

Transition Bulletin - Spring Issue

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



LOU ADAMS, MRS ACTING BUREAU DIRECTOR PRESENTS, "WORKING TOGETHER IS SUCCESS" AT THE MICHIGAN TRANSITION SERVICES ASSOCIATION (MTSA) CONFERENCE

"Coming together is the beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is success." ~ Henry Ford

MRS and education have a long history of working together to help students with disabilities achieve employment. In Lou's presentation he told stories, shared some examples of working together, provided the MRS "state of the state", and put forth a vision for the future. Using the MRS principles, Lou discussed how things are and how things could be to strengthen collaborative efforts leading to increased employment outcomes for students with disabilities.

One excellent example of working together is the MTSA/MRS Collaborative Project. Lou stated, "Several years ago, 2010 to be exact, MRS and MTSA began talking about the possibility of a collaborative relationship that would create funding for work-based learning programs for students with disabilities. The first discussion seemed like the likelihood of something happening was slim to none. A seed was planted and nothing more. A year later a second conversation took place that resulted in a small work group from MTSA and MRS to sort out the possibility. It still seemed unlikely, but the team moved forward as if it could happen. It took two more years of perseverance to work out the bugs and get approvals to kick off the MRS and MTSA Collaborative Project. The projects are now serving students and providing work-based learning opportunities. This is what can happen when we work together."

In the MRS "state of the state," Lou highlighted the following:

- Recent move from Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) to the Department of Human Services (DHS);
- Filling counselor vacancies;
- Avoiding Order of Selection for Services (OSS);
- MRS five year strategic planning process; and
- Predictions about reauthorization of the Rehab Act that will place more of an emphasis on Transition and students receiving Social Security.

Lou talked about a college student, Kent Keith, who wrote a small booklet to be used by high school student leaders. A couple of years later he adapted it for use by high school principals. The booklet was titled, "The Paradoxical Commandments of Leadership." Almost 30 years after writing the booklet, in September of 1997, Kent Keith learned of Mother Teresa's death. He also learned that a poem found on the wall of her Home for Children in Calcutta had been reprinted in a number of books and articles on Mother Teresa's ministry. The poem was eight of the Paradoxical Commandments Kent had written so many years before. Kent Keith was honored that his words had meant so much

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to the ministry of Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Mercy. Soon he saw his commandments everywhere. Usually they were attributed to Mother Teresa or the famous poet: Author Unknown. The popularity and resonance his Paradoxical Commandments had with others lead Kent Keith to write his wonderful little book.

- People are unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered. **Love them anyway.**
- If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. **Do good anyway.**
- If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies. **Succeed anyway.**
- The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. **Do good anyway.**
- Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. **Be honest and frank anyway.**
- What you spent years building may be destroyed overnight. **Build anyway.**
- People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. **Help people anyway.**
- Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. **Give the world the best you've got anyway.**

Lou talked about the MRS principles: Customer-Centered, Equity, Accountability, Continuous Improvement and Collaboration. He asked, "How are we doing and what could be?"

Customer-Centered

MRS provides individualized services and is mandated to do so by the rehab act. MRS struggles to meet this mandate due to large caseloads, limited local options and shrinking resources. Education strives to provide individualized supports and services to students, but faces similar challenges. Classroom sizes are large, funding is a constant concern, and each student presents unique needs.

Lou then asked, "What if MRS and education's joint efforts result in actionable individualized employment plans for students creating a seamless process to exit secondary education and step into post-secondary education, employment, and success? Sometimes students have no goals or the goals that they have are unrealistic; families are concerned about their child taking the risk to go off social security and enter the workforce; it is often difficult to design programs and supports for students that meet their needs...**TRY ANYWAY.**"

Equity

There are inconsistencies in services and practices from one community to another. This is because there is a requirement of statewideness that MRS may veer from when we have a local agreement that allows MRS to dedicate funds to specific services or populations. This can be confusing and frustrating to educators that are trying to replicate programs that are working in other communities. Equity is challenging for both MRS and education. All students and communities have different strengths, weaknesses and available resources.

Lou challenged us, "What if there is access to baseline services across all communities in Michigan that every student and their family could count on? What if these baseline services are evidence-based such as work-based learning? If students received a work-based learning experience prior to their exit from secondary education, their chances of becoming successfully employed increase dramatically. Imagine if students from Marquette to Detroit have access to the same level of



Lou Adams delivers the keynote address at the MTSA Conference in Frankenmuth titled, "Working Together is Success."

service. Equity is hard to achieve; students, families and communities are as different as snowflakes in Michigan; and it sometimes seems impossible that all students can have the same opportunities...**STRIVE FOR IT ANYWAY.**"

Accountability

Information sharing is complicated between MRS and education. Releases are required that give informed consent to share student data. Sharing outcome data is not as complicated when data is aggregate, but individual student information requires permission. There are also varying practices across local community transition teams regarding the level of information that is shared about local Interagency Cash Transfer Agreements (ICTAs). MRS partners want to know: *What services were purchased? How much was spent? How many students became employed?* These are all excellent questions and without this information, how can the value of an education/MRS partnership be measured and relationship maintained?

Lou put forth, "What if we were transparent, consistent and predictable about data sharing? Education could count on receiving quarterly information and a yearly summary report. Local Transition teams can evaluate the progress of their agreement together, make necessary changes and hold each other accountable for the results. Not all data is good news, we may or may not be proud of what the data tells us, it takes work to put data reports together and even more work to explain the data so our partners understand...**SHARE IT ANYWAY.**"

Continuous Improvement

The dizzying velocity of change in our systems has made chaos the defining feature of modern society. Programs that were once benchmarks quickly become dusty and outdated. MRS (with MSU Project Excellence) is in the midst of MT-21 to determine best practices leading to employment for transition youth. This project will identify a wealth of information to improve program development and implementation. MCTI has recently gone through a redesign process and has identified new programming to better serve students.

Lou's challenge is, "What if we have high expectations and employment is the norm for our students; align our systems to collect better data; implement best practices; expand MCTI to provide better services to Transition students; and as a result dramatically increase our student employment outcomes. This is worth fighting for. Change is hard; it takes effort to embrace new habits; and it feels like we are never good enough...**CHANGE ANYWAY.**"

Collaboration

There are many exemplar local transition teams achieving excellent employment outcomes, but there are equally as many not meeting the challenge. MRS has a state-level interagency agreement that was recently updated that lays the groundwork and expectation for collaboration. Sometimes personalities get in the way, teams disagree where to dedicate resources and develop programs; and learning about one another takes energy and commitment.

Lou encourages us, "What if there is a state-level ICTA to address mutual interests; and collaborative training around these interests? What if all local ICTAs have clear goals and objectives and brought in new partners that are not currently at the table (i.e. DHS, CROs, and businesses)



Bill Colombo, MRS Consultant, Program Innovation Unit, presents "Let's Make a Deal" promoting the concept of mutual gain.



resulting in local innovations, promising or research-based practices that can grow to become nationally recognized? What if you didn't have to carry Transition on your shoulders and you could share the load with a team? Imagine that Michigan sets a new standard for what the term, "coordinated set of activities" means; that every student leaves high school prepared to belong and succeed in the workforce; and that they are able to make that Transition successfully. There may be failure along the way; we get frustrated with each other; and its hard work to get together trying to speak and understand each other's language; the work is relentless; the road can be rocky...**WORK TOGETHER ANYWAY.**"

There are many pressures inside and outside of education and MRS. Lou's presentation challenges us to stay in the game, be nimble and flexible, look to the future and work together so that employment outcomes for our students with disabilities are achieved.

WHO CARES ABOUT KELSEY?

MTSA Preconference Presentation sponsored by the Michigan-Transition Outcomes Project (MI-TOP)

How many times do our Transition customers give us a reason to give up on them? They may forget to bring in their application; miss their appointment; don't stay in touch; etc. The MTSA Preconference, "Who Cares about Kelsey?" discussed these types of challenges facing students with emotional and behavioral disabilities.

"Who Cares About Kelsey", is a documentary, made by Dan Habib, that sheds light on the fact that students with emotional and behavioral disabilities struggle in our systems to accept support, make positive connections, graduate from high school and successfully transition into postsecondary education and employment. Dan interviewed many students for the documentary and decided on Kelsey, a girl from New Hampshire, who has a compelling story to tell. One of her many assets is that she is not camera shy and is willing to talk openly about her experiences. Since the making of the documentary, Kelsey has travelled to many states to share her perspective.

The following is from Kelsey's website: <http://www.whocaresaboutkelsey.com/>

What is an Emotional/Behavioral Disability?



Over two million young people in the United States have an emotional/behavioral disability (EBD), yet EBD is often difficult to diagnose. To be diagnosed with an EBD, a person must demonstrate an established pattern of one or more of the following:

- Withdrawal or anxiety, depression, problems with mood, or feelings of low self-worth;
- Disordered thought processes with unusual behavior patterns and atypical communication styles; and
- Aggression, hyperactivity, or impulsivity.

These emotional or behavioral responses must negatively impact educational or developmental performance; be significantly different from appropriate age, cultural, or ethnic norms; and be more than temporary, expected responses to stressful events.

Why should I care about kids with emotional/behavioral disabilities?

Statistics released by the Southern Poverty Law Center and The Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders reflect the grim outcomes for students with emotional or behavioral disabilities:

- Students with EBD have the worst graduation rate of all students with disabilities. Nationally, only 40 percent of students with EBD graduate from high school, compared to the national average of 76 percent;
- Students with EBD are three times as likely as other students to be arrested before leaving school;
- Students with EBD are twice as likely as other students with disabilities to live in a correctional facility, halfway house, drug treatment center, or on the street after leaving school; and
- 75 percent of young adults with EBD have been involved with the criminal justice system at some point in their lives.



Kelsey Carroll tells her inspirational story of her high school experience as a student with ADHD at the preconference titled, "Who Cares About Kelsey?"

Students with EBD typically do not respond well to traditional discipline policies and educational programs. Schools can easily and wrongly dismiss them as "problem kids," further reinforcing the characteristics of EBD (anxiety, depression, low self-worth, aggression), which lead to cycles of discipline referrals.

With the rise of school violence in the 1990s, schools responded by securing the safety of their students and faculty by the initiation of zero-tolerance policies. The goal of zero-tolerance is to deter problem behavior by providing swift consequences for misconduct, sending a strong, "one strike and you're out" message to students.

By focusing solely on punishment, zero-tolerance neglects to examine the root causes of problem behavior and consequently does little to prevent the behavior from reoccurring. Rather than increasing school safety, zero-tolerance often leads to increased suspensions and expulsions for both serious and mild infractions and disproportionately impacts students with disabilities.

The good news is there are numerous alternatives to zero-tolerance policies that work. Rather than cling to ineffectual strategies, many schools around the country are embracing proven (also known as "evidence-based") models that help all students — including those with EBD — achieve success in school. These models are effective because they are rooted in prevention, build upon the inherent strengths of each student, and seek to address the underlying causes of problem behavior.

Many successful evidence-based models that address issues facing schools and students —

particularly those with disabilities — fall under the educational framework called Response to Intervention (RTI), which is sometimes referred to as Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). In short, RTI:

- Provides all students with the best opportunities to succeed in school;
- Identifies students with learning or behavioral problems; and
- Ensures that students receive appropriate instruction and related supports.

The key components of safe and supportive conditions for learning are rooted in the best practices of RTI and include:

- School-wide frameworks, such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), that prevent negative behaviors such as bullying, violence, gang involvement, substance abuse, and truancy;
- Comprehensive and coordinated learning supports (e.g., effective discipline and positive behavior supports) that directly contribute to student social–emotional wellness, mental health, and positive behavior;
- Positive school climates that promote student connectedness and family engagement; and
- Effective use of data to identify and address the most critical issues related to school safety and engagement.
- School-based specialized instructional support personnel who are integrally involved in development, delivery, and evaluation of these services; and
- Youth-directed, person-centered planning models such as [RENEW](#) (featured in “Who Cares About Kelsey?”) which support youth who are struggling in school, at home, and in their communities.

A big thank you to Kelsey for braving a Michigan spring (more like winter) to spend time with all of us!

BETTER TRANSITIONING THROUGH VIDEO

By Staci Anderson, MRS Counselor and Maria Peak, Eaton ISD Transition Coordinator

“Of all of our inventions for communication, pictures still speak the most universally understood language.” ~ [Walt Disney Company](#)

MRS customers sometimes struggle with the traditional interviewing process to put their best foot forward and positively communicate why an employer should hire them. To address this barrier, a team of talented professionals have come together developing a creative approach that utilizes video portfolios to assist in customers with disabilities to achieve employment. The team includes: Staci Anderson, MRS Counselor; Maria Peak, Eaton ISD Transition Coordinator; Justin Caine, Good Fruit Video; and Mari Rosario, Business Developer.

The approach is in the early stages of development and so far



Mari Rosario, Business Developer; Justin Caine, Good Fruit; Staci Anderson, MRS Counselor; Maria Peak, Transition Coordinator Eaton ISD, present “Better Transitioning Through Video.”

the team has created two videos to use with employers. The customers that are represented in the videos have marketable job skills and solid employability skills but struggle with oral communication. The videos feature several critical components:

- Demonstrate the customer's skills on actual job sites;
- Testimonials from the customer's supervisors; and
- Customers talking about their skills and goals.

Customers that are finding new employment, seeking additional employment or whose jobs are in jeopardy can all benefit from using video portfolios. If a customer can benefit from this strategy, the MRS counselor works with the customer to write this service into the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Justin Caine from Good Fruit is the provider that works with the customer to create the videos. The process of recording the video takes about 2 hours. Editing and adding music takes an additional 2–3 hours. Justin has developed a template to create the videos which will make the process easier over time.

Mari Rosario brings her assets to the team in the area of Job Development. Mari works directly with employers using the video portfolios as well as an in-depth employment proposal that highlights why hiring an individual with a disability makes good business sense.

Staci Anderson, MRS Counselor, believes that this approach will be more effective than the traditional approach. As a result, the additional cost of making the video will be balanced by fewer funds spent on job development/placement fees.

This new collaborative concept was showcased in March at the annual 2013 MTSA Conference in Frankenmuth. For more information about this effort contact Staci Anderson at the Lansing District Office at 517-241-7127 or at andersons10@michigan.gov.



Joette Cherry, MTSA President, presents Cathy Schmidt, Transition Coordinator, with the Anderson Award for her exemplary dedication and personal commitment to transition students.



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR
ANNOUNCING:**

The 4th Annual MRS Summer Transition
Training

Tuesday, August 6, 2013

Lansing Community College—West
Campus
5708 Cornerstone Drive
Lansing, 48917

Agenda will come out soon so stay
tuned!