

**Is Transition a Success
after 25 Years of Implementation?**



After 25 Years of Transition Services

What can we celebrate?

- More youth graduating from high school?
 - Less poverty?
 - More youth attending postsecondary education programs?
 - Less youth adjudicated, arrested?
 - More youth employed as a result of their participating in special education programs?
- 

25 Years Ago

- ▶ 10–15% of students with a disability dropped out of high school.
- ▶ Students with disabilities lived in poverty, unless living with their parents.
- ▶ Less than 10% of youth with a disability pursued postsecondary education and training with little known about retention.
- ▶ Arrest rates high, but total unknown due to drop outs.
- ▶ 60–70% of youth with a disability are unemployed after leaving school.

Source: Rusch, 2008

Overview of Drop Outs

- ▶ Approximately 425,000 students with a disability enter the 9th grade every year.
 - ▶ Only 175,000 remain in school until age 18.
 - ▶ Almost 60% of entire high school population of 9th grade students drop out of high school before they reach 18 years of age!
- 

Why So Many Drop Outs?

- ▶ Majority of youth enter high school 2 or more grade levels below their peer in reading and math.
- ▶ Poor course performance leads to higher absence rates.
- ▶ Higher absence rate leads to higher drop out rates.

- Source: Urban Education Institute (2009)

“Attempts to increase
student academic performance
in high school
are futile.”

Source: Urban Education Institute (2009)



Poverty

- ▶ High drop out rates promote higher levels of poverty. Why?
 - Fewer opportunities to engage in work experience-related programs.
 - Poor work experiences lead to menial employment, low wages.
 - Low wages typically result in no vacation plans and no health plans.
 - Youth with disabilities live below the poverty threshold.

Postsecondary Education

(One of the bright spots among youth with disabilities?)

- ▶ In 2005, 30% of youth with disabilities appear to enter postsecondary education and training institutions within 4 years of leaving high school.
 - source: Newman et al. (2010)
- ▶ No data on retention rates.
 - Probably over 50% do not make it to their junior year of study.
 - Source: Astin (1997)

Arrest Rates

- ▶ More youth arrested in 2005 compared to 1990.
 - Source: Newman et al. (2010)
- ▶ Exiting youth with emotional or behavioral problems are 13 times more likely to be arrested than their peers.
- ▶ Arrest rate for drop outs has been reported to be as high as 56% compared to 16 percent of youth who graduate.
 - Source: Rutherford et al. (2002)

Employment

- ▶ Most reported outcome among youth with a disability over time.
 - Harris Poll suggested 67% unemployed (1985).
 - In 1991, 54% unemployed (Wagner, 1991).
 - In 1998, 81% unemployed (NOD, 1998).
 - In 2004, Harris Poll suggested 65% unemployed.
 - In 2010, the Current Population Survey reported 9% decline in employment of youth.
- ▶ 15 follow-up studies conducted between 1985 and 1995 provide compelling data that employment among transitioning youth is worse.
 - source: Heal & Rusch, 1995.

**Employment has always been a
stumbling block for individuals
with disabilities.**



Trends from 1985 to date: worse, better, same??

- ▶ 60% of students with a disability drop out of high school. *worse*
- ▶ Students with disabilities more likely to live in poverty. *worse*
- ▶ 30% of youth with a disability pursue postsecondary education and training with little known about retention. *better*
- ▶ Arrest rates increase over time, with over 30% of all youth with a disability arrested within 3 years of departing high school. *worse*
- ▶ More youth with a disability are unemployed after leaving school. *worse*

Source: Rusch, 2008

“If you are a young man or women with a disability you are likely to enter high school unprepared for the academic challenges that face you, which will likely result in your being less interested in attending high school, which will likely lead to your dropping out, which may likely lead to your being arrested, which will likely lead to your not finding work, which will likely result in your living in poverty.”

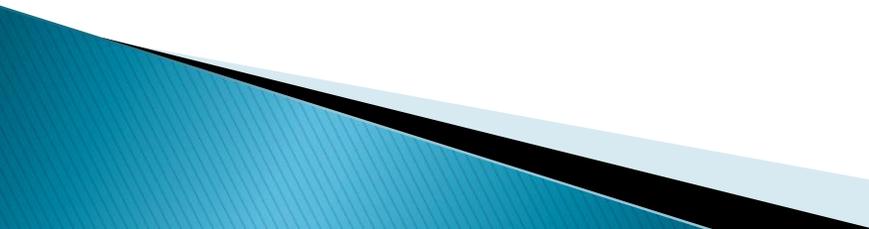


**Adolescents with disabilities
are not highly valued...**

New Visions

- ▶ Need a new vision for our middle and high schools.
 - Need to build new bridges.
 - ▶ Need to develop a new relationship with adult service agencies.
 - Need to play a leadership role in coordinating futures.
 - ▶ Need to develop a renewed relationship with the community.
 - Need to develop the expectation for postsecondary education and employment as THE outcomes.
- 

Build New Transition Bridges

- ▶ *Mandate transition coordinators in every high school. Base numbers of personnel on numbers of students with a disability.*
 - ▶ *Promise every student a future—employment or additional education.*
 - ▶ *Teach youth to be self determined prior to their entering high school.*
 - ▶ *Strengthen youth employment training and apprenticeship programs.*
- 

Build New Transition Bridges

- ▶ *Identify employers who are willing to hire youth with disabilities and who pay competitive wages and benefits.*
 - ▶ *Identify and develop formal relationships with selected postsecondary education options for exiting students.*
 - ▶ *High schools should assume the leadership role in coordinating post high school employment and education services.*
 - ▶ *Develop high school recovery programs to entice and attract students back to high school.*
- 