



Transition e-News

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Spotlight News

2011 Wisconsin Transition Conference

The 2011 Wisconsin Transition Conference is fast approaching! The conference will be held on February 17-18, 2011, with pre-conference sessions scheduled for Wednesday, February 16, 2011.



The 2011 Wisconsin Transition Conference includes sessions on a variety of transition-related topics, including person-centered planning, employment, mental health, and many others. Conference participants can register for the conference on the WSTI website at <http://www.wsti.org>. Click on “Register for an Event” on the top of the page to register. The registration fee for pre-conference sessions is \$100 and general conference registration is \$300. Please remember that conference registrations must be paid with a credit card.

If you have any questions regarding the Wisconsin Transition Conference, please contact Linda Maitrejean, Conference Director and WSTI Project Director, at lindam@cesa11.k12.wi.us.

Articles of Interest

NAMI’s StrengthOfUs.Org Website Review

by Ben Jacobsen

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has created a website called StrengthOfUs.org designed to assist transition age young adults with mental health challenges. The following is a review of the website.

This site features seven sections, each dedicated to a topic within the field of transition. Each “section” (called a group) offers crucial information in a categorical, informative way. I was quite impressed with the ease that this site can be navigated, which is important to parents and clients without technical skills. One huge downside to the site is the lack of posting by clients/parents. This may deter people from accessing information and/or recommending the site.

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If you would like to submit an article or information on an upcoming event for future newsletters, please contact Linda Maitrejean at lindam@cesa11.k12.wi.us.

Future editions of the 2010-2011 e-News are scheduled for March and May.

Articles of Interest

“YiPPE” for Green Bay

by Martha DeYoung

Youth in Partnership with Parents for Empowerment (YiPPE) is the only known program in the country to simultaneously train youth with disabilities, ages 15-20, in transition along with their parents. Up to 25 youth and their parents attend 5 weekend sessions throughout a school year to learn about effective self-advocacy, communication strategies, futures planning, and available resources for students in transition.

The Green Bay School District in collaboration with the Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative (WSPEI), Options for Independent Living, and surrounding school districts of Ashwaubenon, Bonduel, Crivitz, Peshtigo, East DePere, Luxemburg-Casco, Pulaski, Howard-Suamico, and Seymour contributed resources to offer this program to families in the northeast part of the state. A total of 25 parents and 17 youth are currently attending the five weekend sessions at the Tundra Lodge in Green Bay.

The program is designed to provide youth with:

- Information and opportunities for practice so they learn to make decisions for themselves throughout the transition process
- Strategies and supports to get involved in their schools and communities
- Information and practice on learning to be as independent as possible, including incorporating the use of an organizational tool (called the YiPPE Filer)
- Information on resources and programs to support youths' long-term goals
- Advocacy and self-determination skills
- Preparation and options for employment and/or college
- A plan for working on goals related to their individual futures

The program's goals for parents are to:

- Help support their youth in making informed choices about the future
- Improve leadership and communication skills
- Learn about transition issues such as health care, education, inclusion, legislation, employment, adult services, and self-care
- Learn about valuable national, state, and local resources that help youth make a successful transition from high school to work or school
- Develop and complete a Community Action Plan designed to improve transition services and opportunities back in their home communities
- Strengthen parent-youth relationships and leadership skills

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Transition-Related Survey Results

by The Natural Supports Team

As a high school special education teacher in Wisconsin, you may recall receiving a survey last spring from the Waisman Center's Natural Supports team asking about your transition-related professional development needs. We want to thank you for your valuable input on this project! The purpose of the survey was to identify those transition issues special educators in Wisconsin would like to learn more about and to understand the most promising approaches to delivering transition-related information and training to practitioners.

Every high school special educator in the state was invited to be part of the study. More than 1200 responded by completing the survey. This is an impressive participation rate (more than 50%). We have spent the past few months analyzing your responses. Below is a link to a research brief summarizing just some of what we learned from teachers about transition-related professional development needs:

http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/naturalsupports/pdfs/TeacherSurveyBrief11_10.pdf

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Articles of Interest

“YiPPE” for Green Bay

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Youth and parents discuss issues with speakers and take part in hands-on activities in parallel programs. While some topics may overlap, parents have their own sessions while youth are learning similar information in a youth-friendly, interactive format.

YiPPE is designed to address Indicators 2, 3, 8, 13 and 14 of the Department of Public Instructions (DPI) six-year state performance plan for improving outcomes of children with disabilities in Wisconsin.

Indicator 2: Percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school compared to the percent of all youth in the state dropping out of high school

Indicator 3: Participation and performance of children with disabilities on statewide assessments

Indicator 8: Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities

Indicator 13: Percent of youth aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate; measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition services needs. There must also be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP Team meeting where transition services were to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP Team meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority.

Indicator 14: Percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school and were enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school; or enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed; or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school.

Families who participate agree to develop Community Action Plans to improve local and state transition services/options/resources in their local communities. Youth also develop their own projects to address personal areas of their lives, such as getting a job or managing their own health care. For example, a youth may decide that social skills are a barrier, so his plan includes joining a school or community organization where he sets a goal to meet one new person at each meeting.

Proposal Year 2011-2012:

For the 2011-2012 school year YiPPE is seeking proposals from school districts, communities, parent groups or agencies that would like to host a Youth in Partnership with Parents for Empowerment (YiPPE) program. A limited number of YiPPE programs will be provided. Groups making a request must be able to:

- Identify 15-25 youth along with their parents who have not attended a YiPPE or a Transition Parents in Partnership in the past and are willing to commit to all 5 weekends during the school year to the training. (A weekend includes Friday 5:00 to 8:30 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.). Each youth attending must be able to participate and socialize with a group of 20-25 peers, communicate his/her needs, take part in activities for 4 hours on Friday evening and at least 6 hours on Saturday, be able to work in small or large groups, be independent in his/her personal care needs during session time, and with assistance from the facilitators, develop an action plan such as participating in his/her IEP, ordering prescriptions, finding a job, etc.
- Provide a commitment of funding sources to cover the cost for the youth part of the Program in the amount of \$20,000 (WSPEI covers the parent portion of the program).

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Articles of Interest

“YiPPE” for Green Bay

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WSPEI Provides:

- Support in identifying a locally accessible site and food service
- Funding to cover the parent portion of the program, including overnight accommodations and resources
- A team of trained facilitators, who are knowledgeable in areas of transition and facilitation
- Assistance in advertising the program to other parents and youth interested in transition and leadership

Note: School districts may sponsor individual youth to attend YiPPE at the cost of \$1,100/student.

Outcomes:

- Research-based sustainability through direct follow up with the families
- Post evaluation to measure the impact of the program
- Improvement of the SPP Indicators 2,3,8,13, and 14 in your district
- Consistency with the Wisconsin Personnel Development Model

Ideas for Funding:

- District IDEA Recovery and Reinvestment (ARRA) funds
- IDEA flow-through funds
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, if the youth has an open case file
- Other organizations/agencies in your community, such as independent living centers, local Autism chapters, Down Syndrome Society, Family Support, and adult service clubs such as Rotary, Lions, and Kiwanis

To apply for a YiPPE training in your area, download an application from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website: http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/par_partn.html.

If you have questions, contact Martha DeYoung, WSPEI State Training Coordinator 800-862-3725, ext. 255 or deyoungm@cesa5.k12.wi.us.

NAMI's StrengthOfUs.Org Website Review

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The first group, “Taking Charge”, contains excellent advice about topics ranging from positive attitudes, mindfulness despite setbacks, goal orientation, exercise, recovery and steps toward independence. “Taking Charge” also features a “file list” with crucial components of wellness. Each file has a topic/lesson plan which can be incorporated into transitioning youths’ treatment/therapy, and can address elements of the wellness process. Currently, few programs incorporate much of this material into treatment, and thus clients may not receive supports that could prevent many undesirable events.

“On Our Own” is the second group on the site. This similarly formatted section focuses on issues youth face as they transition towards becoming more independent. As many of you know, there is an older crowd leaving home nowadays, but many of the tips in this section still ring true. Tips on dealing with unemployment, finances, disclosure in the workplace and accommodations were especially relevant. A parent or case worker might get real value from such insights. There are sample budgets and employment information within this group. I was driven to the point of frustration that these tips were not taught to me when I got sick. It is unclear whether or not providers are getting this information.

The third group focuses on college information. Knowing your rights and how to access accommodations are featured topics. There are notes about succeeding in college which are informative. A comprehensive list of issues such as disability resources and substance abuse were mentioned. I thought that links to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) site might be useful.

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Articles of Interest

Blind Students Work for the Summer

Submitted by David Ballman

In July, students from around Wisconsin came to Janesville to find a job. This is not unusual, since for many years, the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (WCBVI) Outreach Program has offered its Summer EmployAbility Program to students who are blind or visually impaired. As any parent knows, it is hard for a teenager to get that first job. It is frequently harder for those who have a disability like blindness, as they not only struggle with the normal teenage uncertainties, but also with problems related to their visual impairment as well as attitudes about it.

“Frequently,” says Dan Wenzel, Director of WCBVI, “there may be only one or two students who are blind attending a particular school, or attending school in a particular district. This means that he or she may not have access to peers who are blind or have low vision, let alone blind adult role-models.”

How it Works

David Ballmann, Transition Coordinator for WCBVI, begins working with employers early in the year. “We have some great businesses in Janesville,” he said. “They give our students a chance, and expect them to function as regular employees.” Program participants work in different industries including food service, retail, child care, technology, community service, agriculture, and finance. “We are always looking for new opportunities,” said Ballmann. “This year, we added new partners including M & I Bank, Walgreen’s, and Office Max. We try to match our students with jobs that are aligned with their interests.” Past employers have included Mocha Moment, Janesville Transit, Culver’s, The Italian House and the American Red Cross. This year, students worked at Penny’s Child Care, Janesville Montessori, ECHO Food Pantry, Jack and Dick’s Feed, Creative Children’s Learning Center, Basics Food Cooperative, and many others.

Time for Fun Too

Students work a twenty hour week during four of the six weeks in the program. Fridays are devoted to activities which develop self-confidence and other blindness/independence skills. During the 2010 program, they participated in challenge activities at Blackhawk Technical College, including rock climbing, and using a zip line. One Friday was devoted to canoeing in Madison and another to a trip to Chicago to learn about travel on the ‘L’ train and subway. In addition, students learn to plan menus, shop for groceries, cook their own meals, and work together to keep their dormitory and kitchen clean and in order.

“When students leave our six-week program,” said Ballmann, “we want them to leave with a number of things. They will develop a resumé with some job experience, some life skills, new experiences dealing with their blindness or visual impairment, and self confidence. The money they earn will be soon spent, but the other things they can use for a lifetime.”

Transition-Related Survey Results

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This brief also includes tips and strategies for teachers, schools, and professional development organizations; web locations of useful tools and resources; and other important transition- and career-related websites. We are also sharing this information with school districts, CESAs, and other professional development providers in the state. Much of the content that will be available at the 2011 Wisconsin Transition Conference related to employment and career preparation is being offered based on findings from this survey.

In the months ahead, we will prepare a more in-depth research report describing what we learned from you and your colleagues. This report, along with others from our project, will be available through our website at:

<http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/naturalsupports/resources.php>

We hope this information will be helpful in your work!

The Natural Supports Team: Erik Carter, Ph.D., Colleen Moss, Beth Swedeen, Molly Cooney

Articles of Interest

NAMI's StrengthOfUs.Org Website Review

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The fourth group about relationships was great. Learning how to make friends is a very important topic. Support plays a huge role in our lives. Finding trustworthy and comforting relationships can be hard especially as impersonal technology becomes more utilized. I would have liked to have seen more on how schizophrenia can be isolating, or at least more about non-psychological ways of connecting on a personal level. There are however tips about good reasons to have friends and tips on dating.

"Educate Yourself" is the fifth group and features commonly asked questions and information about mental health conditions, mostly from a client based standpoint. It has thirteen tip sheets with vital information about conditions, based on frequently asked questions. It is a must read for the uninformed consumer.

The sixth group, "Friends and Family" was a disappointment to me. I was surprised not to see any threads on the discussion board in this category. Each family has a struggle and I feel, without community in this area, avoidable stress and issues arise. Posts could be anonymous, and lasting information could be shared. The tip sheets are quite remarkable though. Issues that trouble LGBT youth and "helping ideas" were note-worthy.

The final group was "Express Yourself." Creativity is a huge helping/coping area of mental wellness. The PACT program offers "art group" to all clients. Art groups are also used by most local Mental Health agencies. I very much hope this section gets people motivated to do creative things. Creativity can be empowering, inspirational, social, and self-esteem building.

I found this site to be of excellent quality, but was disappointed by the lack of people using it to form community connections.

Ways Students with Disabilities Improve Transition Outcomes

by Dave Nass, WSTI Transition Coordinator

Tuesday, the week of Thanksgiving, I was on the agenda of the Kenosha County TAC. This Transition Advisory Council goes by the name of "SORTT" (Student Opportunities & Resource Transition Team), and has a Kenosha Unified School District employee providing structural leadership to communications and meeting agendas.

We briefly discussed the merits of looking at local outcomes data for students that have emotional response challenges in the learning setting. I mentioned the WPHSOS site as a source. The Wisconsin Post High School Outcomes Survey, (<http://www.posthighsurvey.org/>) will also be unveiling a "Toolkit" of helpful research and ways to use data to improve educational outcomes. Watch for a link on the home page listed (<http://www.tr4y.com>).

On this TAC agenda was a slot titled "Student Input"; and there at the table was Tremper High School student Tristin Standridge, who developed and administered a most revealing and helpful survey of local interest to her fellow Spec. Ed. student classmates. I have been asked to share the efforts of this student in the WSTI E-Newsletter. The results are local, to be sure. Most importantly, consider the concept and content for your area of transition influence. What could be the benefit to our outcomes improvement if we became more focused in our efforts to measure how we are doing and actually took the time to review our measurements? SORTT did just that at its November TAC meeting.

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A Quiet Man: A Happy Man

by Benjamin Nigro

His two fragile legs are tangled and pressed lifelessly together, dangling from his wheelchair. His hands are permanently clenched into twisted fists that face upward and sit like deadweights on his lap. The years have made their presence known and age has taken its toll on his body. Yet, the subtle wrinkle lines that border the thin skin around his mouth reveal that laughter has been a great friend to him. A continuous, but faint smile shows that he is a happy man, content and at ease.

There is something more complex that can be seen within the dark pupils of his shadowed eyes. It is the story of pain and struggle, victory and defeat, all in the face of an evil companion that has been living with him every day for the past 61 years of his life. Andrews fights this companion every Tuesday at 1 p.m. in the basement of a local Baptist church, using art as his weapon.

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Articles of Interest

A Quiet Man: A Happy Man

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He is a painter, but without the advantage of a skilled artist's hands. The companion has forced his hands into a frozen state of motionlessness, as if they are cemented into his legs.

He is a painter, but without the ability to walk around and observe all the artistic inspirations that the world has to offer. The companion has viciously crippled his legs into a cold state of paralysis.

He is a painter, living with Cerebral Palsy.

This evil companion takes the form of a neurological disorder in which damage or abnormalities in the brain permanently impair body movement, muscle coordination, and motor skills, according to the Cerebral Palsy Association. Because Andrews has Cerebral Palsy (CP), he paints using a different technique. "I started doing my painting about nine years ago. I use a head-stick," Andrews said.

A "head-stick" is a special helmet-like contraption that is strapped around his head. It has a long stick connected to the front with a clasp, to which the paintbrush is attached. He then uses the flexibility only available in his neck to move his head around, navigating his brush with it to create his paintings.

One would never believe that these paintings were not the works of a steady hand. The brush strokes resemble those of Monet, swift, vivid, and effortless. Pain cramps up one's neck just thinking about using only your head to fashion such beautifully detailed works of art.

One of his works, a self-portrait, stands out among the others. It appears as if it was painted when he was much younger, even though it was done recently. The man in the picture has a full head of brownish hair, as opposed to Andrews' balding head spotted with gray hairs. However, the slight smile constantly on his face is still visible, both in the work and in real life.

Many of his paintings grace the cinderblock walls of his residence, adding color and a sense of humanity. Andrews lives in Greensboro, North Carolina at a place called Bell House, which is an assisted living home for individuals who have ortho-neurological disorders, such as CP. "We currently have 22 residents who live here, and Nick was the ninth person ever to move in. He's one of the originals," said Carrie Cummings, a director at Bell House. "In fact, when he moved in he was the first male to ever live at Bell House." Bell House is the place Andrews has called home since 1979. It is the place where he has been successful in triumphing over the evil companion that is CP. "I moved in 31 years ago," Andrews said in slow, distorted speech. "I came because my mother and father had to go on a trip. But I like it here a lot."

Although Andrews may not be able to walk, his arms may not be able to support their own weight, and his speech may trickle slowly and unclearly out of his mouth, this place has allowed him the opportunity to conquer over his disability's limitations. A special machine helps him to get out of bed every morning because of his paralysis, but that does not stop him from exploring and socializing by means of his wheelchair. He reads the newspaper every week and keeps up with current events. He participates in the bell choir and is actively involved in Bell House social functions. He does all this because Cummings always reminds him "if you don't use it, you lose it," which is a motto that Andrews has always lived by.

Just down the hall is Andrews' bedroom. As he slowly maneuvers his wheelchair inside, his ever-faint smile widens and his tired eyes fill with emotion. It is unclear what is going through his mind, but it seems to be memories. Memories cover every inch of white space on the walls like wallpaper. Photographs, new and old, of happy times and of personal achievements, loved ones and caretakers, each giving a glimpse into his life.

Nick Andrews has not let CP get in the way of him living his life to its fullest potential. He has dear friends that he loves, and paintbrushes that he loves. He has a place that he calls home, and people he calls family. He makes each day count. Cummings walks into his bedroom and says, "It's not how you get out of bed in the morning, it's what you do once you get up, right Nick?"

He carefully moves his head up once, then down once, nodding in agreement. His smile is now larger than ever.

Benjamin Nigro is a senior at High Point College, in North Carolina. He was fortunate enough to meet Nick Andrews, who also resides in North Carolina, to complete a classroom assignment. Ben spent many hours with Nick. Both are happy to share this story with you.

Articles of Interest

Ways Students with Disabilities Improve Transition Outcomes

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Here is the survey and the results from last year's effort of this student with disabilities.

SURVEY FORMAT:

Optional: Name; Disability; and Grade

Survey Results: 05/18/2010

Totals

- 80 surveys returned
- Question #1
 - "Yes" - 65 responses or 75%
 - "No"-15 tallies or 25%

Question 1. Do you feel that your case manager or teachers understand what your needs or requirements are so that you are successful in class?

65 of the Tremper students said their case manager knows their needs and 15 said that their case managers do not understand their needs.

Question 2. Why or why not, If not please include examples that may help teachers become more aware of what they can do?

Of the 15 "no" responders, 8- or approximately 50% responded with the following examples:

"Work load is too heavy for students" (2)

"Teachers don't understand my disability" (2)

"Work load is too heavy for teachers" (1)

"Needs help with more graduation options (they are a parent as well as a student with a disability)" (1)

"Teachers should follow the IEP -aren't aware of IEP listed student needs" (1)

"Teachers don't pay close enough individual attention" (1 on 1 needed with the student) (1)

Chuck Wolbers, (cwolbers@kUSD.edu) Transition/Work Experience, Tremper High School, Kenosha, asked that I pass this on to the readers of WSTI E-News.

It is hoped that you find the concept of getting student input for your local programming a real possibility.

Thanks Chuck!

If you have news to share for E-News, regarding local collaboration for transition please send it to Dave Nass at dnass@cesa8.k12.wi.us.

WSTI Website Resources

Transition Resource Directory

Transition Services are provided by local and statewide agencies and are listed by County. Check it out at <http://www.wsti.org/trd.php>

Transition Topics A-Z

A complete list of transition topics can be found on the WSTI website at http://www.wsti.org/transition_topics.php.

Disclaimer: All views and opinions expressed represent the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the Department of Public Instruction, The Wisconsin Statewide Transition Initiative and the Statewide Personnel Development Grant.