

*To Coordinate... To Enhance... To Serve...Through
Communication*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

MRS & MTSA Collaborative Projects	1
MRS/MSU Careers Collaborative	4
Evidenced –Based Practices	4
Student Story—Lauryn Atchison	5
Save The Date	6

MRS and MTSA Collaborative Projects – Year 3

The MRS/MTSA Collaborative is entering into the third year of implementation. Since conception, this innovative approach has resulted in a fund source for ten work-based learning projects in Michigan. This year, the MTSA board approved a donation to MRS that was very generous. After MRS was able to draw down the federal matching dollars, there were enough funds for five new work-based learning projects, one in each of the MTSA Regions. Each project was allowed a maximum of \$30,000 to implement their concept.

This year, a total of ten proposals were submitted for the five awards. Region 4 had three competing projects. Region 1 did not submit any proposals this year allowing for a wild card. The neutral review team collectively agreed that the quality of the proposals was extremely high and that over the last three years, the proposals that have been submitted have improved each year. Because the proposals were so well crafted,

ranking the proposals was very challenging this year. After much discussion, the following communities received funds to implement their work-based learning projects:

Region 2 - Ingham ISD and MRS Lansing District Office:

Need:

According to the US Dept. of Labor, in 2014, the employment rate for YWD ages 16 –19 was 16.6% compared to youth without disabilities of 31.6%. There is a growing demand of businesses to have skilled workers to meet the demands of an evolving economy and employers site “social competency” as a critical skill set for success in the workplace. After implementation of the Michigan Merit Curriculum, several Ingham county schools are below the graduation benchmark of 80%. The passage of WIOA includes enhanced services for YWD to prepare them for “competitive integrated employment.”

Work-Based Learning Project Description:

This project provides a holistic opportunity for SWD to earn high school credits while participating in a summer paid work experience program. The program includes a 40 hour work readiness class focusing on social and communication skills and placement in a business for 80 hours of targeted skills training based on the students interests, skills and abilities. The curriculum includes travel training, disability awareness/disclosure, time management, and budgeting.

Outcomes:

- 10 students served
- 10 work-based learning opportunities provided
- 8 students will achieve competitive employment





Region 3 - Muskegon ISD and MRS Muskegon Office

Need:

Due to the rigorous demands of the Michigan Merit Curriculum, many students with disabilities that have many skills and talents receive a Certificate of Completion rather than a high school diploma. As a result, expanded vocational and employment options are needed. A recently developed approach referred to as the “Transition Table” is currently being underutilized by students due to funding issues.

Work-Based Learning Project Description:

The project objective is to provide MRS eligible students a menu of options that will meet their needs and talents based on individual student strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, and capabilities. The student and MRS counselor select options from various agencies offering services based the assessment and evaluation administered by MRS during the junior year that may include: Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation, Interest Inventory, Situational Assessment, Career Scope, ONET Career Exploration, Paid work experience; and attitude, motivation, work values, and goal development. The student’s senior year is different than a typical high school senior year and may include: vocational training or OJE/OJT to hire, job search skills training, resume building and interview preparation, transportation/riding the bus, individualized placement plan, job coaching, promoting natural supports on the job, assistance with accommodations and orientation, and long term follow-up. Three specific vocational training options will be offered: Institutional/Commercial Food Preparation, Sustainable Agricultural Methods, and Stocking/Manufacturing; Custodial Green Clean Certification and Internships (OJE’s and OJT’s) will also be provided.

Outcomes

- 10 – 13 students will be served
- 10 -13 students will receive work-based learning opportunities
- 7 – 10 students will become employed

Region 4 - Lenawee ISD and MRS Ann Arbor District Office

Need:

In 2013-2014, Lenawee County ISD reported 171 students with ASD in the K-12 school setting. Of those, 52 students were enrolled in high school and of those, 18 had exposure to a work-based learning opportunity. MRS and education discovered the need for early social interventions and more comprehensive reporting in regards to independence and motivation toward obtaining employment. To achieve independence, successful employment outcomes, and community integration, a more collaborative/strategic and proactive approach is needed.

Work-Based Learning Project Description:

The program includes 4 evidence-based approaches including: 16 week ASPPIRE training to improve executive function, social skills, communication, and opportunities for community inclusion; obtainment of the National Career Readiness Certificate (including Applied Math, Reading for Information, and Locating Information); PERT Program (one week vocational and independent living assessment); and an 8 week paid summer work experience.

Outcomes:

- 8 – 12 students will be served
- 8 – 24 work experiences will be provided
- 4 – 6 students will become employed





Region 4 - St. Clair County and MRS St. Clair Office (Macomb District Office)

Need:

Since experience gained from career preparation and work-based learning often impacts later decisions regarding employment options, students with LD need: exposure to work-based learning and vocational activities that focus on their individual interests, skills and aptitudes; and understanding of how their processing challenges may impact career options, how accommodations can minimize barriers, and how disclosure of disability can facilitate success in employment. Adjudicated youth also need: participation in vocational programming in high growth industries as an approach to prevent recidivism; access to employment and work-based experiences on and off facility grounds; and training in behavioral skills that may affect sustaining employment.

Work-Based Learning Project Description:

This project is called, “Youth Employment Project (YEP!)” and provides extensive Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) through multiple paid and unpaid work-based learning experiences and work behavior/social skills training. Job coaching is an identified service that will be provided as needed. Students and parents will receive a packet with the following: information about student’s disability, needed accommodations, and links to resources that may help. Photos and videos of the students working will be compiled for their use to create a portfolio/resume.

Outcomes:

- 12 students will be served
- 36 work-based learning experiences will be provided
- 8 students will become employed

Region 5 - Marquette/Alger RESA, Copper Country ISD, Menominee County ISD and MRS Marquette District Office

Need:

Students with disabilities, particularly those with the most significant disabilities, face difficulties accessing the workforce development system. There continues to be an unyielding dilemma facing youth with disabilities in the achievement of employment. Despite supportive legislation (e.g., the IDEA, ADA and the Rehab Act) as well as many identified effective practices, many YWD experience insufficient opportunities to obtain competitive employment with opportunities for career growth. One key factor in achieving positive post-school outcomes is the ability of students to advocate for themselves.

Work-Based Learning Project Description:

This project is called, “Self Determination: Train the Trainer.” SWD will gain the necessary skills to effectively mentor 8th grade students in developing self-determination and soft skills. They will participate in a 25 hour Self-Determination Workshop that develops leadership skills necessary for these “Student Leaders” to mentor younger SWD. The student leaders conduct 5 Self-Determination Trainings for their mentees. Student Learners will maintain a journal and a post program survey will be conducted. After completing all responsibilities as a mentor, students receive a completion award.

Outcomes:

- 12 students will be served
- 1 day Self-Determination Trainer workshop, 2 day regional workshop, a Spring Workshop Series and a Mentor Power Point Presentation will be provided





Michigan Rehabilitation Services and Michigan State University Launch a New Program – MRS/MSU Careers Collaborative

By Kate Long, MRS Counselor at MSU

Beginning fall semester 2014, Michigan State University (MSU) students with disabilities have a new and innovative program available to help them to become successfully employed after graduation. The Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)/MSU Careers Collaborative has been formed combining the efforts of: MSU Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD), the MSU Career Services Network (CSN), the MSU Rehabilitation Program, and MRS, which coordinates supports and services for students to optimally prepare for successful employment. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Kate Long, is serving as the MRS counselor associated with the Careers Collaborative. Her office is now located on MSU's campus to increase visibility and accessibility for students.



Working alongside the program partners at the university allows everyone to maintain a strong connection. The synergy generated by the model creates enhanced services for students who are nearing graduation and are seeking employment. The project team members including MRS, RCPD, CSN and the Rehabilitation Counseling Program, meet bimonthly to share ideas and ensure smooth program implementation. This partnership is unique in Michigan and nationally, and was made possible for MSU students through private gifts, federal funds and a shared vision of helping students achieve excellent career outcomes.

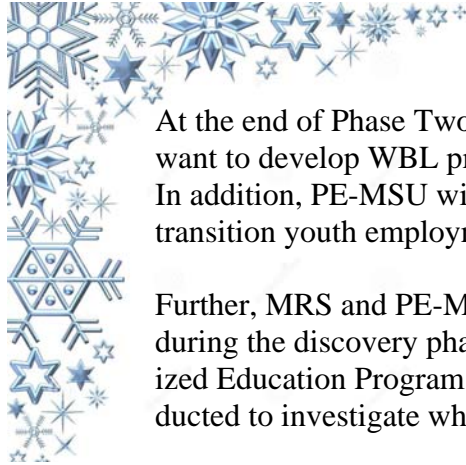
Continuous Research on Evidence Based Practices

MRS and Project Excellence (PE) at Michigan State University (PE-MSU) are implementing a research project called, Michigan Transition for the 21st Century Project (MT-21). Phase One of the project (Discovery) was completed in 2013. During this phase, transition data was collected and analyzed from five best performing district offices with transition youth customers. MT-21 ranked MRS district offices in terms of performance achieving employment outcomes with transition youth. MRS staff and their educational partners (e.g., transition coordinators, special education teachers) from these offices participated in a research process to identify and document promising and emerging transition practices throughout Michigan. The initial findings have been disseminated to MRS staff as well as educational partners.

The MT-21 project is now in Phase Two, which is the implementation phase. The goal of this phase is to build a systemic, working base of knowledge that will be utilized to create job aids, influence policy, and identify programs or initiatives to promote increased employment outcomes. Among other promising practices reported in the Phase One study, the MT-21 team selected “Work-Based Learning programs” as the most effective practice that would lead to successful employment outcomes. The emphasis on pre-employment services for transition youth of the most recently amended Rehab Act (WIOA) was also used in supporting our decision.

MRS and PE-MSU will be creating a promising practice checklist, focusing on Work-Based Learning (WBL), for all district offices based on their local interagency agreement to do a self-assessment. Districts will indicate if they employ the promising practice and, if not, why. For those who have not implemented, but would like to implement it, MRS and MSU plan to create protocols and/or handbooks designed to be used to develop a new WBL program in their local community in FY2015. To accomplish this, a case study will be conducted with a couple of successfully prevailing programs (i.e., MRS-DNR and MTSA projects).





At the end of Phase Two, district offices will be encouraged to use the protocol/handbook when they want to develop WBL programs. Detailed implementation plans will be developed after the second phase. In addition, PE-MSU will be tracking transition outcomes to see if the practices validate improvement in transition youth employment outcomes, comparing with control groups.

Further, MRS and PE-MSU plan to conduct additional study during FY2015. The case study conducted during the discovery phase also reported a disconnection of vocational goals specified in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). A study will be conducted to investigate whether transition youth's goals between IEP and IPE are aligned.



Transition Bulletin Student Story

I am Lauryn Atchison, a 20 year-old female from Belding, Michigan. At an early age I was diagnosed with dyslexia. In second grade I started to get pulled out to the resource room. In the resource room I got help with my reading. This went on throughout grade school, middle school, and high school. During my junior year I went to see Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI) with my school. When I toured MCTI I did not know what to expect. On the tour, I saw a lot of trades, but only a couple trades, the Pharmacy Technician and CNA programs, really caught my eye.

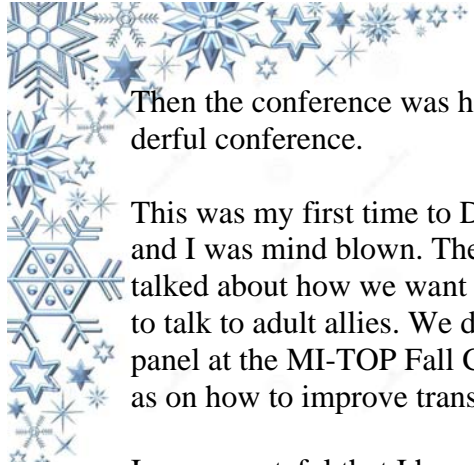
Senior year I was introduced to my Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) counselor, Rick Webster. He asked what I was into and got me signed-up with MRS. Rick and a teacher brought us back to see MCTI again to finally pick a program. I liked the tours because it was all student lead and I could relate to the students that were leading them.

The December after I graduated from high school I started the Career Assessments program, which lasted five weeks. There was a lot of testing, but also some leisure time as well. We learned about what it's like to work. With all this I had made my mind up about the Pharmacy program, but before I could start the program I had to take a course called the reading clinic. This course improved my math almost six grade levels, my reading by almost three grade levels, and my spelling went up seven grade levels. I learned a lot of amazing and useful skills that I use in my trade.

Right after the reading clinic I started the pharmacy program. At first I felt overwhelmed because of all the work. As I figured out a system, class became less and less overwhelming. I am also an extremely organized person; this helped me tackle the task of completing my work. MCTI also has an amazing support system and my instructor Heather Laws is really good at providing us with the one-on-one help that we need. During first term I was a math tutor after school in the Ed center. I was doing well in class and my MRS counselor, Rick, was impressed with me and my life story.

Rick asked me to be a storyteller at the MRS Summer Transition Training. At first I was kind of scared. When I got there I met Cynthia and was told that I was going to tell my story first before the other storyteller. I got up in front of about a hundred people and told my story from second grade till now at MCTI. After the conference I had a little bit of my summer left before I started second term as a pharmacy tech. About a week after the conference Rick called me to ask if I would be willing to go to Washington DC to go to a youth-lead conference. He told me that Maria Peak from MI-TOP would call me with more details later. Maria and I talked about going to DC on September 12th and 13th. I started second term and I was working in leisure and getting ready to go to DC. First thing we did was a conference call.





Then the conference was here and I was so ready to meet the IDEA Partnership and be a part of this wonderful conference.

This was my first time to DC and I had only flown once before. When we got there we went to the hotel and I was mind blown. The IDEA Partnership was an amazing host; I learned and shared so much. We talked about how we want to be a part of the decision making process in our transitions. We discussed ways to talk to adult allies. We did so well, that Maria asked us to go to Traverse City to be a part of a student panel at the MI-TOP Fall Check and Connect. Here we answered questions with full honesty. We gave ideas on how to improve transitions and IEPs. The experience was amazing and I would love to do it all again.

I am so grateful that I have been able to be a part of this. I can't wait until Maria asks me to be a part of another amazing opportunity. I have gained confidence and new friendships in these journeys.



**MI-TOP and Vocational
Rehabilitation Spring
Transition Leadership Institute**
Tuesday-Wednesday, June 16-17
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Lansing

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