

MRS Transition Bulletin - Fall Issue

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

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MRS Transition Training

By Tina Fullerton, Manager, Program Innovation Unit

It was "standing room only" as MRS counselors, managers, and blended staff gathered from across the State to participate in the **1st Annual MRS Transition Training Event**. The one day training took place at the Lansing Community College, M-Tech Campus.



Cynthia introduces the design team.

Cynthia Wright, Consultant from the Program Innovation Unit and Vicki Rafferty, Manager of the Staff Development Unit joined forces with a talented design team to create the training opportunity. The team worked for several months to create a program filled with topics with relevance to effectively serve Transition customers.

Among the presenters were educators, business HR personnel, experts from partner agencies, and many of our own MRS experts in Transition, policy, training and innovation.

Lou Adams kicked off the event with an inspiring welcome to all of the participants. The morning consisted of two main presentations including, "Education Side of Transition" by Chuck Saur, Director of the Michigan-Transition Outcome Project (MI-TOP) & John Mans from the MI-TOP Core Planning Team and well as "Michigan Transition for the 21st Century (MT-21)" by Marcie Ailing, MT-21 State Coordinator & Virginia Thielsen, MSU Director of Project Excellence. Participants told us in the evaluations that they wanted to hear more regarding these topics.

The afternoon consisted of breakout sessions that gave participants a chance to choose from a variety of relevant and critically important topics to our Transition customers:

* Perspectives on Autism Spectrum Disorders

Participants are Talking!

The most valuable things about the training...

"Breakout sessions, especially enjoyed increasing employment outcomes"

"School presentation on IDEA; combining information from both schools and MRS"

"Learning about the educational perspective from Dept. of Education representatives"

"MT-21 and Project Excellence!"

"Networking with counselors from other districts to learn how they are getting things done"

"Learning more about the Michigan Merit Curriculum"

"Hearing Information directly from the source – Dept. of Education"

"Learning how other offices are assisting customers with finding employment"

"Really enjoyed the workshop on Autism Spectrum, using the practical focus"

- * H.S. Diploma vs. Certificate of Attendance
- * MRS Policy Unit Updates, Q & A
- * Achieving Positive Employment Outcomes - MRS Rehabilitations Counselors Best Practices
- * MCTI East & Plainwell
- * Supported Employment Services to Students
- * AmeriCorps
- * Project Search
- * Summer Work Experience

"Look for 'Purposeful Collaboration' training coming January, 2011 with MRS and MI-TOP!"

Many counselors gave us feedback that they wanted to attend all the breakouts. Given the amazing success of the training, it is targeted to become an annual event!

Diploma vs. Certificate of Completion

By Shelly Neal, Rehabilitation Counselor, MRS Oakland District, Waterford Office and Facilitator of the Diploma vs. Certificate of Completion Breakout Session at the MRS Transition Training

One of the sessions at the August 17th MRS Transition Training addressed the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) and the standards students will need to achieve to earn a high school diploma and the anticipated implications for students that exit secondary education with a certificate of completion (sometimes referred to as a certificate of attendance). The session utilized a diverse panel and was one of the most popular breakout sessions of the day. Many questions and concerns were raised about this issue and the dialogue was both informative and passionate.

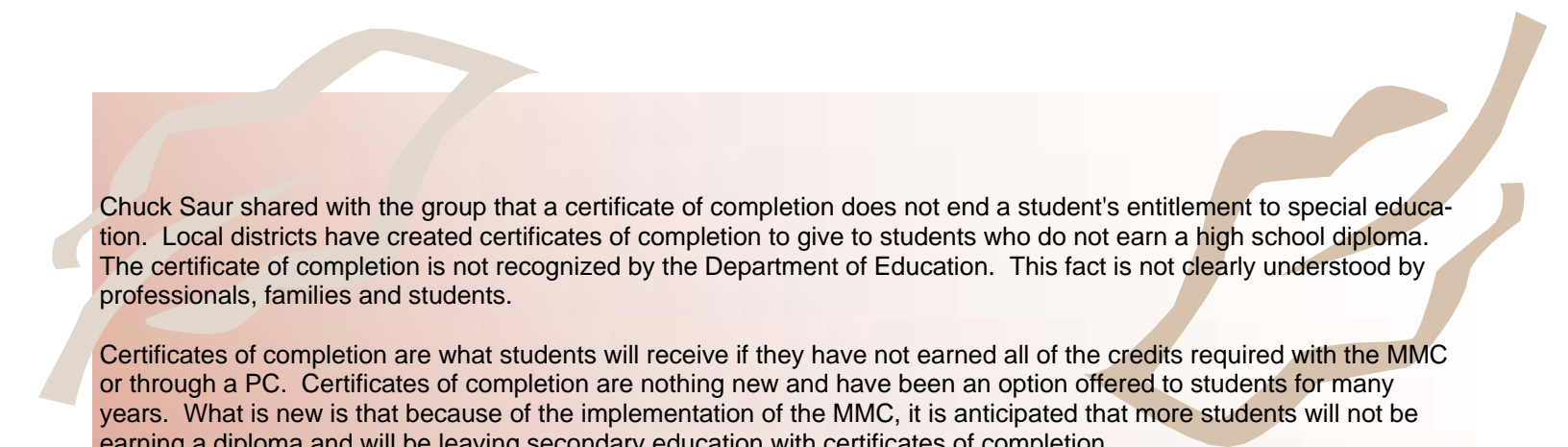
The panel members included Chuck Saur (Director of MI-TOP), John Mans (Transition Coordinator), Paul Mulka (MRS Deputy Director) Gloria Smith (Employment Specialist and parent), John Pajak (Director of Housekeeping at the Palace of Auburn Hills), and Tracey Henry (Wal-Mart).

One of the first things that became apparent was that many parents, students and professionals do not know much about the MMC and its ramifications regarding graduating. Some people are somewhat familiar with this change but didn't realize that students may not be receiving diplomas next year as a result. The graduating class of 2011 is the first class to be impacted by the MMC. **Please refer to the MMC Requirements chart that follows.**

The MMC can be amended with a Personal Curriculum (PC) that is developed by the school and signed off by the superintendant of the school district. A PC can be developed when a student with a disability needs to modify the credit requirements based on his or her disability and their Individualized Education Program (IEP). This upcoming school year is the first time that school personnel can initiate a conversation about a PC. Previously, the parent had to request it.



The "High School Diploma vs. Certificate of Attendance" breakout session that was facilitated by Shelly Neal engaged the audience in passionate discussion.



Chuck Saur shared with the group that a certificate of completion does not end a student's entitlement to special education. Local districts have created certificates of completion to give to students who do not earn a high school diploma. The certificate of completion is not recognized by the Department of Education. This fact is not clearly understood by professionals, families and students.

Certificates of completion are what students will receive if they have not earned all of the credits required with the MMC or through a PC. Certificates of completion are nothing new and have been an option offered to students for many years. What is new is that because of the implementation of the MMC, it is anticipated that more students will not be earning a diploma and will be leaving secondary education with certificates of completion.

Therefore, many questions emerged about what this means for students. What can a student expect from a certificate of completion? Can they further their education or get a job that allows them to make a living wage? Without a diploma, a student can enter a trade or vocational school or attend most community colleges. They may have to take a standardized test to ensure that they have the ability to benefit. They can also enter certain branches of the military. A small portion of enlistees are able to join the four branches based on course completion. They are referred to as Tier II candidates. They can also apply for scholarships and financial aid, but are they likely to be made eligible for scholarships and financial aid?

The employers and the employment specialist that were on the panel shared their thoughts regarding the high school diploma vs. certificate of completion. Ms. Henry from Wal-Mart stated that they only have a few positions in the organization that do not require a diploma such as bagging and cart attendants. She was unsure how this might impact their hiring practices in Michigan.

Mr. Pajak Director of Housekeeping at the Palace said that his employees are more hands on and a high school diploma is not a requirement for his employees. He is more concerned about the soft skills, work habits, time and attendance. He works with Ms. Smith and New Horizons to receive referrals of candidates for employment. This relationship is valued because his potential employees are screened and have been identified by New Horizons as being a good candidate for the jobs at the Palace of Auburn Hills. They often do an on-the-job evaluation to ensure that they are right for the position. Mr. Pajak advised that rehabilitation counselors need to build effective relationships with employers to meet their hiring needs.

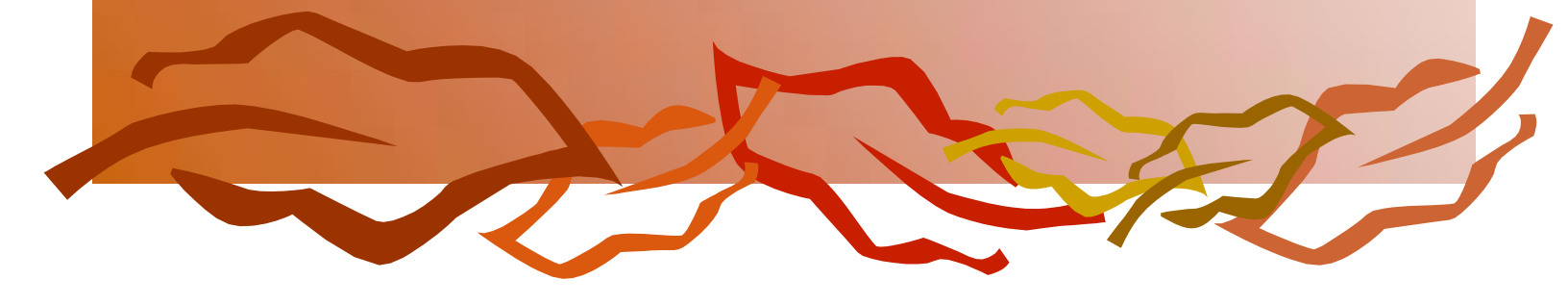
At the end of the breakout session, a few conclusions were reached and there are many unknowns. Clearly a lot of parents are not well informed about this issue and may be making decisions for their child that will not be fully understood until after their child exits secondary education. Without a doubt this challenge is one that will take all of our collective efforts to assist students. It is not just a school problem rather it is a challenge that needs the involvement of rehabilitation counselors, parents, students, and business people. We all need to keep a close eye on this issue to improve supports and adapt our practices to best prepare students with disabilities for their future.

Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) High School Graduation Requirements

Effective for Students Entering 8th Grade in 2006 (Class of 2011)

To prepare Michigan's students with the knowledge and skills needed for the jobs in the 21st Century, the State of Michigan has enacted a rigorous new set of statewide graduation requirements that are among the best in the nation. With these new graduation requirements, students will be well-prepared for future success in college and the workplace.

The MMC requires students entering 8th grade in 2006, to obtain a minimum of 16 credits for graduation, which could be met using alternative instructional delivery methods such as alternative course work, humanities course sequences, career and technology courses, industrial technology or vocational education courses, or through a combination of these programs. In addition, students entering the 3rd grade in 2006 (Class of 2016) will need to complete two credits of a language other than English in grades 9-12; OR an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12 prior to graduation.



Michigan Merit Curriculum High School Graduation Requirements

MATHEMATICS - 4 Credits

Algebra I Algebra II	Geometry One math class in final year of high school
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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS - 4 Credits

English Language Arts 9 English Language Arts 10	English Language Arts 11 English Language Arts 12
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SCIENCE - 3 Credits

Biology Physics or Chemistry	One additional science credit
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SOCIAL STUDIES - 3 Credits

.5 credit in Civics U.S. History and Geography	.5 credit in Economics World History and Geography
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PHYSICAL EDUCATION & HEALTH - 1 Credit

VISUAL, PERFORMING AND APPLIED ARTS - 1 Credit

ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE
Course, Learning or Integrated Learning Experience

LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH - 2 Credits

In grades 9-12; OR an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12 effective for students entering third grade in 2006 (Class 2016)

All required courses/credits must be aligned with Course/Credit Content Expectations and Guidelines developed by Michigan Department of Education, may be acquired through Career and Technical Education programs, and integrated courses.

Michigan Merit High School Graduation Requirement Overview

Goal: To ensure that Michigan's high school graduates have the necessary skills to succeed either in postsecondary education or in the workplace.

Components:

- Sixteen mandatory credits, which are aligned with recommended college- and work-ready curriculum:
 - o Four credits in English language arts.
 - o Four credits in math, including Geometry and Algebra I and II. At least one math course must be taken during the student's senior year.
 - o Three credits in science, with use of labs, including biology and chemistry or physics.
 - o Three credits in social sciences including U.S. History & Geography, World History & Geography, .5 Civics, .5 Economics.
 - o One credit in Visual, Performing and Applied Arts.
 - o One credit in Physical Education and Health.
 - o All high school students must also participate in an online course or learning experience.

- o Effective for the class of 2016, the credit requirement will increase to 18 credits, to include two credits in world languages. Students may receive credit if they have had a similar learning experience in grades K-12.

“Achieving Positive Employment Outcomes with Transition Students: How MRS Rehab Counselors Get It Done”

By Marcie Alling, State Coordinator, MT-21

Time-saving tips for consistent caseload documentation... Care and feeding of relationships with students, families, schools and community partners... Helping to plan student-centered programs and activities that serve as Transition stepping stones from year to year... Just a few of the many things MRS counselors do to get the job done on behalf of their youth customers.

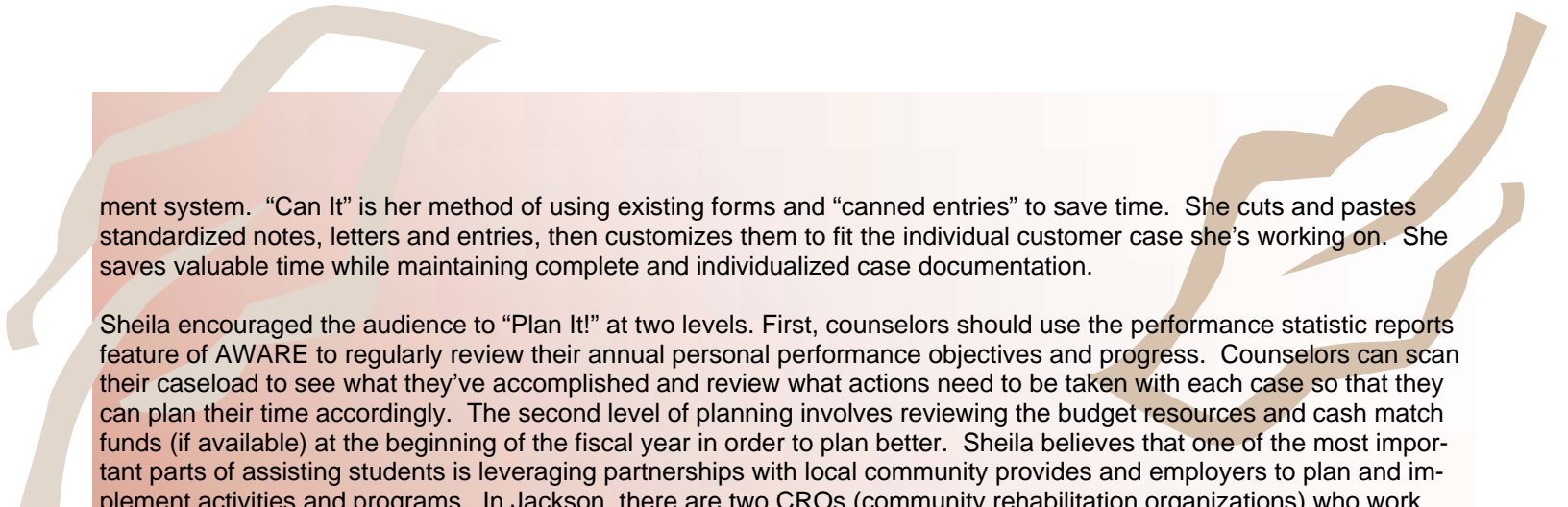
In back-to-back sessions titled “Achieving Positive Employment Outcomes with Transition Students: How MRS Rehab Counselors Get It Done!” two panels of counselors from around the state shared their tricks, tips and practices with MRS Transition Training Day participants. Kim Kazmirski, a VR counselor from the MRS Benton Harbor District Office, organized, coordinated and moderated the panels. The sessions were chock-full of information about what MRS counselors are doing to help students with disabilities in their local areas make a successful Transition to post-secondary education/training and employment. A common theme among the presenters was the importance of relationships, relationships, relationships.

Melissa Harding from the Flint District Office explained that in Genesee County, the counselors’ priority is to spend significant time upfront establishing visibility and rapport with students - especially seniors - and their families. She described a range of strategies the counselors employ that focus on extensive and consistent communication with schools, students and their families, both during and outside “normal” business hours. The goal is to increase the understanding by students, families and schools of MRS services and thereby engage the students in the rehab process. As a result, students’ capacity and readiness to make an informed choice about applying for MRS services has improved. The students are also more realistic and personally invested. The counselors feel that they have a stronger working alliance with the youth customers and a better idea of needed resources and supports. They’ve also seen a decrease in the number of cases closed “Other than Rehabilitated.” Because school personnel have a clearer understanding of the MRS role in Transition, they are making more appropriate referrals to MRS.

The importance of relationships and communication was echoed by **Kathy Flagstadt from the Upper Peninsula**. She described the longstanding collaboration she enjoys with the Copper Country Intermediate School District covering Houghton, Baraga and Keweenaw Counties in the western U.P. She emphasized that it is critical to work in partnership with the ISD Transition coordinator to know and form a lasting bond with students, their families and key school staff. She stressed the importance of maintaining open communication with everyone, as well as networking and working cooperatively with the full range of non-school community partners.

Kathy advocated that counselors be flexible, open and willing to become involved with students and their goals because this is more likely to lead to a successful employment outcome. She also described a continuum of Transition activities and programs for special education students in grades 8 through 12. The activities for each grade level build on the preceding years and are collaboratively developed and supported by the CCISD, MRS and many local partners, including Michigan Works!, Michigan Technological University and Finlandia University. One example of a longstanding successful program is “STOMP”, or “Students Training on Mentoring Peers.” Designed as a peer support program for 9th through 12th graders, STOMP is co-facilitated by Kathy and the CCISD Transition Coordinator.

Sheila Eder of Jackson advocated that counselors “Can It!” and “Plan It!” She explained how counselors can improve their efficiency in case file documentation, while increasing quality time with their customers. She offered a number of tips for taking advantage of computer technology and various features within AWARE, the MRS electronic case manage-



ment system. “Can It” is her method of using existing forms and “canned entries” to save time. She cuts and pastes standardized notes, letters and entries, then customizes them to fit the individual customer case she’s working on. She saves valuable time while maintaining complete and individualized case documentation.

Sheila encouraged the audience to “Plan It!” at two levels. First, counselors should use the performance statistic reports feature of AWARE to regularly review their annual personal performance objectives and progress. Counselors can scan their caseload to see what they’ve accomplished and review what actions need to be taken with each case so that they can plan their time accordingly. The second level of planning involves reviewing the budget resources and cash match funds (if available) at the beginning of the fiscal year in order to plan better. Sheila believes that one of the most important parts of assisting students is leveraging partnerships with local community provides and employers to plan and implement activities and programs. In Jackson, there are two CROs (community rehabilitation organizations) who work with MRS and employers to offer a continuum of summer and year-round work exploration and work experience opportunities from 9th through 12th grades for students with disabilities.

Stacy Janusz from Grand Rapids dug deeper into the area of relationship-building and communication when describing her approach to working successfully with school staff and students. She emphasized good communication as one of the most important elements of success. She works closely with teachers and job developers, especially during the referral stage, to ensure that positive, clear communication is taking place. With teachers, she tries to match her mode of communication with the preferred style of each teacher. She also works hard to ensure that the students are receiving the same message from each person working with them. She meets with students frequently, reinforcing the same information over and over. During the school year, Stacy practices problem-solving and other skill-building activities then tries to reinforce these skills when the students move into a summer job club program at Goodwill Industries of Greater Grand Rapids. She is currently considering using Facebook as a regular tool to stay in touch with her youth customers.

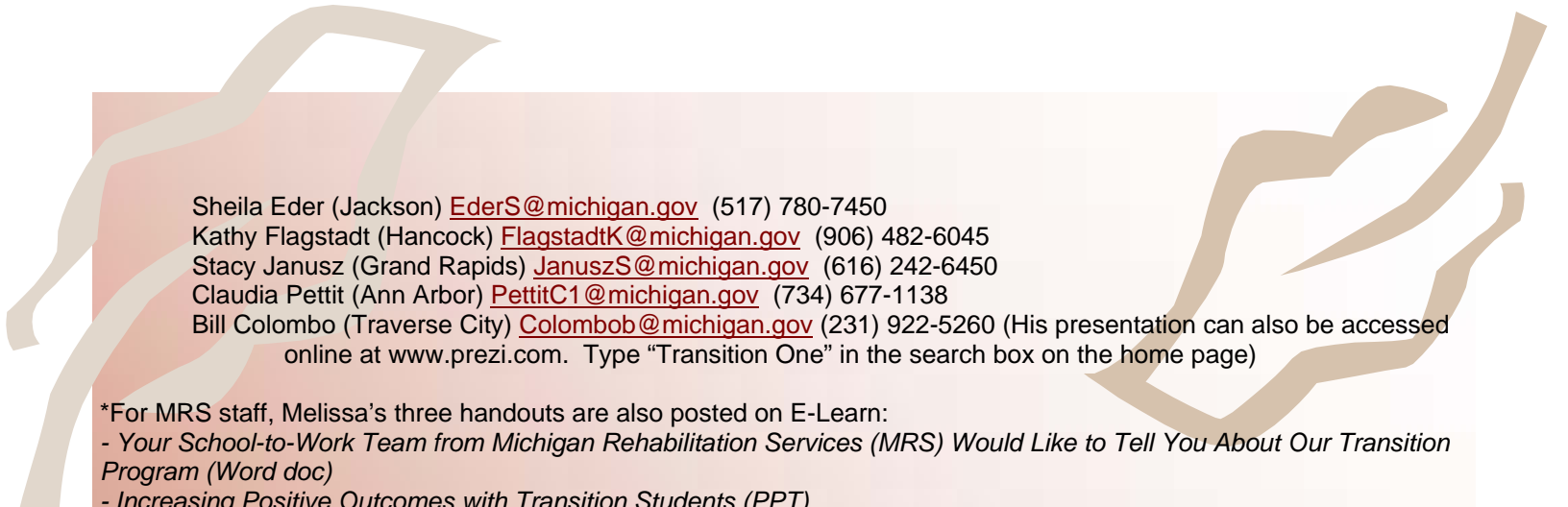
Claudia Pettit from the Ann Arbor District Office described how her office’s relationships with schools and other partners within Washtenaw and Livingston Counties have enhanced services and outcomes for youth customers. For example, for years, MRS and the Washtenaw Intermediate School District have had a unique team to carry out the work of Transition within MRS. The team includes full-time MRS Transition counselors as well as Teacher-Consultants from the WISD who work as part-time “blended” MRS staff. The team also supports a Young Adults Program for Special Education students ages 18-26, in partnership with Community Mental Health and local community rehabilitation organizations. The YA Program provides paid work experience and/or job using a supported employment model. The local center for independent living provides a range of services for Transition youth that include mentoring, community volunteering and even a program for young women called “GirlTalk.” A summer program for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder was developed by a Livingston County partnership comprised of MRS, the Livingston Educational Service Agency (LESA), Work Skills Corporation (a CRO or community-based employment and training organization), the county transit system and Mott Community College’s Livingston Regional M-TEC Center. The unique multi-disciplinary model includes computer classes in graphic design and flash animation, a work experience and life coaching.

“Transition is all about relationships.” But to be truly effective at the local level, all partners need to speak with and act as “One Voice.” “One Voice” for Transition was **Bill Colombo’s** theme as he ended the panel sessions with a spirited presentation about the journey the **Traverse City District Office** and its local Transition partners have taken in recent years to build and refine their team. They believe it is critical to meet employer needs in order to increase market penetration for youth job seekers with disabilities. Becoming One Voice has presented challenges because it requires a culture shift in how teams work together. The Traverse City team is moving away from a model where every organization approaches employers individually to a model where a common employer database is developed and the partners agree on a shared point of contact for each employer, while still honoring individual relationships with employers. Bill described the evolution of their model as well as various aspects of their continuous improvement process. He also shared programmatic examples of how the partners are trying to leverage their resources and relationships more effectively on behalf of their mutual youth customers.

For more detailed information about the various presentations and to get copies of handouts they may have distributed, contact the counselors below directly.

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Stacy Janusz (Grand Rapids) JanuszS@michigan.gov (616) 242-6450
Claudia Pettit (Ann Arbor) PettitC1@michigan.gov (734) 677-1138
Bill Colombo (Traverse City) Colombob@michigan.gov (231) 922-5260 (His presentation can also be accessed online at www.prezi.com. Type "Transition One" in the search box on the home page)

*For MRS staff, Melissa's three handouts are also posted on E-Learn:

- *Your School-to-Work Team from Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) Would Like to Tell You About Our Transition Program (Word doc)*
- *Increasing Positive Outcomes with Transition Students (PPT)*
- *Checklist for Teachers Referring Students to MRS (Word doc)*

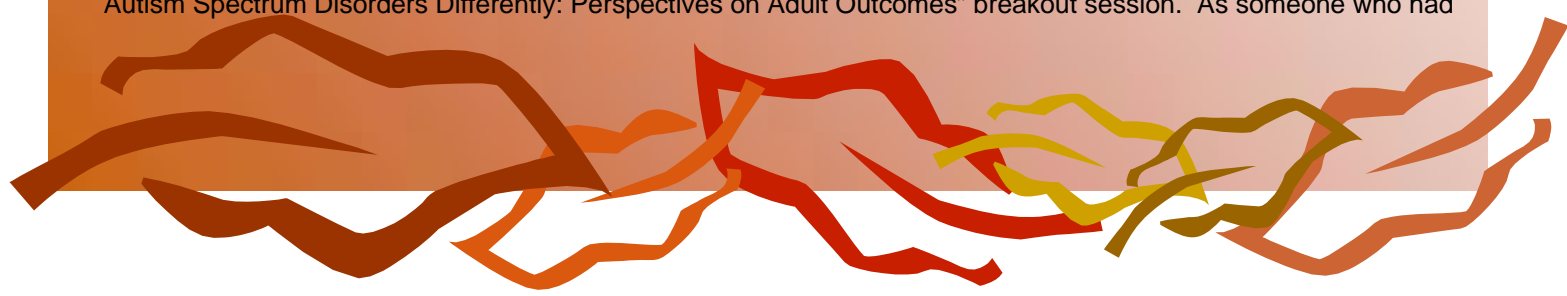
What I Learned at the August MRS Transition Training

By Mary Taylor, Rehabilitation Counselor, Taylor Office

I have never written an article for "The Transition Bulletin," but then again, I have never worked with a Transition caseload before either. With almost 4 years as a rehabilitation counselor (2 years as blended staff with a CMH caseload, and 1 year as a JET counselor), moving to the Taylor office and being assigned to 4 high schools was a welcome challenge, but I knew would require some extra tutelage. I therefore was very excited to learn about the Transition Training advertised by Cynthia Wright and available for sign-up on E-Learn. I had expected a day in the Lansing training conference room learning the how-to's of moving a Transition case along the 6 steps of vocational rehabilitation. I was then pleasantly surprised to learn that it was a conference style event complete with breakout sessions at Lansing Community College's West Campus.

Several topic areas really made me think and are certainly influencing how I will work with my Transition students this year. To document all that I found interesting and all that I learned would take too long for the purposes of this article, but I would just like to highlight what I found most interesting:

- * Counselors are looking at new and innovative ways to work with Transition students prior to graduation. Some strategies are holding in-school, or summer at-school job clubs, providing soft skills training, job try-outs and mentoring and volunteer programs sometimes in partnership with other community agencies and/or CILs.
- * Counselors are evaluating and executing new ways of job development by bringing vendors and community partners together instead of having many different vendors approaching the same employers.
- * The Michigan Transition for the 21st Century or MT-21 Project (thanks to Marcie Alling and Virginia Thielsen) is helping MRS understand the data we have regarding Transition cases and how we can use that to learn about our effectiveness and to start looking at best practices to increase positive outcomes. We as counselors can also ask to look at this data, and if we would like some data that is not already given, we can ask the project to try to obtain it!
- * The MI-TOP presentation team of Chuck Saur and John Mans helped me to learn (among other things) that as we get IEP's from schools and are using this information for eligibility we will see a significant switch to a more performance model versus a medical model. This means more recordings of actions, interventions, strengths and weaknesses and less information such as the FSIQ is a certain number, or the diagnosis is such and such. However, with this documentation we may have more tools for workplace and/or job coaching interventions as we learn how students respond to different intervention techniques.
- * Autism Wins! This was perhaps the most profound statement of the entire day and was learned in the "Looking at Autism Spectrum Disorders Differently: Perspectives on Adult Outcomes" breakout session. As someone who had



worked on an Autism specific project in the past pre-MRS, this one piece of advice earlier in my career would have truly made a difference in my effectiveness. Maureen Ziegler and Kelly Dunlap are truly amazing resources and their strategies for “Using the ASD with the Student and Not against Them” are certainly not rocket science, but something that is often overlooked in our attempts to modify behaviors to make our ASD customers more employable. As I sat in an appointment just yesterday and I witnessed a mother trying to correct her ASD adult child I kept thinking “Autism Wins” and it really is amazing how truly acknowledging this fact changes strategy and mindset.

With these things in mind I am excited to move forward for the school year and start contacting my schools! Thank you Design Team for putting together an amazing training and it is nice to know that us fledgling Transition counselors have you as resources.



Our very own Bill Colombo (counselor from the MRS Northern District Office) wows the audience with his “One Voice” model.

MI-TOP and MRS Purposeful Collaborative Workshop

**January 27, 2011
Ramada Inn West**

MI-TOP and MRS are planning a collaborative training workshop during the first day of the January 27 and 28 workshop at the Ramada Inn West in Lansing. The workshop will be for MRS staff (counselors and/or managers), Transition coordinators and other educational Transition professionals to build and strengthen Transition services to youth with disabilities as they Transition into adult life. The session will be structured around the following questions:

- Are schools providing what’s necessary to ensure students are ready to belong and be successful in their community?
- Is the community ready to support students to belong and succeed as they Transition into their community?
- How do we know?
- Are we satisfied with the results?

***Mark your calendars for this important event!

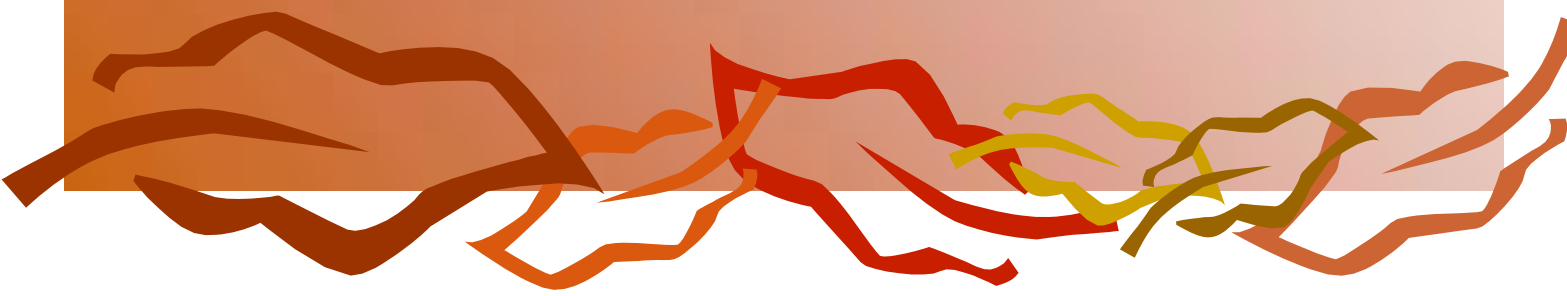




A Big Thank You To:

Kathy Flagstadt
Kathy Freeman
Omar Deadwilder
Theresa Thorne
Shelly Neal
Stacy Janusz
Kelly Blodger
Melissa Harding
Kim Kazmirski
Claudia Pettit

For serving on the Transition Training Design Team!!!



SAVE THE DATES

Enhancing Employment Outcomes Project Overview
Ramada Inn Hotel and Conference Center
7501 W. Saginaw Hwy
Lansing, MI
October 5, 2010

Enhancing Employment Outcomes Project Overview
Best Western Dockside
505 South Huron Avenue
Mackinaw City, MI
October 7, 2010

Enhancing Employment Outcomes Project Overview
Double Tree
5801 Southfield Service Drive
Detroit, MI
October 13, 2010

MI-TOP Workshop
Ramada Inn Hotel and Conference Center
7501 W. Saginaw Hwy
Lansing, MI
October 28 and 29, 2010

Learning Disability Association Conference
Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center
55 South Harrison Road
East Lansing, MI
November 15 and 16, 2010

MTSA Conference
Bavarian Inn
713 South Main Street
Frankenmuth, MI
March 16, 17 and 18, 2011

Enhancing Employment Outcomes Project Overview
Ramada Inn Hotel and Conference Center
7501 W. Saginaw Hwy
Lansing, MI
October 6, 2010

Enhancing Employment Outcomes Project Overview
Kent ISD
1933 East Beltline Ave NE
Grand Rapids, MI
October 12, 2010

Enhancing Employment Outcomes Project Overview
Schoolcraft Community College
VisTa Tech Center
Livonia, MI
October 14, 2010

Michigan Rehabilitation Conference
Grand Traverse Resort
100 Grand Traverse Resort Village Boulevard
Acme, MI
November 3, 4 and 5, 2010

MI-TOP Workshop
Ramada Inn Hotel and Conference Center
7501 W. Saginaw Hwy
Lansing, MI
January 27-28, 2011

MI-TOP Workshop
Ramada Inn Hotel and Conference Center
7501 W. Saginaw Hwy
Lansing, MI
April 28-29, 2011

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E-mail your contributions or ideas and subscription requests for "Transition Bulletin" to
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