



Transition to employment for those with disabilities: Policies, Funding and Planning in the USA

Paula Barnett

2014 Higher Education and Skills Group Fellowship

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i. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fellowship provided opportunities to compare Australian and USA policies in transition, operating programs and attitudes to employability for people with disabilities. It highlighted the difference in funding, planning, policy and practice. It is clear that not all programs in the USA are fully inclusive and that the Fellow's visits were to the programs noted as the best available. However it also highlighted the potential of what is possible in Australia and the factors that assist to enable young people with disabilities to lead fulfilled lives, living and working inclusively in their community.

Students with disabilities in the USA attend school until the age of 21 in comparison to the age of 18 in Australia and begin transition from 14 years of age. Luecking writes, *"Ever since school-to-work became a federal policy priority... and transition planning became a legal requirement ... we have become increasingly aware of the value of work experience and work for youth with disabilities as they prepare to exit publically mandated education"*.¹

In line with these policies, students are mandated to engage in transition activities from 14- 21 and schools are allocated funding to employ transition agencies to work with students with disabilities. In Australian schools, students start work experience at 16 years of age and have only two years of experience in this area. There is no compulsion for all students with disabilities to participate in work activities nor to engage in career planning and it is a relatively new concept in Specialist Schools in Victoria as is the notion of students with moderate to severe disabilities engaging in future work.

'Employment First' is a concept to facilitate the full inclusion of people with the most significant disabilities in the workplace and community in the USA. Under the Employment First approach, community-based, integrated employment is the first option for employment services for youth and adults with significant disabilities.

Of note is the concept that IQ levels are not an indicator of employability and in the Work Link program run by Sara Murphy in San Francisco, the cohort consists of students with mild, moderate and severe levels of Intellectual Disability.

The pathway and preparation towards Employment First in the USA is important and the Fellow saw many examples of personalised career planning including the utilisation of the students' interests and strengths as well as finding benefit to the employer. The support in the work force was impressive and continued for a number of years depending on the need of the student.

In general, students were not placed in full time employment; however the programs created social, life skills and volunteering experiences that complimented the young person's inclusion in the community. Placement in work post school is an 'opt-in' system and the policies that promote employability apply to those parents who elect to participate in them. The problem of parental expectation is similar to Australia and is a vital part of the transition process. The employability data of transition agencies applies only to those students who have opted in to the program so there is still a cohort of non-participating students. However data for the King County transition program indicates a high of 73 per cent (2008) of students being in employment six months out of school. Figures dropped during the Global Financial Crisis but again rose to 65 per cent in 2013. The Australian average rate is currently 50 per cent.²

¹ Richard G Luecking, *The Way to Work*, 2009

² PricewaterhouseCoopers Report 2011 Disability Expectations: Investing in a Better Life, A Stronger Australia

i. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

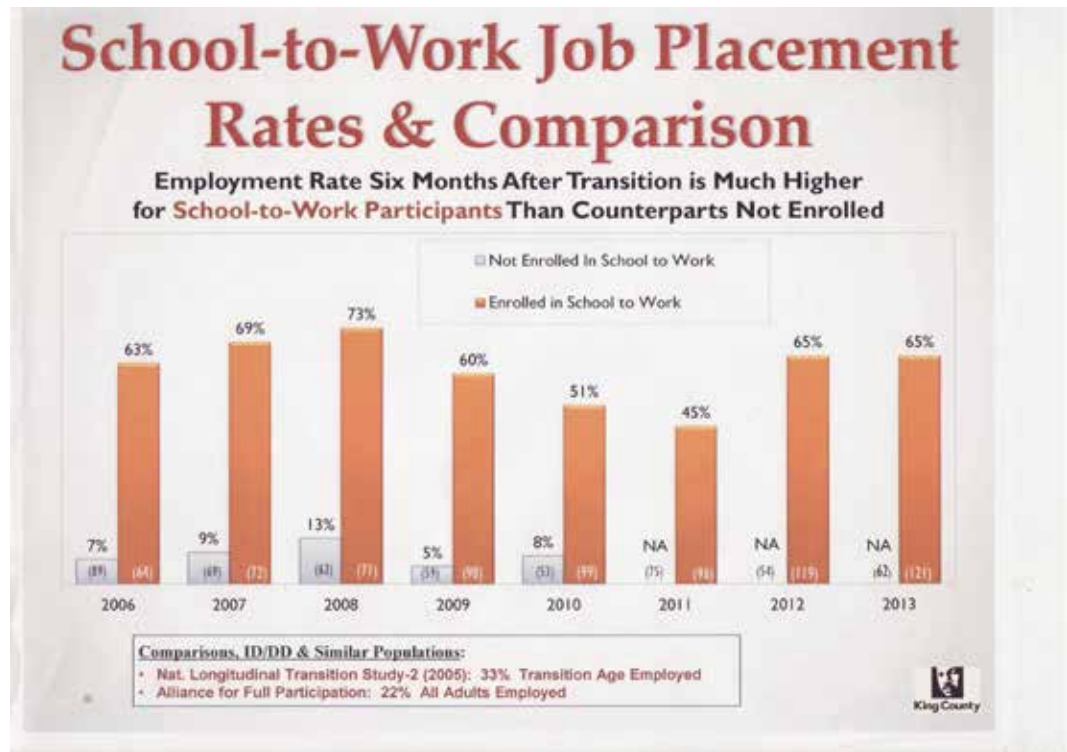


Chart of School-to-Work Job Placement Rates.

Disability inclusion entered the legal litigation system in the USA in 1999 as the State of Georgia was sued for non-inclusion of people in community settings (USA Supreme Court - Olmstead Vs L.C., decision based on the Americans with Disabilities Act).³ This Act has been used for other legal issues and there are currently disabled people engaged in legal action involving their right to employability in the community. During the Fellow's discussions with Richard Luecking, he indicated that Law and Policy would drive further change in the USA and that in the next 10 years there will be huge changes to programs that are not based on community inclusion.

These ongoing changes in the USA are relevant to the Australian system and we must be ready for them!

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ii. ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| ACFE | Adult Community and Further Education |
| ASbAT | Australian School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship |
| DDA | Developmental Disabilities Administration (USA) |
| DDD | Developmental Disabilities Division (USA) |
| DEEWR | Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations |
| DoE | Department of Employment (formerly DEEWR) |
| DET | Department of Education and Training (formerly DEECD, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) |
| DHS | Department of Human Services |
| DSHS | Department of Social and Health Services (USA) |
| DVR | Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (USA) |
| EARN | Employment Assistance and Resource Center (USA) |
| EDI | Employment Disability Institute (Cornell University) |
| ESP | Employment Service Providers (USA) |
| IDEA | Individuals with Disability Education Improvement Act (USA) |
| ILR | Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations |
| MTP | Model Transition Program Cornell University |
| NDIS | National Disability Insurance Scheme |
| ODEP | Office of Disability Employment Policy (USA) |
| SBAT | School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship |
| SSA | Social Security Administration (USA) |
| SSI | Supplementary Security Income (USA) |
| TAFE | Technical and Further Education |
| USA | United States of America |
| VET | Vocational Education and Training |
| VETiS | Vocational Education and Training in Schools |
| VCAL | Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning |
| VCAA | Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority |
| VRQA | Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority |

iii. DEFINITIONS

Blended Funding

Refers to supporting student transition from a variety of funding sources

Braided Services

Refers to supporting student transition through of collaboration of Services

Career Transition Program

Programs operate in counties across the states to assist school to work transition

Employment First Policy

Legislated policy to encourage employment as the first option for students with disabilities

Internship

Students with disabilities learn work skills in real employment environments

Model Transition Program

Extensive program researching best transition sources across New York State

Olmstead Act

Supreme Court ruling in 1999 that was the catalyst for inclusiveness of people with disabilities in all community areas

School to Work Transition

Concept that encourages students to enter the workforce directly from school but also promotes paid work experience and Internships

Transcen

Organisation providing transition opportunities for young people with disabilities

Work Link

A division of Transcen operating in San Francisco

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Paula Barnett thanks the following individuals and organisations that have generously given of their time and their expertise to assist, advise and guide her through this Fellowship program.

Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

The International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute) is an independent, national organisation. In 2015 it is celebrating twenty-five (25) years working with Australian governments, industry education institutions and individuals to enable them to gain enhanced skills, knowledge and experience in traditional trades, professions and leading edge technologies.

At the heart of the ISS Institute are our individual Fellows. Under the Overseas Applied Research Fellowship Program the Fellows travel overseas. Upon their return, they are required to pass on what they have learnt by:

- Preparing a detailed report for distribution to government departments, industry and educational institutions
- Recommending improvements to accredited educational courses
- Delivering training activities including workshops, conferences and forums.

Over 300 Australians have received Fellowships, across many industry sectors. In addition, recognised experts from overseas conduct training activities and events. To date, 25 leaders in their field have shared their expertise in Australia.

According to Skills Australia's 'Australian Workforce Futures: A National Workforce Development Strategy 2010'.

Australia requires a highly skilled population to maintain and improve our economic position in the face of increasing global competition, and to have the skills to adapt to the introduction of new technology and rapid change. International and Australian research indicates we need a deeper level of skills than currently exists in the Australian labour market to lift productivity. We need a workforce in which more people have skills and knowledge, but also multiple and higher level skills and qualifications. Deepening skills and knowledge across all occupations is crucial to achieving long-term productivity growth. It also reflects the recent trend for jobs to become more complex and the consequent increased demand for higher-level skills. This trend is projected to continue regardless of whether we experience strong or weak economic growth in the future. Future environmental challenges will also create demand for more sustainability related skills and knowledge across a range of industries and occupations.

In this context, the ISS Institute works with our Fellows, industry and government to identify specific skills and knowledge in Australia that require enhancing, where accredited courses are not available through Australian higher education institutions or other Registered Training Organisations. The Fellows' overseas experience sees them broadening and deepening their own professional knowledge, which they then share with their peers, industry and government upon their return. This is the focus of the ISS Institute's work.

For further information on our Fellows and our work see <http://www.issinstitute.org.au>.

Paula Barnett also thanks the CEO (Bella Irlight AO) and staff (Ken Greenhill and Paul Sumner) of ISS Institute for their assistance in planning and development of the Fellowship and completion of this report.

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Fellowship Sponsor

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Supporters

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- Principal Association of Specialist Schools
- National/ Local Ticket to Work Networks
- Simon Hamilton, Senior Advisor, SEVR DET
- Michelle Wakeford, National Ticket to Work Manager
- Dr Michelle Anderson, Interface2Consulting
- Karen Underwood, Manager, Achievement and Transitions Student Inclusion and Engagement, DET

2. ABOUT THE FELLOW

Name: Paula Barnett

Qualifications:

- Certificate IV, Training & Assessment, SELMAR RTO, 2013
- Graduate Diploma Special Education, Melbourne State College, 1977
- Diploma Teaching Primary, Melbourne State College, 1971.

Current Position:

- Principal, Berendale School, Department of Education and Training.

Memberships:

- Victorian Institute of Teaching
- Principal Association of Specialist Schools
- Bayside Principals Network
- Inner South Secondary Principals Association
- Australian Association of Special Education.

The Fellow has worked in Special Education for over 40 years and has a particular interest in employability for young people with Intellectual Disability. She has played a major role in developing and implementing the 'Beyond the School Gates' and 'Ticket to Work' programs that address the barriers to employability for this cohort.

Paula Barnett is currently Principal of Berendale School and CEO of the Berendale Registered Training Organisation (RTO) where there is an emphasis on Vocational Education and Training and School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships. She is the recipient of the Emerson Award for Excellence in Special Education and her school has won the Education and Excellence Award for Pathways and Transitions (DET), BGK Regional Applied Learning Awards Champion School plus a number of VET and VCAL Awards.

3. AIM OF THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The three key aims of this Fellowship were to:

- To source Vocational Education and Training programs that lead to career opportunities for young people with Intellectual Disability
- To identify skills that encourage employers to engage young people with Intellectual Disability in the workforce
- To investigate environmental factors including Government Policy, Legislation and Incentives that promotes employability for young people with a disability.

4. THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

Data indicates that Australia sits at twenty-first out of the 29 OECD countries¹ in the employability of people with a disability and that only 50 per cent of young Australians entering the work force can expect to be employed in any type of job. This compares to the seven top OECD countries employability rate of 70 per cent.² It is clear that Australia can improve its current statistics; however a paradigm shift in belief in the capability and employability of people with a disability needs to occur before improvement is shown.

Major groups that will be impacted by the Fellowship findings include:

- Students with Disabilities
- Teachers, Staff and Trainers of young people with a disability
- Parents of young people with a disability
- DET
- Disability Employment Services
- Employers
- Government Disability Agencies.

There is a poor participation rate of students with disabilities in Apprenticeships and Traineeships in Australia and there is also a poor rate of completion of Year 12 or equivalent. Students with disability currently have limited access to career planning and vocational knowledge.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has highlighted the importance of individual needs of young people with disabilities; however there is a poor perception of students' ability to work. The NDIS is recommending that existing individual transition funding could be redirected to employability programs rather than life skills and recreation and leisure based programs. Government quotas on employing people with disabilities in government agencies now exist; however realisation of these targets would ultimately increase employability opportunities for many young people with disability.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- There is some concern in Australia in regards to the future of students with disability.
- NDIS is trialling programs in Victoria and Tasmania.
- Career Planning is beginning to be accepted in Specialist Schools.
- Through State and local disability plans, inclusion in the community is encouraged.
- The National Ticket to Work program is increasing the number of students with disabilities entering Apprenticeships and Traineeships.

Weaknesses

- Australia has a low rate of employability for people with disabilities in comparison to other OECD countries.
- Students with disabilities receive the pension at age 16.
- Parents, teachers and community members have low expectations of the ability of young people with disabilities to engage in work.

¹ PricewaterhouseCooper Report 2011 Disability Expectations: Investing in a Better Life, A Stronger Australia.

² PricewaterhouseCooper Report 2011 Disability Expectations: Investing in a Better Life, A Stronger Australia.

4. THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

- Employers lack confidence to engage young people with disabilities in work.
- Young people with disabilities have limited access to career planning and paid work experience.
- There is a lack of cooperation between government agencies to share funding sources to provide quality transition activities for students with disabilities.

Opportunities

- The comparison of Australian and USA practice emphasises that it is possible for students with disabilities to work.
- Global firms such as Microsoft have programs already operating that could act as mentor programs for Australian companies.
- There are organisations such as 'Ticket to Work' and The Australian Chamber of Commerce 'Outside the Box' following USA practice and encouraging young people with moderate to severe disabilities to participate in Work Experience and paid work.
- The NDIS is in a trial stage and is a possible source for blended funding.
- A Career Development Framework with extensive Career Planning has been developed by the Victorian Education Department.
- Government Policy on Employability is in place to support employability and inclusion in the community.

Threats

- Parents and students with disabilities are concerned that working will mean that they lose the security of the disability pension.
- There is concern regarding the legal issues of young people with disabilities in the work force.
- The potential for promoting employability is often hampered by the negative attitudes and perceptions of teachers, social workers and case managers.
- Parents are over concerned that there will be personal safety issues for their sons and daughters involved in employment and independent travel.
- Organisations are unable to share financial or human resources to promote effective transition opportunities for students with disabilities.

5. IDENTIFYING THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ENHANCEMENTS REQUIRED

There are examples of areas in Australian industries and activities where there are weaknesses in skills, knowledge, experience, innovation, policies and/ or formal organisational structures to support the ongoing successful development and recognition of individuals and the particular sector.

The focus of all ISS Institute Fellowships is on applied research and investigation overseas by Australians. The main objective is to enable enhancement and improvement in skills and practice not currently available or implemented in Australia and the subsequent dissemination and sharing of those skills and recommendations throughout the relevant Australian industry, education, government bodies and the community.

Specific skill enhancement areas addressed through the Fellowship were as follows:

Skill Enhancement Area 1

Australia's poor record of employment and a void in data relating to sustainability of employment can be compared to the more successful countries.

- Investigate Vocational Education Courses and/or Transition Programs in the USA that promote a better rate of employment for people with disabilities.
- Identifying best practice and methods of delivery.
- Investigate successful international liaison activities with employers, government incentives and employment perceptions.

Action/ Outcome

Make recommendations on appropriate changes to the Victorian Education and Training system, including data collection and analysis, actual Transition Programs, and/or effective training programs for students with disability.

Skill Enhancement Area 2

Training for work through Work Experience, Internships and paid employment is limited in Australia. In particular, matching student potential and positive skills to employment is not commonly part of student preparation as students are encouraged to participate in the few jobs that are offered, often at a minimal range of work experiences not paired with their strengths or interests

Actions / Outcomes

- Establish ways of measuring student suitability for employability and connecting with employers to encourage them to engage students with disabilities.
- Initiate positive student profile proformas.
- Encourage Specialist Schools to provide work experience for all students with disabilities.
- Establish trial programs to initiate best practice.

5. IDENTIFYING THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ENHANCEMENTS REQUIRED

Skill Enhancement Area 3

In Victoria, transition from school to Further Training, Employment or Adult Training Centres for students with Intellectual Disabilities depend on the perceptions of parents, teachers and students about the employability of students. They are often associated with IQ level and Literacy and Numeracy levels.

- Investigate objective methods of measuring employability that demonstrate students' realistic strengths that are not associated with IQ or Literacy and Numeracy levels.
- Investigate and showcase successful courses that promote a better rate of employability than current Australia programs. Vocational Education and Training organisations will have best practice models to design new and improved courses.
- Raise awareness of what is happening in the USA and the employability rate of young people with disabilities. This will assist to alter the perception of the capability and potential for employment of students with disability.

Actions / Outcomes

- Document objective employability methods for students with Intellectual Disabilities.
- Distribute and discuss information with DET, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), DoE (Federal) and Peak Body Training Organisations.
- Investigate and showcase successful courses that promote a better rate of employability than current Australia programs in Vocational Education and Training.
- Raise awareness of what is happening in the USA and the employability rate of young people with disabilities.
- Document objective measures of determining employability and student strengths.

Skill Enhancement Area 4

Finding suitable employers is difficult in Australia and students can be placed in areas that are not their preference. Programs in the USA collaborate with employers to establish mutual benefits for both employer and employee. Many Australian companies do not understand that there is benefit to them in employing young people with disabilities and that there are jobs that these young people have significant interest in that regular employees may feel is a mundane task.

Actions / Outcomes

- Raise awareness of employability of young people with disabilities in the USA and the potential for this in Australia.
- Approach Industry areas to make a commitment to possible employability of young people with disabilities.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Seven major issues emerged from the Fellow's discussions and visits around the USA (see table Appendix 1 for list of visits and interviews). Rather than a narrative of each site-by-site visit, the Fellow has referenced visits and discussed the major differences that impact and highlight the success of employability for young people with disability and its relevance to the Australian context.

School Transition

Students with disabilities in the USA can attend school until the age of 21 at their local secondary school, usually located in a special needs unit of a regular school that offers specialised support from a Special Educator. Their true integration into the school is dependent on school attitudes and philosophies and varies from location to location. All schools are mandated and provided with funds to provide transitions activities for students from the age of 14 until they leave school at 21. There are however a greater concentration of services for students in the 16 to 21 age group. These activities can also vary from the school providing funding to local employers to pay students for work experience placements to real work experiences that provide pathways for employability.

In these cases, transition funding is used to engage professional transition/ employment organisations that deliver a curriculum in transitions as well as facilitating work experience activities. King County 'School to Work Transition' in Seattle services 20 school districts and has 35 classrooms of students aged 18 to 21 engaging in transition activities.

Historically there has been a long pathway to their present success rate of 65 per cent of students entering the work force and maintaining paid employment. In the 70s and 80s, grants began to become available to help people with disabilities get real jobs. The first wave of employability focused on supported employment and there was a huge increase in the 90s of students entering supported employment settings. King County data states, "From less than 100 to over 1000. The next wave of employability resulted from the Employment First Policy and amendments that focused on integrated employment and King County now has over 4400 young people with disabilities earning wages in the community".¹



Table 1: Washington State Employment Services Structure.

¹ Mank, David Michael Indiana University 2010 'King County Developmental Disabilities Transition Initiative External Evaluation Report Page 4.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Of interest is the recent concentration on engaging High Support needs students. For the 2015 and 2016 years they have five Districts involved in the program that has been extended to cater for the students' needs. Schools, King County and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation fund the program.

The Model Transition Program in New York State (MTP) was set up to improve post school educational outcomes and centred on participation in both employment and post-secondary school education. It focused on strengthening partnerships with the Vocational Rehabilitation System and community services partnerships including colleges/ universities and businesses.

Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) Employment and Disability Institute researched MTPs for a period of 18 months and collected data quarterly from over 16,000 students. They conducted three research studies in Transition Services Models, students, schools and Vocational Rehabilitation and Collaborative Services and Leadership. The common themes resulting from their studies indicated areas that improved transition. These included Career Development, Work Experience, Administration Support, Information Sharing and Collaboration. These themes were also common to all of the successful programs visited in the states.

Comment: In Australia, funded Transition Services for students with disabilities do not begin until their last year of school when students are turning 18. There is a concentration on determining the level of support (Support Needs Assessment) when they leave school and making a choice of the type of program they will participate in during their Post School Life. Traditionally students move into either, Further Education and Training at a TAFE or in to an Adult Support Service. Few students engage in Open Employment or Apprenticeships and Traineeships; however higher functioning students are often referred to Supported Employment Programs.

School Transition Programs in Victoria for students with disabilities are not compulsory and there is no funding allocated to this area apart from a small allocation for Managed Individual Pathways for Students (MIPS). The school depends on general funds to allocate staff to engage in transition programs and the emphasis depends entirely on the attitude or perception of staff as to the capability of the student and their ability to work.

DET has developed excellent resources such as a Career Development Framework for students with disabilities and engaged in a joint program with DHHS to Strengthen Pathways for Students with Disabilities as well as developing work assessment tools and resources. These resources are under-utilised by Specialist Schools and not all students have career plans. Career coaches work in selected Pilot Schools to try and provide suitable pathways; however they are not available to all schools. Regional Career Development Officer funding has recently ceased which further depletes the support for schools.

Pathways for students are determined by attitudes and competencies of professionals working with students with disability and a lack of knowledge of the supports that do exist such as Disability Employment Services, Disability Liaison Officers or Disability Coordination Officers.

The Victorian (and Australian) system needs mandated Transition Services to ensure that students maximise employment potential and have the opportunities to work.

Blended Funding and Braided Services

'Blended funding' occurs when money from multiple funding streams are combined to create a single pot of funding that is then used to purchase one or more specific services that support an individual with a disability in pursuing, obtaining or maintaining integrated employment. 'Braided services' refers to the use of this funding to engage a variety of services that work towards the same purpose of obtaining and maintaining integrated employment. The variety of funding sources is used with students

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

in school transition programs and programs post school. The cooperation between government departments and the management of these funds is vital to the success of future student transition programs.



Table 2: Use of blended funding and braided services in Washington State

These blended funding and braided services programs use both school and county funding. Of interest is the accountability structure that relies on successful transition data on a monthly basis that is required to meet set targets to ensure funding to the transition/ employment agencies is continued. Funding sources are a complex issue and can involve Federal, State and County sources. For example, the Lake Washington School District Transition Academy uses school district transition funding to buy in the services of King County 'School to Work' staff. In turn, King County uses funding from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation to engage employment agencies.

Sara Murphy (Work Link) sees braided services as a vital part of a successful transition and enables customised employment as a possibility because the transition services are able to direct funds to the particular need or support services required by individual students to successfully transition to employment.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE



Trainee learning how to prepare food products

The External Evaluation Report of King County Developmental Disabilities Division initiatives by David Mank, noted that the use of multiple funding sources was working and commented that blended resources and cash support from King County DDD, School Districts and Vocational Rehabilitation made it possible for providers and others to deliver transition outcomes. The shared commitment to funding further reinforced the shared vision and commitment to outcomes.

Comment: The concept of Blended Funded is foreign to the transition process of students with disabilities in Victoria. It is not until they are exiting school that young people can use Futures for Young Adults funding to buy in a variety of services; however clients often only use one service. This is clearly restrictive and often too late to provide valuable experience in authentic work places to increase employability options. The 'Futures' funding is most often used to support students in Adult Day Services and for students to engage in recreational, leisure and Daily Living Skills and in some circumstances Supported Employment.

Disability Employment Services cannot engage with students until their last year of schooling and it is very limited. There are clear lines of funding for students in school and it is rare that funding from different sources is obtained to improve education, social or life and work skills. School funding focuses on educational aims rather than life and post school aspirations. The USA model is based on the notion that students are more successful moving straight from school to work and therefore realistic training and work education and placements should occur during the students' schooling.

The mandated transition activities and consequent funding in the USA begin when the student turns 14; however there is a concentration of services from 16 onwards. Each of the providers the Fellow

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

visited emphasised that the transition process needs to start as early as possible to give students the skills and knowledge they need to be successful workers. In Victoria, Transition is largely unfunded and limited to the school's knowledge of available services. Currently there is no shared funding to promote transition processes.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme would be a logical provider of shared funding and customised planning for young people with a disability; however attitudes of disability workers need to change to see employability as a vital aspect of inclusion in the community. Although it is planned through NDIS to fund education related supports, if the school is deemed responsible for transition activities by NDIA then they are unable to fund this area. The question of funds being shared for provision of services of employability training for school-aged students is not addressed. It is clear that funding for transition activities of school age students with disabilities needs to improve and be provided by professionals outside of the Education Department as well as developing the notion of sharing funding across agencies.

Personalised and Customised Planning and Work Experience

Work Link (San Francisco) was established in 1986 to develop customised employment and transition services to individuals with disabilities. They have an impressive array of planning documents that link students' interest, personality, dreams, experience and skills to potential employment situations. The Positive Personal Profile Individual Service Plan and Venn diagram is used as a way of presenting students' assets as a unique combination of skills that is of benefit to the employer.

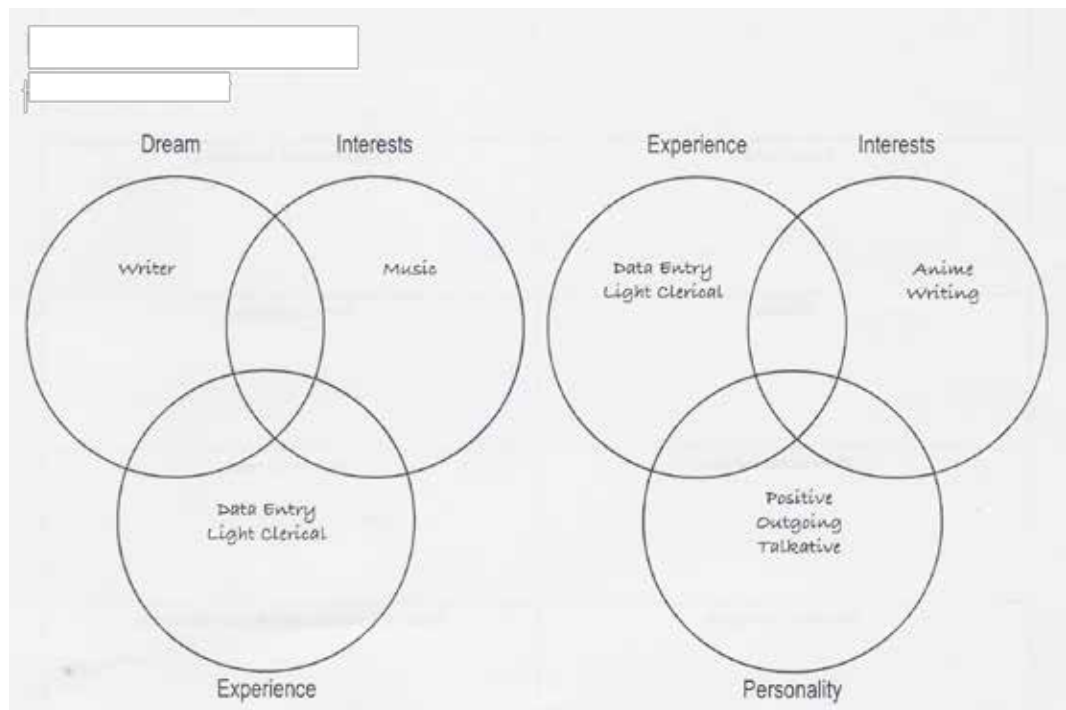


Diagram: Example of an actual Student Venn Diagram self-prepared from his Positive Personal Profile (PPP)

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The planning team hits the target when there is a match between student skills and skills required for a particular type of employment. Importance is placed on the interest or passion the student has for the particular job. By considering the skills in a positive manner, many of the deficit areas can also be considered as strengths. For example, a person with 'obsessive' traits could be viewed as 'focused' in the correct job location or someone who is stubborn can be persistent when attending to tasks. This was very obvious on a site visit to 'Simon' who worked at PSA Law in San Francisco. His obsessive traits (consistent with autism) were well matched to his employment tasks of electronic filing of completed claim forms for accidents. However, other areas needed ongoing intervention and he needed to be reminded to knock on doors and wait until asked to enter.



'Real work experiences'

The Career Transition Program in Montgomery County in Maryland has been operating since 1993 and also has individualised, person-centred career planning as the focus of the program. Of importance to the program is the concept of flexible case management and support as well as the concept of exploring paid work experience. Luecking in his book *The Way to Work* states, "Research has consistently demonstrated that education and employment outcomes for youth with disabilities can be significantly improved by frequent and systematic exposure to a variety of real work experiences".²

Luecking outlines a range of different types of work experiences that range from exploration to paid employment. These are highlighted in the following table.

² Richard G leucking *The Way to Work* 2009 page 23

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Types of Work Experience:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Career exploration | Career exploration involves visits by youth to workplaces to learn about jobs and the skills required to perform them. Visits and meetings with employers and people in identified occupations outside of the workplace are also types of career exploration activities from which youth can learn about jobs and careers. Typically, such visits are accompanied by discussions with youth about what they saw, heard, and learned. |
| Job shadowing | Job shadowing is extended time, often a full workday or several workdays, spent by a youth in a workplace accompanying an employee in the performance of his or her daily duties. Many companies have "take your child to work" or "job shadow" days, during which youth are invited to spend time at the company. |
| Work sampling | Work sampling is work by a youth that does not materially benefit the employer but allows the youth to spend meaningful time in a work environment to learn aspects of potential job tasks and "soft skills" required in the workplace. It is important for transition specialists to be familiar with the Fair Labor Standards Act (PL 75-718) requirements for volunteer activity. |
| Service learning | Service learning is hands-on volunteer service to the community that integrates with course objectives. It is a structured process that provides time for reflection on the service experience and demonstration of the skills and knowledge acquired. |
| Internships | Internships are formal arrangements whereby a youth is assigned specific tasks in a workplace over a predetermined period of time. Internships may be paid or unpaid, depending on the nature of the agreement with the company and the nature of the tasks. Many postsecondary institutions help to organize these experiences with local companies as adjuncts to specific degree programs and are alternatively called <i>cooperative education experiences</i> , <i>cooperative work</i> , or simply <i>co-ops</i> . |
| Apprenticeships | Apprenticeships are formal, sanctioned work experiences of extended duration in which an apprentice learns specific occupational skills related to a standardized trade, such as carpentry, plumbing, or drafting. Many apprenticeships also include paid work components. |
| Paid employment | Paid employment may include existing standard jobs in a company or customized work assignments that are negotiated with an employer, but these jobs always feature a wage paid directly to the youth. Such work may be scheduled during or after the school day. It may be integral to a course of study or simply a separate adjunctive experience. |

An example of a type of work experience outlined in the above table is Project SEARCH that is an internship program for Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities. Kaiser Permanente participates as the host business collaborating with schools and community partners to help interns gain skills to work in healthcare. Yvette Crespo, Project Director, National Diversity Kaiser Permanente Corporate Offices says, "At Kaiser Permanente, we see Project SEARCH as a win-win situation. We help people with disabilities learn job skills, while developing candidates for our work force and achieving diversity objectives".³

The program involves three ten-week rotations during the San Francisco school year and includes a class component on site at the medical centre led by a Project SEARCH instructor. Interns start at 8am and have an hour in the classroom before spending four hours in the medical centre on their assigned jobs. The curriculum around Project SEARCH concentrates on Team Building, Getting Around Your Workplace, Workplace Safety, Technology, Social Skills, Communication and Keeping a Job. These skills taught directly in the workplace by their instructor and project team members take on a real significance to the students.

3 Work Link Annual Report 2012 page 1

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The Work Link Annual Report of 2012 states, "Project SEARCH creates a unique, on-site network of support for applicants and employees with disabilities. The program is proving to be a valuable experience. Kaiser SF have hired two interns as transporters and others have found great paying, career orientated positions because of their training".⁴



Successful 'Graduate' of the Work Link program

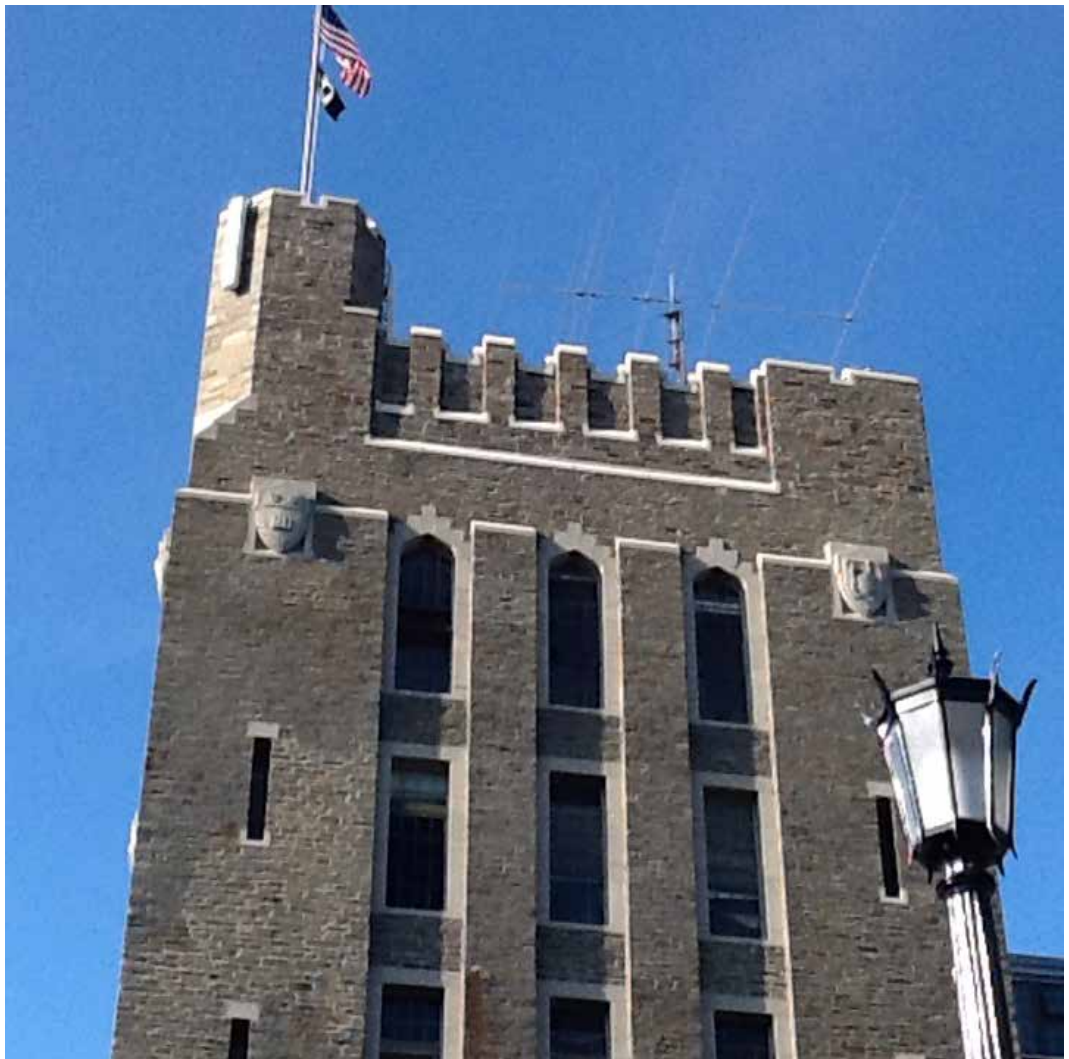
Simon, mentioned previously, completed a yearlong internship at Kaiser Permanente developing administration and social skills before being employed by PSA Law.

Comment: It is important to provide employment opportunities that suit both the students' skills and deficits. It is also important to really understand what the student wants to do and where they would feel able to work. Simon's placement at PSA Law started with his desire to work in a tall building in the city and ended as him becoming a valued employee. Creating a positive personal profile is essential to successful placement at work or work experience. Too often the Fellow see students in her school being placed in positions that have become available rather than developed and created exclusively for them. This is why in school staff need help and assistance from professionals who are experienced and have the relevant time to work on placements. Schools need to connect with relevant Disability Employment Services and Local Disability Agencies to assist with work experience and personalised profiling of students.

⁴ Annual Report Work Link 2012

Family Support and Knowledge

In the USA, like Australia, the decision to transition to employability is based on a family decision to opt for an appropriate pathway. Whether they decide on employment really depends on their experiences in the transition phase at Secondary School and on their knowledge of services and supports available as well as their perception and belief around the capability of their child to work. Families also need to apply to a range of organisations to ensure that future transition funding and services are available. This includes Department of Social and Health Services (eligibility as a Development Disabilities Administration Client), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Social Securities Administration (Pension), Work Source, State ID Card and other areas that cover Student support, Travel Assistance and Independent Living. These forms are explained and the when, where and how to apply is outlined in the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services one page guide detailing all application queries (See appendix 10.2 for full detail). This eases the burden a little of the complex funding maze of disability support. There is no doubt that transition is more successful when parents are involved and understand the process of transition.



External view of Cornell University

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Cornell University's study on MTP concluded, "Parental participation in students' transition is central to their successful employment outcomes. Sites that were more successful with this were able to increase their students' likelihood of participation in transition programs".⁵

The emphasis of engagement is the prime purpose of Parent Resource Centres and includes early discussions on life after school, bringing aspirations of the parents in line with realistic employment options and general support with issues of disability and counselling support.

The King County Transition Program assists families by holding an Annual Transition Fair where families can gather information, interact with transition providers and attend sessions on a range of issues involved in transition. In the Lake Washington School District area a Transition Academy has been set up in a shop front in the business centre. The Academy as well as providing and promoting employability information and programs, works with parents around the expectations of young people with disabilities becoming contributing adults.



Happy student learning experience at a San Franciscoc Hotel Gymnasium

Comment: In essence, the USA situation is similar to the Australian experience; however in the USA, parents are encouraged more by providers to consider employment and there is Legislation that promotes School to Work and employability.

In Victoria, the Parents as Career Transition Support (PACTS) program gives valuable information to parents of students with disabilities and is readily available to parents; however schools need to promote the program and make referrals to parents with low expectations or unrealistic ideas of employment. More importantly parents need to share career planning documentation with teachers

⁵ David Brewer (Cornell University ILR School Employment and Disability Institute. 'Model Transition Program Evaluation. Summary of Results and Recommendations March 2010.)

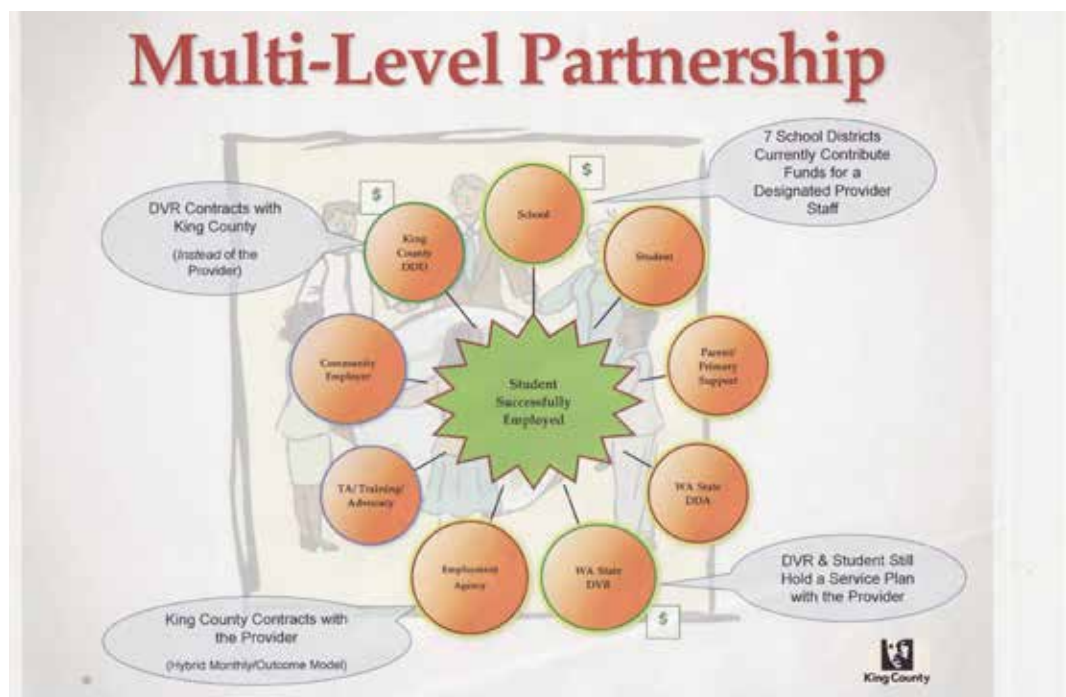
6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

and their children to help contribute to future options and consider career choices. Once again the quality of the program depends on the perception of the providers and their understanding of the ability of students with disabilities to work.

The Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework sets out Career Action Plans for each level of Secondary School; however Specialist Schools are not compelled to complete Career Action Plans. It would be beneficial if this plan became a mandated part of Individual Learning Plans and required both students and parents to sign off on career plans on a yearly basis. This would mean that parents became more involved prior to the introduction of Managed Individual Plans for students at Year 10 and that appropriate high expectations of employability be established.

Concept of School to Work

The concept relies heavily on the notion that transition activities occur during the later years of school and that the student transitioning has been well prepared for work by participating in career development, multiple forms of paid work experience and is supported by employment services and Vocational Rehabilitation. School to Work became a Federal policy priority in 1984 in the USA and was supported by transition becoming a legal requirement for schools under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 1990 (IDEA) and subsequent amendments. At this time the destination of student employability was mainly supported employment, however the notion of paid regular employment has gained considerable support as the Employment First Policy of 2004 and amendments has influenced the number of students employed in Open Employment. Richard Luecking (President of Transcen) has been at the forefront of this concept and writes, "...every youth who wants to can achieve an adult life of productive and successful employment, regardless of disability label, need for support and accommodation intensity of special education services, or even the economic vitality of his or her community... post school employment becomes the rule rather than the exception for youth with disabilities".⁶



School to work – Multi-level Partnership

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The King County Transition Program creates a clear message that employment directly from school is an achievable accomplishment for any student including those with severe disabilities. This is well supported by community perception and human rights and equal opportunity laws.



Another view of happy students

Comment: The School to Work notion is supported through students with disabilities attending school to the age of 21 and having those extra years to work on transition activities. The Victorian practice of students leaving school at age 18 makes this concept more difficult to implement; however our post school options do not always lead to employability opportunities.

Should students have the option of continuing schooling to pursue a pathway to employment? No doubt this opens up the issue of funding, however it also highlights the issue of discrimination, as regular students in Secondary Colleges are able to continue studies post 18 years of age if they are completing an accredited qualification. Considering the current age range restrictions and allowing for the fact that students with disabilities with special permission can complete one extra year to complete VCAL, if students are prepared at an early age for work and have experience in the work force, it is possible to place more students in pathways of Apprenticeships, Traineeships and Open Employment.

It is important that the post school option leads to employment rather than the disability pension. The National Ticket to Work Network in Australia has enabled close to 300 young people with disabilities to enter into Apprenticeships and Traineeships over the past two years. Continued funding of a National Coordinator would enable the program to continue and extend the vital work it is doing in the area of employability. In Australia, it is more a question about whether we believe young people can work.

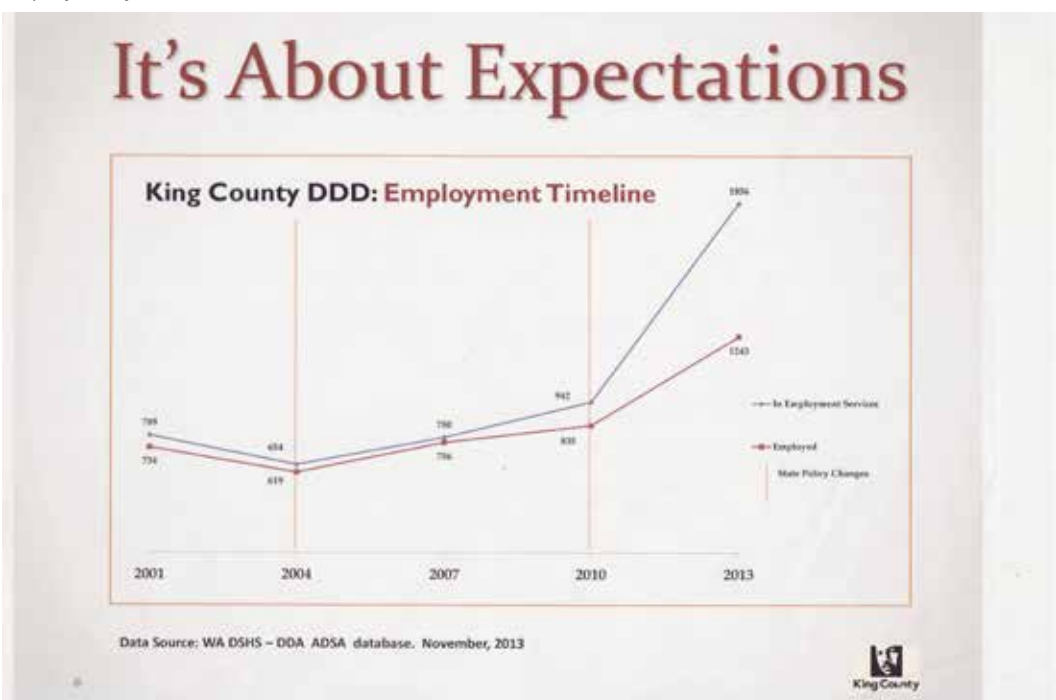
Disability Climate

It is fair to say that the climate around disability issues in the USA is centred on inclusion in all aspects of life. Nancy Hinkley from Cornell University runs 'Partners in Policy Making' which is an online advocacy course for people with a disability. The course teaches advocacy skills and students choose an issue that directly impacts their own life and research solutions to change the issue. A requirement to complete the course is a short testimony outlining what they have achieved and there is a dedicated YouTube site for their presentations. Nancy reports that students in her last course made small but significant changes to environmental issues that impacted on their quality of life and that most students completing the course continued to advocate for disability issues. The state of Illinois is preparing to replicate this program.

The Omstead Decision of 1999 was a Supreme Court ruling through the Americans with Disabilities Act that individuals with disabilities be placed in community settings rather than institutions. It was ground breaking and changed thinking about inclusion in all aspects of life for people with a disability in America. The flow-on from this was employability and the belief that people with disabilities can work in employment. Mandated Transition Programs in Schools and Legislation requiring work to be considered as the first option for Post School placements has increased placements in employability.

Richard Wilson from King County School to Work Program said that prior to the School to Work programs, Transition programs were recording as low as 7.7 per cent of students entering paid employment. The effect of this can be seen as prior to the Global Financial Crisis the rate of employability was at 73 per cent and dropped to 65 per cent after the crisis.⁷ These are still substantially higher percentages than in Australia.

Richard Wilson from King County School to Work demonstrates the impact policy change has on employability and has mapped the correlation between major policy changes and the increase in employability.



"Its About Expectations" heading included in graphic

⁷ Wilson, Richard. 'King County School to Work' 2014

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

There are currently individuals undertaking legal action against a state government for placement in a sheltered workshop and consequently non-inclusion in community based open employment. Both Sara Murphy (Work Link) and Richard Luecking (Transcen) commented on the implications that this legal action could have on increasing employability in the future.

Comment: Australia's disability climate is just emerging and disability organisations are encouraging inclusion in all aspects of the community but employability tends to take a back seat compared to issues such as integration, disability rights, housing and personal care. There are some organisations and parent groups that are more active such as Ability Tasmania that provides employment opportunities for high support needs students. In reality, if one organisation can find these experiences for high support need students who require intensive training and sometimes have challenging health and behavioural issues, placement of students with disabilities with lower support needs should be a given. There is a need to promote successful placements more so that more parents want their children to work and more employers will offer work placements. It is really about our expectations.

Employers

Even though legal litigation is a growing concern in the work force in the USA and cases before the Equal Opportunity Commission are increasing, employers are seeing social benefit in displaying community consciousness and responsibility in the employment of people with disabilities.

Large organisations such as Microsoft are entering the field of employability for students with disabilities. Microsoft recently announced that they would offer over 200 placements for students with disabilities over a two-year period working with employment agencies to train them in the Microsoft site in Seattle. Richard Wilson (King County School to Work) said that at a meeting to discuss the proposal over 800 interested employees, parents of disabled people and community members attended the meeting.

Similarly agencies to support employers have been established such as EARN-Employer Assistance and Resource Centre funded by a cooperative agreement between US. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy and Cornell University.

Employers are being exposed to workers with disability through the work experience, internship and school based apprenticeships that have emerged out of the mandated school transition programs. The high quality programs, as reported by the MTP researched by Cornell University, use a range of Career Training programs that better prepare the student for work. Programs sharing planning collaboration and funding to support the school to work process are providing workers with quality skills in their work experiences.

Personalised transition and customised employment provide workers who add benefit to the employer and provide real skills to the work force. This was witnessed on site visits at work places where students were entrenched as valued workers. The ongoing support by transition agencies ensured that both workers and employers continued to be supported. Sara Murphy from Work Link emphasised that this was only possible due to the concept of blended funding being fed from agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation into one agency so that there was a one-person contact with the employer and worker.

The customised employment process looks for a benefit to the employer as a means of encouraging them to host work experience students or employ young people with disabilities.

Luecking writes, "According to employers who have successfully brought youth with disabilities into their workplaces, three main reasons exist for employers to host youth with disabilities:

1. To meet a specific company need, such as filling a job opening or addressing a production or service need

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

2. To meet an industry wide need, such as preparing potential new workers in a technology industry
3. To meet a community need, such as helping youth become productive citizens".⁸

Positive Personal Profiles aim to find this benefit and acts as a negotiating tool with the employer. Sara Murphy described her efforts to find an employer for her students as using all her staff's personal connections to industries and business as well as established community connections through employment services. She reported that often personal connections were more successful with students beginning a placement but the vital factor is being able to offer ongoing support to employers. Employers engage more when they know they will get benefits from the employment offer.

Comment: Our global economy means that many of the industries and companies already employing young people with disabilities in the USA exist in Australia; however our perceptions of employability differ from the USA. Collating information on successful USA disability employment outcomes provides a strong case to replicate programs here but we need our students be to be ready for the work situation and we need to make sure that students are well trained and suitable for the positions.

Essentially we need a public campaign to promote disability employment that raises the expectation of employers and the community in general. Disability advocates, organisations, politicians and services providers need to lobby the government to promote an Australian-wide commitment to employability issues.

7. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: APPLYING THE OUTCOMES

The impact of the report is related to changing the perception of who is employable and targets State and Federal Governments, all disability providers, Australian educators, transition workers and parents of students with disability. In essence, it outlines what is possible and even without Legislative changes in regards to transition and employment, a paradigm shift about the rights of all students with disability to be employed and their capability would make a recognisable difference to the current situation.

The distribution of the report to a wide audience in the disability sector would be beneficial; however discussions and the presentation of the report to the Department of Education and Training (Victoria) is essential as they have the ability to make the necessary changes to curriculum in transition areas for all students with disability.

The Fellow will commit to presentations on the findings at conferences involving the education sector, disability employment organisations, industry peak bodies and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS, Victoria).

The Fellow will contact and brief relevant politicians to inform them of current practice and Legislation in the USA.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made to policy bodies at both Australian Federal level and at State level (using Victorian bodies as the example), as well as at a more General level as a way forward to improving how Australia manages those students with disabilities:

To Federal Government

1. DoE (Federal) review recent decisions to restrict funding to Disability Employment Services to the last year of the students' schooling.
2. The Australian Government adopt the 'Employment First' concept and pass legislation to ensure schools and transition officers adopt it.
3. The Australian Government mandate schools to provide transition programs for all students with disabilities and provide priority funding to appropriate agencies to plan transition programs for all students with disabilities.
4. The National Ticket to Work program promote Internships as well as SBATs in their support for authentic work experiences for students with disabilities and that they make approaches to large companies such as Microsoft to replicate programs currently operating in the USA.
5. A National Campaign be developed and funded through the Australian Government to make Australians aware of the potential for all young people with disability to work in paid employment.

To Victorian State Government

6. The Regional Career Development Officer program be reinstated by DET and expanded to include an officer who works with all schools that have students with disabilities to implement career development plans based on the Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework.
7. The Transition Coaches program funded through the Department of Health and Human Services is expanded so that all Specialist Schools access coaches. The clear purpose of the program should be articulated to schools and focus on Employment First and School to Work notions.
8. DET policy clearly articulates that all students with disabilities regardless of Intellectual level participate in compulsory work experience in the last three years of schooling.
9. DET policy mandates participation in an accredited curriculum post Year 10 for all students with disabilities.
10. The review of VCAL by the VCAA includes the recommendation that a further compulsory Unit of Study at Foundation level be established in Career Planning and Pathways.
11. That DHHS and DET (Victoria) continue to work in partnership in Strengthening Pathways for Students with Disabilities and run a further Pilot Program to develop the next steps on implementation of the framework that was developed through the previous Pilot Program.

General Recommendation

12. Blended funding is encouraged in all Secondary and Specialist Schools to allow students with disabilities to participate in realistic transition activities including internships, SBATs and work experience activities.

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Wilson Richard

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10. ATTACHMENTS

10.1 Contacts and visits:

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Sara Murphy | Director, Work Link, San Francisco (Transcen Inc. Program), USA |
| Eileen Easterbrook | Employment Specialist for Competitive Employment – Aim Hire, San Francisco, USA |
| Jessica Avalos | Open Hand Project, San Francisco, USA |
| Simon | (Transcen Client) Phillips, Spallas and Angstadt, LLC San Francisco USA |
| Bob | (Transcen Client) Sheraton Leisure Center San Francisco USA |
| Richard Wilson | Project Manager, School to Work, King County Disabilities Division, Seattle, Washington, USA |
| Richard Haines | Transition Academy Lake Washington School District 414 USA |
| Dr Susanne Bruyere | Director, Employment and Disability Institute, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York State, USA |
| David Brewer | Disability and Employment Institute, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York State, USA |
| Thomas Golden | Transition Services Professional Development Support Centre Associate Director, Employment and Disabilities Institute, Ithaca, New York State, USA |
| Nancy Hinkley | Co- Principal Investigator, New York State Promise Initiative Project Director/ Principal Investigator, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York State, USA (New York State Partners in Policy Making) |
| Richard Luecking | President, Transcen, Rockville, Maryland, USA |
| David Brophy | Career Transition Program Montgomery County Maryland USA |

10. ATTACHMENTS

10.2 What to do and when to do it – students eligible for an IEP or a Section 504 Plan

| AGE | If my child is entitled to an IEP, a Section 504 Plan and/or has a disability, here are some timelines of activities to do. | |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| 15-16 | <p>Apply for a Washington State I.D. card.</p> <p>WHY: It will be needed to apply for adult services.</p> |  <p>• Get an I.D. card at your local Department of Licensing.</p> |
| Sophomore Year | <p>Apply to join the University of Washington DO-IT Scholars Program before January deadline.</p> <p>WHY: This program prepares young people with disabilities for college, careers, independent living and leadership roles in society. DO-IT Scholars explore careers and the world of work, learn to select and use adaptive technology, applications software, and Internet resources.</p> |  <p>• 1-888-972-DOIT</p> |
| 16 | <p>Apply to become a client of the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA).</p> <p>WHY: You may want these service options when your son/daughter turns 21. Long term job coaching support is based on availability of funding.</p> |  <p>• www.dshs.wa.gov/dda/</p> |
| 17-19 | <p>Apply for HUD Housing.</p> <p>WHY: The wait list for housing can be very long, so it is important to apply early.</p> |  |
| 18 | <p>If your child does not receive Social Security Benefits – apply now!</p> <p>WHY: He or she is now an adult and parents' income is not counted. He/she may be eligible for cash and medical benefits. There are many provisions available, called WORK INCENTIVES, that allow people with disabilities to keep benefits, including Medicare/Medicaid, while working. <i>He or she needs to pay rent to the family in order to maximize all benefits.</i></p> |  |
| Young Men 18 | <p>Register for Selective Services.</p> <p>WHY: It's the law. Also, if planning to apply for financial aid to attend college, applying for Selective Service is required.</p> | <p>• Apply on line at: http://www.sss.gov</p> <p>• Get a form from your local post office.</p> <p>• Return the form that comes in the mail.</p> |
| 18 or last year of school | <p>Apply for services with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).</p> <p>WHY: This agency helps people with disabilities become employed and understands how working will affect people's benefits.</p> |  <p>• www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/</p> |
| Senior Year | <p>Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).</p> <p>WHY: If seeking aid to attend college, this form must be filled out by March 1 of Senior year for best consideration.</p> |  <p>• www.fafsa.ed.gov</p> |
| Anytime | <p>Apply for job search assistance with WorkSource Youth Services.</p> <p>WHY: This is the local program that can help self-directed job seekers find part time and/or summer employment to help develop work skills.</p> |  <p>• www.g2mworksource.com</p> |
| Anytime | <p>Call for local transit system bus Travel Training and Paratransit services.</p> <p>WHY: This is free training for people who want to learn to be independent on the bus and flexible alternative public transportation for people with disabilities and the elderly.</p> |  |
| Anytime | <p>Apply for services at a local Center for Independent Living (CIL). The State Independent Living Council (SILC) can help you find local resources.</p> <p>WHY: These organizations provide support for independent living skills development, advocacy, and benefits planning.</p> |  <p>• www.waifc.org</p> |

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NB: This table is referred to in the first paragraph of Family Support and Knowledge, in Section 6 - International Experience.

