without disabilities (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hughes et al., 1997; James & Partee, 2003; Keith et al., 1998; Kohler, 1996; Sanders, Epstein, & Connors-Tadros, 1999; Shaver & Walls, 1998; Simon, 2001; Yap & Enoki, 1994). These outcomes include improved achievement test results, decreased risk of dropout, improved attendance, improved student behavior, higher grades, greater commitment to schoolwork, and improved attitude toward school. Some studies have found that characteristics of family involvement are correlated with social, racial/ethnic, and economic variables (Catsambis & Garland, 1997; Harry, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; Muller & Kerbow, 1993). Research findings indicate the appropriateness of refraining from broad generalizations with regard to family involvement and its relationship to increased student achievement as such generalizations mask the complexity of the issue. The research literature indicates that student achievement outcomes differ depending on (a) the particular component(s) of family involvement studied, and whether data analyzed were provided by parents or by schools; (b) achievement measure(s) used (e.g., achievement test scores, grades, GPA); (c) cultural or racial/ethnic groups involved; (d) the subject matter (e.g., mathematics, reading, science) being tested; (e) income levels of the parents; and (f) gender of the parents (Harry, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002).

Although several studies have examined the relationship between family involvement during the K-12 years and student outcomes (Cotton & Wicklund, 1989; Desimone, 1999), the majority have focused on the elementary school setting. With many, if not most, of these studies focusing on younger children, much less is understood about the impact of family involvement on middle and high school students (Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Brough, 1997; Keith et al., 1993; Rutherford & Billing, 1995; Trivette et al., 1995). Morningstar, Turnbull, and Turnbull (1995) found that secondary students with disabilities themselves reported the need for their families to guide and support them as they planned for the future.

Research has also found that the benefits of family involvement exceed the mere realm of academics to include enhanced self-concept and motivation of students (Haynes, Comer, & Hamilton-Lee, 1989; Perla & O'Donnell, 2002). The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 indicated that the following

positive outcomes were associated with family involvement:

- improved student motivation to learn and academic self-confidence (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2001);
- more consistent attendance (Falbo, Lein, & Amador, 2001);
- improved homework completion and greater time spent on homework (Callahan, Rademacher, & Hildreth, 1998; Cooper, Lindsay, & Nye, 2000);
- improved academic performance (Keith et al., 1998; Simon, 2001), including achievement on standardized tests (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Thorkildsen & Stein, 1998; Zellman & Waterman, 1998);
- higher school completion rates (Rumberger, Ghatak, Poulas, Ritter, & Dornbusch, 1990);
- more clearly defined future plans and educational expectations (Trusty, 1999); and
- higher rates of postsecondary education enrollment (Eagle, 1989).

Facilitating Family Involvement

Numerous programs are continuously developed, implemented, and evaluated to foster increased family involvement in educational issues and facilitate school leaders in identifying practices and policies that encourage parent trust and involvement in the process of schooling (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005; Nistler & Angela, 2000). Components of effective family involvement identified in the literature include:

- engaging and supporting families in a wide range of activities from preschool through high school (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; James & Partee, 2003; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Sanders & Epstein, 2000), including facilitating parental presence and voice in educational practices, activities, and policy beginning at the preschool level (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; James & Partee, 2003; Kohler, 1996);
- collaborative plans based on annual feedback (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000; Mapp, 1997);
- frequent professional development of practitioners on family and student involvement (Boethel, 2003; Furney, & Salembier, 2000; Harry, 2002; Harry, 2002; James & Partee,

2003; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Kohler, 1998; Lamorey, 2002; National PTA, 1997; Rutherford & Billing, 1995);

- promotion of parental education, advocacy, and leadership that provides clear information on school or program expectations, activities, services, and options for their children (Catsambis, 1998; Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 1997; Kohler, 1996; Leuchovius, Hasazi, & Goldberg, 2001; National PTA, 1997; Perla & O'Donnell, 2002; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997);
- a cultivated level of trust and collaboration via family-school partnerships (Guy, Goldberg, McDonald, & Flom, 1997); and
- familial services/enticements (e.g., transportation, child care, and refreshments) to overcome economic and social barriers inhibiting optimal parental participation (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005; Nistler & Angela, 2000).

Though an abundance of research highlights the general education setting, family involvement is imperative to the academic and professional success of youth with disabilities (Bailey et al., 1998). Secondary students with disabilities report the necessity of family guidance and support in constructing postsecondary education programs (Morningstar, Turnbull & Turnbull, 1995). Yet, literature warns against excessive involvement as a student's ability to cultivate and hone self-advocacy skills may be hindered (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Smith, English, & Vasek, 2002).

Due to its educational and societal value, family (parental) involvement has been supported by the U.S. Congress and provisions have been formulated to incorporate this support into education laws. The preparation, planning, and implementation phases of the IEP process mandate family involvement and solicit family/guardian input (IDEA, 2004). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), identical to its predecessor the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, outlines family involvement in children's education as a priority delineated by Title I provisions. Title I states that improved higher achievement of disadvantaged students can be accomplished by "affording parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children."

Additionally, the public values of choice and excellence have fostered legislation buttressing parental entitlement to school choice in supplemental educational services and academic programs—charter, magnet, private, home schooling, etc.—for their children (NCLB, 2001).

Strengthening Communication between Youth, Families, and Schools

The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs (National PTA, 1997) states that "communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful." Outreach, communication, and relationships with families have been identified as key ingredients of effective programs and schools (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; James & Partee, 2003; Keith, et al., 1998; Mapp, 1997; Rutherford & Billing, 1995; Sanders, et al., 1999; Yap & Enoki, 1994) and are especially important for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Espinosa, 1995; Martinez & Velazquez, 2000). Effective communication strategies identified in the literature include (a) a variety of communication methods (James & Partee, 2003; National PTA, 1997; Sanders & Harvey, 2000), (b) communication based on individual student and family needs and that includes alternate formats and languages as needed (Brough & Irvin, 2001; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Harry, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; James & Partee, 2003; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Kohler, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research, 1999), (c) reports of positive student behavior and achievement (Epstein et al., 1997; National PTA, 1997), and (d) improving the literacy skills of English Language Learners (Boethel, 2003; Espinosa, 1995; Yap & Enoki, 1994).

The importance of establishing credibility and trust with culturally and racially diverse populations cannot be overemphasized; cultural responsiveness is essential to establishing such confidence (Harry, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research, 1999). Tailoring training to the cultural traditions of families improves recruitment and outcome effectiveness (Kumpfer & Alvarado, 1995). For example, parents from culturally and racially diverse populations may prefer one-on-one meetings rather than more traditional training formats such as workshops (Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, 1998; National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research, 1999). Additional strategies may include family-mentoring programs, needs assessment surveys, and working with culturally specific community organizations that have created relationships of trust (Harry, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2002). Establishing effective levels of communication between youth, families, and school professionals is critically important in relation to these research findings.

Embracing Youth and Family Involvement

Despite recognition of the importance of student and family involvement, families are resources that have been underutilized by transition and vocational rehabilitation professionals (Czerlinsky & Chandler, 1993; DeFur & Taymans, 1995; Marrone, Helm, & Van Gelder, 1997; Salembier & Furney, 1997). Although parents and professionals are working to forge new relationships, there remains a need to build the level of trust and collaboration between them (Guy, Goldberg, McDonald, & Flom, 1997).

The current system does not make it easy for families to be effective partners in the transition process, even with the new emphasis in NCLB and IDEA on family involvement. Multiple service programs form a confusing, fragmented, and inconsistent system (General Accounting Office, 1995). Parent centers report that families of young adults with disabilities are deeply frustrated by the lack of coordinated, individualized services for high school students and the scarcity of resources, programs, and opportunities for young adults once they graduate (PACER, 2000).

Recent surveys indicate that families seek information on a variety of issues including helping youth develop self-advocacy skills; balancing standards-based academic instruction with functional life skills training; inclusive education practices at the secondary level; postsecondary options for young adults with developmental and cognitive disabilities; pre-employment experiences and employment options that lead to competitive employment; financial planning; resources available to youth through the workforce investment, vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, and Social Security systems; better collaboration with community resources; housing options; and interacting with the juvenile justice system (Leuchovius, Hasazi, & Goldberg, 2001).

A number of studies and program evaluations highlight the importance of actively encouraging family involvement and creating a welcoming school or program climate for families (Boethel, 2003; Brough & Irvin, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; James & Partee, 2003; Rutherford & Billing, 1995; Simon, 2001; Yap & Enoki, 1994). Strategies for cultivating family involvement include (a) a formal process identifying strengths and needs and connecting families and students to support and assistance (Kohler, 1993; Rutherford & Billing, 1995); (b) meetings that accommodate scheduling, transportation, and other family needs (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Martinez & Velazquez, 2000; National PTA, 1997); (c) family training on positive family-child relationships (James & Partee, 2003; National PTA, 1997; Simmons, Stevenson, & Strnad, 1993); (d) staff development on welcoming and working collaboratively with families and students (Boethel, 2003; Espinosa, 1995; Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000; Kreider, 2002;

National PTA, 1997); (e) supports and materials that reflect community diversity (Boethel, 2003; Furney & Salembier, 2000; Harry, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; Martinez & Velazquez, 2000); and (f) referrals to community resources (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Youth, Families, and School Staff as Partners in Policy Development and Decision-Making

Strategies for effective partnering of families, educators, and community members include (a) an accessible and understandable decision-making and problem-solving process for partners (National PTA, 1997); (b) dissemination of information about policies, goals, and reforms to families and students (Kohler, 2000; Lopez, 2002; National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research, 1999); (c) policies that respect diversity (Boethel, 2003; Harry, 2002; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Lamorey, 2002; National PTA, 1997); (d) adequate training for families on policy, reform, and related issues (James & Partee, 2003; National PTA, 1997); and (e) the inclusion of students and families on decision-making, governance, and other program and school committees (Furney & Salembier, 2000; James & Partee, 2003; National PTA, 1997; Sanders et al., 1999).

Further, meaningful family involvement and participation must expand beyond the individual student level. Student and family involvement are important in making service systems and professionals aware of the young person's needs (Gloss, Reiss, & Hackett, 2000). Family members can be fully included in the research process (Turnbull, Friesen, & Ramirez, 1998) and at all levels of policy and service delivery planning. Involving family members in the development and evaluation of federal, state, and local policies and practices helps assure that the services and supports available to youth with disabilities are of the highest quality (Federal Interagency Coordinating Council, 2000). In addition, research indicates that family participation and leadership in transition planning practices enhances the implementation of transition policy (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002). In order for family members to expand participation beyond their own child, they must have opportunities to increase their own knowledge and develop leadership skills.

Online Resources to Promote Parental Involvement in Transition Planning

Below you will find a sampling of the many online resources that family members can use to find information on transition planning for youth with disabilities.

“Employment 101,” a product of the National Dissemination Center on Children with Disabilities (NICHCY), provides a wealth of information about jobs and “getting employed.” Visit <www.nichcy.org/enews/foundations/employment101.asp>.

“Fanning the Flame,” a product of the National Dissemination Center on Children with Disabilities (NICHCY), can help parents fan the flame of individuality, interest, and talent in their child. Accompanying workbooks are designed for students and for the many folks who support them in this quest. Visit <www.nichcy.org/stuguid.asp>.

“IEP & Transition Planning” is sponsored by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition and the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. It provides information on strategies to support students, families and professionals to participate in developing a student’s IEP and transition plan. Visit <<http://www.ncset.org/topics/iep-transition/default.asp?topic=28>>.

“Measuring Transition Success: Focus on Youth & Family Participation,” a brief produced by the PACER Center in collaboration with the National Post-School Outcomes Center (NPSO), describes the importance of engaging families, youth, disability advocates, and parent centers in the design of state post-school data collection systems. Visit <<http://psocenter.org/Docs/PacerParentBrief.pdf>>.

“PACER Center (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights)” was created by parents of children and youth with disabilities to help other parents and families facing similar challenges. The mission of the Center is to expand opportunities and enhance the quality of life of children and youth with disabilities and their families, based on the concept of parents helping parents. The Center houses a number of projects including the FAPE (the Families and Advocates Partnership for Education) Project that provides information on IDEA for families and advocates with the goal of improving education outcomes for youth with disabilities, and the TATRA (Technical Assistance on Transition and the Rehabilitation Act) Project that provides training, information and materials to inform families of youth with disabilities about transition, independent living, and vocational rehabilitation services. For more information, visit <<http://www.pacer.org/>>.

“Parent Briefs on Transition,” produced by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), offer an entire transition series for parents. Explore topics such as “Age of Majority: Preparing Your Child for Making Good Choices,” “Preparing for Employment: On the Home Front,” and several issues on Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Visit <www.ncset.org/publications/default.asp#parent>.

“Parental Roles and Active Lifestyles for Youth with Disabilities” is a fact sheet produced by the National Center on Physical Activity and Disabilities (NCPAD). Visit <http://www.ncpad.org/wellness/fact_sheet.php?sheet=450&view=all&print=yes>.

“Parenting Postsecondary Students with Disabilities,” a guide from the HEATH Resource Center, a clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities, discusses how parents can become mentors and advocates, and guide their young adult’s needs. Visit <www.heath.gwu.edu/PDFs/Parenting1.pdf>.

“Supported Employment and the Adult Service System,” sponsored by the Employment Training Program at the University of Washington (ETP), briefly summarizes ETP’s 20 years of experience working with adults with developmental disabilities who benefit from supported employment. Visit <<http://depts.washington.edu/~transctr/ETP.html>>.

“SchwabLearning” is a website dedicated to understanding the challenges of raising a child with a learning disability. It provides reliable parent-friendly information from experts and parents. Topics addressed include, “Components of Effective Reading Instruction,” “Finding a Good Reading Tutor,” “Technology that Supports Learning,” “Working with the School,” “IEP & 504 Plans,” “Preparing for Life After High School,” and lots more. Visit <<http://schwablearning.org/>>.

“Transition Toolbox,” sponsored by New York’s Vocational and Educational Services for People with Disabilities’ Special Education Division, provides tools and resources such as checklists, how-to guides, helpful hints, and brochures, to assist students, families, schools, and community agencies in developing and implementing effective transition planning and services. These tools, frequently developed by local schools, community agencies, and families in collaboration with the Transition Coordination Sites are among the favorites when preparing youth with disabilities to live, learn, and earn in the community as adults. Visit <<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/transition/toolbox/home.html>>.

EXHIBIT 6.2 (CONTINUED)

“To Work or Not to Work,” a fact sheet from the Virginia Commonwealth University RRTC on Workplace Supports and Job Retention, addresses frequently asked questions by individuals with disabilities and their family members as they begin to think about going to work in their local communities. It provides answers to dispel the concerns parents have about their youth entering the workforce. Visit www.worksupport.com/resources/viewContent.cfm/501.

“You Have Homework” is a Wrightslaw information page that includes a section, “Doing Your Homework: Making the Transition from School to Work,” that provides information for parents about transition planning in the IEP process. It discusses NCLB and links to related information. Visit www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=1432.

“Want Your Near-Adult to Be An Active Player in Planning His or Her Own Life?” is another example of NICHCY’s guides on the IEP process. There is one for students and one for parents and professionals. Visit www.nichcy.org/stuguid.asp and <http://www.nichcy.org/parents.asp>.



PART II

High School/High Tech
Putting it All Together

CHAPTER 7:

Launching a HS/HT Program

This chapter discusses what to consider when planning, developing, and implementing a HS/HT program. It explores the role of advisory bodies and examines the importance of partnerships and interagency collaborations. It spells out the roles and functions of HS/HT coordinators at both the state and local levels. Additionally, it includes information on many of the lessons learned from HS/HT programs around the country.

Historically, HS/HT programs have depended on multiple sources of support to address the range of needs of transition-age youth with disabilities. The experiences of the ODEP grantees demonstrate the ability to successfully expand the depth and breadth of a HS/HT initiative and to facilitate long-term sustainability when a state infrastructure is in place to support local implementation and when there are dedicated staff at both the state and local levels. Consequently, this chapter promotes the establishment of a state infrastructure, while at the same time acknowledging the infrastructure development that must occur at the local level to implement HS/HT programming successfully.

Establishing the Infrastructure Needed to Support HS/HT

Identify the State Agency to Lead the State Infrastructure Development Effort

One of the first steps needed to establish a state level

infrastructure to support HS/HT involves the identification of a state level agency or state-sanctioned entity to head this effort, and serve as a home base or center of operation. While no particular organization or type of program has emerged as the forerunner to play this role, experiences from the current states have identified a set of factors that should be considered when selecting which state level entity should take the lead. HS/HT programs are most successful when housed in an organization that

- is capable of providing in-kind support for such things as office and meeting space, supplies and equipment, and specialized services such as data collection, program evaluation, marketing, and fiscal management;
- has legal authority to undertake fundraising activities and to accept resources from both public and private sources, and/or the capacity to arrange interagency transfers of funds among partners;
- has the capacity to influence resource allocation decisions of multiple agencies and programs focused on transition services;
- has established relationships (preferably through written agreements) with a variety of state agencies that are committed to applying for grants to support HS/HT and are willing to incorporate HS/HT into grant proposals addressing transition services;
- is willing to incorporate elements of the *Guideposts* and references to HS/HT into Request for Proposals

(RFPs) that are being issued to distribute discretionary funds to support transition services;

- has a track record and credibility for advocacy and support of youth with disabilities; and
- is recognized as a trusted convener by key governmental agencies.

These lessons are drawn from the experiences of all the states that received ODEP funding to help launch a state infrastructure, as well as from states that launched the program without the benefit of such seed money (e.g., South Carolina). Another emerging lesson is that the initial home for HS/HT may not be the final home. Some constrictions in state laws, such as contracting rules and the inability to accept funding other than appropriated funds, place constraints on state agencies that would not be applicable for non-profit organizations. In such cases, administering HS/HT through a non-profit organization or creating a spin-off non-profit to administer HS/HT may be necessary. However, even when a non-profit strategy is pursued, the key factors noted above that focus on generating “permanent” support on the part of state government need to be carefully considered.

Determine State-Level Staffing

Along with selecting an appropriate center of operations for the HS/HT program, determining appropriate staffing needs is critical to a program’s success. While there are many options, the most successful HS/HT programs maintained one to two full-time staff at the state level to carry out services during the launching stage. The state infrastructure for HS/HT typically includes at least one additional person (usually part-time) who provides administrative support, fiscal management, support for data collection, assistance with program evaluation, etc. In some states, such part-time administrative staff have been financed with funds from the HS/HT budget, while others were financed through an “in-kind” contribution by the agency leading the state infrastructure development effort. As a HS/HT program grows and the number of local sites increases, more state-level positions may be needed to undertake specific duties such as program development and/or intensive one-on-one consultation with developing local sites.

The following list outlines the responsibilities typically undertaken by the state coordinator. This information will be helpful in developing a job description for the state coordinator and in making decisions regarding supervisory roles and the time commitment and salary for this position. HS/HT state coordinators are typically responsible for **state level development and coordination**, including

- meeting with state agency representatives, partners, potential partners, employers, and other stakeholders to
 - ~ promote the HS/HT program model,
 - ~ explain the benefits of HS/HT as they relate to student outcomes,
 - ~ solicit involvement and support, and
 - ~ facilitate interagency cooperation and coordination;
- facilitating strategic planning for HS/HT, including convening and managing a state-level advisory body and conducting regularly scheduled meetings;
- developing and monitoring the budget, either individually or by working with the financial officer of the fiscal agent for HS/HT;
- developing a plan for the long-term sustainability of HS/HT, including researching and responding to funding opportunities at the national, state, and local levels;
- consulting with the HS/HT advisory body, parent agency, stakeholders, and consumers to determine the process and timelines for local implementation and expansion;
- supervising state level staff;
- developing materials to be used in marketing and outreach to different target populations;
- participating in and serving on boards, committees, advisory groups and work groups that address issues related to disability, education, transition services, postsecondary education, vocational training, employment, etc.;
- presenting on HS/HT at national, state, and local conferences and meetings;

- assisting with the coordination of statewide activities such as National Groundhog Job Shadow Day, Disability Mentoring Day, or a statewide internship program;
- assisting in the planning and development of the state's Youth Leadership Forum, as appropriate; and
- developing a data collection system (Chapter 9 addresses the topics of data collection and evaluation in further detail).

State coordinators are also typically responsible for **supporting local sites** in the following ways:

- assisting with the development of partnerships at the local level;
- assisting with the coordination of local meetings and events, and the recruitment of local businesses;
- ensuring local coordinators receive training centered on the *Guideposts* and convening statewide meetings of local coordinators for the purpose of technical assistance, networking, and resource sharing;
- coordinating video conferences and conference calls with local sites to determine the progress of local implementation and to share promising practices and effective strategies for service delivery and partnership development;
- assisting with the development of program activities and curriculum to address the different components of the *Guideposts*;
- managing and conducting the process for local implementation and program expansion;
- conducting site visits and monitoring local sites;
- conducting outreach to or assisting with outreach efforts targeted for students, parents, state agencies, local service providers, employers, etc.;
- ensuring quality controls are established for the supervision of local coordinators and establishing a management information system for use by local sites; and
- compiling, synthesizing, and analyzing data collected from local sites for use in reporting program results to partners and stakeholders, particularly entities providing financial support.

In developing training programs and providing technical assistance and support to meet the needs of local sites, the state coordinator must consider the diverse backgrounds, training, and professional experiences of the local coordinators. In many cases, statewide gatherings of all HS/HT staff are the only opportunities for local coordinators from different geographical areas to meet and form a network of support. Statewide meetings also provide opportunities for local coordinators to meet members of the state-level advisory body, to plan and discuss program activities, to learn about program management and reporting requirements, and to share successful strategies.

How Will the State Support Implementation of HS/HT on the Local Level?

Know the Landscape

In making decisions regarding state support of local implementation, it is important for the state to determine if there are any existing HS/HT programs operating. In addition to the nine states that have state infrastructure to support HS/HT, a number of locally operated programs exist in many other states. Visit the national HS/HT website, <<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/HSHT/index.html>>, for information on programs throughout the country. Where such local programs do exist, decisions will need to be made by the state as to how to coordinate with and bring the existing program(s) within the state-led effort.

Delineate Responsibilities

When a state infrastructure exists, it is imperative to delineate which issues related to local implementation will be dealt with at the state level, and which will be left up to local decision-makers. For example, if the state infrastructure provides funding for local implementation, the entity leading the state infrastructure development effort, the state-level advisory body, and/or the state coordinator, may have responsibility for identifying and managing a process for distributing funds to local sites. If a RFP process is used to establish local sites, certain parameters for local implementation may be spelled out in the RFP

announcement. If local implementation is to be managed through an interagency agreement, specific aspects of local implementation may be spelled out in the written agreement. If the funding for local implementation is going to be secured through partner programs, aspects of local implementation may be spelled out in legislative and/or regulatory language applicable to the partnering programs. If the local implementation begins with a resource mapping exercise, some aspects of local implementation may be determined by the results obtained through the exercise.

Decide Where Local HS/HT Sites Will Be Housed

Local HS/HT sites can be housed in any number of places and many different approaches have been taken to identify the agency or program to house a local site. Certain advantages and disadvantages are likely to be associated with housing local sites in different organizations or programs. Some of these issues have implications for securing the resources to support a local site and also for the training and technical assistance that will be needed to support local implementation.

Some of the advantages commonly associated with housing a local HS/HT site in a secondary educational setting include

- easy access to participating youth;
- opportunities to secure meeting space and access computers and other types of technology free of charge;
- natural opportunities to facilitate school-based preparatory activities, particularly HS/HT activities that complement what students are learning in science, math, and information technology classes;
- the potential to minimize challenges associated with transporting students to and from regularly scheduled HS/HT meetings; and
- parental participation may be easier to facilitate.

One potential disadvantage associated with housing HS/HT in a school setting is the inability to access the school's facilities on weekends and during the summer. Another potential disadvantage is the lack of training

that school personnel sometimes have on elements of the *Guideposts* beyond school-based experiences.

Local HS/HT sites that are housed in Independent Living Centers (ILCs) tend to have strong connections to the disability community and easy access to accessible technologies, accommodations, and support services. Since many, if not most, ILCs rely on an individual case management process, participating students have access to intensive one-on-one assistance addressing many different aspects of their lives and providing guidance throughout the transition process. HS/HT programs housed in ILCs tend to be relatively comprehensive in terms of connecting activities and family involvement, and may include some youth development and leadership activities. Many HS/HT programs housed in ILCs have particularly strong components addressing self-determination, self-advocacy, and independent living skill building. Some ILCs have accessible vans that can be used to transport students to HS/HT meetings and other activities. On the other hand, HS/HT sites housed in ILCs have historically been more costly than school-based programs and programs housed with other service providers such as VR or WIA youth programs. In addition, HS/HT programs housed in ILCs may require more training and support with regard to program components dealing with school-based preparatory experiences and work-based learning experiences.

Local HS/HT sites housed in VR offices also have certain advantages and disadvantages that should be considered. Some of the advantages include

- easy access to the expertise of VR counselors, transition coordinators, and other specialized VR staff such as benefits planners, job placement specialists, and job developers;
- access to significant in-kind support and to accessible computers and equipment;
- staff who have significant experience in serving individuals with different types of disabilities and different levels of severity;
- access to vocational assessments, information on different careers, and an understanding of the needs of the local workforce;

- established relationships with local employers and various skills training programs;
- facilitated referrals of HS/HT students for eligibility determinations which can potentially facilitate their access to the wide array of services and supports available to VR consumers; and
- minimization of transportation problems as VR offices are almost always located on public transportation routes and often have accessible vans that can be used to transport participating students.

There are also a number of disadvantages associated with housing HS/HT in a VR office, including

- some VR agencies are hesitant to serve youth until they are within 12 months of graduation;
- most VR agencies have historically had a very narrow view of their role in serving transition-age youth prior to their being determined eligible for services and having an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) developed;
- there is no guarantee that services will be provided in a timely manner because many VR agencies operate under an Order of Selection and place eligible individuals with less significant disabilities on waiting lists; and
- many VR counselors have not traditionally viewed individuals with disabilities as appropriate candidates for entry into the STEM careers.

HS/HT sites that are housed in community-based programs such as Easter Seals, United Cerebral Palsy, Goodwill, and Jewish Vocational Services also have certain advantages and disadvantages. Many community-based programs have strong program components related to career exploration, vocational assessments, skills training, and job placement. Participating students are often able to access these opportunities for free or at reduced rates. Many community-based programs have significant experience working with individuals with different types of disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities. Most of these programs have established relationships with local employers and have a good understanding of the local labor market.

On the other hand, many community-based programs have limited experience working with youth. Similar to VR agencies, some community-based programs do not view individuals with disabilities as good candidates for the STEM careers.

HS/HT sites that are housed within different generic components of the workforce system have the potential to provide easy access to existing youth programs. They may also require less direct financial support due to the availability of significant in-kind contributions. However, most generic programs have limited experience working with youth with disabilities and limited knowledge of reasonable accommodations and community resources targeted for people with disabilities. HS/HT programs housed in generic programs often need training and technical assistance to help them develop program components addressing school-based preparatory experiences, connecting activities, and family involvement and support.

HS/HT Programs in Non-Traditional Settings

A number of HS/HT programs have been serving students with disabilities in non-traditional settings. As with the settings most commonly housing local HS/HT sites, each of these settings offer certain advantages and disadvantages that should be considered.

Two Florida HS/HT sites target youth with disabilities who are either involved with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) or “at risk” of such involvement. One of these sites is run by the local workforce board. Fifty percent of the enrolled students are served through the DJJ and fifty percent are served through public high schools. The local HS/HT coordinator has had to be creative in implementing certain aspects of the *Guideposts* because of the restrictions placed on youth in DJJ facilities. For example, these sites use a website (<http://virtualjobshadow.com>) that offers virtual job shadowing opportunities to facilitate career exploration and employs a new e-mentoring component, Mentor Me!TM, that allows users to ask questions and seek advice directly from professionals. To facilitate work-based learning experiences, arrangements can be made with the DJJ Site Manager and the DJJ Education Coordinator at each DJJ facility to transport incarcerated youth to visit an industry site. If transportation is not possible, the DJJ Partner Team,

which consists of representatives of the programs and agencies in the community that can assist in reconnecting incarcerated youth to their communities, will facilitate having the selected business bring its presentation to the DJJ facility. During the second year of operation, the youth at this site had the opportunity to participate in FIRST (For Inspiration & Recognition of Science and Technology) VEX Robotics and to increase their communication skills and problem-solving while building robots. The students participating in this HS/HT site are being exposed to learning environments where they are developing their math and science skills, learning leadership skills, and experiencing positive behavioral development.

The Florida DJJ has been watching this effort closely and based on its demonstrated success, a second DJJ site began implementing HS/HT in 2007 at the Bay Point Schools, Inc. (BPS) in Miami Dade County. BPS is an alternative boarding school that provides educational, vocational, and therapeutic services to moderate-risk adolescent boys ages 13 to 18. Florida DJJ contracts with BPS to provide residential services for 209 adolescents.

MiConnections, Michigan's HS/HT program, has also experimented with serving incarcerated youth. The Wolverine Security Treatment Center is a privately-owned maximum security, lock-down facility for adjudicated youth. A teacher and a teacher's aide employed by the Center staff this local HS/HT initiative. Approximately 80 percent of the facility's residents have IEPs. Many have learning disabilities and some have emotional/behavioral disorders. Similar to the Florida DJJ sites, the local coordinators at these sites have faced unique challenges in implementing certain aspects of the *Guideposts*. For example, only ten students are permitted to convene in one place at any one time. Since students are not allowed to leave the facility, they cannot participate in industry site visits, job shadowing opportunities, or internships. Although students are permitted to use computer technology, they are not given open access the Internet. Consequently, they do not have access to the wealth of resources found online (e.g., vocational assessments, information on career options, and options for postsecondary education, etc.).

The staff involved in these programs have been creative in finding ways to implement the *Guideposts* within this restrictive environment. For example, volunteers from local businesses are brought into the facility to talk about different career opportunities, and leadership opportunities are designed so that they can be undertaken within the facility. In addition, once a year volunteers, business representatives, service providers, and family members are brought into the facility to conduct the "Reality Store," one of the signature activities of MiConnections. In the Reality Store exercise, each participating youth chooses a career with a set salary assigned to it. Based on his/her decision, the youth is given a paycheck for a month and asked to make decisions about how to spend the paycheck on various things in the Reality Store (e.g., rent, food, transportation, recreation, etc.). The students learn about budgeting and about how different jobs and their subsequent salaries will likely impact their ability to become self-sufficient.

This HS/HT program has been so successful that the teacher's aide who functions as the local HS/HT coordinator has been designated as the facility's "transition coordinator." In this newly created position, he is responsible for working with youth who are nearing the end of their incarceration to help them prepare for their reentry into the community.

Several HS/HT sites have been designed specifically to serve American Indian youth with disabilities. One MiConnections site serves youth from the Hannahville Indian Community and Menominee County. The Director of the American Indian 121 Vocational Rehabilitation Project serves as the local HS/HT coordinator. This local initiative began by conducting a resource mapping exercise using the *Guideposts* to assess the comprehensiveness of the local programs serving youth with and without disabilities, both on the reservation and in the surrounding communities. However, rather than assuming that youth with disabilities were accessing available programs and services, the local HS/HT coordinator developed a student interview form that was used to interview graduating seniors. The information gathered from the students was compared with the information gathered through the resource mapping exercise to determine if the youth were actually accessing the programs and services available on the reservation and in the

surrounding community. This information was then used to determine the initial focus for program activities at this developing site.

Working on a team with other students and adult advisors, two youth from Red Eagle Fenv, a Native American HS/HT program in Grady County, Georgia, were recognized as winners in the 2006 Microsoft Accessible Computer Program Development Competition, a statewide competition jointly sponsored by Microsoft and the Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. The team designed and developed a fully-functional, bug-free Windows-based application. They adapted Lower Muskogee Creek Indian myths and legends from print to electronic format, creating an e-book. The electronic format was written to a database and stored on a CD, along with the application, which accesses the stories and modifies them using the accessibility features built into the Microsoft Windows XP operating system. Throughout the competition, the students applied critical thinking skills, mastered useful computer programming concepts and techniques, deepened their understanding of accessibility, and gained self-confidence. The project also addressed a primary goal of the Muskogee Creek program—connecting its young people to tribal elders through cultural awareness.

In Maryland, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) sponsors a HS/HT site at the Baltimore Center, which is NFB's national headquarters. Students enrolled in the HS/HT Transition to Independence Club are encouraged to get involved in math and science programs and explore the STEM careers. Many of the activities focus on issues that are relevant to blind students and their postsecondary plans, including the advantages of attending a training center for the blind, using disability resource centers on campus, accessing adult services, and discovering careers that are available to blind individuals. Students are exposed to mentors and encouraged to discuss their fears about blindness and explore ways to overcome those fears. As a part of this HS/HT initiative, the staff and students explore ways to make science more accessible to students with visual impairments.

Ohio HS/HT is working with Electronic Schools of Tomorrow, a consortium of four electronic charter schools, to establish a virtual HS/HT club. These schools serve approximately 18,000 youth throughout the state and approximately 20 percent are students with disabilities. Focusing on students who have the technical capabilities of connecting via computer and Internet, the HS/HT Club will use a web cam program to conduct meetings to explore technical and scientific careers and to host virtual tours of different businesses and industries. The web cam capabilities are also used to conduct regularly scheduled meetings of the state-level steering committee and to connect HS/HT students with professional mentors, including mentors in other countries such as Canada.

Decide How Training and Technical Assistance Will Be Provided

Importance of Training and Technical Assistance

Youth service practitioners, including intake workers, case managers, job developers, teachers, transition coordinators, counselors, youth development group leaders, independent living specialists, and HS/HT coordinators are often the first contact or “face” that transition-age youth with disabilities encounter who are focused on connecting them to the workforce development system. Unfortunately, there has been little or no agreement regarding the type of skills front line workers such as these should have in order to provide support to youth, including youth with disabilities, as they transition from school to adult outcomes including postsecondary education and employment.

In collaboration with ODEP, NCWD/Youth partnered with the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) to identify the competencies of professionals who work on a daily basis with youth as a critical step to improving their opportunities and outcomes. The result of this collaboration was the creation of a new professional development tool for youth service practitioners, organizations and systems. The Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) webpage includes resources to support the development of a

system of professional development for these practitioners.

On the KSA webpage, you will find

- A full list of competencies within the following ten competency areas:
 1. knowledge of the field;
 2. communication with youth;
 3. assessment and individualized planning;
 4. relationship to family and community;
 5. workforce preparation;
 6. career exploration;
 7. relationships with employers and between employer and employee;
 8. connections to resources;
 9. program design and delivery; and
 10. administrative skills.
- a KSA Study Guide with learning objectives, activities, demonstrations of learning, and resources for each competency;
- strategies for youth service practitioners, organizations, systems, and policy makers to identify, strengthen, and recognize the KSAs;
- a self-assessment and professional development plan to support youth service practitioners in identifying and strengthening their own competencies;
- a readiness assessment to help organizations and systems plan and support professional development for youth service practitioners;
- an information brief describing the need for and benefits of professional development for practitioners, programs, communities, and youth;
- a “Hot Topics” section with audience-specific strategies for practitioners, administrators, policy makers, employers, and youth and their families; and
- many, many more resources.

Similar to the *Guideposts for Success*, each competency area identifies the KSAs needed to serve all youth effectively and the additional KSAs needed to serve youth with disabilities effectively. For more information on how this important tool can be used in providing training and technical assistance to HS/HT coordinators, check out the KSA webpage at <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/ksa/>.

The Role of the State Coordinator in Providing Training and Technical Assistance

In places where there is a state infrastructure to support local implementation, the state coordinator will most likely be responsible for looking across local sites and developing training programs to ensure that local coordinators have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively work with transition-age youth, and for providing technical assistance on how to get local sites up and running. The self-assessment and professional development plan on the KSA Webpage can be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of local coordinators and develop a plan to address any identified deficiencies. Technical assistance to local sites may be needed to help participating partners work together collaboratively, to identify resources that can be used to implement HS/HT locally, and to ensure that program activities address the different components of the *Guideposts for Success*. Technical assistance may be in the form of one-on-one consultations, materials development, and facilitated networking among local coordinators within a state as well as between HS/HT staff from different states. Participants in the national network of HS/HT programs often provided technical assistance and support across programs.

Partnerships and Collaborations Are Key to Success at Both the State and Local Levels

The Importance of Partnerships and Collaboration

Successful HS/HT programs rely on interagency cooperation and coordination, and on the blending and braiding of public and private resources at both the state and local levels. Consequently, it is essential that HS/HT programs put significant time and energy into facilitating interagency cooperation and collaboration.

One positive benefit of these efforts is the increased understanding that participating agencies and programs have of each other's programs. Another benefit is the active engagement of multiple organizations in developing interagency strategies to maximize the impact of their limited resources. (See Exhibit 7.1 for information on supporting research on effective collaboration.)

Meaningful interagency collaboration and adoption of coordinated public policies does not just happen. It requires a skilled convener who can engage multiple stakeholders and help them see the benefits of collaboration and understand the implications of coordinated public policy. The following strategies are provided to assist HS/HT personnel at the state and local levels as they work with multiple organizations and programs to facilitate interagency cooperation and collaboration.

- **Create a Trusting Atmosphere.** Stakeholders must feel comfortable and respected, and trust that their opinions will be taken seriously.
- **Share Knowledge.** Organizational representatives should be encouraged to share basic information about their programs/organizations, including information on their target populations, mandates, legislative and regulatory restrictions and flexibility, outcome measures, etc.
- **Highlight Similarities.** Whenever possible, similarities in goals, objectives, target populations, underlying philosophies, assumption, etc., should be highlighted. This will help build a foundation for the discussions to follow and will help participants see that collaboration is in their best interest.
- **Provide Historical Context.** Provide a brief history of previous cooperative/collaborative initiatives, highlighting positive outcomes experienced by participating organizations/programs.
- **Acknowledge Political/Social Realities.** Highlight any aspects of the political and/or social climate that might positively or negatively impact the collaborative effort.
- **Establish Common Goals.** Have participating organizations/programs establish one or two broad goals for the current collaborative effort. This will likely require the disclosure of any self-interest (individual and organizational), an important step in identifying the needs of every organization/program involved. These broad goals should focus on long-term policy goals and immediate changes that are expected, rather than specific quantitative objectives.
- **Establish Corresponding Objectives and Outcomes.** Identify a number of measurable objectives and common outcome measures related to each broad goal. To the extent that you can, address the needs of all participating organizations/programs.
- **Establish an Action Plan.** Involve all participants in establishing an action plan that outlines specific strategies for accomplishing the agreed upon goals and objectives.
- **Resolve Conflicts and Establish Collaborative Work Habits.** If conflicts arise, resolve them by clarifying issues and exploring alternative resolutions. Recognize the possible need to alter policies and procedures to keep the process moving. Set the stage to promote collaborative work habits.
- **Identify and Implement an Accountability and Evaluation Strategy.** Determine a system for ensuring accountability and assign responsibility to ensure follow-through. Continuously evaluate the effort to ensure that the focus stays on the agreed upon goals and objectives.
- **Be Adaptable.** Leave enough flexibility to adapt to new needs as they arise.
- **Plan for Follow-up and Secure Commitments.** Produce minutes for each meeting, recording agreement on key decisions and action items. Assign participants to ensure follow-through with specific commitments, particularly when organizational approval is required.
- **Communicate Effectively.** Establish a decision-making protocol and outline a communications plan to ensure ongoing communication among participating organizations/programs. Between meetings, provide for open and frequent interactions and communications (both formal and informal). If timelines were established, provide follow-up to see that they are met.

- **Market Your Efforts.** To ensure continuity of the effort, publicize and promote the collaborative effort to make it highly visible. Be sure to engage the community.
- **Plan for Sustainability.** This needs to be addressed from the start of the program. As the collaborative effort evolves, it may be necessary to secure diverse funding and involve new members. This may necessitate reassessing the original vision and mission, and modifying the goals and objectives to address the needs of new members.

Adapted from Mattessich & Monsey, 1992 and Winer & Ray, 1994.

The results of collaborative efforts will vary. Some will result in informal arrangements that are largely an agreement to work together. Others will result in formal written agreements. When written agreements are pursued to support a HS/HT program, the end result will be more beneficial if the agreement is more than merely an agreement to work together. Exhibit 7.2, titled “Interagency Agreement Checklist,” outlines the key components of a comprehensive interagency agreement and includes some suggested language.

Local Partnerships

While the aforementioned discussion of effective strategies to foster interagency coordination and collaboration applies equally to partnership development at the state and local levels, this section will focus on particular concerns relevant to local partnership development. Partnerships and interagency collaboration are critically important at the local level because ultimately it is imperative to leverage the services and supports available through different organizations and agencies to provide the full scope of services and activities outlined in the *Guideposts for Success*. Local partners will need to be convened, either by the state coordinator or by an organization or person willing to spearhead the local initiative. While many of the partners involved at the state level will have local affiliates that should be approached, there are also potential partners that will be unique to each locality.

Meetings to recruit local partners should be scheduled at times and in locations that will facilitate the participation of as many potential partners as possible. Begin the meeting with a discussion about the needs of

transition-age youth with disabilities. Ask participants to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the local service delivery system in addressing those needs. Highlight the wide variety of agencies, organizations, and programs involved in meeting the needs of this population. Note that while one might assume that collaboration within the local service delivery system would occur naturally, experience has shown that there is no “natural” system to meet the needs of this population. Martinson (1999) stresses the importance of acknowledging that there are many factors that can make interagency collaboration difficult, including

- turf issues;
- fear of breaking away from the status quo;
- bureaucratic barriers associated with legislative and regulatory requirements;
- incompatible eligibility criteria;
- competition for limited resources;
- differences in philosophies, missions, and approaches to service delivery;
- different methods for measuring performance and obtaining credit for outcomes; and
- incompatible management information systems.

This discussion will set the stage for a detailed presentation on HS/HT, which can highlight the program’s role as an intermediary that brings different organizations and programs together to create a coordinated system of services and activities with demonstrated success in improving post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities. Facilitate the buy-in of participants by asking for their assistance in identifying

- individuals within their respective organizations (e.g., teachers, administrators, VR counselor, transition coordinators, etc.) who might be willing to champion the local HS/HT initiative within that organization,
- organizations and programs that should be represented on the local advisory body (if one is being convened) and individuals within those organizations and programs who would be most appropriate to serve on the advisory body, or,

- one or two individuals who would be willing to spearhead the local initiative and convene local partners to develop a strategic plan for program implementation if a local advisory body is not being convened.

Advisory Bodies: A Strategy to Maximize Stakeholder Buy-In at the State and Local Levels

Advisory bodies are excellent mechanisms for engaging multiple stakeholders in planning and implementing a HS/HT program at both the state and local levels. Establishing an advisory body is also an effective strategy for getting representatives of business and industry involved in HS/HT, particularly individuals representing the STEM careers. Although HS/HT advisory bodies go by different names (e.g., steering, planning, or advisory committee, consortium, etc.) and their roles, responsibilities, and makeup may vary, all undertake certain common roles and functions, albeit to different degrees and at different times. HS/HT advisory bodies typically take on functions that include

- developing a plan to launch a HS/HT program;
- developing and monitoring a strategic plan to support local implementation;
- providing ongoing guidance, direction, and advice as local sites are developed; and/or
- developing a plan to secure the resources necessary to sustain the program.

Establishing an effective HS/HT advisory body takes both time and resources. However, a few people can form a core group that can take responsibility for identifying and recruiting additional members and convening the group to begin its work. This core group needs to be strategic in identifying potential partners and stakeholders to ensure that the right organizations/programs are at the table. It should include representatives who bring different expertise, including expertise in disability issues, education, youth services, youth development and leadership, vocational training and employment services, to name a few. To the extent possible, the organizational representatives invited to serve on a HS/HT advisory

body should be people who have the ability to make strategic decisions within the organization, particularly with regard to resource allocation. Youth, families, and employers as ultimate consumers of HS/HT should also be included.

Exhibit 7.3, “Establishing an Advisory Body,” provides a tool that can be used as you consider who to approach about serving on your HS/HT advisory body. It highlights the importance of approaching a variety of stakeholders and potential partners, of thinking through the potential benefits of having different stakeholders participate, and of identifying key contact people within each organization to be approached. It also stresses the importance of assigning someone to make each of these contacts.

The following things are important considerations when convening both state and local advisory bodies:

- **Membership.** Involve a variety of partners, some that are disability specific and some that are not. Include enough people to ensure adequate participation in meetings without involving so many people that meetings become cumbersome and reaching consensus becomes impossible.
- **Functions.** Spell out what the advisory body’s mission, goals, objectives, and functions will be. Determine whether the advisory body will be convened primarily for planning purposes or for both planning and ongoing program programmatic advice.
- **Leadership.** Determine how the leadership will be structured. Some advisory bodies are headed by a chairman while others are headed by a slate of officers or an executive committee. Decide whether term limits will be imposed for the leadership and/or the membership.
- **Structure.** Determine how formal the advisory body will be. Some advisory bodies are very formal and operate under established by-laws, policies and procedures while others are very informal and operate under loose guidelines. Identify the most effective operational structure given political realities and available resources. Decide whether subcommittees or work groups will be convened to deal with specific issues (e.g., staffing decisions, sustainability, programmatic advice, etc.).

- **Meetings.** Determine how often the advisory body will meet. Some advisory bodies meet quarterly while others meet monthly. Some meet more at the onset of a HS/HT initiative and less often after the program is up and running.

Before approaching anyone about serving on an advisory body, the core group will need to begin defining the roles, responsibilities, and functions of the body. In some situations an advisory body is convened primarily for planning purposes (e.g., to establish the state infrastructure for HS/HT or to plan for local implementation) and is intended to be time-limited in nature. In other situations, the initial planning group may be modified when the planning function is completed and new functions may be assumed. Some advisory bodies have ongoing functions, such as

- providing ongoing guidance and direction on program implementation and developing a plan for program expansion at the local level,
- determining the approach to program design at the local level,
- developing a business plan,
- developing and monitoring the annual budget for HS/HT, and
- identifying resources for ongoing sustainability.

When the primary function of an advisory body changes, the initial membership is often modified and/or expanded to include different partner organizations.

Once the advisory body is convened, the proposed roles and functions can be further refined with the involvement of the entire membership and issues such as term limits for organizational representatives can be addressed. Exhibit 7.4, “Roles and Functions of a HS/HT Advisory Body,” is a helpful tool to use as you think through the functions that your HS/HT advisory body might assume.

Convening a Local Advisory Body

Many programs have found it beneficial to convene local advisory bodies. For the most part, the issues discussed in the above section on establishing a state-

level advisory body are also applicable to local advisory bodies. The primary difference is that local advisory bodies focus on providing guidance and direction for program planning at the local level and securing local resources to support program implementation. Local advisory bodies provide important links to local resources and help engage local educational agencies, service providers, community leaders, and employers directly in program implementation. If needed, members of a local advisory body can assist in identifying someone to serve as the local coordinator. They can help identify an agency or program to house the local initiative or to function as the fiscal agent for the local site. To the extent possible, the membership of the local advisory body should be recruited through organizations that were involved in initial planning and from the organizations identified as potential stakeholders within the local community.

It may be necessary to conduct outreach to engage additional employers in the local effort. The involvement of the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB), specifically the Youth Council, and of local employers can lend significant credibility to an emerging HS/HT initiative. The local WIB may be willing to support HS/HT in different ways (e.g., small grants or facilitating referrals of HS/HT students to programs and activities sponsored by the local WIB). Local employers may be willing to sponsor special events. Local WIBs and local employers are also excellent sources of information on the local labor market and the needs of the local workforce in terms of prerequisite education and training for different jobs. In addition, local HS/HT sites rely heavily on local employers to facilitate work-based learning experiences. As local employers learn more about HS/HT, they may begin to view youth with disabilities as an untapped source of future employees.

Local advisory board meetings should be upbeat, interactive, and appeal to the needs of the group. If there is one, involve the state coordinator in the initial meeting of a local advisory body to provide guidance and facilitate the discussion. The state coordinator can help articulate the goals and objectives of HS/HT, help create a vision for the local site, and assist in identifying other potential partners to recruit to participate in the local effort.

Using Community Resource Mapping As a Planning Tool

An important planning strategy used by some state and local advisory bodies is to conduct an environmental scan or engage in a community resource mapping exercise to determine the resources available in the state or community, and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the service delivery system. Undertaking an environmental scan can reduce or prevent the duplication of services and maximize the use of available resources.

A number of HS/HT programs have developed tools that use the *Guideposts for Success* as the framework for conducting a resource mapping exercise (see Exhibit 7.5 for one example). Some local WIA Youth Councils have also developed resource mapping tools that could be used by HS/HT. When resource mapping has been completed, the information needs to be compiled and provided to everyone involved in the exercise and to all members of the local advisory body. In consultation with local partners and stakeholders, this information should be used to develop a plan for local implementation and to identify the core activities/curriculum that will constitute the local HS/HT program.

Pulling It All Together: State and Local Roles in Implementing HS/HT

This section outlines some of the key considerations associated with different aspects of HS/HT program implementation. Some of these considerations have inherent cost implications, while others do not.

The extensive diversity in the ways that HS/HT programs are managed and supported at both the state and local levels gives rise to some unique relationships between state and local site coordinators. For example, the wide variety of people who function as local coordinators can have a significant impact on the state coordinator's ability to oversee local implementation. When both the state and local coordinators are employees of the HS/HT program, the lines of authority tend to be clearly delineated and the state coordinator's ability to ensure quality control is clearly spelled out in his/her supervisory functions. When a local site is funded through a grant from the state infrastructure for HS/HT, the lines of authority and

mechanisms for quality control are often spelled out in the grant announcement and/or the resultant contract or interagency agreement.

When local coordinators are employees of other organizations and have assumed responsibility for local implementation of HS/HT as part of their regular job responsibilities, the state coordinator's roles and responsibilities in relation to the local coordinators are nonexistent. In those situations, the roles and responsibilities should be spelled out in a formal agreement that includes well delineated expectations regarding staff responsibilities (e.g., number of hours dedicated to HS/HT, commitment to participate in training, agreement to collect data, etc.). Exhibit 7.6 provides a sample Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the entity leading the state infrastructure effort for HS/HT and a local HS/HT site that lays out things that should be included in any such agreement, along with things that might be included depending on how the program is structured and funded.

Key Considerations for Implementation

Local Sites. How will local sites be defined (e.g., a single school; an intermediary school district; a service provider such as UCP, Goodwill, or an ILC; a VR office; a regional or local workforce board; a juvenile detention facility; an alternative school; an Indian reservation, etc.)?

Advisory Body. Will the local site convene a local advisory body and, if so, what will its role be? Who will be asked to serve? How will the state assist in this effort? Will a separate advisory body be convened for the express purpose of obtaining input from youth and family members? How will local advisory bodies coordinate with the state advisory body if one exists?

Resources. How will local sites be supported? Will the state have primary responsibility for funding local sites and, if so, how will funds be distributed (e.g., grants, subcontracts or cash-match agreements; using start-up grants or mini grants for specific activities; or some combination of these)? Will the local sites be responsible for locating funds to sustain HS/HT beyond an initial start-up period?

Staffing. How will the local site be staffed (e.g., by hiring staff or by using staff employed by other local programs)? Will funding for staffing come from the state or local level? Who will staff the local site (e.g., teachers, VR counselors, transition coordinators, staff from an ILC or a career/technical education, community rehabilitation, or workforce development program, etc.)? How will staff be classified (i.e., full-time employee, part-time employee, contractor, stipend, grantee, or in-kind contribution)? How will local coordinators be supervised?

Training. Will the state coordinator be responsible for looking across the local sites and developing or procuring needed training? If there is no state infrastructure, is this the responsibility of the local advisory board? Can other resources such as members of the national HS/HT network be leveraged?

Goals and Objectives. Will local sites be required to develop their own annual goals and objectives, or will the state develop goals and objectives for them? Who will monitor the accomplishment of local goals and objectives?

Marketing. Who will develop the marketing plan for the local sites? Who will develop and pay for marketing materials that are targeted for multiple audiences? (Exhibit 7.7 contains a sample Media Release Form which must be signed before a HS/HT program can use pictures of youth in brochures or other printed materials or publish success stories in newsletters, local papers, etc. In addition, Chapter 10 provides detailed information on how to market a HS/HT program.)

Outreach. Who will develop and pay for outreach materials? How will state entities and local sites conduct outreach to inform people about HS/HT, recruit schools to participate, facilitate the referral of students, recruit businesses to participate, and secure financial support?

Program Activities. Will the state require that a standardized program of activities or menu of services be developed for use by all local sites or will local sites develop their own program of activities? Will local sites conduct resource mapping exercises? How will year-round activities be ensured (e.g., by conducting a job

fair, college campus experience, or institute during the summer)? How will the site ensure that activities are both age- and developmentally-appropriate? If the program is multi-year, are the activities planned to be sequential in nature? How will the site ensure that all categories of the *Guideposts* have been addressed? Will students be encouraged to participate in formal training programs available in the community (e.g., computer training, self-advocacy training, youth leadership opportunities, etc.)? How will students be exposed to community resources (e.g., mental and physical health services, academic tutoring, etc.)? How will students be exposed to postsecondary educational opportunities? How will STEM careers be emphasized? Will special activities be planned for parents and family members of HS/HT students?

Planning Specific Activities. When and where should the activity take place? What are its goals and objectives? What format is most appropriate? Who should lead it? How will accommodations be made for youth with physical disabilities, with sensory disabilities, with learning disabilities, etc.? What resources will be needed (e.g., supplies, room rental fees, transportation, refreshments, etc.)? Will computers/equipment be needed? What resources are available to support the activity?

Internships. Who will locate internships for HS/HT youth (the state coordinator, the local coordinator, participating youth, etc.)? Who will monitor internships? Will internships be paid or unpaid? If paid, who will pay the salary or a stipend? Will youth be expected to meet certain criteria before participating in internships (e.g., reach a certain grade level, regular attendance at HS/HT meetings, maintain a certain grade point average, participate in an internship orientation program, etc.)?

Special Events. Will the program sponsor special activities such as an annual kick-off, employer appreciation events, awards ceremonies for participating students, etc.? How will such events be financed (e.g., mini-grants out of the state funds for HS/HT, fund raising, employer contributions, etc.)? Who will be responsible for planning and staffing special events? How often will special events occur?

Scheduling. Will the decision regarding how often regularly scheduled HS/HT activities are to occur (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly) be made at the state level or locally? Where will they occur? How will the accessibility of the facilities be ensured?

Transportation. How will students get to and from regularly scheduled activities and special events? Will local HS/HT coordinators be insured and permitted to transport youth in their personal cars? Does the school have an activities bus that can be used? Can the local site purchase or lease a van to transport youth? Are state level transportation coordination funds available to assist in this effort?

Access to Technology and Equipment. How will students access computers and other technology? Will equipment be purchased or will donated equipment be sought? Are students able to use the school's equipment, the computer lab at a local community college, or equipment at the local VR office or One-Stop Career Center? How will students with sensory impairments be accommodated in using computers and technology? Can the Statewide Assistive Technology Program or VR provide access to equipment that students can try?

Incentives for Participating Students. Will the program offer incentives/rewards to students who demonstrate improvement in different areas? Will students have the option of competing for small scholarships? Will funding for this be a state or local responsibility?

Consumer Input. What mechanisms will be employed at the state and local levels to facilitate obtaining input from participating youth, employers, and family members? How will youth have opportunities to provide input into the development and/or scheduling of program activities?

General Program Management. Who will maintain ongoing contacts with education officials, service providers, local employers, postsecondary institutions, etc.? What process will be used to enroll students in HS/HT? Who will be responsible for planning/conducting meetings of the local advisory body and maintaining ongoing contact with members? Who will maintain time and attendance records for HS/HT youth? Who will be responsible for collecting data on students? Who will be responsible for reporting outcomes from specific program activities? Who will compile relevant data and report back to local funders and supporters? (Exhibit 7.8 contains a sample HS/HT Enrollment Form which includes a section for the student and/or parent or guardian to sign giving the student permission to participate in HS/HT. Exhibit 7.9 contains a sample Release of Information form which must be signed prior to obtaining information on a young person from the school, the VR agency, or any other program or agency that is working with that youth.)



Supporting Research: Effective Collaboration

Collaborative efforts that focus on youth transitioning to adulthood, and those that offer interventions supporting this transition, have the potential to greatly improve postsecondary outcomes for all youth, and particularly for youth with disabilities. Multiple stakeholders must be involved if youth with disabilities are going to be exposed to the STEM careers and secure the education and training needed to enter such careers and earn a living wage. Potential stakeholders include youth development or workforce preparation organizations (both generic and disability specific), business-related organizations, employers, youth with disabilities and their families, state and local agencies, higher education institutions, parent centers, consumer and advocacy organizations, and guidance counselors and transition specialists in schools.

Collaborative efforts are key strategies for creating systemic change in human services, education, government, and community agencies. Collaboration and teamwork provide stakeholders the opportunity to engage in meaningful interaction (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 1993). Each individual in the group can build on the strengths of others. In this way, the community benefits much more than it would from just the individual efforts of the partner organizations. “By working together—collaborating—each partner organization can work smarter, share important information, build a collective set of resources, and keep its focus on youth” (Stasz, 1998). Collaborative efforts can address the real issues of shrinking resources; the complex needs of families, workers, and communities; and the current system of fragmented services.

There are many fundamental elements necessary for a well-organized, successful collaboration. Mattessich and Monsey (1992) define six essentials that make collaborations effective: environment, membership, process/structure, communication, vision, and resources.

- 1. Environment**—There is a history of collaboration or cooperation in the community, favorable political/social climate, strong local leadership, a convergence of needs/public opinion/legislative priorities/agency readiness, and a catalytic or galvanizing event.
- 2. Membership**—Both providers and consumers of services are represented. There is mutual respect and understanding, trust, and the ability to compromise.
- 3. Process/structure**—Collaborating groups must be careful not to create new bureaucracies. Instead, structures and processes should be designed to facilitate information exchange, participatory decision-making, and resource allocation. The group must be flexible in organizing itself to

accomplish tasks and in adapting to change. Clear roles, responsibilities, and policies must be established in the early stages of group development.

- 4. Communication**—Good communication is the key to effective collaboration. Communication within collaborative groups must be open and frequent, through both formal and informal channels, as well as culturally sensitive and reflective of different communication styles.
- 5. Vision**—Collaborative partners should have a shared vision of what they are trying to achieve, with an agreed-upon mission, objectives, and strategies. This vision or purpose should be unique to the group, overlapping but not duplicating the missions of the individual organizations. A shared vision with concrete, attainable goals for accomplishing the vision spurs collaborative efforts and sustains momentum.
- 6. Resources**—Financial and human resources are essential for effective collaboration. Financial resources may include those resources (funds, technology, facilities, and training) that collaborating partner organizations can contribute, as well as those the group obtains from outside sources. Human resources may include skilled group discussion facilitators, committed leaders, and the best mix of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts among individual members.

Many agencies and organizations exist to serve youth with disabilities. Many of them, however, overlap in services, reflect unwieldy bureaucracies, and have a maze of conflicting requirements (Guthrie & Guthrie, 1991). The involvement of so many programs and agencies can make it hard for the group to remain cohesive and effective. Although many stakeholder groups want similar outcomes for youth, they often operate in isolation or in competition with each other. To make sure youth with disabilities receive the services they need, there must be extensive collaboration among agencies so a system can be developed that will integrate services and pool resources and costs (Johnson, 2000).

Numerous studies report problems addressing the transition needs of youth with disabilities through interagency collaboration and cooperation. The studies were conducted by the following: Furney & Salembier, 1999; Guy & Schriener, 1997; Hanline & Halvorsen, 1989; Hasazi et al., 1999; Johnson, Bruininks & Thurlow, 1987; Johnson & Sharpe, 2000; Johnson, Sharpe & Stodden 2000; Johnson, McGrew, Bloomberg, Bruininks, & Lin, 1997; Stodden & Boone, 1987. These studies report the following problems: (a) lack of shared student information across agencies, (b) lack of follow-up data on program

EXHIBIT 7.1 (CONTINUED)

recipients that could be used to improve service efficiency and effectiveness, (c) lack of adequate attention in IEPs to all aspects of adult living (i.e., transportation, health services), (d) lack of systematic transition planning with the adult agencies responsible for post-secondary service needs, (e) deficient interagency agreements, (f) difficulties in predicting needed post-services, (g) minimized role of parents and students in decision-making and transition planning, and (h) inefficient and ineffective management practices for establishing interagency teams. Despite these ongoing problems, the studies report interagency collaboration and services coordination must continue as a major strategy to address the needs of transition-age youth with disabilities.

Gaining the interest and commitment of stakeholder groups to engage with the workforce development system can also be challenging. Coordination of collaborative effort is a necessity. Such connections require strategic and continuous planning. These challenges can be eased by working through third-party brokers or intermediaries (Miller, 2001).

Intermediaries can bring together traditionally separate programs and services with separate funding streams, created in response to different priorities, which are administered by a number of federal, state, and local agencies. As these parties are convened by intermediaries, they can identify mutually beneficial ways to blend and/or braid funding and resources. Ultimately, these strategies can result in improved services.

Strategies that allow funds and resources to be used in more flexible, coordinated, and sustainable ways are critical to the success of efforts to improve the coordination and impact of multiple youth-serving organizations.

Intermediaries can help build constructive collaborations among employers, educators, youth development program personnel, and families so that young people with disabilities have access to quality work-based learning experiences. Linking with an intermediary can ensure the quality and impact of local efforts and promote policies to sustain effective work-based learning practices, along with providing access to a wider range of learning experiences and career development services (Mooney & Crane, 2002). In other words, research tells us that collaboration, though difficult to develop and sustain, is absolutely essential.

There is a growing body of evidence that organizations that serve as brokers or intermediaries play critical roles in communities to promote collaboration (Jobs for the Future, 2002). A number of pilot projects funded by ODEP have demonstrated the value of supporting intermediaries to help improve outcomes for youth with disabilities. In many ways, HS/HT programs have been doing just that for some time by bridging in-school activities with the world of work and beyond. Overall, intermediaries can foster relationships with multiple stakeholders to create a comprehensive system of quality improvement based on the promotion of mutually beneficial outcomes.



Interagency Agreement Checklist

Item	Question to Answer	Sample Wording	Explanation
Parties to the agreement	Who are the participants in the partnership?	"This Memorandum of Understanding is between..."	Use the proper title of each organization, company or institution in the group, not the names or titles of divisions or the people representing it. One of the common mistakes with MOUs is to put the name of non-legal entities as parties to the agreement.
Dates	What are the dates that the memorandum takes effect/ceases?	"The Memorandum of Understanding commences on (insert date) and terminates on (insert event* or date)."	"For example, acceptance of Final Report by xyz."
Project title	What is the full name of the project?	"The title of the project is _____ hereafter referred to as 'the Project' or (insert shortened form)."	State the actual full name of the project, not an acronym or shortened form.
Project definition	What are the project objectives, the intended outcomes, and outputs?	"The Project objectives, outcomes and outputs are: (a) Objectives (list) (b) Outcomes (list) (c) Outputs (list)"	Restate the definition in the primary letter of agreement. If the project is complex, make this letter an addendum to the memorandum.
Obligations of the parties	Within the project, what are the obligations of each party and by what date?	"Each party to this Memorandum has agreed to undertake the following obligations: (a) Party A has agreed to (insert tasks) (b) Party B has agreed to" (insert tasks)"	"Obligations" means those tasks each participant has agreed to do. In some cases, that will be to undertake research or provide funds; in other cases to provide an "in kind" contribution.
Project management structure	Who will manage the project? Is there an Advisory Committee? Who is the Chairperson? Who are the Committee members? What are their powers (supervisory, decision-making)? <i>Optional—</i> How often do they meet? Where/how? Who is responsible for preparing minutes, distributing papers? Who will provide administrative services?	"The Project will be managed by..." "There will be an Advisory committee comprising..." "The role and responsibilities of the Steering Committee will be..."	Name of the Project Manager

Interagency Agreement Checklist *(continued)*

Item	Question to Answer	Sample Wording	Explanation
Budget	<p>Who gets paid what? If there are in-kind contributions, spell them out.</p> <p>What is the duration of these contributions—six months from the start-up date (specify) or for the life of the project?</p> <p>What functions or services do the payments or budget allocations cover?</p>	<p>“XYZ Institute of 123 will be paid \$ --- for the administration of the project, etc.”</p> <p>“ABC Department of Training will make an in-kind contribution of one officer at 10% FTE per week for six months from the onset of the project.”</p> <p>“ZZZ Vocational Institute will provide an office, two dedicated telephone lines and a computer for the exclusive use of the project.”</p>	<p>Apportionment of the allocated budget is determined by the Project Manager in consultation with the Steering Committee.</p>
Schedule of payments	<p>When will payments be made?</p> <p>What do recipients do to activate a payment?</p>	<p>Specify the project outputs and milestones. “30 days after delivery of an acceptable YYY.”</p> <p>“Payment will be made on production of a valid Tax Invoice.”</p>	<p>Payments will usually be linked to the achievement of milestones in an acceptable manner and production of adequate documentation and invoices.</p>
Sub-contracting	<p>If some project work is to be sub-contracted, who is responsible for the sub-contractor?</p> <p>If there is a sub-contract, what are the financial arrangements?</p>	<p>“AAA (one of the parties) is responsible for XY&Z. They may sub-contract XY&Z but they remain responsible for XY&Z.”</p>	<p>If it is known at the commencement of the Project which tasks will be sub-contracted, details should be inserted.</p> <p>Subsequent sub-contracting decisions (what to sub-contract, to whom and on what terms) will be determined by the Steering Committee and will be overseen by the Project Manager.</p>
Contact persons	<p>Who are the designated contact persons within each organization?</p>	<p>“Parties must have at all times one nominated person who is the contact person for the project and an obligation to advise all other parties immediately of any changes.”</p>	<p>Insert the name, address, telephone, fax, email, website of relevant officers, organizations.</p>

Motherhood clauses—use as required.

Intellectual property	<p>Who owns the intellectual property generated by the project?</p>	<p>“All intellectual property generated by the Project will be in the ownership of ABC.”</p>	<p>ABC will claim ownership of all generated intellectual property. However, care should be taken where IP (such as proprietary software) is licensed for the Project, as there may be restrictions on use and on rights of ownership.</p>
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Interagency Agreement Checklist *(continued)*

Item	Question to Answer	Sample Wording	Explanation
Motherhood clauses—use as required. <i>(continued)</i>			
Record keeping and reporting requirements	What records will be kept? To whom will they be available? What reports will need to be made? To whom will they go? How often will they need to be submitted?	“The Project Manager must ensure adequate records are kept with respect to the Project, to enable the Project to meet auditing and reporting requirements.”	Each Project needs to meet the record keeping and reporting requirements set down for the Project.
Confidentiality non-disclosure	Parties to the agreement must be asked not to use or pass on sensitive information obtained in the course of the project.		
Conflict of interest	Are there any potential conflicts of interest between the parties?	“A party must notify the other parties if performance of their obligations would put them in conflict with obligations to third parties.”	It is important that any conflicts are disclosed and made transparent.
Warning clauses—for use as required			
Dispute resolution	How do you propose to resolve any disagreements that arise?	“Any dispute which arises will be resolved by...”	Spell out the process.
Indemnity	Indemnity, liability, insurance.		Must align with primary agreement and local regulations.

*Adapted from National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (2003).
High School/High Tech Program Manual. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.*

Establishing a HS/HT Advisory Body

Instructions: Use the table to help identify stakeholders that would potentially be interested in a HS/HT initiative. The “Possible Sources of Membership” section provides a list of organizations, entities, and individuals in the state that could potentially have a vested interest in HS/HT. While this list is not exhaustive, it provide lots of ideas on where to start. The core planning team should use their personal and professional contacts and relationships to develop a list of appropriate people to contact under each of the stakeholders categories. For organizations such as school districts, start with the “top” (the superintendent or designee) to get assistance in identifying the appropriate liaison or primary contact for a HS/HT initiative. To complete the “Supporting Information” section, collect as much information as possible about each organization from brochures, websites, personal and professional

contacts, and other available sources of information. Support information might include the types of services provided, the target population for those services, and any eligibility criteria associated with the receipt of services. Brainstorm with personal and professional contacts to identify the benefits of involving each of these entities or individuals in a HS/HT initiative, considering benefits to both the HS/HT program and the potential member of the advisory body. Materials throughout this Guide can help you frame a “benefits for all” discussion. Use this information to complete the section on “Potential Benefits to HS/HT and to the Stakeholder.” Use the “Who Will Make the Contract” section to identify exactly who will be responsible for contracting the individuals identified within the organization where a mutually beneficial partnership can be envisioned.



Establishing a HS/HT Advisory Body *(continued)*

Stakeholder Group	Possible Sources for Membership	Supporting Information	Potential Benefits to HS/HT & Stakeholders	Who Will Make the Contact?
K-12 Education	Representative(s) of state or local education agencies (Superintendent or designee) • Teachers (regular and special education) • 504 and accommodations specialists • Transition counselors and coordinators • Secondary vocational education teachers • Career and technical education instructors • Schools for special populations (deaf, blind, etc)			
Youth and Their Families	High school students with disabilities • Parents of HS/HT students • Parent/Teacher Associations • Parent Information and Training Centers • 4-H Clubs • Boys & Girls Clubs • Boy & Girl Scouts • Other youth organizations • Faith-based and community organizations			
Workforce Development Organizations	State and Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) • WIA Youth Councils • One-Stop Career Centers • State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies • Community Rehabilitation Programs • Private Employment Programs • Social Security offices • Employment Networks			

Establishing a HS/HT Advisory Body *(continued)*

Stakeholder Group	Possible Sources for Membership	Supporting Information	Potential Benefits to HS/HT & Stakeholders	Who Will Make the Contact?
Postsecondary Educational Institutions	Community colleges, college and university offices (admissions and disability support services) • Postsecondary technical training schools • IT instructors • Vocational educators			
Employers	Business Leadership Networks (BLN) • State & Local Chambers of Commerce • Chapters of American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) and/or Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) • Employers involved in youth council for the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) • Industry associations (e.g., IT, Manufacturing) • Employers involved in School-to-Work partnerships • Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, Kiwanis, and other business groups, etc.			
Disability Community	State Rehabilitation Councils • Centers for Independent Living • Developmental Disabilities Groups • disability-specific organizations • youth leadership groups • Statewide Assistive Technology Project			
Community Leaders	Mayors' offices • Elected officials • Local foundations • Community-based organizations			

Roles/Functions of a HS/HT Advisory Body

This table outlines activities that will need to be addressed by an advisory body. These activities are not listed sequentially and an advisory body will often find it necessary to work on several activities simultaneously. Involving stakeholders in activities such as these will assist in getting the buy-in of individual members and in promoting collaboration within the membership. Although advisory body meetings are usually

scheduled only three or four times a year, members need to be aware that they could be called upon more often for specific tasks based on their individual expertise. While planning is the primary purpose of such a body, the membership can also assist in facilitating connections to and garnering the support of other potential stakeholders, including employers, as program implementation moves forward.

Activity	Sources of Applicable Information	Who Should Have Lead Responsibility?	Suggested Approach/Outcome
Determine potential pool of eligible youth by collecting and analyzing demographic data.	State Census and Labor Statistics Offices or other organizations responsible for profiling a state • WIA • Schools • State Department of Education • Schools • VR	Staff and/or advisory council members who know how to collect and analyze demographic data.	Advisory council members help identify “shared” consumers and determine who will receive highest priority within the HS/HT program.
Conduct or facilitate an environmental scan to determine the programs and services available to transition-age youth, including youth with disabilities.	Schools • Independent Living Centers • Youth Services Providers • VR • WIA Youth Council • Parent Information and Training Centers • Community-based organizations • Junior Achievement • Others	Advisory council members who know how to lead a program resource mapping effort.	Advisory council convenes program representatives to learn about HS/HT, discuss the programs and services available in the community, and explore how these programs and services can be made available to HS/HT students and/or become partners in the HS/HT initiative.
Determine potential sources of funding (begin with the best possibilities).	IDEA • VR • NCLB • Workforce Investment Boards (state and local) • WIA Youth Council • DD Act • AT Act • State Department of Education • Career and Technical Education • Employers • BLN • Foundations • Governor’s Committees • Federal, state, and local grant opportunities	Advisory council member(s) who can contribute or locate information on fiscal resources and services available in the state and locality for transition-age youth, including resources to support a resource mapping effort.	Advisory council identifies and prioritizes the funding sources that can most realistically support HS/HT.
Determine fiscal agent.	Review all current providers of related services to identify the ones that are most closely in line with the goals and objectives of HS/HT.	Advisory council subgroup should set core expectations for the fiscal agent. These expectations must be sufficiently flexible to ensure that reporting requirements and procurement rules are not burdensome.	Advisory council discusses HS/HT initiative with organizations/agencies determined to be in line with HS/HT goals and objectives to determine which is willing to serve as the fiscal agent for HS/HT.

Roles/Functions of a HS/HT Advisory Body *(continued)*

Activity	Sources of Applicable Information	Who Should Have Lead Responsibility?	Suggested Approach/Outcome
Determine the program design and develop a staffing structure. Identify desired outcomes and establish goals and measurable objectives, and timelines for achieving the goals and objectives.	The established goals for HS/HT outlined in this Guide can be used to start the discussion. However, the agreed upon goals need to be “owned” by the local community. Information obtained in the environmental scan can be used to identify measurable objectives that are in line with each of the five <i>Guideposts</i> and adequately address any outcomes required by each funding sources.	One or more persons on the advisory council should take the lead on identifying the desired outcomes and developing a goal/outcome grid for review and acceptance by the advisory council.	Advisory council members should come to agreement on the data to be collected and a data collection process (preferably that includes consumer satisfaction surveys). Establish a continuous improvement process that includes revisiting program goals based upon outcome data and feedback from youth and others involved in HS/HT (e.g., state agencies, schools, employers, etc.).
Develop a plan to market the HS/HT program to different target populations (students, parents, schools, state agencies, youth services providers, employers, etc.)	Review suggestions in Chapter 10 on how to develop a marketing plan. Hold a “kick-off” or open house each year to create increased public awareness of HS/HT and generate support and contacts.	Advisory council members with marketing expertise, HS/HT staff and/or a marketing advisory group comprised of key stakeholders—including HS/HT youth.	Expand the network of contacts, seek publicity wherever and whenever possible, and look for fiscal and in-kind contributions to support the marketing effort.
Develop a business plan and budget.	Check with other HS/HT sites for examples.	Core group and/or advisory council subgroup with business expertise.	Create a comprehensive business plan that includes a budget for implementation and addresses the issue of sustainability.
Approve business plan and budget.	N/A	All advisory council members.	A firm foundation on which to build the HS/HT site.
Establish a feedback loop to report progress on the goals, objectives, outcomes, and resource management of the program.	HS/HT Program Guide and partners involved in HS/HT.	Continuous improvement subgroup of advisory council.	Use a continuous improvement process, which will ensure the growth and stability of the HS/HT program/site.
Review and endorse the fiscal and human resource plan.	N/A	Staff, advisory council, and/or fiscal agent, as determined necessary.	Plan goes into action.

Community Resource Scanning Tool: *Insert Name of Local HS/HT Site*

(Note: This tool focuses on the components of the *Guidposts for Success* that HS/HT can potentially impact.)

Agency Name:				
Target Population:				
Contact Person:				
Fees required?				
Job Title:				
How Do Youth Enroll?				
Phone:				
Phone number to enroll youth:				
E-Mail:				
Are you able to provide accommodations?				
Geographic Area Served:				
Average time between application and receipt of services?				
Preparatory Experiences	Is this the responsibility of/offered by your organization?	Description/Frequency of Service	Number of youth receiving service annually?	How many youth have documented disabilities?
Standards Academic programs based on state standards and career and technical education programs based on professional and industry standards				
Learning Environments Small and safe learning environments with extra supports such as tutoring				
Educational Programming Programming that complements school curriculum				
Educational Curriculum Curriculum and program options based on universal design of school, work, and community-based learning experiences				
Transition Planning Using individual transition planning to drive personal instruction, and use strategies to continue the transition process post-schooling				

Community Resource Scanning Tool: Insert Name of Local HS/HT Site

Preparatory Experiences <i>(continued)</i>	Is this the responsibility of/offered by your organization?	Description/Frequency of Service	Number of youth receiving service annually?	How many youth have documented disabilities?
Accommodations Develop knowledge of reasonable accommodations that can be requested and controlled in educational settings, including assessment accommodations				
Qualified Staff Support from highly qualified transition support staff				
Work-Based Experiences	Is this the responsibility of/offered by your organization?	Description/Frequency of Service	Number of youth receiving service annually?	How many youth have documented disabilities?
Opportunity Awareness Career research, speakers, informational interviews, community mapping				
Career Assessment Formal and informal, hands-on and activity based, Internet-based				
Work-Readiness Skills Soft skills development, computer competency, job search skills, interviewing				
Industry Site Visits/Tours and Job Shadowing Individuals or groups				
Internships Paid or unpaid				

Community Resource Scanning Tool: Insert Name of Local HS/HT Site

Work-Based Experiences <i>(continued)</i>	Is this the responsibility of/offered by your organization?	Description/Frequency of Service	Number of youth receiving service annually?	How many youth have documented disabilities?
Entrepreneurship School-based enterprises, business plan development, and other entrepreneurial resources				
Benefits Planning Understanding the relationship between benefits planning and career choices				
Communicating Needs Learning to communicate disability-related work support and accommodation needs				
Supports/Accommodations Finding and securing appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations in education, training, and employment settings				
Youth Development and Leadership	Is this the responsibility of/offered by your organization?	Description/Frequency of Service	Number of youth receiving service annually?	How many youth have documented disabilities?
Mentoring Adult, individual, group, e-mentoring, individuals with and without disabilities				
Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Supportive peer group, pen pal, peer role models, job clubs				
Role Models Exposure to role models in a variety of contexts				

Community Resource Scanning Tool: Insert Name of Local HS/HT Site

Youth Development and Leadership <i>(continued)</i>	Is this the responsibility of/offered by your organization?	Description/Frequency of Service	Number of youth receiving service annually?	How many youth have documented disabilities?
Personal Growth Training in self-advocacy, conflict resolution, goal setting, transition planning				
Organizational/Community Leadership Opportunities Leadership training and experiences, service-learning, volunteer work				
Leadership/Self-Esteem Opportunities to exercise leadership and build self-esteem				
Disability History Exposure to disability history, culture and public policy, including knowledge of rights and responsibilities				
Connecting Activities	Is this the responsibility of/offered by your organization?	Description/Frequency of Service	Number of youth receiving service annually?	How many youth have documented disabilities?
Health/Mental Health Services				
Transportation/Orientation and Mobility Training Driver's education, public transportation, and alternatives				
Academic Tutoring Peer, adult, individual, group				

Community Resource Scanning Tool: Inset Name of Local HS/HT Site

Connecting Activities <i>(continued)</i>	Is this the responsibility of/offered by your organization?	Description/Frequency of Service	Number of youth receiving service annually?	How many youth have documented disabilities?
Workforce Preparation and Postsecondary Education College visits, disability student services, vocational rehabilitation, workforce programs				
Other Services and Opportunities Independent living, recreation, drug prevention, drop-out prevention, crime prevention				
Assistive Technology Consultation, awareness, acquisition				
Personal Assistance Services Attendants, readers, interpreters, other supports				
Benefits Planning Counseling Information on available benefits and their interrelationships				
Family Involvement & Supports	Is this the responsibility of/offered by your organization?	Description/Frequency of Service	Number of youth receiving service annually?	How many youth have documented disabilities?
Parental Involvement Facilitating parental involvement in transition planning				
Information On programs, services, supports, accommodations, employment, further education, community resources, rights and responsibilities under applicable laws				

Community Resource Scanning Tool: Inset Name of Local HS/HT Site

Family Involvement & Supports <i>(continued)</i>	Is this the responsibility of/offered by your organization?	Description/Frequency of Service	Number of youth receiving service annually?	How many youth have documented disabilities?
Support Networks Access to medical, professional, and peer support				
Disability Awareness Understanding a youth's disability and how it affects education, employment, and daily living options				
Rights and Responsibilities Under disability laws				
Individualized Planning Understanding how individualized planning tools can be used to achieve transition goals and objectives				

Would you be interested in participating or becoming a partner in the HS/HT program? ____ Yes ____ No ____ Not Sure
If so, please provide details as to the role you might assume.

Adapted from a form used by MiConnections, Michigan's High School/High Tech Program.

EXHIBIT 7.6

Sample Memorandum of Understanding Between

(entity administering the state infrastructure for HS/HT)

AND

(entity housing the local HS/HT site)

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is entered into between

(name and address of the entity administering the state infrastructure for HS/HT)

and

(name and address of the entity housing the local HS/HT site),

as a site coordinating entity for a local HS/HT site.

High School/High Tech (HS/HT) is a community-based transition and enrichment initiative for high school students with disabilities. The program is designed to expose such students to career opportunities and provide activities that will interest students in careers in science, technology, engineering, and math fields (the STEM careers), and in pursuing higher education. The overall goal of HS/HT is to improve the graduation rate of youth with disabilities and increase their rate of participation in postsecondary education and employment (particularly in the STEM careers) following high school.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARTIES

The Local Site will:

1. Scope of Work

- A. Operate a HS/HT program and provide activities in accordance with all five components of the Guideposts for Success, which was produced by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth), in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, and is incorporated by reference into this MOU. The components include (1) School-Based Preparatory Experiences, (2) Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences, (3) Youth Development and Leadership Activities, (4) Connecting Activities, and (5) Family Involvement and Supports.
- B. Maintain the following documents, completed and appropriately signed, on file for each participant: (1) HS/HT application, (2) signed permission (if necessary) for student to participate in the program, (3) media release form, and (4) consent to share information among VR, the local school system and the Site (if different from the school system). (Note: Blank copies of these forms should be included as exhibits or attachments to the MOU.)
- C. Recruit students with disabilities and determine student eligibility, based on the following criteria: (1) secondary school students with disabilities in grades 8-12, and (2) between the ages of 14 and 24, in accordance with the Site's criteria. (Note: State programs or local sites may have additional or slightly different criteria.)

2. Staffing

(Note: The following responsibilities will vary depending on the nature of the relationship between the entity administering the state infrastructure and the local site.)

The local coordinator agrees to

- dedicate _____ hours a week/month to HS/HT;
- report to _____ with regard to the execution of his/her HS/HT duties;
- participate in _____ (monthly/quarterly) conference calls with the state coordinator and other local coordinators, and to participate in _____ (e.g., an orientation training, annual conferences or trainings, etc.); and
- participate in an annual review of his/her work with regard to HS/HT, to be undertaken by the state coordinator in conjunction with _____ (e.g., the local coordinators' immediate supervisor).

3. Reporting:

- A. Collect demographic data on participating youth and submit quarterly statistical, progress and narrative reports to the State HS/HT Coordinator, in the format and with the content required by the State Coordinator. (Note: Minimum requirement for demographic data may be included here or reporting forms may be included as exhibits or attachments.) This information is to be provided no later than ten (10) working days following the end of each quarter (i.e., September 30, December 31, March 31, and June 30).
- B. Provide additional data about youth participating in specific program activities, and narrative information regarding activities and successes (e.g., interim and final outcomes, including graduation from high school, entry into postsecondary education, and obtaining employment) and photographs (if available), to the State Coordinator for inclusion in the HS/HT annual report. These materials are to be provided no later than fifteen (15) working days following the end of the fiscal year (i.e., June 30 or September 30). Original information and photographs will not be returned to the site. (Note: Photographs and success stories that identify participating youth must be accompanied by a signed release form before they can be used.)

4. Interagency Collaboration/Cooperation

- A. Work with local educational entities and local vocational rehabilitation offices to assure efficient and appropriate reciprocal referrals of participating youth between the local site and these entities.
- B. Demonstrate active engagement with local Youth Councils, area Chambers of Commerce, local postsecondary institutions, local business/employer organizations, and other entities in the local area, as appropriate.

5. Financial Management (optional depending on funding mechanism)

- A. Request funding from _____ (name of entity administering the state infrastructure for HS/HT), using correct forms and submitting required follow-up information. [Note: Applicable forms and description of follow-up information should be included as an exhibit or attachment.]
- B. The site shall establish a separate account for funds received under this agreement and submit quarterly reports detailing income and expenditures.
- C. Purchase all equipment and services costing more than \$_____ on a competitive bid basis and use comparison shopping to purchase equipment and services costing less than \$_____. [Note: This section may spell out the specifics of the competitive bidding process. It may also address ultimate ownership of equipment costing more than \$_____.]
- D. Restrictions: HS/HT funds may not be used to purchase vehicles or real property or to finance building improvements.

6. Miscellaneous (optional)

- A. Establish and convene a local Advisory Board consisting of local and state partners. Upon selection of Advisory Board, names of the members will be submitted to the State HS/HT Coordinator.

EXHIBIT 7.6 (CONTINUED)

B. Establish a local website that is fully accessible, reflective of the five components of the *Guideposts for Success*, and is linked to the statewide accessible HS/HT website.

State HS/HT staff will:

- Provide technical assistance and support to the Site, as requested.
- Sponsor conferences and training programs for local site coordinators.
- Develop partners and partnerships at the state and national level to facilitate local implementation of HS/HT.
- Maintain state leadership/advisory involvement.
- Communicate and collaborate with _____ (e.g., Statewide Assistive Technology Project, State Rehabilitation Council, State Independent Living Council, postsecondary institutions, etc.).
- Develop and provide state-level student activities.
- Sponsor Annual Youth Leadership Forum for students. (Optional.)
- Sponsor or co-sponsor National Disability Mentoring Day. (Optional.)

NON-DISCRIMINATION: The parties agree to comply with applicable federal and state laws and regulations regarding nondiscrimination in employment practices, based on political affiliation, religion, race, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age or national origin. Furthermore, no individual shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination, on any such basis, under any program or activity.

INDEMNIFICATION: The Site agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the State of _____, and _____ (name of entity administering the state infrastructure for HS/HT), and its employees, against any and all liability claims and costs for injury to any person or property arising from the service, operation or performance of tasks associated with this MOU, resulting in whole or in part from the negligent acts or fault of the Site, or any employee, subcontractor, or other agent or representative of the Site.

DURATION AND TERMINATION: This MOU is effective on the date signed by both parties. This agreement may be renewed annually, with written notice provided by _____ (name of entity administering the state infrastructure for HS/HT) and written confirmation by the Site, no later than ten (10) days prior to the annual renewal date. Either party may terminate this agreement, at any time, with sixty (60) days written notice to the other party.

MODIFICATION: This MOU may be modified, with the written agreement of both parties, at any time.

By their signatures below, the parties enter into this MOU.

State Infrastructure:

(State HS/HT Coordinator or representative of the entity administering the state infrastructure)

Title: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Agency Name: _____ Date: _____

Local Site:

(Name of Local Coordinator or representative of entity housing the local site)

Title: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Agency Name: _____ Date: _____

Adapted from agreements used by HS/HT in Florida, Georgia, and Maryland.

Sample Media Release Form

High School/High Tech Consent for Media Use

I, _____, hereby give permission to the _____ High School/High Tech Program to photograph me, and to use audio and/or video equipment to record my participation in program activities. I understand that print and visual media may wish to distribute information regarding my participation in the program.

It is understood that this material will be used only for educational purposes or to promote the High School/High Tech Program.

Student Name (print)

Student Signature

Date

Parent's Signature (if student is under 18 year of age)

Date

Sample HS/HT Enrollment/Permission Form

HS/HT Site: _____

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Complete Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail: _____

Gender: (circle one) Male Female Date of Birth: _____

Grade: _____ Disability: _____

High School: _____

Guidance Counselor: _____

Year of Graduation: _____

I have (circle one): an IEP a 504 Plan

Current Program Involvement (circle all that apply):

VR WIA Youth Jobs for Graduates Career Technical Education Other: _____

Parent/Guardian Information:

Name: _____ Relationship to Student: _____

Complete Address: _____

Phone: (home) _____ (work) _____ (cell) _____

E-mail: _____

Permission

I have chosen to participate in all program activities of High School/High Tech, including field trips.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

I hereby approve of this student's participation in all program activities of HS/HT, including field trips, and will not hold HS/HT or any persons connected with the activities, liable in case of an accident.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Note: Many HS/HT programs include additional information on their enrollment forms, addressing such things as race/ethnicity, the need for assistive technology, vocational interests, etc. While these forms may vary, the signed permission to participate in HS/HT is a critically important part of all enrollment forms.

EXHIBIT 7.9

Sample Release of Information Form

By signing and dating this release of information, I allow the persons or agencies listed below to share specific information, as checked, about my son's/daughter's history. I understand that this is a cooperative effort by agencies involved to share information that will lead to better utilization of community resources and better cooperation amongst agencies to best meet my son's/daughter's needs.

The agencies or agency representatives who are authorized to share information about my son/daughter are

Name	Address	Date
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

The information to be released includes:

_____ History	_____ Diagnosis	_____ Performance
_____ Psychological Assessment	_____ Summary of Treatment	_____ School Evaluation
_____ Lab Work	_____ Medications	_____ Other (specify)
_____ Psychiatric Evaluation	_____ Legal issues/concerns	_____

This information is to be released solely for the purpose of

This consent to release is valid for one year from the date it was signed, or until otherwise specified.

Specify date, event, or condition on which permission will expire:

I understand that at any time between the time of signing and the expiration date listed above I have the right to revoke this consent.

Student Name	Date of Birth	
Address		
City	State	Zip Code
Student Signature	Date	
Witness	Date	
Witness Position		
Signature of Guardian or Responsible Party (if student is under legal age)	Date	
Guardian/Responsible Party Relationship to Student		

Sample contributed by Flint Hills Special Education Cooperative.



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CHAPTER 8:

Resources to Sustain a HS/HT Program

This chapter addresses the resources needed to plan, initiate, implement, and sustain a HS/HT program and provides tips on how to plan a HS/HT budget and where to look to secure resources to fund the initiative. It stresses the importance of developing a strategic plan to ensure the sustainability of a HS/HT program. The HS/HT program model offers significant flexibility in how the program is supported, administered, and locally implemented. This flexibility is critically important to capitalizing on existing resources at the national, state, and local levels.

The resources needed to establish and operate HS/HT programs have come from a variety of places, including

- grants (public and private),
- federally-funded programs,
- in-kind donations,
- state legislatures, and
- other opportunities that have presented themselves!

The Necessity: Blending and Braiding of Resources and Establishing Partnerships

The success of initiatives, such as HS/HT, designed to improve the coordination and impact of multiple youth-serving organizations depends on strategies that allow funds and resources to be used in flexible, coordinated, and sustainable ways. Strategies that

encourage cross-systems collaboration and promote the blending and braiding of resources have proven to be the most successful in designing a comprehensive HS/HT program that addresses all of the *Guideposts* and supports significant program expansion through local implementation.

Neither schools, nor workforce investment programs, human service agencies, or any other single system alone can pay for and provide the array of services needed to effectively meet the often complex needs of youth with disabilities. When collectively pooled, however, these resources can produce positive outcomes for youth, well beyond the scope of what any single system can hope to mobilize on its own (National Governors Association, 2004).

Before discussing budgeting and funding strategies, it is important to develop a concept of blending and braiding resources. Successful blending and braiding funding strategies require knowledge of eligibility criteria, allowable services, priorities of potential grantors, and more. As with all funding arrangements, the funder's objectives have to be met.

"Blended funding" pools dollars from multiple sources and combines the funds making the sources of the money in some ways indistinguishable. At the point of service delivery (i.e., the actual program site), this may necessitate asking the state government to request waivers for exemption from specific federal

legislative and/or regulatory requirements. However, this is not always a successful strategy. A more successful approach to blending funds from multiple sources at the state level can be found through the state “set-asides” for administrative, research, and development, and for training in all federal grant-in-aid programs. Funding to support a HS/HT state infrastructure, including staffing to facilitate collaboration, coordination, program planning, and staff development functions, all fit within the allowable activities in these set-asides. The demonstrated ability of the HS/HT program model to positively impact post-school outcomes for transition-age youth with disabilities can be a strong motivator for blending resources.

Propose an interagency agreement to multiple state agencies to support full-time dedicated staff and other costs such as training, marketing, and monitoring. Do so by using a modest amount of funds from each of the state set-asides and possibly by tapping their staffing line item as well.

“**Braiding**” is a funding and resource allocation strategy that taps into existing categorical funding streams and uses them to support unified initiatives in as flexible and integrated a manner as possible. Unlike blended funding, the funding streams in a braided funding strategy remain visible and are used in common to produce greater strength, efficiency, and/or effectiveness. Under a braiding strategy, participating agencies can continue to closely track the use of funds in such a manner as to address the reporting requirements and accountability measures of the state or federal agencies administering the funds. As a result, a strategy that relies on braided funding requires significant attention to administrative issues. This generally requires continued accountability for assessing services and adherence to mandated data collection and reporting requirements. In some instances it necessitates the delineation of specific arrangements for the payment of fees to collaborating agencies.

Blending and braiding funding strategies are not mutually exclusive and can work to complement and reinforce each other. Both strategies require

collaboration, coordination, and cooperation across multiple programs, agencies, and systems. The level of collaboration and coordination is not easily achieved unless there is some mechanism to facilitate it, such as an organization acting as an intermediary between the involved agency and service system partners. In localities throughout the country, HS/HT is that intermediary organization.

Exhibit 8.1, “Activities to Facilitate the Blending and/or Braiding of Existing Resources,” highlights some of the activities that HS/HT coordinators can undertake at the state and/or local levels to assist stakeholders in envisioning and potentially adopting funding strategies that rely on the blending and/or braiding of resources.

Support Comes in Many Forms

It takes time and staffing resources to approach different agencies and organizations to solicit support to sustain a HS/HT program. The programs that have been most successful in this regard have had full-time staff at the state level who are resourceful, creative, flexible, and persistent. These people have been strategic about approaching a variety of agencies and programs to talk about the benefits of HS/HT and have been able to translate the benefits of HS/HT into benefits that are valued by these different agencies and programs.

Ultimately, the mix of funding and resources that will sustain a particular HS/HT program will depend on

- the partners of the programs and what they have to offer,
- the organization serving as the fiscal agent for HS/HT,
- the state entity heading the state infrastructure development effort (if different than the fiscal agent),
- the organizations implementing the program on the local level, and
- the staffing structure at both the state and local levels.

Support for HS/HT programs comes in many forms. In addition to the financial support provided by grants and the blending and braiding of funding sources,

programs also rely on many forms of in-kind support. The state agencies heading the state infrastructure for HS/HT have provided significant in-kind contributions to support the program, including donated office space, use of supplies and equipment, fiscal and administrative staff support, telephone, and Internet services, etc.

Similar in-kind support is also found at the local level, as most local sites look to the agency housing the site and/or to local partnerships to support implementation. In addition to the types of in-kind support typically provided at the state level, local partnerships often provide additional in-kind support such as transportation services for youth. The local coordinator's time may also be made available through in-kind support. HS/HT programs may also receive support in the form of free or low-cost services that are made available to youth. Based on the outcomes of community resource mapping exercises, some local sites develop referral mechanisms (both formal and informal) to help youth access services and supports within the community. Many local HS/HT sites rely on local partnerships to support specific program activities (e.g., internships) and special events (e.g., kick-off events and employer appreciation programs).

Budgeting for the State Infrastructure for HS/HT

HS/HT programs with the state infrastructure to support local implementation have taken different approaches to state-level staffing. Some employ minimal part-time staff, while others employ one or two full-time people or a combination of full- and part-time staff. Programs supported by at least one full-time person at the state level, plus some part-time administrative and content advisors, have had the most success in facilitating program expansion and in securing resources from multiple sources to support long-term sustainability.

The importance of having a full-time person at the state level becomes evident when you consider the diverse roles and functions that must be assumed by the state coordinator (see Chapter 7). Even when a full-time position is dedicated to HS/HT, additional staff with specific expertise (e.g., fiscal management, training,

program evaluation, data collection, reporting, etc.) may be needed at the state level. Such part-time positions may be paid positions or provided as in-kind support. When local implementation expands significantly throughout the state, the exponential expansion of the state coordinator's duties will likely necessitate more than one full-time position at the state level.

Table 8.1 provides a tool that can be used to estimate the annual budget for the state infrastructure for a HS/HT program. The first column lists the major categories of expenses associated with supporting a state infrastructure. In designating staffing, remember to estimate the percentage of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff positions needed to support specific activities. The roles and responsibilities of the state coordinator for HS/HT outlined in Chapter 7 should be helpful to estimate the percentage FTEs needed. Remember, activities such as budgeting/fiscal management, curriculum development, conducting program evaluation, data collection and reporting, and designing, developing, and maintaining a website may be the responsibility of the state coordinator, or may require staff support with expertise in those areas. The second column indicates the estimated costs associated with the different categories of expenses, both actual and in-kind. The third column can be used to identify potential sources of funding and in-kind support for each of the categories of expenses. In some situations, the annual budget for the state infrastructure will change significantly from year to year, particularly if the program is successful in expanding to new localities throughout the state.



TABLE 8.1

Budget Worksheet—State Infrastructure for HS/HT

FUNCTION	AMOUNT/ IN-KIND	POTENTIAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT
Personnel (percentage FTEs), including —state coordinator and/or state director —administrative support staff —staff with specific expertise (e.g., fiscal management, program evaluation, marketing, data collection/reporting, etc.)		
Office space to house state-level staff		
Equipment and supplies		
Communications (telephone, fax, Internet, postage)		
Website		
Transportation for staff to —conduct visits to local sites —participate in meetings/conferences —meet with partners/potential partners, service providers, representatives of business and industry, potential funders, etc.		
Curriculum development (i.e., to aid local sites)		
Liability insurance		
Training for local coordinators		
Program evaluation, data collection, reporting		
Miscellaneous expenses (e.g., conference registration fees)		



Budgeting for a Local HS/HT Site

From locality to locality, the organizations housing local HS/HT sites, the mix of collaborating partners, the staffing structure, and in some cases, the mix of services and activities is a function of many different factors. Two examples from the ODEP grantees demonstrate this diversity.

Tech-Now, Inc. in Oklahoma recruits site instructors and aides primarily through the school system and pays each instructor and aide a set stipend for implementing a standardized HS/HT curriculum which is undertaken through a specific number of 90-minute weekly sessions throughout the year. These weekly sessions are supplemented with a statewide competition in the spring and a week-long summer institute.

Florida HS/HT uses a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify its local sites. The RFP process is conducted by The Able Trust, the state lead for HS/HT. When the Florida State Legislature appropriated funds to support the expansion of HS/HT to new sites throughout the state, the RFP process was conducted under the direction of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the state agency that functions as the fiscal agent for these state-appropriated funds.

Many local HS/HT sites assume the responsibility to implement activities and curriculum that address every category and most elements of the *Guideposts for Success*. However, some local sites conduct community resource mapping exercises to identify elements of the *Guideposts* that are already available to students with disabilities through other agencies and programs. This information is then used to design HS/HT activities and curriculum that fill in the gaps where elements of the *Guideposts* are not being addressed. Obviously, the approach that is taken will have implications for establishing the budget for a local HS/HT site.

The experiences of HS/HT programs around the country indicate that two aspects of local implementation have significant cost implications: transportation and internships. Securing transportation for students to participate in regularly scheduled meetings, special events, conferences, recreational activities, industry site visits, job shadowing, and internships is one of the biggest challenges facing

HS/HT programs. Planning, executing, and monitoring the internship component of a HS/HT program require both a significant commitment of staff time and program resources.

A successful internship program requires a significant commitment of time and program resources, including

- identifying local employers who are willing to sponsor HS/HT students as interns;
- developing materials (e.g., a handbook, agreements, medical release forms, etc.) to be used by youth participating in internships;
- screening participating youth to ensure a good match between the student and an employer offering an internship;
- ensuring the interested youth have completed any pre-requisites (e.g., participation in an internship orientation program) prior to participation;
- arranging for interested youth to interview with employers;
- assisting students in making the logistical arrangements to participate in an internship;
- monitoring each internship to make sure the needs of both the intern and the employer are being met and being available to intervene if issues arise;
- securing commitments from employers to pay salaries or stipends to HS/HT interns or finding the funding to pay a salary or stipend to youth; and
- dealing with the liability issues associated with high school students participating in internships. (Note: Liability laws and coverage will vary across different jurisdictions, and from company to company depending on the type of work. Consequently, local coordinators will have to research these issues locally.)

Many of the considerations for local implementation outlined in Chapter 7 will also have implications for establishing a budget for a local HS/HT site. It is important to focus on the factors that have cost implications and use the chart in Table 8.2 to estimate the local budget.

TABLE 8.2

Budget Worksheet—Local Site Development

FUNCTION	AMOUNT/ IN-KIND	POTENTIAL SOURCES
Personnel (percentage FTEs), including —local coordinator(s)/site instructor(s) —aide(s) (if used) —support staff —staff with specific expertise (e.g., fiscal management, data collection, etc.)		
Office space to house the local staff Meeting space for program activities		
Equipment (computers and other types of technology for use by staff and youth)		
Communications (telephone, fax, Internet, postage)		
Materials, supplies, printing, copying, etc.		
Assistive technology and reasonable accommodations for participating youth		
Website (if applicable)		
Transportation for youth to participate in —regularly scheduled HS/HT meetings —job shadowing opportunities, industry site visits, special activities/events, etc. —internships (if provided by program)		
Transportation for local staff to —meet with partners/potential partners, school personnel, service providers, representatives of business and industry, etc. —participate in training programs and conferences.		
Curriculum development (if applicable)		
Liability insurance		
Stipends for students (e.g., paid internships)		
Data collection and reporting		
Miscellaneous expenses (e.g., conference registration fees)		

Funding Strategies

An important step in developing a sustainable funding strategy is to bring together program partners, potential partners, and interested stakeholders to brainstorm on different funding opportunities and the basic framework of the overall strategy. A small subgroup of these people should be designated to take responsibility for developing a detailed strategy to secure funding and resources to support the state infrastructure for HS/HT and/or to support local implementation. However, the involvement of the

larger group does not end here. Each partner and stakeholder should be asked to continuously be on the look out for funding opportunities that might support a HS/HT initiative or support individual program components such as tutoring, career assessments, mentoring, internships, etc.

Once an outline for a specific sustainability strategy has been developed and the planning group has brainstormed a list of potential funding sources, it is time to narrow down the options to identify those that are the most likely to produce positive results. Make

sure the sources included in this priority list are willing to fund projects in the designated geographic area. Look at descriptions of any potential funding sources and explore their funding track records. The goal is to identify funding sources such as foundations that have supported projects similar to HS/HT and that award the type of support the project is seeking (e.g., support for programs that reduce the dropout rate). However, do not overlook opportunities that may necessitate putting a particular twist on the HS/HT program model to bring it in line with the objectives of a particular funding source.

Create a prospect list based on your research and your program's needs. Take time to identify an appropriate strategy for approaching each potential funding source on the list. In some cases, you will be responding to an announcement of availability of funding. In other cases, you may be submitting unsolicited proposals.

Be Positioned to Take Advantage of Grant Opportunities

Another important step in any strategy to sustain a HS/HT program is to draft a generic grant proposal that can later be modified and used by both state and local coordinators to respond to different funding opportunities. In developing a generic grant proposal you will need to think through and address a variety of things that are common to most funding announcements. Exhibit 8.2 provides information on the most common elements of a grant proposal, and includes comments specific to how you might approach developing a generic grant proposal.

When responding to grant opportunities, timing is almost always critically important. The response time for grant announcements varies from a few weeks to unspecified dates or open submission. Even in our electronic age, it can take weeks before the word on a related grant opportunity reaches a HS/HT program. If you have a generic proposal on file, you can respond to a grant announcement even when the timeframe is short. In many cases, the state coordinator will assume responsibility for drafting a generic grant proposal that can be used by local sites when needed.

Responding to Specific Grant Opportunities

Increasingly states are establishing interagency

initiatives focusing on youth. These initiatives vary in their scope but all relate to finding more effective ways to support at-risk youth. Many are increasingly addressing the reality that youth with disabilities are overrepresented as wards of the state through the juvenile justice and child welfare systems and that the transition period is particularly problematic. HS/HT programs are well-positioned to be involved in assisting these initiatives.

When actually responding to an announcement of availability of funding, you will need to tailor the generic proposal to address specific requirements in the announcement. In many cases, it is helpful to gather additional background information on the entity sponsoring the competition and on the types of proposals that have been funded in the past.

To the extent that you can, use specific terminology found in the grant announcement. If the announcement talks about working with high school students, use this term rather than another such as transition-age youth. If the announcement talks about enhancing achievement, use this term and then describe how HS/HT enhances student achievement in terms of advancing to the next grade, increasing grade point averages, graduating from high school with a regular diploma, and entering postsecondary education.

Read the grant announcement carefully to make sure you have been thoughtful and thorough in responding to each item and addressing all applicable requirements (e.g., deadlines for submission, page limits, formatting, supporting information such as resumes and letters of support, etc.).

Keep in mind, the HS/HT program model is extremely adaptable and can be an effective strategy in serving any number of at-risk populations. Don't be afraid to draft a proposal that is creative in addressing the initiative being funded and in describing how the staff implementing HS/HT is uniquely qualified to work with the population being targeted. Based on the flexibility found within HS/HT, some programs have been successful in supplementing their HS/HT activities and curriculum with activities designed specifically to address the goals and objectives of a grant announcement that would not typically be considered as a funding source for HS/HT.

When local WIA Youth funds in Gainesville were designated for teen pregnancy prevention programs, Florida HS/HT partnered with the University of Florida’s Rehabilitation Counseling Center and drafted a proposal that incorporated a teen pregnancy prevention component into the HS/HT curriculum and expanded the outreach strategies to target young girls at risk of getting pregnant. The proposal was funded and provided significant support for one of the Gainesville sites.

Favorable Grantee Characteristics

Grant makers (governmental and private) look for a variety of things when reviewing grant proposals. In addition to looking for proposals that respond specifically to the things spelled out in the grant announcement, they also may consider the following criteria:

- Do the goals and objectives of the grant seeker fit the grant maker’s mission? A grant reviewer will immediately reject any proposal that is not in line with the mission of the funding source and the goals and objectives of the grant announcement.
- Is the organization applying for the grant well known in its community/state and is it addressing an existing need within the community/state?
- Does the applicant have a history of funding by other sources, governmental or private?
- Has the applicant demonstrated responsible fiscal management?
- Does the applicant have a strong board of directors or advisory body?
- Does the applicant have access to a cadre of committed volunteers?
- Has the applicant demonstrated that it has a competent staff with appropriate expertise to carry out the proposed project?
- Is the proposed project budget realistic and well-planned?

Exhibit 8.3 provides a list of common reasons why private sector proposals are declined.

Public Funding—Federal

Several federal laws authorize specific programs that provide services and supports for transition-age youth, including some targeted for youth with disabilities. Even when a federally-funded program targets youth with no mention of youth with disabilities, they have a responsibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to make their services and supports available to individuals with disabilities as a condition of the receipt of federal funding. In addition, some federally-funded programs that provide services and supports for adults with disabilities are often able to serve transition-age youth as an approach to early intervention for adults. Many of the laws authorizing such programs include discretionary authority to fund demonstration projects and promising practices in service delivery. HS/HT programs should always be on the look out for announcements related to the use of these discretionary funds.

Obviously, each federally-funded program has different purposes, supports different services, imposes different eligibility requirements, and is subjected to different data collection and reporting requirements. In addition, different federal laws often include different definitions for the same basic terms such as “disability,” “individual with a disability,” and “youth.” There are even differences in how “employment” is defined as an intended outcome of a federally-funded program. It is important to note, however, that federal funding may never be used for lobbying or fundraising.

Table 8.3 outlines the youth eligibility requirements that apply to selected federally-funded programs and services. Additional details regarding the federal laws authorizing some of the programs as well as other federally-funded programs can be found on the NCWD/Youth website by checking out the “Legislation” section of the “Resources and Publications” page.

TABLE 8.3

Age Requirements for Selected Federally-Funded Programs

PROGRAM	AGE					
	14	16	18	19	21	24
HS/HT	Eligibility starts.					Eligibility ends.
IDEA <i>Note: Eligibility can start as early as birth, but transition services are required at age 16.</i>	Transition planning “may” start at age 14.	Transition plans are required at age 16.			Services stop at age 21 unless specified otherwise in State law.	
WIA	Services start—local youth programs.	Eligible for Job Corps.	Eligible youth ages 18-21 may be concurrently enrolled in adult and youth activities.		Eligibility for most youth services ends.	Eligibility for Job Corps ends at age 24. There is no age limitation for people with disabilities
Ticket to Work			Individuals determined eligible for SSI or SSDI will receive a ticket.			Eligibility for the Ticket program extends to age 64.
Vocational Rehabilitation No firm legislative age trigger	Although most VR agencies do not outreach to youth prior to their junior or senior year in high school, youth may receive vocational assessment, guidance and counseling services, and selected other services if they apply for and are determined eligible for services prior to this.			Additional services and supports are generally available post high school (ages 19-22) for eligible individuals.		

Of the programs listed in Table 8.3, the public VR program has provided the most support for HS/HT to date. In addition to the types of in-kind support described in Chapter 7, VR has also been the primary source of funding for HS/HT in two states (Georgia and South Carolina) and the VR agencies in Maryland, Michigan and Ohio were instrumental in providing the funding to keep HS/HT going after their ODEP grants ended.

When the ODEP funding for Georgia HS/HT ended, the program became a permanent program within the Georgia Department of Labor (GADOL), under the direction of Vocational Rehabilitation, which reports to the Division of Rehabilitation Services. GADOL funds support the state coordinator’s salary, a consultant’s

fee, and one contract person responsible for providing administrative support and technical assistance to the state coordinator and the HS/HT State Advisory Board. The South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD) is the first VR agency to move forward and implement HS/HT on a statewide basis without receiving a grant from any source outside of the state. The primary source of funding for HS/HT in SC is a grant from the Department of Commerce which houses the WIA youth-related program, which is combined with funds from SCVRD. All local HS/HT sites in SC, with the exception of one, are operated out of area SCVRD offices. With the goal of having a HS/HT Employment Specialist housed in all area offices and sub-offices of SCVRD, the HS/HT program has expanded quickly to sites throughout the state.

The state VR agencies in Maryland, Michigan, Ohio and Oklahoma have also explored ways to provide support to continue HS/HT beyond the ODEP funding. In Maryland and Oklahoma, HS/HT sites have been approved as vendors of specific types of VR services for which VR will pay a fee-for-service for participating HS/HT youth. The Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) and the Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) have pooled funds to support the state coordinator's position beyond the ODEP grant period. In Ohio, the Rehabilitation Services Commission (RSC) provided interim support to the local sites to keep them in operation for one year beyond the ODEP funding while they explored other ways to sustain the HS/HT program.

The Workforce Investment Act is another potential source of support for a HS/HT program. Several HS/HT programs have leveraged support from regional and local Workforce Investment Boards. For example, the Workforce Development Board of Okaloosa and Walton Counties in Florida administers a HS/HT Department of Juvenile Justice Re-entry Program. The Georgia HS/HT program was successful in getting HS/HT students included in the Georgia Department of Labor's WIA Summer Youth Program, which had over \$1 million in funding for 2006. Youth participating in the program are co-enrolled in WIA, VR, and HS/HT, with shared case management and a written agreement outlining what each program agrees to do. HS/HT was allotted 75 slots for the summer intern program. When more than 110 students expressed an interest, additional slots were given to HS/HT to allow all interested youth the opportunity to participate. A few HS/HT students were offered jobs following the internship.

Another source of federal funding not to be overlooked is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Title I funds are targeted for students who are low achieving or at risk of not meeting state academic standards and for school-wide programs in schools where not less than forty percent of the students are from low-income families. However, for a school to receive Title I funds, it must be identified as needing improvement based on its failure to meet the state's test score targets and other indicators of adequately yearly progress for two or more consecutive years. Among other things, Title I funds may be used for "supplemental educational

services," which are defined as "tutoring and other supplemental academic enrichment services that are in addition to instruction, provided during the school day, and are of high quality, research-based, and specifically designed to increase the academic achievement of eligible children on required academic assessments and to attain proficiency in meeting the State's academic achievement standards." These services may be offered through public- or private-sector providers that are approved by the state.

There are numerous other federal laws that authorize programs that provide assistance to individuals with disabilities regardless of age that could potentially support a HS/HT initiative or specific components of a HS/HT program. The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act funds state Councils on Developmental Disabilities (CDDs) that support many different projects and activities addressing the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities in the state. Although individuals of all ages are eligible for the programs and services supported by CDDs, eligibility is limited to individuals who experienced the onset of a disability prior to the age of 22 and whose disability resulted in three or more functional limitations. CDDs fund many different initiatives to support this population. The Oklahoma HS/HT program got its start with a five-year grant from the state CDD.

The Assistive Technology Act is another source of federal funding that is not age-specific or disability specific. In the 2004 reauthorization of the AT Act, Statewide AT Projects were required to focus some of their efforts on coordination of and collaboration with state agencies to facilitate access to assistive technology for transition-age youth. As a result, every Statewide AT Project is now supporting some activity or activities related to transition-age youth.

For more information on federal laws and programs that might be potential sources of funding for specific services and supports outlined in the *Guideposts for Success*, check out the online resources described below.

Online Resources to Consider

Finding Funding: A Guide to Federal Sources for Youth Programs is a comprehensive resource

developed by the Finance Project that outlines strategies for gaining access to and using federal funds, which provides information on 103 funding sources offering supports for youth programs. These programs support a wide range of services and activities for youth that are provided by large and small and public and private organization in diverse settings. Visit http://www.financeproject.org/publications/finding_funding_PM.pdf.

The Guide to Partnership Development for Transition-Age Youth is an online resource that is being developed by NCWD/Youth to assist programs such as HS/HT in securing federal funding to sustain different elements of the program. This valuable resource will crosswalk each component of the *Guideposts* with specific legislative and regulatory provisions found in numerous federal laws to identify potential sources of funding for those specific services and activities. The Guide will be available online at http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/partnership_Guides/.

State and Local Funding

As you explore different ways to support your HS/HT program, don't forget to consider state and local funding. When looking at funding from the State Department of Education (SDE), it is important to remember that less than ten percent of education funding comes from the federal government. The remainder is state and local funds.

Several HS/HT programs have been successful in securing funding from the SDE. Tech-Now in Oklahoma received \$173,000 from the SDE to support HS/HT during the 2005-2006 school year. The SDE increased their support to \$200,000 for the 2006-2007 school year. Both Colorado HS/HT and MiConnections have used discretionary funds from the SDE to support local HS/HT sites. However, since discretionary funds are generally time-limited, they are not a good resource to sustain a HS/HT program over time.

In most states, the state legislature sets aside funds within the state budget each year to support specific initiatives, including some youth initiatives and some transition initiatives. You will want to do some research

to see if any such initiatives exist in your state and to determine if they have the potential to support a HS/HT program or specific components of the program. Working in partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Florida HS/HT program was successful in getting the state legislature to appropriate \$500,000 from the state budget in FYs 2006, 2007 and 2008 to support HS/HT. These funds were established as a line item within DVR's annual budget and are used to expand local implementation of HS/HT throughout Florida.

When exploring support for local HS/HT sites, don't overlook local programs that may be willing to support specific components of the HS/HT program or specific types of activities such as small scholarships to reward participating youth for outstanding achievement. Consider approaching your local school board, your local community action program, local volunteer programs, etc. While they may not be able to provide significant financial support, small financial contributions help and other types of support, such as use of a volunteer network, may be available.

Private Funding Resources

There are many potential sources of private sector funding that could be sought to support a HS/HT program, e.g., through independent private foundations, community foundations, corporate philanthropy, and service clubs.

Independent Private Foundations are non-governmental, nonprofit organizations with a principle fund or endowment. The foundation is managed by its own trustees and directors to maintain or increase charitable, educational, religious, or other activities serving the public good. Usually, an independent private foundation awards grants, most often to nonprofit organizations, based on announcements soliciting proposals addressing specific initiatives (e.g., programs that increase the number of females pursuing engineering degrees, programs that encourage minorities to enter the STEM careers, programs that decrease the dropout rate, etc.).

The National Science Foundation (NSF) provided funding to support implementation of several of the early HS/HT programs. However, since NSF funds are targeted to support new innovations, they are not a potential source of ongoing funding for a HS/HT program. Consequently, when NSF announced the availability of grants to support initiatives that promoted an increased interest in the STEM careers among middle school students, Tech-Now in Oklahoma submitted an application that proposed to replicate the HS/HT program model in several middle schools. NSF awarded \$103,000 to Tech-Now to implement this innovative program in six middle schools throughout the state.

Community Foundations make funding available to support projects in a defined geographic area. They pool the resources of many donors and also provide a venue to assist smaller foundations in managing their assets and allocating their funds. Community foundations usually have a broad scope and local community focus. Funding is usually granted based on the needs of the local community, which can evolve over time, resulting in changes in the types of programs that are awarded grants over time.

Corporate Philanthropy can be particularly important to HS/HT because of the recent emphasis on the STEM careers. While these philanthropic programs often rely on their governing boards or endowment committees to make funding decisions, some rely on employee committees and local executives to make such decisions. HS/HT program coordinators can get to know the business leaders in the state and/or local community by getting involved with the Chamber of Commerce, the Business Leadership Network, and other entities sponsored by the business community. Established relationships with groups like these can facilitate your access to information about funding opportunities as they arise. You may also discover business leaders who might be willing to make HS/HT a funding priority. In addition, it is through such relationships that some HS/HT programs have found businesses willing to support specific activities, such as kick-off events, through small donations.

There are two ways in which a company or corporation makes contributions to nonprofit programs: through a separate company foundation or through company-sponsored giving programs. Corporate foundations are funded by corporate allocations to the foundation to carry out grant making. The foundation is usually set up as a separate but affiliated organization which may or may not be located at a site within the corporation. Company-sponsored foundations are separate legal entities that usually maintain close ties with the parent company. Corporate foundations must follow the laws and regulations for private foundations, including filing an annual Form 990-PF to the Internal Revenue Services (IRS). While their giving usually reflects the specific interests of the parent company, they may also reflect the particular interests of the corporate leadership or the foundation's governing body. For this reason, their funding priorities may change over time.

Service Clubs or Local Civic Organizations provide community support as well as philanthropy. Often, this philanthropy includes providing funding support to local community programs as well as scholarships and other grants. Scan your community to find clubs and service organizations in your area such as Civitan International, the Elks of the United States, Jaycees, Kiwanis International, Lions Clubs International, and Rotary International.

The Search for Private Funding Sources

An easy way to identify potential funding sources is to conduct a search based on subject area, geographic restrictions, and type of support. When searching by subject, search listings that have expressed an interest in funding programs in a specific field (e.g., secondary and/or postsecondary education; science, math, and/or technology; youth; underserved populations; workforce development, etc.). To do a geographic search, start with a listing of donors that support programs in your city, state, or region. Although some give nationally and even internationally, most funding sources limit their giving to specific geographic areas where they are located or where their affiliates are located. When searching by type of support, search for grants that focus on youth, youth or individuals with disabilities, dropout prevention, encouraging participation in the STEM careers, facilitating entry into postsecondary education, etc. You will also want to

look for grants that fund specific aspects of program development such as seed money, general operating support, or program-specific support.

Online Resources to Consider

The HS/HT Funding Resource Database is a searchable database of primarily private foundations that have been pre-screened for applicability to the HS/HT program, to youth initiatives, and initiatives targeted for underserved populations. The private donor database is searchable by organizational name or geographic area (national or state-specific). Visit www.highschoolhightech.net, click on “Resources,” and scroll down to “Funding Resources.” Click on all resources or request resources by state.

What’s New is a section of NCWD/Youth’s website that is updated constantly to include funding announcements specific to youth projects and other youth initiatives. While many of the announcements here are for smaller grants and awards, you may find them useful to fund specific activities or to acknowledge student achievements. Visit www.ncwd-youth.info/.

The Foundation Center provides a wealth of information to help nonprofit organizations develop successful strategies to secure funding from private sources. It includes a broad overview of how foundations operate, outlines their common industry practices, and highlights trends in philanthropy. It provides online training courses such as step-by-step instructions on how to write a grant, quick tutorials and short courses on topics of interests that are free of charge. Visit <http://foundationcenter.org/sitemap.html>.

Be Strategic

As you think about securing funding to start or expand a HS/HT program, it is important to remember that resources are scarce. Thus, it is extremely important to identify all of the available resources at the federal, state and local levels, including both public and private resources, and to develop a strategic plan for how to secure and use them in the most effective way possible. Due to the nature of their funding, state agencies and federally-funded programs are often restricted on how they can use funds. Take the time to learn about the program and its funding so that you can take advantages of any opportunities that might be beneficial to HS/HT.

When dealing with state agencies and federally-funded programs, you will most likely need to educate the agency about HS/HT and provide evidence of its success in improving outcomes for transition age youth before asking for financial support. It is also important to invest time in developing relationships with key staff. When such relationships are present, people are more likely to think of you when a funding opportunity arises. Remember, developing relationships takes time and energy, and people in key positions can change quickly. However, don’t be discouraged. Experience has shown that persistence pays off.



EXHIBIT 8.1

Activities to Facilitate the Blending and/or Braiding of Existing Resources

Area of Community Need	Potential State-level Intermediary Activities	Potential Local-level Intermediary Activities
<p>Articulating a clear vision for service improvement that reflects agreement on common outcomes for youth and strategies to streamline services</p>	<p>Facilitating ongoing strategic planning for supporting the engagement of multiple stakeholders in the preparation of youth with disabilities for the world of work</p> <p>Providing strong leadership to lay the groundwork for identifying and coordinating financial resources</p>	<p>Facilitating ongoing strategic planning to engage youth service providers, components of the workforce investment system, and employers</p> <p>Convening local leadership (key stakeholders) to establish a clear vision of what services need to be financed or re-organized (a community implementation plan)</p> <p>Providing strong leadership to lay the groundwork for identifying and coordinating financial resources</p>
<p>Developing and sustaining interagency partnerships and collaborations between agencies that fund and deliver youth services and between these agencies and employer groups</p>	<p>Participating in the development of state plans that include waivers allowing blending funds for specific youth initiatives such as HS/HT</p> <p>Training service providers to use various funding streams that operate within distinct systems to support different elements of the <i>Guideposts for Success</i></p> <p>Providing support for training and technical assistance aimed at helping local initiative leaders understand the funding landscape and tackle administrative barriers to coordination</p> <p>Managing specific initiatives that feature interagency partnerships</p> <p>Sustaining commitments for collaborative agreements</p>	<p>Convening local decision-makers for collaborative planning across various agencies and programs</p> <p>Examining how specific local programs can work together to fund particular services/activities</p> <p>Sustaining commitments for local collaborative agreements</p>

Activities to Facilitate the Blending and/or Braiding of Existing Resources

Area of Community Need	Potential State-level Intermediary Activities	Potential Local-level Intermediary Activities
Identifying a range of youth-serving resources	<p>Identifying existing budget assets and gaps in the current use of potential funding sources</p> <p>Identifying and interpreting resources uses, restrictions and reporting requirements</p> <p>Leading the development of grant and funding applications</p>	<p>Identifying budget assets and gaps in their current use of potential funding sources</p> <p>Using resource mapping to identify funding for various services and activities—then, matching funding streams to programmatic goals of the system</p> <p>Identifying and interpreting resources’ uses, restrictions and reporting requirements</p> <p>Leading the development of grant and funding applications</p>
Providing technical assistance and training	<p>Providing cross-training and technical assistance on aspects of youth services, such as job development, service accommodation for disability, etc.</p> <p>Providing support for training and technical assistance for professionals and staff of collaborating agencies and organizations as they perform newly assigned roles</p> <p>Linking providers to important sources of training, technical assistance, and professional networks</p>	<p>Providing cross-training and technical assistance on aspects of youth services, such as job development, service accommodation for disability, etc.</p> <p>Providing support for training and technical assistance for professionals and staff of collaborating agencies and organizations as they perform newly assigned roles</p> <p>Linking providers to important local sources of training, technical assistance, and professional networks</p>

Drafting a Generic Grant Proposal

A grant proposal communicates the case you have built for your program, particularly as it relates to the mission of the organization/foundation sponsoring the grant opportunity and the specific goals and objectives of the grant announcement. Competitive grant announcements go by many different names, including Request for Proposals (RFPs), Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGAs), and Announcement of Availability of Funding. Regardless of the name, the announcement spells out the goals and objectives for the awarding of funds and the intended outcomes the grantee is expected to facilitate. It also outlines the areas that must be covered in the grant application and rates the importance of each area that needs to be addressed with a percentage value that the reviewers will use in evaluating the applications submitted in response to the announcement. Consequently, it is critically important to cover each area identified, paying special attention to areas with the highest ratings for the evaluation plan. The announcement will also identify any special requirements that applicants must meet, such as providing matching funds or collaboration with specific entities. It will also outline any restrictions such as who can and cannot apply for funds. For example, some funding sources will not accept applications from state agencies or from for-profit organizations. Others may be targeted specifically for public entities such as state agencies.

The most common elements of a grant application are outlined below. While it is intended to give an idea of what to include in a grant application, it is critically important to read the entire announcement very carefully and to respond exactly to the particular requirements of the specific announcement.

- A. Executive Summary:** Briefly summarize your program's goals, the project design, and expected outcomes. Most announcements limit the executive summary to one or two pages. In most cases you will not want to draft an executive summary for your generic grant proposal, since this section needs to concisely spell out the goals and objectives of the proposal as it applies to a specific grant announcement and summarizes the program model being proposed and the specific outcomes that the model is expected to accomplish.
- B. Statement of Need:** Document the needs of the population to be served in terms of depth and breadth (e.g., the potential number of students that could benefit from HS/HT), the current lack of services or identified gaps in services, the nature of the problem to be solved (e.g., reduce the dropout rate for youth with disabilities), etc. On the state level, you may want to include a statement of the number of transition-age youth enrolled in special educa-

tion, the estimated dropout rate and/or graduation rate for this population, and any information that might be available regarding the rate of enrollment in postsecondary education for this population and/or the unemployment rate for either this population or for individuals with disabilities in general. For a local grant application, similar statistics for youth with disabilities in a particular school, the local school district, the county or some other local geographic area should either be the basis of this section or be provided to supplement the state data being used to define the need.

- C. Goals and Objectives:** Establish the overarching goals of your HS/HT program and spell out the specific goals that your program can accomplish in quantitative terms. When responding to a specific grant announcement, you will need to spell out a timeline for accomplishing the overarching goals and the specific objectives in terms of the timeframe of the grant award.
- D. Program Design:** Describe the program design or service delivery methods you are proposing to achieve the stated goals and objectives. You will need a detailed but concise description of HS/HT, including the underlying principles, the key program components, the target population, and the intended outcomes. This basic information, which is common to all HS/HT programs, will need to be supplemented with specifics about how the program is actually being implemented in your state or in the designated locality. If you are seeking funding to initiate a new local site, provide a description of how you are planning to implement the program. When you are applying for a grant to support certain aspects of HS/HT or elements of the *Guideposts for Success*, you may need to modify this section to stress specific elements of your program design or to modify the program design consistent with the requirements specified in the grant announcement.
- E. Results/Expected Outcomes:** Highlight the positive outcomes that will be experienced by students participating in your program. If you have existing data that demonstrates positive outcomes for youth participating in HS/HT in your state, in your specific locality, or in a similar locality somewhere else in the state, include that in this section. If appropriate, this section might include a summary of national outcomes for HS/HT to demonstrate the overall success of the program and to show that HS/HT is being implemented in other states and localities. This section will need to be updated when responding to a specific grant opportunity.

F. Organizational Capacity: Describe your organization's or program's qualifications to accomplish the identified objectives, highlighting the program's credibility in terms of past accomplishments in the same or related areas. This section also needs to include a description of material resources (e.g., staffing, office space, equipment, access to support services, etc.) that are available to support the proposed initiative. In the case of an application where the state entity heading the state infrastructure development for HS/HT is the lead in applying for the grant, you will need a statement of organizational capacity as it applies to that agency, highlighting the resources that will be made available for use by the HS/HT program. For a locally initiated grant application, the statement of organizational capacity will focus on the agency or program housing the local site and resources that it will make available for use by HS/HT. It should also highlight any services or supports that will be available to support the local initiative through the state infrastructure. For both state and local applications, you will want to describe any staff expertise that is available to assist the proposed initiative or that will be hired specifically for the proposed initiative.

G. Evaluation Plan: Think through a process for measuring outcomes for individual students and evaluating the overall HS/HT effort. Develop a detailed plan on how you will evaluate the outcome of your efforts, including intermediate steps to ensure the appropriate use of resources, the timely completion of tasks, the modification of the implementation plan, etc. If you think through some of these things ahead of time, you can begin collecting data in light of these measurements and criteria even before you begin applying for grants. This will make it easier to have up-to-date information for the Results section when you are applying for a specific grant.

H. Budget: Prior to responding to a specific grant announcement, it is important to develop a proposed budget that estimates how much funding would be needed to support the state infrastructure and implementation of multiple local sites throughout the state, or an estimate of how much it would take to support the local site that is applying for the grant. Specify costs of the overall initiative, including the costs to be covered with grant funds, any other sources of funding, any in-kind contributions that will be available to support the initiative, and any interagency collaborations providing support for specific aspects of the initiative. If appropriate, specify any resources that the receipt of funds may be able to leverage. Be prepared to modify this budget when actually applying for a grant to address specifications such as maximum grant awards and requirements for matching funds which may or may not include in-kind contributions. Having an idea of general program costs will save considerable time and effort.

I. Future Funding: Since many grant announcements require you to address the sustainability of the initiative beyond the initial grant period, you may need to outline a strategy for securing funding from other sources to continue the project after the grant ends.



Common Reasons Why Private Sector Proposals Are Declined

When crafting a grant proposal, you will want to pay close attention to the criteria that will be used to evaluate applications. In most cases, these criteria are spelled out in the grant announcement along with information on how important each will be in determining the proposals to be funded. In addition, you will want to consider some of the things that the Fundraising School at Indiana University has identified as the most frequently cited reasons private sector proposals are rejected, including the following:

- The project hasn't been documented properly.
- The project doesn't strike the reviewer as significant or doesn't interest him/her.
- The prospective client groups have not been involved in planning and determining the goals of the project.
- The proposal is poorly written, or hard to understand.
- The proposal objectives do not match the objectives of the funding source.
- The proposal budget is not within the range of funding available through the funding agency.
- The proposed project has not been coordinated with other individuals and organizations working in the same area or with the same population.
- The funding source has not been made aware that those individuals submitting the proposal are able to carry out what is proposed; not enough substantiating evidence has been provided.
- Project objectives are too ambitious in scope.
- The proposal writer did not follow guidelines provided by the funding agency.
- There is insufficient evidence that the project can sustain itself beyond the life of the grant.
- The evaluation procedure is inadequate.

These private sector lessons are also applicable when responding to governmental grants.



CHAPTER 9:

Managing for Performance Excellence— Program Evaluation and Reporting

This chapter provides a context and process for documenting the results of HS/HT programs, and offers guidance on program evaluation strategies. It highlights examples of common outcomes measures used by HS/HT programs around the country. It includes examples of tools that can easily be modified for use by any HS/HT program. With proper attention to data collection and program evaluation, the success of HS/HT can be clearly demonstrated.

Why Evaluate?

Programs evaluate their performance to ensure proper accountability for the expenditure of funds and to obtain information to facilitate program improvement and promote excellence in products and services.

Program performance has become increasingly important over the years, particularly with the passage of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in 1993. GPRA directs all federal agencies and the programs they administer to establish performance indicators and outcome measures to monitor their performance. As an outgrowth of this, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget has developed a tool, the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART), which is used to assess and improve program performance so that the federal government can achieve better results. A PART review helps identify a program's strengths and weaknesses to inform funding and management decisions aimed at making the program more effective.

Consequently, the PART looks at all factors that affect and reflect program performance including program purpose and design; performance measurement, evaluations, and strategic planning; program management; and program results. Because the PART includes a consistent series of analytical questions, it allows programs to show improvements over time, and allows comparisons between similar programs. (For information on the results of various PART reviews, visit <www.ExpectMore.gov>.) The emphasis on program performance has also been expanded as Congress has increasingly incorporated mandates for greater accountability into pending legislation. The ripple effect of these trends has been felt throughout the country.

Program evaluation relies on the collection of relevant data and the establishment of other appropriate methods for tracking performance and results. However, program evaluation is more than just an accountability tool. The data and evaluative information gathered by HS/HT programs can also be used to provide a framework for self-assessment, continuous program improvement, and marketing.

How to Organize an Evaluation Process

Evaluation is a continuous process that is a core part of program management. A HS/HT program can use the information gathered about its success, uniqueness, and challenges, along with information on the

approaches taken by other HS/HT programs, to fine tune its program to achieve better results.

Figure 9.1, “The Planning, Implementation and Evaluation Cycle,” shows the cyclical nature of the planning, implementation, and evaluation process. It begins with a program being implemented and results being measured. The results are then examined and evaluated to determine what can be done to improve the program. Each local HS/HT site can be involved in determining what works and what does not work, and then use that information to improve their programming and operations. When shared widely, it has the potential of improving the programming and operations of other HS/HT programs.

Systems HS/HT Programs Use for Data Collection and Reporting

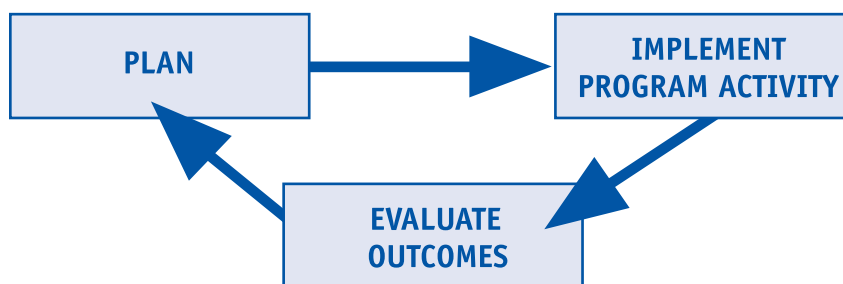
Although the ODEP-funded HS/HT grantees had a prescribed system for reporting data and outcomes, there is no mandated system that applies to HS/HT programs in other states and localities. Nevertheless, some degree of commonality across all programs is necessary to promote HS/HT as a national initiative. Most HS/HT programs routinely collect information

on the youth they serve, the activities/curriculum being used, the number of youth participating in specific activities, and the outcomes for participating youth. When a state infrastructure is in place, the state coordinator compiles the information to produce quarterly and annual reports. These reports are effective tools for

- capturing the results of the local sites;
- generating data that describes specific activities and their results;
- preparing quarterly and annual reports for entities providing financial support for HS/HT in general or for specific program activities;
- demonstrating outcomes to current and potential funding sources;
- developing program benchmarks;
- sharing information with other local HS/HT sites and with entities considering starting a HS/HT program;
- fine tuning program activities, promoting program improvement, and ultimately improving outcomes for participating youth;

FIGURE 9.1

The Planning, Implementation and Evaluation Cycle



GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION: To the extent possible, an evaluation plan should be developed prior to implementing program activities. In some situations, program planning and evaluation will occur primarily at the state level, while in others, each local site will be responsible for developing its own implementation and evaluation plans. Once a site begins implementing program activities, it is important to start evaluating the outcomes resulting from those activities. The information gathered through evaluating outcomes should be fed back into the planning to facilitate improved program activities...and so on. This process is graphically described as cyclical.

- recruiting students, schools, community-based organizations, teachers, transition coordinators, employers, etc., to participate in HS/HT;
- recruiting community leaders, employers, and representatives of the STEM industries to get involved in the program;
- marketing the program; and
- facilitating program expansion.

States also use the data collected from local sites to

- meet the requirements of partnering organizations such as state agencies;
- identify the training and technical assistance needs of local sites and develop plans to ensure that necessary supports are available to meet those needs;
- demonstrate the value of HS/HT and recommend policy changes, if needed, across multiple agencies within the state; and
- promote cross-agency accountability and the sharing of information on common program outcomes.

Data collection, then, supports local management and information needs and contributes to development, expansion, and sustainability of HS/HT. HS/HT programs have used web-based, electronic and paper-based reporting methodologies, including the methodologies developed specifically for the ODEP-funded HS/HT grantees.

Collecting National Data on HS/HT

As a requirement associated with the receipt of grant funds, the HS/HT programs that received ODEP funds to establish a state infrastructure had to collect data for submission to ODEP. Each grantee was required to submit quarterly and annual reports which included both data on program participants and narrative descriptions of how the program was developing and maturing. The participant data included age, racial/ethnic background, education level, disability, employment status, income for those earning wages, and any public assistance received. Programs were also required to report on the number of students

participating in specific components under each category of the *Guidepost for Success*, through both school-sponsored activities and activities sponsored by HS/HT, as well as the total number of employers that assisted with these specific activities. The grantees were also responsible for reporting on intermediate and final outcomes related to educational achievements and employment. The narrative section of the ODEP reports addressed grants management related to program implementation and progress on specific goals and objectives outlined in the grant application. The narrative section also sought information on

- entities receiving subawards under the ODEP grant,
- the involvement of stakeholders and building of collaborative relationships,
- outreach to customers and employers,
- trainings offered,
- dissemination of information through forums other than trainings,
- changes in policies and practices resulting from HS/HT's activities,
- plans for sustainability,
- staffing changes,
- the provision of technical assistance,
- media contacts,
- utilization of and dissemination of information on the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) and the Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network (EARN), and
- quarterly reports and activities planned for the next quarter.

The ODEP-funded HS/HT programs took different approaches to collecting this data. Most asked local sites to submit data on a quarterly basis and the state coordinator compiled the data for submission to ODEP. Florida HS/HT began by asking local sites to submit data to the state coordinator on a monthly basis. Towards the end of their ODEP grant, this procedure changed and the local sites were asked to submit data quarterly.

A Model for Performance Excellence in HS/HT

To develop a model for performance excellence for HS/HT that works, one must understand who the “customers” are, what “activities” are carried out during the program year, what “resources” are available, and what the “outcomes” were.

Customers

There are several categories of customers for HS/HT. Some things to consider regarding data collection and program evaluation as it relates to each category are highlighted here.

1. Students with disabilities: All HS/HT programs track the number of students served by each site. This is almost always accompanied by demographic data on participating youth, including age, gender, race/ethnicity, education/grade level, disability, and employment status. Some programs collect information on the student’s/family’s income and any public assistance and related services a student is receiving (e.g., welfare benefits, Social Security benefits, VR services, Medicaid, Title I-WIA youth programs, mental health services, and mental retardation/ developmental disabilities services, etc.). Some programs track where/with whom participating youth live (e.g., with parents or with relatives, in foster care, in a juvenile detention facility, etc.).

Additional questions related to participating students might include the following:

- What was the student’s grade point average upon entering, and annually thereafter?
- Did the youth participate in advanced placement classes, clubs, sports, service learning experiences, etc.?
- How long did the student participate in the program?

2. Employers and business partners: The success of a HS/HT program is dependent to some extent on the ability to engage employers in a variety of ways. Some employers provide financial support (e.g.,

through small grants to support discrete activities such as special events and scholarships for graduating students). Some sponsor site visits, job shadowing, and internships. Collecting information on the specific roles that business partners assume is an important part of program evaluation for HS/HT. Such information is then used to develop strategies for improving relationships with existing business partners and approaching additional businesses to establish partnerships. Thus, most HS/HT programs record, at a minimum, the names of participating companies, key contacts within those companies, the industries they represent, and the nature of their involvement with and support of HS/HT. Most programs also maintain a list of employers and business entities that should be involved with the program and use that information in developing their outreach and marketing strategies for business customers.

3. High schools and other educational entities: The customer base for high schools might include public, private, and alternative schools and the staff associated with such schools, including teachers (special and regular education), principals, school administrators, guidance counselors, transition counselors and coordinators, 504 coordinators, special events coordinators, local school board members, and district administrators.

Due to significant variations as to what constitutes a local HS/HT site, almost every HS/HT program tracks the number of participating schools, in addition to the number of participating youth to establish some commonality across all programs. HS/HT programs should also track the involvement of other educational entities such as community colleges, colleges, universities, and postsecondary training programs.

4. Service organizations: Service organizations such as state agencies, public and private employment and/or training programs, community-based organizations, youth programs, etc., are also important customers of HS/HT. In some places, service organizations have been delegated authority to lead the development effort for the state infrastructure for HS/HT. They are also regarded as the ones implementing HS/HT locally. In almost

every situation, partnering with service organizations is critically important to the success of the program. Thus, HS/HT programs generally keep records on the service organizations partnering with the program, including what type of support they provide. Such information can be useful in securing additional resources to support the program (both financial and in-kind). Many programs also keep a list of other service organizations and how they might benefit HS/HT and use that information in developing a strategy for outreaching to facilitate additional partnerships.

Activities

HS/HT programs should routinely collect data on how many students participate in the various activities under each category of the *Guideposts for Success*. This is important for two reasons. First, this information will ensure the comprehensiveness of program activities. Second, developing HS/HT programs/sites can use this information to identify areas under the *Guideposts* that have not yet been addressed or that need additional attention. This information can then be used to develop a plan to address gaps in program design.

Recently, programs have been looking for ways to promote parental involvement. By tracking their involvement in specific activities, a program can determine the most effective activities for facilitating parental participation. The following are examples of questions relating to activities:

- What combination of activities under each *Guidepost* is the program/site using?
- Have the activities been designed to complement the services already available at school and/or in the community?
- Are activities planned throughout the year?
- Is the program a multi-year program and, if so, are the activities age and developmentally appropriate and sequential in nature?

Some programs go so far as to report activities by the category of resources supporting them. Such information can be critically important in establishing the budget for HS/HT, in developing a plan to ensure

the comprehensiveness of the activities and curriculum offered, and in developing long-term sustainability of the program.

Resources

When looking at the resources needed to support HS/HT, it is important to consider all of the resources that are available to the program. While only a few partners may be willing and able to provide direct financial support, many may be willing to provide other types of support (see Chapter 8). The monitoring and evaluation system for HS/HT should track how the different categories of resources are being used and, to the extent possible, the specific outcomes or benefits that can be directly attributed to the use of those resources. This is particularly important when partner organizations are providing financial support and are being held directly accountable for the use of those funds.

In states where a state infrastructure supports local implementation, resources are usually tracked separately at the state level and for each local site. The following are questions relating to resources at both the state and local levels:

- What sources of funding are available to the program and how much is available through each source?
- Who staffs the program/site?
- What in-kind resources are available?
- Does the program have access to volunteers?
- What partnerships have been developed to benefit the HS/HT program and participating students?
- Are students able to/encouraged to access other programs and services that address different aspects of the *Guideposts*?

Outcomes

Measuring outcomes is probably the most important aspect of data collection and reporting. Since most HS/HT programs have evolved into multi-year programs, two levels for measuring outcomes for HS/HT participants have evolved. The first level looks at **intermediate outcomes** for students who have been

participating in and are continuing to participate in HS/HT, but have not yet graduated from high school.

On the individual level, intermediate outcomes look at such things as

- promotion to the next grade level,
- an increase in a student's grade point average,
- the assumption of leadership roles,
- retention in school, and
- employment or successful completion of a paid internship prior to exiting high school.

The second level of outcome measurements looks at **final outcomes** for students who have exited a HS/HT program. On the individual level, final outcome measure such things as the number of HS/HT students who

- graduated from high school (possibly broken down by type of diploma);
- enrolled in postsecondary education,
- entered a postsecondary training program,
- secured full or part-time employment (e.g., within one year of leaving high school), and/or
- stayed connected to the program after graduation (e.g., serving as mentors or site aides to assist other HS/HT students).

Under IDEA 2004, states are required to establish goals for the performance of children with disabilities. A variety of indicators have been established to assist states in setting these goals. Of particular interest, Indicator 1 looks at the percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma compared to percent of all youth in the state graduating with a regular diploma. Since states define graduation in different ways, a HS/HT program coordinator needs to be aware of the graduation options available to students (i.e., receipt of a "regular" diploma, a High School Certification, a Special Education diploma and/or a General Education Development (GED) certificate) and include those options in the HS/HT data collection system. In

addition, Indicator 2 looks at the percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school compared to the percent of all youth in the state dropping out of high school. Since there is no standardized definition of what constitutes a dropout, a HS/HT program coordinators needs to be aware of how the state defines dropout and collect comparable data on students participating in HS/HT. While it may be difficult to attribute a higher graduation rate and a lower dropout rate directly to HS/HT, some implications may be drawn from the data.

Some HS/HT programs track additional outcome measures. These include tracking increases in the number of companies that provide financial support, sponsor work-based learning experiences, or hire HS/HT graduates.

Since HS/HT relies so heavily on partnerships to support program activities, it is often necessary to collect data and track outcomes that will address the accountability needs of partnering organizations/programs. In some places, local HS/HT sites or programs are responsible for developing their own goals and objectives, either as part of the proposal responding to an RFP or as part of the planning process prior to actual implementation. When local goals and objectives have been spelled out, appropriate outcomes measures will need to be identified to address those goals and objectives.

Year-Round Data Collection

Conducting an annual evaluation of a HS/HT program is less time consuming and more accurate if each local site is asked to track students, schools, employer participation, etc., throughout the year. Sites may keep track of students who are participating by using lists, enrollment forms, rosters, and other means.

Since most local HS/HT coordinators are part-time employees of other agencies/programs, the time and resources available to collect data and report results are often very limited. Consequently, most local sites are asked to report data to the state coordinator once a quarter, and the state coordinator often takes responsibility for compiling the data both quarterly and annually.

A Note on Tracking Final Outcomes for Students

Although tracking post-school outcomes for participating students is one of the most important aspects of data collection and program evaluation, it is not easy and can require a significant commitment of staff time. However, the passage of the 2004 amendments to IDEA, which require schools to track post-school outcomes for special education students, may ultimately make it easier for HS/HT to track final outcomes. As discussed under component 3 in Chapter 6, IDEA 2004 requires states to track the progress of special education students, including reporting on transition services and post-school outcomes. The U.S. Department of Education has developed indicators to operationalize these new requirements. Under the new indicator 13, states must report on the “percentage of youth aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the child to meet the postsecondary goals.” Under the new indicator 14, states must report on the “percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school.”

The fact that schools must now report on these new indicators of performance will likely make it easier for HS/HT programs to obtain such information from the schools, so long as HS/HT can obtain signed releases for participating students. These new requirements also provide a unique opportunity to market HS/HT to schools and to state and local education agencies as a comprehensive transition program that has a demonstrated track record for improving post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities. This also increases the likelihood that HS/HT will be acknowledged as a legitimate program within the educational system.

The “Oklahoma High School Exit Survey” found in Exhibit 9.1 provides one example of how schools are addressing these new requirements. Of particular interest is the fact that Tech-Now, Oklahoma’s HS/HT program, is specifically listed as one of the programs that may have contributed to student success.

Beyond the Basics: Resources to Support an Ongoing Commitment to Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

While an integrated internal program evaluation system will require the collection of basic data such as that described previously, most programs go beyond such minimum requirements. For example, most HS/HT programs conduct surveys to determine overall customer and employer satisfaction with the program. Some go so far as to conduct follow-up evaluations and/or consumer satisfaction surveys for individual activities to determine the benefits to participating students and the students’ (and sometimes parents’) satisfaction with the activity, as well as the employer’s satisfaction when the activity is a work-based learning experience. Such information can be used to facilitate continuous improvement as activities are modified to address input from youth who have participated in the activity. Below are some things to consider when establishing an internal program evaluation system.

Satisfaction and Follow-up Surveys

Customer satisfaction and follow-up surveys are valuable for informal program self-assessments and quality improvement.

A **customer satisfaction survey** is a valuable way to make sure that the program is working as intended. As indicated earlier, HS/HT has several “customers,” including students, parents, schools, companies, employment programs, partner programs, organizations/people providing financial support, etc. Using a customer satisfaction survey for each of these “customers” lets them know that their opinions count. The information gathered provides a good indicator of how well the program is achieving its desired results for each of these customer groups, and has the potential to identify ways to improve those results.

Examples of customer satisfaction surveys for students, parents, and employers, which can be modified to fit your program’s activities and goals, can be found in Exhibits 9.2 and 9.3. Exhibit 9.2 contains a sample generic survey that can be used for different customers of the HS/HT program. Many of the questions focus on the five content areas of the *Guideposts for Success*.

Exhibit 9.3 contains separate survey forms designed specifically for four key customers of the HS/HT program: students, parents, employers, and educators.

Follow-up surveys are important tools for determining final outcomes for program participants. They are used to track what individual students did after they exited HS/HT. For example, they are effective tools for determining the number of HS/HT students who graduated from high school, the types of diplomas they received, the number who entered/continued in postsecondary education, and the number finding and retaining employment in STEM industries and other high-tech professions. Capturing and reporting this type of information clearly demonstrates the success of the HS/HT program, and can be a critical factor in securing future support for the program.

Follow-up surveys may be done by phone, e-mail, mail, or in-person. They can be done individually or in group settings. To the extent possible, HS/HT students should be encouraged to take responsibility for assisting with this type of follow-up. Ask exiting students to provide their contact information (address, telephone number, and e-mail address) prior to leaving the program and to let the program know if this information changes in the future. Keeping in touch and completing follow-up surveys should be presented as an opportunity for youth to give something back in exchange for the benefits they reaped from HS/HT and to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to the program. Setting up mentoring relationships between current and former members of the program can also facilitate the exchange of this data.

Follow-up should take place at regular intervals after students leave the HS/HT program. Follow-up surveys take time and resources. Some programs start with a six-month or one-year follow-up of last year's HS/HT seniors, and build the follow-up program gradually from there. Knowing where students end up after graduation and what they consider to be the benefits of HS/HT in light of their accomplishments, progress, and successes can be very valuable information to support program improvement.

In order to measure long-term outcomes such as completion of postsecondary education, securing a job and retaining it over time, and advancing in employment, follow-up for a number of years after

graduation is advisable. Sites with funding from other education, transition, and employment-related programs may have additional follow-up and outcome reporting requirements, including specific time requirements for follow-up reporting. Exhibit 9.4 contains a Sample HS/HT Follow-Up Survey that can be modified to meet the needs of any HS/HT program.

Some HS/HT programs have looked to other programs that have demonstrated success in meeting the needs of transition-age youth with disabilities to get ideas for program improvement, and to identify other outcomes (both intermediate and final) that might be appropriate measures of HS/HT success.

Quantitative Versus Qualitative Information

The data collected, analyzed and reported by HS/HT programs should portray the depth and breadth of the program, in addition to providing documented evidence of outcomes and impact. This will require a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data looks at numbers and percentages, e.g., the number of youth participating in the program or in a particular activity, the number of participating students graduating from high school, the number of employers providing work-based experiences, the percentage of youth exiting the program and entering postsecondary education, the amount of wages and/or stipends paid to HS/HT interns, the percentage increase in students with disabilities graduating from high school, etc. Qualitative data is more descriptive and attempts to reflect the quality of a particular initiative. Customer satisfaction surveys are generally used to obtain qualitative data. However, qualitative data for HS/HT could also include descriptions of program activities that reflect the comprehensiveness of the program and success stories that emphasize how HS/HT has positively impacted the lives of participating students.

Continuous Improvement and Self-Assessment

To continually improve a HS/HT program and provide more opportunities for youth with disabilities, each HS/HT program and every local site it supports should undertake a self-assessment. Start with the ideas in this chapter and develop a specific self-assessment process that works for your program.

Getting Organized

The following outlines the initial steps necessary to establish, implement, and maintain a data collection system and a process for program evaluation:

- Define your program's overall objectives for data collection, monitoring, and evaluation.
 - Determine what types of data, both quantitative and qualitative, will be needed to meet these objectives.
 - Consider your limitations. Recognize any constraints that will impact your ability to collect and analyze data and to undertake monitoring and evaluation efforts. Take into consideration resource limitations (staffing, fiscal constraints, computer capabilities, etc.) at both the state and local level.
 - Develop methods and tools that will ensure consistency in gathering data across local sites.
 - Develop a system for tabulating and processing the data; determine who will be responsible for collecting, consolidating and analyzing data; and establish a timeframe for data collection and analysis. Some data will need to be collected after each event, and some will be collected and reported quarterly and annually.
- Have local sites collect and process the data based on the established system, process, and timeline.
 - Analyze the data that has been collected, looking for things to highlight, emerging trends, implications for training and technical assistance, etc.
 - Evaluate the program components and overall project activities as measured against your project goals. This is most effective when it is done at the state level for the overall project goals and at the local level to assess the accomplishment of local goals and objectives.
 - Prepare reports that reflect your program monitoring and evaluation objectives.
 - Disseminate those reports widely and use relevant information to develop and update your marketing and outreach materials.



Oklahoma High School Exit Survey—Part 1

Directions:

We are contacting you on behalf of your high school to find out what your plans are after you leave high school. This is an effort by the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE), Special Education Services (SES) to ensure students with disabilities are being prepared to accomplish their goals after high school. One year after you leave high school, we will contact you again to see what you have accomplished toward reaching your post-school vision and what you are doing at that time. Please take a few moments to complete this survey and return it in the postage-paid envelope provided. Thank you for your honesty and cooperation. We look forward to hearing from you.

District Code _____ School Code _____

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- Special Education Teacher's First Name _____ Last Name _____
- Student's First Name _____ Last Name _____
- Date of Birth: Month ____ Day ____ Year _____ Student's Home Telephone Number () _____
- Student's Home Address _____ City _____ Zip Code _____
- Gender (Please select one) _____ Male _____ Female Race/Ethnicity _____
- Primary Disability Category _____ Secondary Disability Category _____
- Educational Setting: Place an "x" by the amount of services that best describe your educational setting.
 - ____ 0 hours per week outside the general education classroom
 - ____ Less than 6 hours per week outside the general education classroom
 - ____ 6-21 hours per week outside the general education classroom
 - ____ Over 21 hours per week outside the general education classroom
- Number of people living in household _____ Number of siblings _____
- How long do you plan to stay in high school? Please place an 'x' to indicate your selection.
 - ____ Until I graduate ____ Until I turn 21 ____ I do not know yet. ____ I will probably drop out.
- Current Grade Level in School _____
- Date Survey Completed _____
- Please list contact information for two adults who will know how to contact you after leaving high school.

Name _____	Name _____
Relationship to you _____	Relationship to you _____
Telephone number () _____	Telephone number () _____
Address _____	Address _____
City, State, Zip Code _____	City, State, Zip Code _____

** For students under the age of 18, parent consent is required.

I hereby consent for the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Services, to survey my child for the purpose of collecting post-school information one year after leaving high school.

Parent Signature and Date

Oklahoma High School Exit Survey—Part 2

1. How do you spend your time when you are not in school?

(Mark all that apply.)

- Working
- Studying
- Hanging out with friends
- Watching TV
- Playing video/computer games
- Listening to music
- Volunteering
- Playing sports
- Doing hobbies (e.g., gardening, sewing, collecting)
- Going to church or community activities
- Going to the mall or movies
- Doing outdoor activities (e.g., hunting, fishing, hiking)
- Other: _____

2. While in high school, have you been involved in extracurricular activities? Yes No

If yes, please select all that apply from the list below and circle the number of years you were involved during high school. If no, please skip to question No. 3.

- Academics Club 1 2 3 4
- Art Club 1 2 3 4
- Athletics/Sports 1 2 3 4
- Band/Vocal Club 1 2 3 4
- Drama Club 1 2 3 4
- FBLA 1 2 3 4
- FFA 1 2 3 4
- Special Olympics 1 2 3 4
- Speech/Debate 1 2 3 4
- Tech-Now Oklahoma High School High Tech 1 2 3 4
- Other: _____ 1 2 3 4

3. Which groups or individuals provided a service to you while in high school? (Mark all that apply.)

- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Career/Technical Education Teacher
- Tech-Now Oklahoma High School/High Tech Instructor
- Job Coach
- School Counselor
- Rehabilitation Counselor
(Vocational Rehabilitation Services)
- OKDHS Case Manager
- WIA/Navigator
(Workforce Office/One-Stop Career Center)
- Athletic Coach
- Assistive Technology (ABLE Tech)
- Medical supports/healthcare/Mental Health Agency
- None
- Other: _____

4. Which classes or activities are preparing you the most to work and live in the community? (Mark all that apply.)

- General education academic class
- General education elective class
- Special education class
- Career/Technical education class
- Extracurricular activities (e.g., clubs or sports)
- Tech-Now Oklahoma High School/High Tech Course
- Work Study
- None
- Other: _____

5. Which people at your high school are most helpful in preparing you to work, get additional education, and live in the community? (Mark all that apply.)

- General education teacher
- Special education teacher

EXHIBIT 9.1 (CONTINUED)

- Career/Technical education teacher
- Tech-Now Oklahoma High School/High Tech Instructor
- Job Coach
- School Counselor
- Rehabilitation Counselor
- OKDHS Case Manager
- WIA/Navigator/One-Stop Career Center staff/Navigator
- Athletic Coach
- Assistive Technology Specialist
- Health Care Provider (doctor, nurse, etc.)
- Parent/Guardian
- None
- Other: _____

6. Who makes important decisions about your life?
(Mark all that apply.)

- Me
- My parent/guardian
- Other family members
- My friends
- Professionals in my school
- Professionals from other agencies
- Other: _____

7. What did you do to prepare for your Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings? (Mark all that apply.)

- Nothing
- I considered possible goals and developed a plan for my future.
- I chose my own elective classes.
- I thought about what to say at the meeting.
- I talked to others about the meeting.
- I worked directly with the teacher in developing my IEP.
- I received education and training on self-determination and how to lead my own IEP meetings.
- Other: _____

8. What did you do at your IEP meetings? (Mark all that apply.)

- Nothing; others did all the talking.
- I answered questions.
- I set goals for myself.
- I led the meeting.
- I introduced and thanked those who participated.
- N/A; I did not go to the meeting.
- Other: _____

9. Have you participated in an on-the-job training activity while in high school?

- Yes No

10. If you have had a paying job while in high school, who helped you get the job? (Mark all that apply.)

- N/A, I did not work
- Myself
- Parent/Guardian
- WIA/Navigator/One-Stop Career Center staff
- Rehabilitation Counselor
- School staff
- Other family
- Friends/peers
- Juvenile Justice Worker
- Tech-Now Oklahoma High School/High Tech Staff

11. While in high school, when did you work?
(Mark all that apply.)

- N/A, I did not work.
- During the school day
- After-school and in the evenings
- During the weekend
- During the summer

12. What are your plans after immediately leaving high school?
(Please select only one.)

- Work
- Attend Career/Technical School
- Go to college

EXHIBIT 9.1 (CONTINUED)

Join the military

Volunteer/community service

Job Corps

Nothing

I don't know

Other training

Other: _____

13. What kind of job, if any, do you want to have when you leave high school? _____

14. Within a year after leaving high school, where do you plan to live? (Please select only one.)

With my parent/guardian

With my grandparents

With my siblings

In my own apartment/house

With my spouse/significant other

With other relatives

In a group home

In a foster home

In a shelter

Other: _____

15. After you leave high school, what challenges might you have? (Mark all that apply.)

No problems

My parents will not agree with what I want to do.

I will not be able to get a job.

I will not be able to get into college.

I will not be able to get academic support in college.

I will not have access to appropriate assistive technology.

I will not have access to medical supports or healthcare.

I will not have adequate medical supports or healthcare.

I will have legal issues.

I will lose benefits (e.g., SSI) if I work.

I will not have enough money to live on.

I will not have a place to live.

Lack of transportation

Other: _____

16. What things would help make your life better in the community? (Mark all that apply.)

Nothing

Having a job

Having a better job

Being able to make more choices about my life

Finding solutions to personal problems

Having more things to do in my free time

Having more friends

Having transportation

Having more money

Living in a different place

Having a boyfriend or girlfriend

Getting married or having a family

Getting more education/training

Volunteering/community service

Having access to appropriate assistive technology

Having access to medical supports/healthcare/insurance

Having adequate medical supports/healthcare/insurance

Other: _____

Source: Oklahoma Department of Education, April 2006.

EXHIBIT 9.2

Sample HS/HT Customer Satisfaction Survey (Generic)

We are interested in assessing our HS/HT program.
Your answers will help us understand how the program met your needs, and how we might improve the program.

Name _____ Today's Date _____

I am a (circle one): parent employer teacher VR Counselor Transition Coordinator
Other (specify: _____)

Issue	Question	Satisfaction Rating Scale
Overall Assessment	Overall, how satisfied were you with your association with this HS/HT program?	Level of satisfaction: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied Rating:
Expectations	Did the HS/HT program meet your expectations?	Level of satisfaction: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied Rating:
Competence	What is your level of satisfaction with the competency of the HS/HT staff?	Level of satisfaction: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied Rating:
Information	To what degree were you satisfied that HS/HT staff informed you of everything you needed to do?	Level of satisfaction: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied Rating:
School-Based Preparatory Experiences	What was your overall satisfaction with the program's school-based preparatory experiences (see below for description)?	Level of satisfaction: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied Rating:
Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences	What was your overall satisfaction with the program's career preparation and work-based learning activities (see below for description)?	Level of satisfaction: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied Rating:
Youth Development and Leadership Experiences	What was your overall satisfaction with the program's youth development and leadership activities (see below for description)?	Level of satisfaction: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied Rating:
Connecting Activities	What was your overall satisfaction with the program's connecting activities (see below for description)?	Level of satisfaction: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied Rating:

EXHIBIT 9.2 (CONTINUED)

Issue	Question	Satisfaction Rating Scale
Family Involvement and Support	What was your overall satisfaction with the program's activities to facilitate family involvement and supports?	Level of satisfaction: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied Rating:
Significance	How satisfied were you that the program provided a significant experience for students?	Level of satisfaction: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied Rating:
Value	Overall, how satisfied were you with your investment in HS/HT.	Level of satisfaction: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied Rating:
Recommendation	Were you satisfied with this HS/HT program to the extent that you would recommend it to other parents, teachers, employers, etc.?	Level of satisfaction: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied Rating:

Definitions:

- *School-based preparatory experiences:* include academic programs based on standards, support from highly qualified staff, graduation standards that include options, access to specific learning accommodations, etc.
- *Career preparation and work-based learning experiences:* includes career exploration and assessments, presentations about different careers, industry site visits, job shadowing, and internships.
- *Youth development and leadership:* includes finding role models and supporting peer mentoring, personal development and growth, and leadership training.
- *Connecting activities:* includes program supports—such as academic tutoring, mentoring, assistive technology, transportation, and connections to the workforce system, vocational rehabilitation, and continuing education.
- *Family involvement and supports:* includes access to caring adults who have high expectations, taking an active role in transition planning, knowledge of and access to programs, services, supports and accommodations available to youth with disabilities.

Any other comments you would like to make: _____

EXHIBIT 9.3

High School/High Tech — Student Evaluation

Mark an X under the Best Answer	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree a Little	Agree a Little	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Your grades have improved as a result of your participation in the HS/HT program.						
2. Your high school attendance has improved as a result of your participation in HS/HT.						
3. Your participation in the HS/HT program has helped you stay in school.						
4. Your social skills and relationships have improved as a result of your participation in the program.						
5. HS/HT participation has made your overall high school experience better.						
6. You plan to continue your education or training in a high tech area because of your experience with HS/HT.						
7. Participation in the HS/HT program has increased your access to training, employment opportunities, and career advancement.						
8. Your participation with HS/HT has made you more aware of career opportunities in high tech industries.						
9. Your experience with HS/HT has helped you make the decision to pursue a high tech career.						
10. HS/HT site visits and tours have helped you understand high tech careers.						
11. HS/HT job shadowing and mentoring experiences have helped you develop high tech career goals.						
12. HS/HT internships have helped you make career decisions.						
13. Overall, the HS/HT program has been a valuable and worthwhile experience.						
14. What did you like MOST about the HS/HT program?						

15. What did you like LEAST about the HS/HT program?						

16. Would you recommend the HS/HT program to other students? ____ Yes ____ No						

(n =)

(Note: In tabulating responses, indicate the percentage of people that responded to each item.)

Source: Colorado High School/High Tech Program.

High School/High Tech — Parent Evaluation

Mark an X under the Best Answer	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree a Little	Agree a Little	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Your child’s grades have improved as a result of participation in the HS/HT program.						
2. Your child’s high school attendance has improved as a result of participation in the HS/HT program.						
3. Participation in the HS/HT program has helped your child stay in school.						
4. Your child’s social skills and relationships have improved as a result of participation in the program.						
5. Your child’s relationship with his or her teacher has improved as a result of participation in the program.						
6. HS/HT participation has improved your child’s overall high school experience.						
7. Participation in the HS/HT program has increased your child’s access to skills training, employment opportunities, and career advancement.						
8. Your child has fully participated in HS/HT site visits and tours.						
9. Your child has fully participated in HS/HT job shadowing and mentoring experiences.						
10. Your child has fully participated in a HS/HT internship.						
11. Overall, the HS/HT program has been a valuable and worthwhile experience for your family.						

12. What did you like MOST about the HS/HT program?

13. What did you like LEAST about the HS/HT program?

14. Would you recommend the HS/HT program to other families?

(n=)

(Note: In tabulating responses, indicate the percentage of respondents that replied to each item.)

Source: Colorado High School/High Tech Program.

High School/High Tech — Employer Evaluation

1. Describe the participation of your company in the High School/High Tech program (site tours, mentoring, job shadowing, internships, etc.) over the last year:

Employed Student = ____ Yes ____ No Provided Internship = ____ Yes ____ No Provided Site Tour = ____ Yes ____ No

Provided job shadowing opportunity = ____ Yes ____ No.

Statement:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree a Little	Agree a Little	Agree	Strongly Agree
2. The goals of the HS/HT program were made clear to you at the start of your company's participation.						
3. The HS/HT program staff and coordinators were easy to work with.						
4. Your company's participation in the HS/HT program helped students understand high tech skills and career opportunities.						
5. Your expectations about the HS/HT program were met.						

6. Rate your overall satisfaction with the High School High Tech program:

Very Satisfied = ____ Satisfied = ____ Somewhat Satisfied = ____ Dissatisfied = ____ Very Dissatisfied = ____

7. What would you change to improve the program?

8. Would you recommend the program to other employers?

Yes = ____ No = ____ Unsure = ____

9. Would you be willing to participate in the HS/HT program in the future?

Yes = ____ No = ____ Not Sure = ____

(n =)

Employers: List the employers that completed the survey.

(Note: In tabulating responses, indicate the percentage of respondents that replied to each item.)

Source: Colorado High School/High Tech Program.

High School/High Tech — Educator Evaluation

Compilation of Responses

1. Total no. students in HS/HT program: ____% have 1 to 2 students in the program ____% have 3 to 5 students in the program ____% have 6 to 9 students in the program ____% have 10 or more student participating Average students per teacher =
2. Total number of years teaching experience: Average = ____ years: Range = ____ to ____ years
3. Schools represented: List individual schools or number of schools by district.

Statement:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree a Little	Agree a Little	Agree	Strongly Agree
4. The goals of the HS/HT program were made clear to you at the start of your participation.						
5. The overall difficulty of participating in the HS/HT program was appropriate.						
6. The HS/HT program staff and coordinators were supportive of you.						
7. You received adequate notification of events and activities.						
8. The HS/HT program has become an important resource for you.						
9. Participation in the HS/HT program has made a positive difference in your classroom.						
10. Overall, the HS/HT program has been a valuable and worthwhile experience for you.						

11. What did you like most about the HS/HT program?

12. What did you like least about the HS/HT program?

13. Would you recommend the HS/HT program to other students and teachers?

Yes = ____% No = ____% Not Sure = ____%

14. Additional comments

(n =)

(Note: In tabulating responses, indicate the percentage of respondents that replied to each item.)

Source: Colorado High School/High Tech Program.

Sample HS/HT Follow-Up Survey

We are interested in finding out how our former HS/HT students are doing after exiting high school. Your answers will help us understand how the program helped you, and how we might improve our program.

Name of Former HS/HT Student: _____

Dates enrolled in HS/HT: from _____ to _____ Date graduated from high school _____ Today's date _____

The following questions relate to your employment or education situation right now.

1. Currently, are you (circle all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. Enrolled at a 4-year university | b. Enrolled at a 2-year junior or community college |
| c. Enrolled at a vocational or technical school | d. Employed (full- or part-time) |
| e. Participating in an adult employment program
(like VR, WIA, private program) | f. Other (specify) _____ |

If only employed, go to Question 3

If only attending school, go to Question 2

2. What is your major area of study? _____

(If currently ONLY attending school, go to Question 9)

3. On average, how many hours per week do you work? _____ hours

4. How much do you earn in this position in a week? \$ _____ per week

5. How long have been working in this job?

- | | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| a. 3 months or less | b. 4-6 months | c. 7-9 months | d. 10-12 months | e. more than 12 months |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------------|

6. Do you receive medical insurance in your current job?

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. Yes | b. No, because they don't offer it |
| c. No, because I haven't worked there long enough | d. No, because I don't work enough hours per week |

7. Have you held any other jobs since you left high school?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| a. Yes (specify number) _____ | b. No _____ |
|-------------------------------|-------------|

8. Has anything hindered you from finding a job?

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| a. My disability | b. Need more education |
| c. Need more experience | d. Lack transportation |
| e. Need a specific skill (specify) _____ | f. Other (please explain) _____ |
-

EXHIBIT 9.4 (CONTINUED)

The following questions explore the HS/HT activities in which you participated, and ask whether you found them valuable.

9. To what extent did the activities that you participated in while enrolled in HS/HT help you become better prepared for entry into a STEM career or other high-tech profession?
- a. To a great extent b. To some extent c. Not at all
10. To what extent have the activities that you participated in as part of your HS/HT experience helped you become better prepared for further education or training (e.g., community college, university/college, vocational technical school, or other adult learning opportunities)?
- a. To a great extent b. To some extent c. Not at all
11. To what extent have the activities you participated in during HS/HT helped you live more independently?
- a. To a great extent b. To some extent c. Not at all
12. How would you rate the quality of activities that you participated in/services you received from HS/HT?
- a. Excellent b. Good c. Fair d. Poor
13. Which HS/HT activities did you find most helpful?
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
14. Which HS/HT activities did you find least helpful?

Thank you for your time!

This instrument was adapted from documents used by the HS/HT program at UCP, in Cleveland, Ohio. The Research Triangle Institute prepared the Longitudinal Follow-up for HS/HT and the Follow-Up Questionnaires for a longitudinal study of the Vocational Rehabilitation Service Program in 1994.



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CHAPTER 10:

Marketing a HS/HT Program

Conduct a Google or Amazon search, or take a trip to your local library or bookstore, and you'll find an overwhelming selection of books and other materials on the subject of marketing. Most of these resources offer excellent information about marketing methods and tools; however, none will offer advice directly applicable to marketing a HS/HT program. Consequently, this chapter presents information on basic marketing principles and offers ideas for strategies that are particularly applicable to marketing a HS/HT program.

What Is Marketing?

The American Marketing Association defines marketing as “the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives.” As this definition suggests, marketing involves a variety of interrelated, ongoing activities that permeate an organization’s operations. Marketing activities range from creating a service or product that meets your target markets’ needs, to promoting the product, to making sure that your customers are satisfied.

People sometimes mistakenly equate marketing with its individual components, such as advertising, sales, or public relations. Although these components may be important in an overall marketing effort, strategic marketing takes a much broader view. It involves designing services or products that meet a specific

market’s needs and then getting those services or products to the target market or customer.

Why Market Your Program?

While establishing a HS/HT program is an important accomplishment to celebrate, strategic marketing of the program is critically important to a program’s long-term sustainability. Whether your program already exists or is just getting underway, planning and implementing a strategic marketing strategy will help it to flourish and make a real difference in the lives of participating youth.

Before you can decide how to market your HS/HT program, you need to think about why you want to market the program and to whom you want to market the program. In the HS/HT context, your ultimate marketing goals might be to

- **increase** the program’s visibility among youth with disabilities and their families, employers, educational staff, and potential funding sources, as well as staff at One-Stop Career Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, and other community-based organizations;
- **persuade** youth and prospective stakeholders to participate, get involved, and/or “invest” in the program;
- **establish** and convey a clear identity for your program;

- **inform** high-tech employers and other stakeholders about the benefits they will reap by participating in your program; and
- **educate** people in business and industry about the untapped resource that people with disabilities represent and the advantages of employing persons with disabilities, including youth with disabilities.

Although the prospect of doing “strategic marketing” may sound intimidating at first, keep in mind that effectively marketing your HS/HT program does not require a degree in business or decades of marketing experience. Rather, it requires enthusiasm, resourcefulness, persistence, thoughtful planning, and the ability to persuade others to become part of the program. Also, keep in mind that marketing is as much art as science. Each situation is unique and each target audience may require a different approach. Consequently, there is no right or wrong approach to marketing—only more effective or less effective marketing!

Become a Strategic Marketer

Corporate giants spend billions of dollars to market their products and services. Even mid-sized companies dedicate as much as 10 percent of their revenues to packaging and advertising their wares. Fortunately, the task of marketing a HS/HT program requires more ingenuity than monetary outlay.

The next section provides an example of a step-by-step process for planning and implementing a HS/HT marketing strategy. As you move through the process, you may find that some of the suggested steps overlap and may be conducted at the same time. You may also find that you need to revisit some of the steps as you gather information and gain experience.

The information you gather and develop as you proceed through these steps should be compiled into a detailed, written strategic marketing plan. Remember, your plan can be as simple or complex as you wish; however, it must be realistic and achievable. Since you will be gathering additional information and gaining more experience with HS/HT as you move forward with program implementation, your marketing plan should not be set in stone, but rather should change as your program and marketing needs evolve.

A strategic marketing plan typically includes

- **an introduction** that states the program’s mission, describes the rationale for marketing the program, and summarizes the goals of your marketing strategy;
- **a situation analysis** that describes internal and external environmental factors that may impact your marketing efforts;
- **the identification of target market(s)** that specifies your target audience(s);
- **marketing goals and objectives** that state what you hope to achieve in terms of broad marketing goals and more specific objectives;
- **an action plan** that specifies the marketing strategies and tactics you will use to achieve each goal and objective, sets target start and finish dates, and identifies who will be responsible for and involved in each activity; and
- **an evaluation plan** that describes how you will evaluate the success of your marketing efforts (Tilson, 1999).

Five Steps to Marketing a HS/HT Program

Step 1—Analyze Your Situation

Before you dive into marketing your HS/HT program, it is important to analyze your current situation. By gathering information from a variety of sources, you will better understand the environment in which you are working and your program’s marketing challenges and opportunities. For example, to market your program effectively to local employers, it is helpful to understand your community’s economic situation, become familiar with employment trends, and be aware of your community’s leading, new, and growing high-tech businesses. It is also useful to understand the hiring, retention, and competition challenges that local employers face.

Understanding your internal and external environments will also make you more credible when speaking with colleagues, employers, or others about the value of your HS/HT program. Your “situation analysis” should focus on both the strengths and weaknesses of

your internal (or organizational) situation and resources, and the aspects of the external environment that may influence your marketing and your program design. Be sure to take notes as you gather information and then compile the notes into a written analysis.

Sources of information for your internal and external situation analysis may include

- members of your advisory body;
- co-workers;
- youth with disabilities and their families;
- teachers and school administrators;
- current employer contacts;
- the business sections of local newspapers;
- the Yellow Pages or other telephone directories;
- local Chamber of Commerce and other business organizations (e.g., the Rotary Club);
- contacts at career/technical schools, community colleges, colleges and universities;
- the reference section of your public library;
- state and local professional and trade associations;
- faith-based and community organizations, including those serving persons with disabilities;
- employment service agencies (e.g., the local Vocational Rehabilitation agency and the local One-Stop Career Center);
- other local, state, and federal government agencies (e.g., the U.S. Census Bureau); and
- the Internet.

As part of your situation analysis, be sure to visit high-tech employers in your community. Develop a contact database and plan to conduct site visits with known or new personal and professional contacts. Let the employers know you are with HS/HT and that your work involves assisting youth with disabilities in exploring career opportunities in high-tech industries. Initially, your focus should be on learning about a particular industry, although such visits also offer

opportunities to get to know employer representatives, and for them to get to know you.

Developing a Contact Database

A contact database can help you take an inventory, keep track of current and prospective contacts, and serve as a useful organizational tool as you plan and implement your marketing strategy and your program activities. The following suggestions will assist you in developing such a database.

- Begin by compiling a list of individual contacts you have in companies, government agencies, employment service agencies, funding groups, and other relevant organizations. Also include the names of current and former HS/HT participants who may help market the program or serve as speakers or mentors.
- Brainstorm the types of STEM industries and high-tech occupations which may be of interest to HS/HT students (e.g., graphic design, website design, computer repair, telecommunications, engineering, biotechnology, software engineering, etc.).
- Ask your colleagues to help you identify local high-tech companies and prospective funding sources. Using both personal and professional contacts, try to identify contact people within those organizations.
- Compile all of the information into a contact database that, at a minimum, includes each company's name, at least one contact person's name and position, mailing address, telephone, fax number, e-mail address, website, date of the most recent contact, name of the program staff person who made the contact, and the outcome of the discussion (for example, "discussed internship opportunities").
- If possible, use database software to create a searchable, electronic database.
- Build and update the database as your program evolves and your marketing activities progress.

Step 2—Define Your Marketing Goals and Objectives

Before choosing your marketing strategies, it is important to determine what you hope to achieve. Use

the information gathered through the situation analysis to define your goals and objectives. For example, if you learned that most youth with disabilities in your area are aware of or already participate in your program, but that few high-tech employers are familiar with the program, it would be best to focus your efforts on employers, not youth.

Your marketing goals should define the overall changes you hope to accomplish in the process of marketing your program. For example, do you hope to

1. increase the number of youth with disabilities who participate in the program?
2. build parents' awareness and support of the program?
3. recruit teachers to serve as local HS/HT coordinators?
4. convince school administrators to let you establish HS/HT sites in their schools?
5. recruit people to serve on your state/local advisory body?
6. obtain a grant or other funding to support the program's operations?
7. increase the number of industry representatives willing to serve as guest speakers?
8. increase the number of industry tours or site visits offered to youth with disabilities?
9. identify host organizations for job shadowing experiences?
10. increase the number of internships available to participating youth?
11. recruit professionals in high-tech industries to serve as mentors to HS/HT students?

After you have defined your overall marketing goals, write down objectives that describe the steps that must be taken to achieve each goal. Unlike goals, which are broad statements about what you hope to achieve, marketing objectives should be measurable and time-specific. For example, one of your marketing goals might be to establish new internship opportunities for HS/HT participants. Associated objectives might be to

1. increase the number of internships at XYZ Corporation to three within the next year, and
2. establish at least five summer internship opportunities at new genetics research firms in the community by April.

Step 3—Identify Your Target Market

In order to define your marketing goals and objectives, you must also clearly define your "target market." To define your target market, think first about the broad "universe" of "customers" (e.g., youth with disabilities, family members, school staff, employers, foundations, employment service agencies, etc.), and then divide the universe into narrower market "segments" (e.g., teachers, transition coordinators, scientists at biomedical research labs or human resource officers in the software development companies). Refer to your situation analysis and your marketing goals and objectives to help define your target markets.

If your resources and time are limited, you may want to focus initially only on the one or two market segments that will give your HS/HT program the greatest benefit. Channeling your efforts to reach only those segments that will provide the greatest benefit will help focus your efforts and ensure that you can achieve your goals with the resources available. You can later expand your efforts to other target markets as you gain experience and your program grows.

Features to Benefits

Because HS/HT programs rely on a variety of partners, it is important for marketing efforts to be targeted. This is achieved by translating your program features into customer benefits. Features are defined in terms of products or services. A car, for example, may feature a manual transmission and power accessories such as windows, door locks, and radio antenna.

The customer, on the other hand, defines benefits. Depending on the customer, the benefits of a manual transmission may be in handling and responsiveness or in improved gas mileage. Power accessories may represent luxury or may simply be elements of convenience. Again, the benefits are determined by the customer. Think about express mail. Most people would think companies dealing with express mail are

in the shipping business, but in essence they are in the reliability business. Many of its customers are businesses that want the absolute, positive assurance that their valued shipments will be delivered the next day or even the same day. These customers are so motivated by reliability that they will pay a substantial premium over other shippers.

Now, think about the services provided by a HS/HT program. How could these “features” be thought of as “benefits” to your target audience? This becomes your marketing “script.” It will be different for different target audiences. For example, when approaching employers about making internships available to HS/HT students you will likely want to point out the following things:

- Interns provide assistance for permanent staff on projects.
- Interns often undertake projects postponed for lack of time and/or staff resources.
- Employees working with HS/HT interns develop an awareness of the potential for youth with disabilities to be successful, productive workers.
- Engaging interns with disabilities can increase the organization’s overall comfort with persons with disabilities and has the potential to improve the organization’s understanding of reasonable accommodations in the workplace.
- Engaging interns with disabilities enhances an organization’s community responsibility role.
- Interns create a natural pipeline for new permanent employees.

When talking to youth about the benefits of participating in internships, you might point out the following:

- Internships provide opportunities for youth to obtain direct exposure to different careers in a structured setting.
- Through internships, youth see a variety of applications of what is being taught in school.
- Youth who participate in internships discover more

about their talents, skills and interests—information that can be used in formulating initial career choices.

- Youth who participate in internships have the opportunity to develop the soft skills associated with work, i.e., what it takes to be a successful employee.

Step 4—Develop and Implement a Marketing Action Plan

A carefully designed and written action plan will serve as a road map for your marketing efforts. The methods and techniques you choose to include will depend on many factors, including your program vision, your existing relationships with employers and representatives of other target audiences, the size of your program and of your target audiences, and the fiscal and human resources available to your program.

Your written marketing action plan should provide clear, concise direction for your marketing efforts and include methods for measuring the success of your efforts. The action plan should

- state the broad marketing strategies (e.g., personal contact or media relations) and tactics (i.e., specific activities selected to implement the strategies) you plan to use,
- establish target dates for each activity,
- assign responsibilities and define the involvement of different individuals, and
- specify how your marketing efforts will be evaluated (see suggestions below).

As you begin to develop an action plan, think carefully about your marketing goals and objectives, and carefully choose strategies and tactics that will help you achieve them. Sometimes, a targeted approach aimed at reaching specific types of employers (government agencies or small graphic arts firms) and involving only one or two strategies and a few tactics will suffice. In other situations, a broader approach that involves several strategies and tactics will be more effective. As you draft your action plan, be sure to solicit input from your advisory body, interested stakeholders, and trusted representatives of your target audiences.

Marketing Strategies and Tactics

There are at least eight primary strategies for marketing your HS/HT program and reaching your target audiences:

1. personal and professional contacts,
2. print communications,
3. electronic communications,
4. media relations,
5. public service advertising
(see Exhibit 10.4 for a PSA Template),
6. paid advertising,
7. specialty advertising, and
8. special events sponsorship.

Exhibit 10.1 provides a detailed explanation of the marketing strategies and tactics as well as the advantages and disadvantages for different target audiences.

Don't forget that HS/HT participants are your best advertisement. Involve them whenever possible in special events, personal contacts, and presentations. There is nothing like a personal success story to get people listening. You will also want to involve them in determining the design and content of ads, articles, promotional material, and websites. This will provide them with another opportunity for work-based experiences.

Step 5—Evaluate Your Marketing Activities

While Chapter 9 deals with overall program evaluation, this section focuses on evaluating your marketing efforts. People who succeed in business know the importance of tracking the results of their marketing efforts. Building evaluation plans into your strategic marketing plan from the beginning will help you measure your results. It will also provide the information you need to further refine your marketing efforts and gain ongoing support for your HS/HT program. Two types of evaluation are useful: process evaluation and outcome evaluation.

Process evaluation provides data about the administrative and organizational aspects of your marketing efforts. This type of evaluation might result in a report that documents, for a specified time period, the number of telephone calls made to or received from prospective employer partners, meetings held with employers to discuss opportunities for involvement in the program, quarterly employer satisfaction survey results, news stories that were published in local newspapers, materials (i.e., coffee mugs, pens, etc.) distributed, and hits on your website. Process evaluation data should be gathered continuously and analyzed periodically.

Outcome evaluation focuses on the actual results of your marketing efforts. Outcome evaluation measures might include, for example, an increase in

- the number of students enrolling in HS/HT;
- the number of site visits, job shadowing opportunities, and internships created as a result of your marketing efforts;
- the number of employers expressing an interest in participating in your HS/HT program; and/or
- the amount of funding received from different sources to support your program.

When analyzing both process and outcome evaluation data, you will want to look at both the positive and negative impacts of your marketing efforts. You should consider the return on investment for your marketing efforts. Which marketing strategy had the highest response rate? What was the cost per response? Be willing to improve or eliminate the weak areas, make the most of your marketing program's strengths, and adopt new marketing strategies and tactics as you gain experience and gather more information as your program evolves.



Making Your HS/HT Program Business-Friendly

Solid relationships with employers are essential to any HS/HT program. Your success as a program operator depends in large part on how well you interact with employers in your community. As you market your HS/HT program and develop relationships with employers, think about how “business-friendly” you and your program are.

Taking steps to be business-friendly is important for several reasons:

- Your HS/HT program needs employers for speakers, job shadowing, site visits, and internships.
- Business people expect to work with others who present themselves as professionals.
- Employers want to know that their relationship with HS/HT will benefit them and that they will receive a personal or business return on their investment.

When working with employers, be sure to do the following:

- Conduct business in a professional, respectful manner (e.g., by arriving on time for appointments, dressing appropriately, being prepared, replying promptly to telephone and e-mail messages, sending thank you notes, and following up as

appropriate). Encourage participating youth to do the same.

- Think of employers as customers. Talk their language. Listen to their needs and take extra steps to meet those needs. For example, could an employer’s workforce benefit from disability awareness training? Does the employer need advice on workplace accommodations?
- Work to build a relationship rather than “make a sale.”
- Look for ways to make your HS/HT program convenient and understandable to employers. Employers may not have experience working with youth or with people with disabilities. They may not have been involved in providing internships, job-shadowing opportunities, work-study programs, or other programs for high school students in the past.
- After you begin working with an employer, continuously assess the employer’s satisfaction with the relationship and make improvements as needed. Resolve problems immediately and make it clear that you are interested in helping them to achieve their business goals.

Adapted from ODEP’s 2002 Customized Employment Strategies Training Manual.

Think Outside the Box

In identifying target audiences for your marketing efforts, think about ways to get political leaders at the state and local levels involved. For example, consider asking the governor or mayor to support a proclamation stating their support of the HS/HT program or asking them to establish a Youth Achievement Day where the accomplishments of individual HS/HT students can be recognized. Send members of the state legislature and your state’s representatives to the U.S. Congress copies of your newsletters or a letter providing information about HS/HT students in their districts who were successful

in getting a job or securing a summer internship. Ask them to send letters of congratulations to those students. This will remind them of HS/HT on a regular basis and it will be a real thrill for your HS/HT students and their parents.

Remember, all politics are local. When approaching mayors, members of the state legislature and members of Congress, you should try to identify current and past participants in HS/HT who live in their jurisdictions, and either invite them to accompany you to meetings or ask if you can share their stories when talking with politicians.

Working with the Media

Note: The information in this section was adapted from the Florida HS/HT Public Relations Toolkit sponsored by The Able Trust, Florida Governor's Alliance for the Employment of Citizens with Disabilities.

HS/HT offers tremendous media potential! It combines

- a story of national impact with activities taking place in states and localities throughout the country,
- local human interest stories well-suited to local coverage,
- great facts and statistics about improved post-school outcomes for HS/HT graduates, and
- the opportunity to highlight an untapped source of labor (i.e., youth and adults with disabilities).

However, achieving media coverage will take time. The ability to attract coverage will grow with increases in the number of HS/HT sites and increased participation from students and employers. Over time, forming good relationships with local media will aid in securing more and better coverage.

Media Coverage

The more exclusive characteristics you add to your event, the more likely it is to attract media coverage. Try to arrange for a local VIP or public figure to speak or attend the event. Consider partnering with a well-known organization or planning your event in conjunction with a special day that is already being celebrated. Remember, reporters are looking for certain “news value” when deciding what stories to cover, including timeliness, importance, proximity, significance, unusualness, human interest, and newness.

While the state coordinator for HS/HT may take the lead on securing media coverage, local coordinators also have a role. Local coordinators may be better equipped to craft a locally-focused media advisory, develop a local press list, call local reporters to pitch the importance of HS/HT, and prepare a targeted press release for the day of the event. A local coordinator

may want to approach a local public relations firm of a media relations department at a university or corporation to see if they would be willing to provide assistance on a pro bono basis as a local sponsor of HS/HT.

Writing a News Release

The news release is often viewed as the public relations professional's bread and butter. However, since reporters receive hundreds of news releases every day, you must make sure yours stands out. A news release highlights the essence of your story and is written to heighten the editor's interest. Reporters' most common criticism about news releases is that they lack news. Consequently, you should ask yourself the following questions before drafting a news release:

- Is this newsworthy?
- What are the important points?
- Is there any new data or statistics to substantiate the claim?
- Is new information being presented?
- Are well-known experts involved who might be willing to provide a quote that would reinforce the main message being communicated?

(See Exhibit 10.2 for a Sample News Release Template.)

Media Advisory or Media Alert?

A media advisory, also known as a media alert, is a variation of a news release. It notifies assignment editors of a press conference or any other event that you believe will generate news for the media to cover. It is always one page, brief but compelling, and sufficiently informative to arouse interest, usually (but not necessarily) without giving away the story. Make it clear that there are visual opportunities on a newsworthy topic for cameras and print photographers. Since timing is critically important, a media advisory or media alert must be distributed far enough in advance to get the media to the event. (Exhibit 10.3 contains a Sample Media Advisory Template.)

The Release Is Written, Now What?

Once a news release and/or media advisory has been written, proofread, and approved, the next step is to send it out. Since reporters are not working for you, it is up to you to sell your story or event to them.

Timeliness on sending out news releases and media advisories is critically important. The following general guidelines will help you generate news coverage for your HS/HT program.

The News Release

When—If the news release is telling about an event, you typically want to send it out a couple of days before the event is taking place. You can always put the date of the event as the release date, but send it to the reporter a day or two early. However, it is just as important not to send it too early. If the event is too far into the future (to a reporter a week is too early), the release will get lost and your event will not get covered. If you are writing a release about one of your HS/HT students, timeliness isn't as much of an issue as relevance to the community.

How—Releases can be sent to reporters through standard mail, fax, or e-mail. However, many reporters prefer e-mail. Faxes are also common, but many times the fax machine can get overloaded and your release could get lost. Do some research to determine the name of the reporter that would be most likely to cover the topic, e.g., by checking their website or calling their office.

At the event, it is a good idea to have several copies of the news release available for the media representatives who are present.

The Media Advisory

When—A media advisory should only be given out for an event you want the press to attend. You should send it out 24 hours prior to the event. If it is on the weekend or on a Monday, it is best to send it out on Friday. If it is on a Monday, it is advisable to send it again on Monday morning.

How—Media advisories should only be sent through fax or e-mail because of time constraints. You will also

want to distribute advisories at events where media representatives are likely to be present.

Media Etiquette

Demonstrating respect for the media is critically important to getting your story covered. The following are some things to consider when interacting with the media:

- When calling reporters about your story, make sure you reiterate why the story should be covered, rather than merely asking whether they got your news release or advisory;
- Stick to the facts when writing your release or advisory. Many people use opinions that cannot be included in a media report. Make sure you can provide evidence of your program's excellence, e.g., using facts, statistics, or personal experiences of past participants;
- Don't use a release which sounds like an advertisement;
- Target specific media outlets. Don't send your release to just anybody. Do your research and determine where it should go and who it should go to;
- Proofread! Make sure you check for spelling or grammatical errors. Errors will turn off reporters and your release may end up in the garbage; and
- KISS! Keep It Short and Simple.

Other Written Public Relations Tools

Media Kit

Media kits are used by organizations to provide basic information about the organization, special events, news conferences and crises to the media. The shell for media kits is usually a basic folder that has the name and logo of the organization or program. In all cases, the kit should have a letter attached or enclosed addressed to the person who is going to use the information. The letter should explain why the kit is being sent, identify its contents, and list important dates and contacts (see "Pitch Letters"). Media kits are often distributed at press conferences and events.

A basic media kit generally includes the following:

- a fact sheet giving information about the organization, program, or event;
- biographical information on the principals/officers of the organization. In the case of HS/HT, this would likely be biographical information on members of the advisory body;
- a backgrounder that tells something about the character of the organization/program and the nature of what it does;
- photocopies of articles printed about the organization, program, or event in publications such as daily newspapers or monthly magazines;
- selected copies of any position papers prepared by the organization/program;
- selected copies of any serial publications such as newsletters or magazines produced by the organization/program;
- an annual report or informational brochure if available;
- logo in electronic or other formats; and
- optional items, including black and white glossy photographs (print media only), sound bytes on compact disk (electronic media only), and B-roll video footage (television media only).

Pitch Letters

A pitch letter should accompany every media kit sent. It is designed to illicit help from an editor, reporter or producer to provide coverage on your organization, program, or event. A pitch letter is a standard business letter (about four to five paragraphs with a maximum of one page) that includes the following information:

- why you are writing them—for example, you are announcing an event, new service or program, accomplishment, or news conference;
- why they should read through the media kit;
- why the organization, program or event is interesting and/or important;

- a brief statement describing the organization or program and what it does;
- as appropriate, a brief statement describing the event or issue;
- information on what the media kit contains;
- a plea for support or explanation of what you would like them to do; and
- contact information.

Fact Sheets

Standard fact sheets present the fundamental facts about the organization, program, or event in an easy to read, bulleted format. Fact sheets should not be any longer than one page, and may include:

- names of officers or of the leadership of the HS/HT advisory body;
- office location(s) with address, phone number, fax numbers and appropriate e-mail addresses;
- description of what the organization, program, or event is and/or does;
- historical milestones in the organization's/program's/event's history (e.g., when and where it was founded, when and where activities began, etc.);
- major accomplishments;
- interesting facts and statistics; and
- programs/services offered.

For fact sheets on events, you should also include:

- where and when the event is being held;
- any cost associated with the event, if applicable;
- past benefits offered as a result of the event and who benefited;
- name of participants or type of people participating;
- goals of the event; and
- names of the people and organizations sponsoring the event.

Backgrounder

Backgrounders provide a more comprehensive overview of an organization, program, event or issue than a fact sheet. Backgrounders are longer and give more in-depth content than a news release. For example, a two-page release announcing the merger of two organizations may not permit much description of the companies involved. A four or five-page background paper would provide more detailed information on the make-up, activities, and history of the companies that are merging. Representatives of the media seldom use all of the information provided in a background paper; rather they excerpt selected information. A background paper needs to include the latest research and information on outcomes (if available) in order to be effective.

Using a Website to Market Your HS/HT Program

Most HS/HT programs maintain a website which is a powerful tool for marketing the program. A website provides global access to information about the program twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It can be easily updated to address changes in information and to include new information. A website can be designed to provide basic information about HS/HT with icons and links that lead to more detailed information of interest to different target audiences. A website can be used to post information on upcoming

events, to provide detailed descriptions of past events, and to highlight HS/HT success stories. A website can also be made interactive, providing an easy method of communicating with and getting feedback from HS/HT students, family members, education personnel, employers, etc. Several HS/HT programs use their websites to share information on the *Guideposts for Success* and to disseminate information on resources useful to transition-age youth and the people who work with them.

If your program decides to establish a website, it is important to make it simple to navigate and fully accessible to individuals with disabilities. The Bobby WorldWide Web Accessibility Tool, <<http://webxact.watchfire.com/>>, was designed to aid webmasters in creating standard compliant websites and to increase the accessibility of a website. Bobby tests web pages using the guidelines established by the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Access Initiative, <<http://www.w3.org/WAI/>>, as well as Section 508 guidelines from the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) of the U.S. Federal Government. WAI guidelines are widely regarded as the international standard for web accessibility support materials to help understand and implement web accessibility resources, through international collaboration. It is also important to register your website with major search engines so people will be able to find it easily.



Suggested Marketing Strategies and Tactics

Personal Contact

- Send personalized letters and your HS/HT business card to selected employers or others in the community to let them know about your program and invite their participation in the program or in a specific event. When sending letters, be sure to follow up with a phone call to confirm receipt and answer any questions.
- Call or send e-mail messages to people with whom you have an existing relationship to let them know about your HS/HT program and invite their participation. Before making contact, know what you want to communicate and what you are going to ask them to do.
- Contact your local Chamber of Commerce to get information on local businesses, particularly those that emphasize the STEM careers and other technology-related professions.
- Make “cold calls” or canvas high-tech employers to learn more about their organizations, let them know about your program, and get a sense of the employer’s potential interest in getting involved with HS/HT. Even though you may be making cold calls, be sure to take a warm approach!
- Ask to speak during regularly scheduled meetings of your local Lion’s Club, Kiwanis Club, etc. Use these opportunities to inform professional members of the business community about HS/HT and explain how they can get involved.
- Educate others at your school or organization about the goals and activities of the HS/HT program.
- Arrange for site visits to help you better understand the operations and business cultures of STEM industries.
- Represent your program at community, business, and professional events as a speaker, host, or exhibitor.
- Network at professional conferences, in classes you may be taking, or through your involvement in church, community events, or volunteer activities.
- Visit the websites of employers, employment service agencies and potential funding sources, or call their offices to obtain e-mail addresses. Send e-mails to targeted individuals to let them know about your HS/HT program.
- Volunteer to serve on boards or committees of stakeholder organizations.
- Arrange for booth space at conferences attended by youth with disabilities or their families, local employers, service providers, and community-based organizations.
- Attend or exhibit at high-tech trade shows to meet and network with employer representatives.
- Invite target market representatives to become a part of your state/local advisory body.
- Ask your current employer partners to tell their colleagues in the business world about HS/HT.
- Follow up after each contact by sending a letter or by calling with additional information.
- Begin by focusing on building long-term mutually beneficial relationships, rather than asking for financial support up front. Such relationships often evolve into financial support.



Advantages of Personal Contact

Allows greater control of results, requires few material resources, and allows you to use your interpersonal skills and known contacts.

Disadvantages of Personal Contact

Can involve significant time and offers limited reach.

Print Communications

- Develop a HS/HT program brochure or fact sheet to mail with letters, disseminate at meetings or workshops, or post in targeted locations such as high schools.
- Create an inexpensive newsletter that periodically updates current and prospective employers and others about your HS/HT program. Include success stories about participating youth. Produce the newsletter in a print format, distribute it by e-mail, and post it on your website.
- Design and print HS/HT business cards and stationery that convey a professional, consistent program image. Be sure that the business card includes your telephone and fax numbers, mailing address, and e-mail and website addresses. Carry business cards with you at all times.
- Develop program progress reports or an annual report to update stakeholders about program activities and accomplishments.
- Make copies of articles that have been published about your HS/HT program and share them with stakeholders and prospective stakeholders.

Advantages of Print Communications

Lets you control the messages and timing and allows you to target specific audiences.

Disadvantages of Print Communications

Requires funds for reproduction; can involve significant time for writing and layout; and requires lead time to develop materials.

Electronic Communications

- Create an accessible website that informs targeted markets about your HS/HT program and provides your contact information. Be sure to keep the website current and add new material to encourage viewers to return to it.
- Register your website with search engines to improve the chances of the site being found when web users conduct a search. Register for free on search engines' websites (e.g., www.google.com) or pay to use a search engine registration service.
- Disseminate program updates, event invitations, and other information by e-mail and place it on your website.
- Create and send periodic e-mail newsletters.

- Create a video or CD-ROM that explains the goals, activities, and successes of your HS/HT program.
- Participate in online communities such as electronic bulletin boards and listservs used by local high-tech business leaders, workforce development representatives, or disability employment professionals.
- Ask employer partners to include information about HS/HT and their involvement with the program on their websites and in their electronic newsletters.
- Arrange for reciprocal website links with other organizations (e.g., websites of employer partners, One-Stop Career Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, etc.).
- Include your program contact information and website address on your e-mail address block.

Advantages of Electronic Communications

Lets you control the messages and timing; allows instant, low-cost dissemination of messages and information; allows you to target specific audiences as needed (i.e., through targeted e-mails); and facilitates interactive, around-the-clock communications with known contacts.

Disadvantages of Electronic Communications

Requires expertise, technology, and time to develop, launch, and maintain a website; and requires staff time to keep the information up-to-date, respond to e-mail inquiries, manage listservs, etc.

Media Relations

- Create news by "pitching" story ideas to local media representatives. Suggest interesting angles for covering your HS/HT program, the accomplishments of participating youth, or collaborations with employers.
- Mail, fax, or e-mail news releases or media advisories to reporters, editors, or producers at local newspapers, television stations, and radio stations to inform them of program events and activities. Be sure to use the proper format and always include your telephone number and e-mail address for any questions the recipient might have.
- Write articles about HS/HT activities for placement in local newspapers, trade publications, employers' in-house or external newsletters, or school system publications. Before writing an article, contact the publication to determine the editor's interest in a particular story line.

- Use—but don't abuse—any connections you may have with local reporters, editors, or producers.
- Develop and use a database of media contacts.
- Tap into the expertise of media relations experts within your school system or ask your employer partners if their public relations staff can advise you on media relations.
- Invite media representatives to become a part of your state/local advisory body.
- Invite reporters to attend your program events.
- Make yourself and your program participants available for media interviews.
- Talk with representatives at your local public access cable television station about being included in their programming (e.g., in a panel discussion about youth with disabilities and employment).

Advantages of Media Relations

Often allows rapid dissemination of messages; involves few or no material costs; and allows you to reach a broad audience.

Disadvantages of Media Relations

Provides limited control of messages and timing of message release, takes time to develop a story, requires sustained work to maintain relationships with reporters and other media representatives, and requires time to communicate and follow-up with reporters and others.

Public Service Advertising

- Submit announcements about events, need for volunteers, and need for partner organizations to local newspapers, radio stations, and broadcast and cable television stations.
- Work with program partners (e.g., employers) to develop issue-oriented print or broadcast public services announcements (PSAs).
- Use the proper format for the media outlet you are targeting. Try to limit PSAs for television and radio to 30 seconds and indicate the running time on the announcement.

Advantages of Public Service Advertising

Offers free promotion air time or print space and can offer wide reach.

Disadvantages of Public Service Advertising

Offers little control over timing and editing of messages and can involve costs to develop print or broadcast ads.

Paid Advertising

- Do a cost benefit analysis for paid advertising, which can be very expensive. Investigate circulation numbers, who the readers/viewers are, and other relevant information. (Which TV channel has the highest viewership among your target audience(s)? Should you run your display ad in the sports section, business section, or near the education columnist in the newspaper? What day of the week would be best from an optimal exposure and impact standpoint?)
- Develop a template or “look” for your print advertisement working with a graphic designer—or with your HS/HT students.
- When looking for employer partners, place paid advertising in local newspapers and on radio, broadcast television, or cable television.
- Place ads in local business magazines, newsletters, and directories.

Advantages of Paid Advertising

Lets you control the content of the message, lets you control where and when messages are disseminated, and can offer targeted or wide reach.

Disadvantages of Paid Advertising

Involve costs to create and place ads and requires repeated ad placement to achieve the greatest impact.

Special Event Sponsorship

- Invite representatives of business and industry, employment service agencies, schools, and prospective or current funding organizations to an annual informational meeting or kick-off event.
- Hold an annual employer or funding organization recognition event, or present awards to employers, youth participants, and other stakeholders at an annual conference or program banquet.
- Invite local high-tech employers and representatives of community colleges, colleges and universities to participate in a career fair for people with disabilities.
- Create an annual, issue-oriented awareness event that involves program stakeholders.

Advantages of Special Event Sponsorship

Provides visibility in the community or targeted communities, offers opportunities to recognize and solidify support of program stakeholders, and offers opportunities to make new contacts.

Disadvantages of Special Event Sponsorship

Can require funds to rent event space, produce materials, and provide refreshments; requires significant staff time for planning, logistics, and follow-up; and can be negatively impacted by weather, traffic, and other problems.

Specialty Advertising

- Create t-shirts, mugs, magnets, bookmarks, mouse pads, pens, or other giveaways bearing your HS/HT program's logo or slogan. Distribute these items at events, when you meet employers or have other contact with representatives of your target audiences.
- Include HS/HT participants in the design and creation of products and materials.
- Consider selling specialty advertising items to raise funds for your program.

Advantages of Specialty Advertising

Offers low-cost program visibility, and offers control over product design and distribution.

Disadvantages of Specialty Advertising

Requires funds for product design and production, and requires staff time to oversee item production, distribution, and inventory.



Sample News Release Template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Month, Day, Year

CONTACT: CONTACT NAME IN CAPS

NAME OF ORGANIZATION/COMPANY

(if not on letterhead)

PHONE: (XXX) XXX-XXXX or e-mail address

**TITLE OF RELEASE SHOULD SUMMARIZE THE CONTENT OF THE RELEASE
IN ONE LINE AND SHOULD BE IN CAPS, BOLD AND CENTERED**

(MONTH, DAY, YEAR—NAME OF CITY IN CAPS AND BOLD) In the first paragraph of a news release, state the basic who, what, where, when and why information. A release should lead with the most important information and end with the least important. As a general rule, news releases should be no longer than two pages.

Indent all new paragraphs. Paragraphs should consist of approximately 3 – 4 concise sentences. The body of a news release should be double-spaced, whereas the contact information should be single-spaced.

Print news releases on organization or company letterhead if available. Do not use bright colored paper for a news release. Even though you want to get the reporter's attention, use neutral colored paper. Provide at least one-inch margins on each side of the paper if possible.

Use three number marks (###) centered on the bottom of the page to indicate the end of a release. If an additional page is necessary, indicate that the release continues onto the next page using the following centered on the bottom of the first page: -more-. If you must continue your release onto the next page, never break up a sentence.

-more-

News Release Template

Simply begin the next page with the entire sentence. Do not indent this sentence unless you are beginning a new paragraph.

“Slugline” and date should be single-spaced. However, the remainder of the release body will be double-spaced.

There is no need to use letterhead for subsequent pages. Plain white paper is fine. The last paragraph should be separate and include your contact information in case the reader wants more information.

For more information, contact _____, at
_____. You can include telephone, fax, e-mail or address.

About your organization/program. In this paragraph, you may choose to briefly describe your organization/program. What is its mission? When was it established? Why does it exist? Once again, this should be short and to the point. Random facts and information should not be included. It can be single-spaced and a smaller font if needed.

###

Source: The Able Trust—Florida Governor’s Alliance for the Employment of Citizens with Disabilities.

Sample Media Advisory Template

CONTACT: CONTACT NAME IN CAPS
NAME OF ORGANIZATION/PROGRAM: IN CAPS
PHONE: (XXX) XXX-XXXX
FAX: (XXX) XXX-XXXX
E-mail Address: XXXXXX@XXX.XXX

MEDIA ADVISORY/PHOTO OPPORTUNITY (CENTERED IN BOLD, CAPS AND LARGER FONT SIZE)

WHO: Name of the organization/program hosting the event
WHAT: Name of event that is taking place
WHERE: Physical location—provide address
WHEN: Date and time of event
WHY: Purpose of event

You may choose to provide a brief summary underneath (1-2 paragraphs) with more detailed information on the event. Highlight particular aspects of the event that are newsworthy and not included in the basic who, what, where, when and why, such as dignitaries attending, special awards or honors being presented, activities surrounding the event, or announcements being made.

For more information, contact _____ at
_____.

###

Source: The Able Trust—Florida Governor's Alliance for the Employment of Citizens with Disabilities.

Public Service Announcement Template

TITLE OF PSA SPOT:
BROADCAST DATES:
SECOND PSA:
CONTACT: NAME OF CONTACT IN CAPS
PHONE: (XXX) XXX-XXXX
DATES: (MONTH & DAY)
FAX: (XXX) XXX-XXXX
E-mail Address: XXXX@XXX.XXX

ANNOUNCER: PSA COPY SHOULD BE TYPED ON THE RIGHT-HAND SIDE OF THE SHEET IN CAPITAL LETTERS. **TRIPLE-SPACE THE COPY** TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE ANNOUNCER TO READ. BE SURE TO LIST IF THE ANNOUNCEMENT IS A 60, 30 OR 10-SECOND SPOT IN THE TOP LEFT-HAND CORNER OF THE COPY. LIST THE DATES (MONTH, DAY THROUGH MONTH, DAY) YOU WOULD LIKE IT TO RUN. READ YOUR COPY OUT LOUD AND TIME YOURSELF TO ENSURE YOU ARE WITHIN THE APPROPRIATE TIME LIMITS. USE -30- TO INDICATE THE END OF THE COPY.

-30-

Source: The Able Trust—Florida Governor's Alliance for the Employment of Citizens with Disabilities.



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CHAPTER 11:

HS/HT Glossary of Terms

ACCESS refers to the ability to find, manipulate, and use information, an object, a place, a service, or a program in an efficient and comprehensive manner. Access can be programmatic or physical.

ACCESSIBLE refers to providing access to or capable of being reached or used. It may also be used to describe architecture that can be reached or utilized by everyone, including those who have functional limitations and, as a result, may use a wheelchair, a walker, or a cane.

ACCOMMODATION refers to the modifications or adjustments to the work environment or to the circumstances under which a particular task is customarily performed that enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of that position (including jobs, education, and community involvement). Also includes any strategy that eliminates or lessens the effect of a specific barrier.

ADULT SERVICES refer to those services needed for people when they reach adulthood. Such services often include (but are not limited to) assistance in finding a job, keeping a job, living independently, and the provision of various therapies or medications.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY under the Americans with Disabilities Act, refers to “any item, piece of equipment, or system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is commonly used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of

individuals with disabilities.” Assistive technology helps people with disabilities complete daily living tasks independently, assists them in communicating with other individuals, and provides access to education, employment, and recreation.

BENEFITS PLANNER is a person who interprets complex policies, rules, procedures, administrative code, and legislative language into practical and understandable information. Under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act, Congress created a formal program, known as the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program, as a core employment support for people with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance. All 50 states participate in the WIPA program.

BENEFITS PLANNING refers to the person-centered analysis of the effect that work and other life situation changes have on public and private programs, including income support programs. Benefits planning helps people with disabilities steer through the maze of public and private benefits programs while minimizing disincentives and barriers that exist for them to prepare for, obtain, advance in, retain, leave, and regain employment.

BLENDED FUNDING is a term used to describe mechanisms that pool dollars from multiple sources and make them in some ways indistinguishable. Blending may require the changing or relaxing of regulations guiding relevant state and federal funding

streams by policy makers at the federal, state, or local level to permit program flexibility, and change the way services are structured and delivered.

BRAIDED FUNDING is a term used to describe a funding and resource allocation strategy that taps into existing categorical funding streams and uses them to support unified initiatives in as flexible and integrated a manner as possible. Braided funding streams remain visible and are used in common to produce greater strength, efficiency, and/or effectiveness. Braided funding allows resources to be tracked more closely for the purpose of accounting to state and federal administrators. Thus, implementing a braided funding approach requires that significant attention be paid to administrative issues.

BUSINESS LEADERSHIP NETWORK (BLN) is a national network led by employers in concert with state Governor's Committees on Disabilities and/or community agencies that engage the leadership and participation of companies throughout the United States to hire qualified job candidates with disabilities.

CAREER ASSESSMENT refers to a comprehensive process conducted over a period of time, involving a multi-disciplinary team with the purpose of identifying individual characteristics, education, training, and placement needs. Such assessments provide educators and others with the basis for planning an individual's school and career development program. Career assessment may use both formal and informal methodologies and should provide the individual with insight into his or her vocational potential (Leconte & Neubert, 1997).

CAREER EDUCATION refers to an educational emphasis stressing the teaching of life career roles (e.g., family member, citizen, community participant, worker, etc.) early in life, to be followed up throughout the student's education, in preparing him or her for those roles (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000).

CONFLICT RESOLUTION refers to the process of becoming aware of a conflict, diagnosing its nature, and employing an appropriate problem-solving method in such a way that it simultaneously achieves the goals of all involved and enhances the relationships among them (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 1993).

CONSUMER EMPOWERMENT refers to programs that allow for, and even promote, self-determination, self-advocacy, and active participation in the decision-making process at the individual and systems levels.

DISABILITY PROGRAM NAVIGATORS (DPNs) are positions that exist in a growing number of One-Stop Career Centers to build staff capacity and work with people with disabilities and service providers to access, facilitate and navigate the complex statutory and regulatory provisions that impact their ability to gain/retain employment. DPNs also develop linkages and collaborate with employers and conduct outreach to agencies and organizations that serve people with disabilities.

DISCLOSURE refers to the act of opening up, revealing, or telling. With regard to individuals with disabilities, it refers to the act of informing someone that an individual has a disability, including self-disclosure. It is often associated with a person's need to request accommodations.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP is the process of finding and evaluating opportunities and risks, in developing and executing plans for translating those opportunities into financial self-sufficiency. The two variables of this definition are process and risk.

INDIVIDUALIZED PLANNING refers to the process of assessing a person's strengths, skills, resources, interests, and limitations as they apply to the achievement of a specific goal, and then using that information to develop a plan that lays out the steps that need to be taken for that person to accomplish that goal. Under IDEA, special education students are required to have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that includes information on the student's present level of functioning in each identified needs area, a statement of annual goals for the student, a statement of appropriate short-term objectives with the evaluation approach and criteria for determining progress toward achievement of annual goals, a statement of any required related services and who will provide them, a statement of transition service needs (beginning at least by age 16), and a statement that relates to the amount of time the student will spend in the least restrictive environment (i.e., general education classes). Under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, individuals determined

eligible for services from a State Vocational Rehabilitation agency must have an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) which is developed in partnership with a qualified VR Counselor and which outlines the person's vocational goals, the services that the individual will receive, the providers of those services, and the methods that will be used to procure those services. Another example of an individualized plan is the Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) which allows recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to set aside income and resources to achieve a specific work goal. Other examples of individualized plans include individualized service strategies for participation in Title I WIA youth activities, the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) required under Part C of IDEA, the Individual Work Plan (IWP) required under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program, and the Individual Habilitation Plan (IHP) required for individuals receiving services from State Divisions of Developmental Disabilities.

INFORMED CHOICE refers to the process by which an individual arrives at a decision. It is a process that is based upon access to, and full understanding of, all necessary information from the individual's perspective. The process should result in a free and informed decision by the individual about what he or she needs.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) refers to a written document detailing the work and fiscal responsibilities of participating parties. Such documents may also be referred to as Service, Resource Sharing, or Governance Agreements. These agreements include details regarding who is providing what services, how much they will cost, who is paying for them, where they will be delivered, and additional information as needed.

MENTORING refers to a trusting relationship, formalized into a program of structured activities, which brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee. There are four basic types of mentoring models: traditional one-to-one, peer, group, and e-mentoring.

NATURAL SUPPORTS refer to personal associations and relationships typically developed in the community

that enhance the quality and security of life for people, including, but not limited to, family relationships; friendships reflecting the diversity of the neighborhood and the community; association with fellow students or employees in regular classrooms and workplaces; and associations developed through participation in clubs, organizations, and other civic activities.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) refers to an invitation for providers of a product or service to bid on the right to supply that product or service to, or on behalf of, the individual or entity that issued the RFP.

SELF-ADVOCACY is the action part of self-determination. It refers to taking action on one's own behalf and includes seeking out options, determining levels of independence, determining individual rights and responsibilities, and speaking out (Hayden & Shoultz, 1991 BH). When individuals make decisions about their lives, they must have skills to voice their decisions to others and act.

SELF-DETERMINATION is a concept that combines "skills, knowledge, and beliefs [to] enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one's strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination" (http://www.dcdt.org/pdf/self_deter.pdf). There are three components to self-determination: self-awareness, self-advocacy, and goal setting. Self-determination also involves the concept of "informed choice" which means having the right information to make the right decision at the right time.

SOFT SKILLS refers to skills other than technical skills and basic knowledge that are valued by employers in the workplace. These include behaviors such as good work habits and attitudes, dressing appropriately, the ability to communicate and get along with others, and the ability to work in teams. These skills are essential for all youth.

TECHNOLOGY refers to the tangible objects of the human designed world (e.g., bridges, automobiles, computers, satellites, medical imaging devices, drugs, etc.) and the systems of which these objects are a part (e.g., transportation, communications, finance, healthcare, food production, etc.), as well as the people,

infrastructure, and processes required to design, manufacture, operate, and repair the objects (Pearson & Young, 2002).

UNIVERSAL DESIGN refers to the design of products and environments that are usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) defines “Universal Design for Learning” (UDL) as a framework for designing education environments that enable all learners to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning. UDL is accomplished by simultaneously reducing barriers to the curriculum and providing rich supports for learning. UDL involves providing multiple and flexible methods of presentation, means of expression, and means of engagement. “Universal Design for the Workforce Development System” refers to the design of environments, products, and communication practices, as well as the delivery of programs, services, and activities to benefit the greatest number of people served by the workforce development system.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM is a term that encompasses organizations at the national, state, and local levels that have direct responsibility for planning, allocating resources (both public and private), providing administrative oversight, and operating programs to assist individuals and employers in obtaining education, training, job placement, and job recruitment. Included in this broad network are several federal agencies such as the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education, charged with providing specific education and/or training support and other labor market services such as labor market information. At the state and local levels the network includes state and local workforce investment boards, state and local career and technical education and adult education agencies, vocational rehabilitation agencies, recognized apprenticeship programs, state employment and unemployment services agencies, state and local welfare agencies, and/or sub-units of these entities. A wide array of organizations provide direct education, training, or employment services (e.g., technical schools, colleges, universities, Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, apprenticeship programs, community-based organizations, One-Stop Career Centers, Welfare to Work training programs, literacy programs, Job Corps Centers, unions, and labor/management programs).

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD (WIB), as required under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, refers to an appointed body, certified by the governor to set policy, guide implementation, and provide oversight to the local workforce development system. A WIB is also a forum for planning workforce development strategies. A WIB attempts to anticipate economic and business trends, develop community linkages and partnerships, and provide a focus on system outcomes.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT refers to a process that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences that help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Youth development spans five basic developmental areas in which all young people need to learn and grow: thriving, leading, connecting, learning, and working. It includes mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with adults through formal and informal settings, peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities, and exposure to role models in a variety of contexts. Positive youth development addresses the broader developmental needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models that focus solely on youth problems (NCWD/Youth).

YOUTH LEADERSHIP refers to an internal and external process leading to (1) “the ability to guide or direct others on a course of action, influence the opinion and behavior of other people, and show the way by going in advance” (Wehmeyer, Agran & Hughes, 1998); and (2) “the ability to analyze one’s own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and vocational goals, and have the self-esteem to carry them out. It includes the ability to identify community resources and use them, not only to live independently, but also to establish support networks to participate in community life and to effect positive social change” (Adolescent Employment Readiness Center, Children’s Hospital, n.d.). It includes training in skills such as self-advocacy and conflict resolution; exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, including community service; and opportunities that allow youth to exercise leadership and build self-esteem.

APPENDIX A:

HS/HT Program Guide References

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