An Introduction to the Transition Improvement Grant

Welcome to a new school year. In this newsletter, we bring to you great offerings from the Transition Improvement Grant (TIG), along with event information and links to informative and exciting resources related to Transition. And we have only just begun. We look forward to working together with schools, agencies, families, youth and communities to educate, inspire and support teams and activities around the state.

The Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) is a new discretionary grant funded by the Dept of Public Instruction that began on July 1, 2013. TIG combines two of our previous grants: Wisconsin Statewide Transition Improvement (WSTI) and Wisconsin Post High School Outcomes Survey (WPHSOS), into one dynamic statewide transition improvement effort.

The focus of the Transition Improvement Grant Team will be to provide:

- Community engagement through local school districts and county Communities on Transition (C-CoTs...also known as TACs). We invite and encourage students, families and representatives from every school, service provider, agency and interested members of the community to connect with the local C-CoT in all counties in which they are interested in participating. Please visit www.wsti.org to register for an account and to view the Calendar of Events, where you can list and view information related to the activities and events through your local C-CoT. Go to Transition in Wisconsin to read our E-News, find answers to frequently asked questions, and hear personal stories from students in transition. Visit the Find Services/Resources section, where you can search for services and resources in your area.

- Professional Development through local and statewide training events and the use of technology to share effective and innovative transition practices with interested professionals, students, families and communities. Visit the Calendar of Events at www.wsti.org to view training opportunities or to list invitations to your upcoming events.

- Program improvement through continually making contact with schools, agencies, students and other stakeholders to understand and to address the struggles to bring about greater success in transition for students heading for post-secondary education, training and employment. Visit the Learning Community at www.wsti.org to view articles of interest. This is also an opportunity for you to recommend articles and resources of interest to include online.

- Technical Assistance in the form of ongoing support to LEAs and school districts regarding data collection and reporting requirements of the state. Visit the online Learning Community at www.wsti.org to take part in online learning opportunities related to transition improvement and practices.

(continued on page 2)
Introduction to the Transition Improvement Grant (con’t)

As our grant team provides leadership in area school districts and through collaboration in local events, your support, guidance and input are welcomed. We invite you to contact the regional coordinator serving your county at any time. On pages 8 and 9, you will find detailed introductions to each TIG staff member. On page 16, you will find detailed contact information for all staff members.

You can also view staff contact information online at www.wsti.org.

For training, technical assistance or other matters related to transition, go to www.wsti.org and select About Us and then Contact Us for information about our grant staff contacts. For general questions, can call (608) 745-5489 or email info@wsti.org and your inquiry and comments will be addressed quickly by our administrative staff.

Upcoming Events

Transition Academy

November 13, 2013
8:00am – 4:00pm
Glacier Canyon Lodge
Wisconsin Dells, WI
8:00am – 4:00pm (evening meeting) Details coming soon

2013-14 Transition Coordinator Network Meetings

November 13, 2013
5:00pm – 8:00pm
Glacier Canyon Lodge
Wisconsin Dells, WI

March 4, 2014
8:30am – 3:30pm
CESA 1
Pewaukee, WI

Articles of Interest

A New Tool for County Community on Transition Facilitators
(also known as Transition Action Councils)
by Brenda Swoboda, TIG Western Regional Coordinator

Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) staff are here to encourage, document and support the activities of County Community on Transition (C-CoT) Facilitators. New to the grant website is a form to assist in developing a vision statement for your local group. Leaders and organizers can use the simple form to collaborate with all members of their C-CoT to describe the ongoing purpose and direction of their C-CoT.

Also within the form is a chart to use in setting goals for the C-CoT, including a section to define the objectives (or steps) to be taken to reach the goal created by their team. Leaders are encouraged to share their news, developments, activities and events through the submission of the write-ups, articles and by listing their activities and events on the Calendar of Events on www.wsti.org.

In addition, this form has a membership organization and building area. Facilitators are encouraged to network with youth, families, educators, agency staff and community partners to build their membership list to invite into their efforts to improve transition in their county.

The form can be found at http://www.wsti.org/wstidata/resources/CCoTFacilitatorForm.pdf. Please work on completing the form early this year with your C-CoT members. We are working on the capability for Facilitators to upload the document, once completed, directly to the WSTI website so others can see the activities and goals C-CoTs are focusing on this year.
REGISTER NOW!  FREE!!!

2013 Transition Academy: College and Career Ready

Date:  November 13th, 2013
8:00am – 3:30pm
Location:  Wilderness Glacier Canyon Conference Center in Wisconsin Dells

Go to www.wsti.org to register (http://www.wsti.org/event-details.html?id=1239)

This year’s Keynote will be presented by Judson Laipply, award-winning speaker and inspirational comedian. Judson promises to do two things: to make you laugh and make you think! Check him out at www.mightaswelldance.com

Our State Superintendent Dr. Tony Evers has set a clear goal for education: “Every Child a Graduate, College and Career Ready”.

It is our mission to ensure we prepare our students for life after high school by teaching them the skills and knowledge they will need for success. Sessions for this day-long event will include: mental health challenges, entrepreneurship, employment, assessment, college transition, universal design, post high outcomes, peer mentoring, co-teaching to build strong transition skills and much more!!! The presenters of the event include: high school educators, university/college staff, state and agency staff, and youth. The target audience for this event includes: Transition Coordinators, Directors of Special Education, Special Education Teachers, General Education Teachers, School Counselors, School Psychologists, School Administrators, Agency Providers and Parents.

New this year! A silent auction with proceeds to be given as a scholarship to a student with disabilities going on to postsecondary education. All items for auction are donated by businesses throughout the state of Wisconsin. Some exciting examples are:

- Tomah cabin: 3 nights for up to 6, includes Friday fish dinner, kayak rental,
- A mini-iPad with case, screen protector and i Tune cards – est. value $400.00
- TGI Friday’s, Miller Park: Dinner for 6 with 6 Brewer Tickets – est. value $350.00
- Participation in the 21st Annual EBD Institute held Feb. 26-28, 2014 at Westwood Conference Center, Wausau, WI – est. value $300.00
- Plus many more hotel, entertainment, food and leisure items from all over Wisconsin

TCN Meeting: Employer and Student Stories

5:00pm – 8:00pm
Meal included
(Following the Transition Academy)

Hear from a diverse group of employers will share their perspectives on employing people with disabilities in a variety of settings: production, retail, hospitality, food service. This will be a question and answer time. Then meet Michael and his team of supporters. Hear how he braided school and community supports through self-determination to achieve successful long-term employment in his chosen field.

Questions regarding the Transition Academy or the TCN Meeting may be directed to Pam Jenson at pamj@wsti.org.

There is no cost for this event, but you must register – please register at www.wsti.org under the calendar of events tab.
Articles of Interest

Getting Ready for Transition Academy: November 13, 2013
by Wendi Dawson, TIG Grant Director

Grant staff has been hard at work designing training opportunities, contacting school district personnel and have been making connections with transition support professionals around the state. They have also been working on Transition Academy and Transition Coordinator Network meeting details. They have come up with some exciting training, including an employer roundtable and some impressive award goodies for the winners of this year’s Transition Academy Awards and we need the community’s help in giving them to distinguished and outstanding professionals in the field of Transition.

Nominate Now! --Share with your students, parents, community members! --
We strongly welcome students to nominate adults who have assisted in meeting their transition goals.

Effective transition planning is necessary for youth to successfully transition to adulthood. We would like to recognize and acknowledge those who have performed exceptionally in serving youth in this capacity.

We are seeking nominations for the following awards:

Distinguished Educator Award: This award will be presented to a special education teacher, transition coordinator, general education teacher, counselor, administrator, university professor or paraprofessional who has demonstrated dedication and commitment to youth with disabilities in the transition process. Award selection will be based on the recipient’s performance above and beyond typical job requirements and his/her focus on a student’s strengths and development of personalized services. Individuals in any education career are eligible for the Distinguished Educator Award.

Outstanding Family Member Award: This award will be presented to a parent, foster parent, guardian, caregiver or family member who has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to supporting a youth/youths” transition needs. The award recipient will have made significant contributions to enrich the transition process for youth/youths with disabilities through his/her understanding, persistence, generosity or ongoing support. Individuals in any family role capacity are eligible for the Outstanding Family Member Award.

Distinguished Adult Service Provider Award: This award will be presented to a person employed in an adult service agency that provides services to youth with disabilities in the transition process including but not limited to: postsecondary education disability coordinators, vocational rehabilitation counselors, benefits specialists, aging and disability resource staff, and independent living staff. Recipients of this award will have made significant contributions to improve youths” experience transitioning to adulthood through his/her collaborative mindset, understanding, integrity and performance above and beyond typical job requirements. Individuals in any adult service provider capacity are eligible for the Distinguished Adult Service Provider Award.

Find the nomination forms at [http://www.wsti.org/wstidata/resources/2013AwardNominations.pdf](http://www.wsti.org/wstidata/resources/2013AwardNominations.pdf) (links to the form can be found in the Teacher, Parent & Youth Resource pages). Each form has an area for each award; Distinguished Educator, Outstanding Family Member and/or Distinguished Adult Service Provider. Fill in one, two or all three nomination categories and submit your forms via email to tammib@wsti.org for consideration on or before 4:00pm on November 5th, 2013. We encourage you to nominate multiple people. Please have all your students complete a nomination form! The form is included in this newsletter, in the event that you would prefer to fax or mail in your nominations. See the form for details.

Final selections will be made by November 6th, 2013 and award recipients will be notified on or before November 7th, 2013. Award recipients will be contacted by a member of the Transition Academy Planning Committee, and will receive:

- Free hotel stay for November 12, 2013, the night prior to the Transition Academy, at the Wilderness Resort.
- Recognition during the Awards Presentation at the Transition Academy on November 13, 2013.
- A prize basket overflowing with great items to thank each designee for their time, effort and dedication to assisting others in Transition in Wisconsin.
**2013 Transition Academy Nomination Form**

Awards will be presented to winners on November 13, 2013 at Glacier Canyon in WI Dells

Complete a section below for each person you are nominating for an award.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Name:</th>
<th>Your Phone:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Email:</td>
<td>School you attend:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(if applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agency/Organization Affiliation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(if applicable)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Distinguished Educator Award**

Name: [ ]

Phone: [ ]

Tell us “why” you are nominating this person for an award:

---

**Outstanding Family Member Award**

Name: [ ]

Phone: [ ]

Tell us “why” you are nominating this person for an award:

---

**Distinguished Adult Service Provider Award**

Name: [ ]

Phone: [ ]

Tell us “why” you are nominating this person for an award:

---

Mail form to Tammi Biddle %CESA 5, 626 E. Slifer St., Portage, WI 53901 or Fax to (888) 579-0786 or email to tammib@wsti.org
Students from Holmen Present their Stories

A highlight of the event was a presentation by students from the Holmen School District’s Transition Program, during which students shared their experiences within the program; including the types of community outings, employment and community involvement students are engaged in. They also offered examples of successful fund-raising projects that support the program, along with describing the community relationships that enhance the program’s mission.

Pictured top left is Sadie Christen speaking.

Pictured lower left is Brady Dockendorff.

Pictured above is Erik Lindsey, speaking, and the Transition Coordinator for the Holmen School District, Nick Slusser at the computer.

Professional Learning

News and reports from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the Wisconsin Technical College System were provided as the meeting opened.

Presenter topics covered Enhanced Learning through Dual Enrollment for Students with Disabilities and Effective 18-21 Year-Old Program Options; including examples of school settings, community settings and college settings.

In addition, attendees could take away Opening Doors Guides and the latest Community-Based Transition Options Guide produced by DPI, along with other informative materials from various presenters for use in their districts.

All handouts from the TCN Meeting can be viewed online at wsti.org

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Department of Human Services Presents (DHS) “What’s New”

Jessica Thompson, from DVR (speaking), and Sarah Lincoln, from DHS (standing on left), described the initiatives through their departments to support youth with disabilities in finding and maintaining employment of their choice. They also described programs designed to support Self-Determination for people with disabilities and to promote the activities of individuals to shape their lives in the community, including postsecondary training options and employment. Also shared, was information about the PROMISE Grant.
Wisconsin Post-School Outcomes/Indicator 14 Survey and the Predictor of Post-School Success

My name is Mary Kampa, Coordinator of the Wisconsin Post-School Outcomes/Indicator 14 Survey. Together with Jenny Jacobs, Post-School Outcomes Outreach, and as coordinators in the new Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) project, we will be providing assistance to schools for the data collection and reporting responsibilities of Indicator 14 before, during and after a district’s DPI Self-Assessment Monitoring year.

The Wisconsin Post-School Outcomes Survey/Indicator 14 assesses the outcomes of youth with disabilities one year after leaving high school, and considers outcomes of employment and postsecondary education or training. All districts are required to collect outcomes data at least once within a five-year period, with Milwaukee Public Schools participating every year. Indicator 14 data have been collected since 2007, meaning every district in the state has participated in the survey at least once, and some schools have participated twice.

A priority for us this year is helping educators, families and students become knowledgeable about the survey outcomes. How many students are going on to further education? How many are competitively employed? If things didn’t go as they planned while in high school, what happened? What high school activities or services helped? All of these things provide a view of how youth are doing within the year after leaving high school, and the things we could do better.

We will also be introducing a new tool on the www.wsti.org website. The Transition Improvement Plan (TIP) presents the Predictors of Post-School Success, a research-based review of the literature on what works to improve transition practices and outcomes for youth with disabilities. Individual educators and school teams have the opportunity to review the Predictors, and along with a review of district and statewide outcomes and related evidence-based practices, develop an on-line Transition Improvement Plan (TIP).

To help readers understand the Post-School Outcomes data and the Predictors, we will be providing an article in each issue of the TIG e-newsletter during the 2013-14 school year. Through this series, we will present portions of the most recent outcomes data and introduce several of the 16 Predictors of Post-School Success.

An Introduction – Predictors of Post-School Success www.wsti.org

The Predictors are intended to provide schools, districts, or other stakeholders in secondary transition with a framework for determining the degree to which their program is implementing practices which are likely to lead to more positive post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. Visit the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) for background information on the identification of the Predictors.

There are currently 16 Predictors, and the first three Predictors focus on Career Preparation, which is the participation in activities of career and occupational readiness that helps youth prepare for further education and/or entry into employment.

1. Career Awareness - Learning about opportunities, education and skills needed in various occupational pathways to choose a career that matches one’s strengths and interests. Youth need to exit high school with high career awareness and job search skills.
   • Activity: Identify skills and qualifications required for occupations.
   • Resource: Age-appropriate transition assessments

2. Occupational Courses - individual courses that support career awareness, allow or enable students to explore various career pathways, develop occupational specific skills through instruction and experiences focused on their desired employment goals.
   • Activity: Provide hands-on and community-based opportunities
   • Resource: My Skills – My Future

3. Vocational Education – a sequence of courses that prepares students for a specific job or career. Students who participated in vocational education were 2 times more likely to be engaged in full-time employment.
   • Activity: Provide a sequence of entry level and advanced integrated academic and vocational courses.
   • Resource: Vocational Futures Planning and Support

Bonus! College and Career Ready Resource: Quick Stats Sheet

Contact us for additional information or training opportunities.
Mary Kampa, maryk@wsti.org, 715-416-0609
Jenny Jacobs, jennyj@wsti.org, 920-617-5630
Introduction of the Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) Staff

Pam Jenson, TIG Grant & Data Coordinator: Although, some of you are acquainted with the vast work of TIG Grant & Data Coordinator, Pam Jenson, we’d like to take a moment to share a little bit about her with everyone. Pam’s educational background includes a Bachelors and Masters Degree in Vocational Rehabilitation from the University of Wisconsin-Stout, with a concentration in the areas of Rehabilitation Counseling and Vocational Evaluation. For over 20 years, Pam has worked with individuals with disabilities in various transitional capacities including: residential, case management, school to post-secondary options, and vocational evaluation and training environments. She has consulted youth, teachers, parents, agency providers, businesses and community members regarding the pathways and benefits of transition, accommodations, and acceptance of persons with disabilities. Pam has worked in creative collaborations, such as participating in and creating short films and music videos, student conferences and student performances showcasing students promoting self-advocacy, the importance of transition, and other positive messages. She embodies the “from school to success” focus through the promotion of effective strategies and development of strong, committed transition teams. She brings her expertise, enthusiasm and excitement to ignite conversation about innovative and effective strategic planning that will bring measurable results in transition statewide.

Mary Kampa, TIG Post School Outcomes Coordinator: Mary holds an Education Specialist – Director of Special Education degree and a Master of Education – School Psychologist from the University of Wisconsin – Superior. She earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology and Biology from the University of Missouri, and began a Clinical Psychology doctoral program there before moving back to Wisconsin in 1984. Over the past 26 years, Mary has held positions as the Director of the Wisconsin Post High School Outcomes Survey (WHPSOS), Director of Special Education, School Psychologist, and supervisor for the Washburn County Alternative School. She started three county councils, and works closely with schools and adult agencies to provide transition services to youth with disabilities. In addition to her position as director of this statewide project, Ms Kampa is currently the Needs Assessment Coordinator for the state Culturally Responsive Education (CREATE) project, and assists districts that have identified disproportionate populations of students in special education. Mary brings a thorough understanding of data trends and is a treasure trove of practical, effective and proven advice related to activities that will improve successful transition for students. In addition, she exudes boundless energy for and personal commitment to serving youth and families throughout the state of Wisconsin.

Jenny Jacobs, TIG Post School Outcomes Outreach Coordinator: Jenny’s first experience with special education and transition came, not from employment but, from her best friend’s home. Her friend’s parents adopted 10 children, many of whom had some type of disability that required special education. Participating in conversations regarding appropriate goals for school, transitioning between schools, and appropriate services at different age levels was part of everyday conversation. She was exposed to a parent’s perspective of the importance of getting a driver’s license and having the skills to be able to attend technical college, at an early age. Jenny earned a degree in psychology from UW-Madison and began a career in vocational rehabilitation at a not-for-profit rehabilitation center for over ten years. She continued her education at Silver Lake College in Manitowoc, earning her certification as a middle/high school Cross-Categorical Special Education Teacher. Jenny worked as a transition coordinator for Calumet County for a year and a half, before serving as special education teacher, advocate and case manager at New Holstein High School. Jenny’s focus is to improve school engagement through sharing individual school data and strategies to improve compliance with indicator 13. She will use effective data analysis and down-to-earth problem-solving skills to assist schools in implementing goal-orientated transition planning for students. She offers her insight in a positive and dynamic inter-agency, inter-collaborative manner that will help bring together solutions for successful transition statewide.

Tammi Biddle, TIG Administrative Assistant: Tammi comes to the team from a position in employment support direct service provision. In addition to employment support, Tammi has worked as a special education paraprofessional and as a treatment foster parent. She is also the parent of an adult with disabilities. Her administrative background includes; business administration, human resources, accounting, project development and project management. She began assisting youth in transition from high school to postsecondary planning almost 20 years ago, as a treatment foster parent moving youth from foster care to adult independence. Tammi brings enthusiasm for self-determination, celebrating the possibilities that exist for all students...so long as they can dream and someone is there to provide information and support that turns those dreams into goals and those goals into accomplishments. Her experiences bring a good administrator to the team, but also bring the team a wonderful insight into serving students and their families through transition statewide.

(continued on page 9)
Introduction of the Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) Staff

LaNae Jabas, TIG Eastern Regional Coordinator: LaNae will be supporting CESAs 1, 6, and 7 through the CESA #1 office. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse with a Bachelors degree in Recreation Management and went on to earn a Masters Degree in Education from Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota. LaNae brings thirteen years of special needs experience ranging from vocational rehabilitation to secondary education. She began her work as a Special Needs Coordinator for Northwoods of Wisconsin Inc. and continued into secondary education in a combination of roles as an EBD Teacher in Baraboo High School and Portage Middle School and as Transition Coordinator in both Baraboo and Portage School Districts. She is an enthusiastic and energetic individual who wholeheartedly believes in transition and the positive impact that a “team approach” has when creating and implementing a transition plan for students with disabilities. LaNae’s professional approach is to use humor and enthusiasm to make trainings and interactions interesting, while connecting and collaborating with stakeholders.

Brian Kenney, TIG Southern Regional Coordinator: Brian will be supporting CESAs 2, 3, and 5 through the CESA #5 office. He graduated from Marquette University, where he earned a Bachelors degrees in Psychology and Criminal Justice. He also received a Bachelors Degree in Social Work from Upper Iowa University, followed by a Masters degree in Education from UW Steven’s Point. Brian completed 12 years of military service in the Wisconsin Air National Guard, USAF Reserves and Wisconsin Army National Guard. While completing his service, Brian earned an Associate’s Degree in Search & Rescue from the Community College of the Air Force. He worked for 3 years as a Behavioral Specialist in a juvenile residential treatment center. He is certified as a Cross-Categorical teacher for grades 6-12 and taught special education for 14 years. He spent the last 11 years at Wisconsin Dells High School, working in a variety of capacities: Special Education Teacher, School to Work Coordinator and Transition Coordinator. Brian is self-motivated and coaches power-lifting and Olympic weightlifting and he makes a mission of sharing his enthusiasm for team-building, including through activities that engage his audience wholly; mind and body. Brian brings his energetic style to instruct, inform and inspire team-building and to promote successful strategies to support students in transition as they build their winning team for success in work, education and in their communities statewide.

Brenda Swoboda, TIG Western Regional Coordinator: Brenda will be supporting CESAs 4, 10 and 11. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Stout with a degree in Vocational Rehabilitation and Concentration in Independent Living. She then earned her Masters Degree in Education at UW – Stout, along with her Cognitive Disabilities teaching license for grades 7-12. She has worked as a special education teacher for 17 years, with 6 of those years as a Transition Coordinator at Holmen High School. During her time at Holmen High School, Brenda created the district’s 18-21 year-old community-based program and played an active role in the Let’s Get to Work Grant to increase employment outcomes for students with Intellectual Disabilities. She accompanied a school consortium to Washington DC, where students spoke at the national Capitol about their jobs and what working meant to them. Along with increased employment for students with disabilities, Brenda actively supported strategies that successfully increased the rate and effectiveness of self-advocacy, transition planning, parent engagement, self-confidence, and greater involvement with regular education peers for students with disabilities. She has a commitment to community involvement shown through her organization of, participation in and service as facilitator for CCoTs (formerly known as TACs) in counties where her students resided. Brenda brings her proven hands-on experience to promote successful transition, team-building and community-involvement statewide.

Kathy Tuttle, TIG Northern Regional Coordinator: Kathy will be supporting CESAs 8, 9, and 12 through the CESA 9 office. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Madison with a B.S. degree in Behavioral Disabilities and University of Wisconsin–La Crosse with a M.S. in Professional Development. Kathy also has many hours of professional development over a wide range of educational topics and initiatives. Prior to joining the TIG Grant team she was an educator for over 25 years in Baraboo, WI. During those years, she taught students with disabilities K-12. Most recently she was the district transition coordinator and a high school classroom teacher for students with cognitive disabilities. Kathy has pioneered transition initiatives in her district and Sauk County. She left a legacy of strong postsecondary outcomes for students and families. Through her leadership and collaboration, there remains an ongoing community effort to improve employment opportunities, independent living supports and postsecondary education connections for people with disabilities in the Sauk/Columbia County areas. Her experience and “can do” spirit creates relationships and connections which will become the driving force in making a difference in transition outcomes for our students and families statewide.
**Articles of Interest**

**Parent Resource: WSPEI Promotes Communication, Seeks Parent Leaders**

Since 2000, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WDPI) has funded WSPEI as a resource for families and educators. The District Family Engagement (DFE) Liaison Program is a core component of WSPEI’s efforts to provide districts with a structured framework to train and mentor a district selected DFE Liaison. A WSPEI trained liaison facilitates the district’s ability to offer local support. The trained liaison also has the capacity to assist districts in developing and refining family engagement activities. WSPEI’s DFE Liaison program has been purposely aligned with State Performance Plan Indicator 8, which focuses on parent engagement, to assist districts in fostering positive working relationships with families.

DFE Liaisons are the parent/guardian of a child with a disability and should have some knowledge or experience with special education. Liaisons disseminate information to other parents, guardians, and staff about special education topics, family engagement, and DPI grant-initiative resources. Liaisons are identified by their local school district and must attend WSPEI core trainings during their first year. Some of the topics covered in the core trainings are an overview of the WSPEI Grant, Confidentiality, Navigating the Special Education Maze, the IEP Process, and Transition Planning for Students and Families. New Liaisons also receive other books and resources that support the training objectives.

The core trainings are offered at all twelve Cooperative Educational Service Agencies. WSPEI has four regional Family Engagement Coordinators that assist the CESA Family Engagement Coordinators with the training. The regional trainers are

- Deb Hall for CESAs 1, 2, 3
- Martha DeYoung for CESAs 5 and 6
- Colleen Mulder for CESAs 4, 10 and 11
- Evelyn Azbell for CESAs 7, 8, 9 and 12

A complete list of contact information for all the CESA Family Engagement Coordinators is at http://wspei.org/contact/. The 2013-2014 schedule will be posted on the WSPEI web site in early October.

---

**“Speak up for Yourself!” New Self-Advocacy Video for Students**

Submitted by Pam Jenson, TIG Grant & Data Coordinator

This must-see, fresh and entertaining video, funded by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and created by the Figureheads in collaboration with the youth attending the Young Self-Advocates of Wisconsin 2013, features the song “Speak Up for Yourself!” and can be viewed at [http://tinyurl.com/SpeakUpForYourself](http://tinyurl.com/SpeakUpForYourself).

The Figureheads is an award-winning musical act turned non-profit organization using original positive hip-hop music to engage youth and educators, from pre-kindergarten through high-school, in order to develop critical thinking and collaborative skills that result in a greater desire to learn and relate. These outcomes can be described in two words: *Inclusion,* or the ability to collaborate with those different from you in age, ability, gender and race, and *Literacy,* the development of creative thinking towards oneself and society at large, resulting in greater interest in reading, writing and the pursuit of knowledge.

For more information about the Figureheads, visit [www.figureheadsinc.org](http://www.figureheadsinc.org) on the web or find them on Facebook and Twitter: keyword “figureheads.”
Articles of Interest

Student - Self-Advocacy in My Own Words
JR-16 year old Wisconsin Self-Advocate

To defend, speak up, and stand up for myself. This means the same thing for other self-advocates too. Instead of someone else defending, speaking up, and standing up for me, I can do it myself. This summer, in June, I went to the Youth Leadership Summit because I needed to learn about “self-advocacy” and how to become a “self-advocate.” Since, I never knew about it, I was always so insecure with a low self-esteem. Usually, I felt like “Everyone hated me” because they thought I was “weird”. When I cared what people thought about me, I began to think negative about myself. I hate that. This all started in middle school. Sometimes, it still happens but now I believe in me.

I am practicing to become a self-advocate so that I can live a normal life, become independent, ask for assistance when I need it, and express my feelings. By practicing these things, it will help me and others increase our self-esteem. The more we try the more confident and proud we are of ourselves. That’s what self-advocacy means and is all about.

I helped create a video on self-advocacy to help others become self-advocates too. I hope you use this video to help students understand self-advocacy.

Invitation to Teachers & Transition Coordinators: to Participate in a Research Survey - Practices and Perceptions: Universal Design for Transition

You are invited to participate in a research study titled “Practices and Perceptions: Universal Design for Transition”. This study is being conducted by Kathryn Best (doctoral student) and Dr. Colleen Thoma and Dr. LaRon Scott from the Department of Special Education and Disability Policy in the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. The purpose of this study is to determine how secondary general educators, special educators, and transition specialists use elements of Universal Design for Transition (UDT) in transition planning and practices. All secondary educators who are involved in secondary transition planning and instruction for students with disabilities are invited to participate.

In this study, you will be asked to complete an electronic survey. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time.

There are no risks associated with participating in this study. The survey collects no identifying information of any respondent. All of the response in the survey will be recorded anonymously.

While you will not experience any direct benefits from participation, information collected in this study may benefit transition services for students with disabilities in the future by better understanding current transition practices, as well as their strengths and challenges.

If you have any questions regarding the survey or this research project in general, please contact Kathryn Best at kwbest@vcu.edu. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, please contact the IRB of Virginia Commonwealth University 828-0868 or ORSP@vcu.edu.

By completing and submitting this survey, you are indicating your consent to participate in the study. Your participation is appreciated.

Kathryn Best, doctoral student, Department of Special Education & Disability Policy, VCU
Dr. Colleen Thoma, Department of Special Education and Disability Policy, VCU
Dr. LaRon Scott, Department of Special Education and Disability Policy, VCU
Articles of Interest

Meet AJ from Kohler High School, now attending UW Whitewater. Submitted by Brian Kenney, TIG Southern Regional Coordinator

AJ was born in December 1991, he was 2 months early. His full name is Anthony Joseph after his grandfathers but the nurse in the hospital said that was too big of a name for a baby so they changed it to AJ and it stuck.

AJ has 2 brothers, Douglas who is 14 months older and Dominic who is 5 years younger. His mom is Lisa and his Dad is Doug.

Growing up, he was surrounded by extended family and great friends that always supported him in everything he did. When he was little he played soccer with his mom’s help and basketball with his dad’s. He ran track in Middle School with the help of his power wheelchair and scored a touchdown in middle school football.

When AJ went to Kohler High School, one of the best decisions he made was to approach the varsity coaches for both football and basketball and ask to be the manager. For the next 4 years he was the manager of both teams.

AJ excelled in high school both academically and socially, being involved in everything from choir to his true passion: sports.

AJ worked hard and went on to University of Whitewater where he currently is a Senior. His major is Broadcast Journalism with a Coaching minor. He is also the manager of the UWW men’s basketball team and he loves doing that. In 2012 his basketball team was the NCAA Division III National Champions and he was a part of it. This summer, he is completing a co-op at Kohler Company back home. His work will focus on corporate social responsibility and stewardship. He will be collecting and communicating Kohler stewardship stories.

AJ hopes to graduate in the spring of 2016.

AJ took time out of his busy schedule to answer some questions about his school and life experiences, asked of him by TIG Southern Regional Coordinator, Brian Kenney.

Brian: Reflecting back to when you were in high school, what prepared you the most for being a college student?
AJ: My family, teachers and coaches best prepared me for being a college student. Being involved in athletics gave me a connection and having family and friends that didn’t allow me make my disability an excuse for not succeeding really helped drive and push me.

Brian: How were you unprepared for school?
AJ: I always had mom and dad there to help me make decisions. I had people around me making me use the restroom regularly, having everything for classes, and telling me how to get around campus, etc. I learned the hard way about not planning my restroom breaks. I once got lost on campus looking for a building, when I was 5 feet away from it. I learned independence early while I was at UW-Whitewater. The best solution for lack of preparation is willingness to make mistakes and learn.

Brian: What are some of the supports available to students at UW Whitewater that you want to make people aware of?
AJ: UWW Center for Students with Disabilities can get students aids for classes and special help with homework. They allow you to use private testing rooms as an option for assessments. The testing center even assists with getting you a scribe or a reader, if necessary. They also provide access to a variety of assistive technology - Dragon Naturally Speaking and Kurzweil to name a few.
They have transportation available, where they will take you to and from class when weather is bad or if it is a far distance. You give them your class schedule in advance and they will set up pick-up times.

Brian: What have you learned up to this point that you wish you knew in high school?
AJ: I learned how to handle different situations - if you come across an obstacle you don’t make excuses about it. When I was a freshman, I could have had all the excuses in the world, I didn’t want to be there. I wanted to go back home and be with my friends and still be a Kohler kid. Towards the end of my freshman year, I changed my outlook. I got involved in the men’s basketball team and surrounded myself with friends who supported me and helped me through things. I just learned to kind of grow-up and not only be independent, but also be accountable. I tell my friends all the time we don’t have time to make excuses in life. It is time to be the person people can count on. If I wouldn’t have changed my outlook, I probably would be

(continued on page 12)
the kid that saw himself as the one that wants to come home and be with my Kohler friends. Now I am the kid that says you
can do whatever is best for you, nobody is going to judge you. Either way, just be the person you want to be and don’t make
excuses.

Brian: What are your strengths?
AJ: I would say one of my strengths is also a weakness sometimes. I am a very confident kid, but sometimes I can be more
stubborn and that makes it more difficult for me to listen to other people’s thoughts and opinions. The greatest strength in
terms of displaying confidence, is the ability to overcome. I have Cerebral Palsy, was born 2 months early, I have had 9
surgeries... I could have said I don’t want to do this anymore. I just kept going and kept fighting, I just said no I am not going
to let it be an obstacle. I just made the most of my situation.

Brian: In what ways do you plan to improve?
AJ: One skill I really want to improve has to do with when I am in an uncomfortable situation. I will just stop talking. I will
struggle being me, and this is where I need to display utmost confidence.

Brian: The Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) Team wants to help support people with disabilities as they transition from
high school to their adult life. What is the best advice you can give people with various types of disabilities in regard to life
after high school?
AJ: Don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t do it. Don’t let anyone ever feel sorry for you and accept their pity. I have had
both happen, and it should fuel you when someone says you can’t go to college or you can’t get a job. It should push you to
prove that individual wrong. I am going to be the best I can be and if I have to overcome obstacles along the way, so be it. I
am not going to let me stop me.

School and Community Collaboration - LEAPP: Local Educators and Agencies Promoting Potential
by Chris Jackson, NEXT STEPS 18-21 Services Coordinator, Wauwautosa School District

LEAPP; Local Educators and Agencies Promoting Potential, has been a vibrant group of educators and agency representatives
since 1992. At that time a small group of district transition staff met with CESA 1 representatives. The goal was to
brainstorm ideas to pool district resources for the purpose of reaching transition needs of students outside the classroom;
and LEAPP was created. CESA 1 assisted by contacting other local district staff to meet and further build upon the mission
that was established those first meetings. The mission of LEAPP is to work collaboratively to provide transition opportunities
for students with disabilities and their families. LEAPP educates students and families through networking and creating
experiential learning activities with an emphasis on transitioning into the adult world. Through the years, LEAPP has received
several awards including Friends of Transition from DCDT and the 2001 Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce Award. They
have received grants from the U.S. Department of Education and Work, U.W. Madison’s Center on Education and Work and
local CESAs has funded various projects in the past. Participating school district administrators have witnessed the value o
LEAPP and continue to support LEAPP through a small yearly participation fee.

LEAPP consists of 15 school districts and several agencies from the Milwaukee and Waukesha county areas that are
dedicated and passionate to ensure that transition continues to be a part of the students’ whole education process. LEAPP
members meet one to two times per month at Life Navigators (formerly ARC) in Wauwatosa to network and plan interactive
transition events for students in middle school through high school. LEAPP sponsors six to eight events per school year for
students to attend. An annual Transition Resource fair is designed and held in the evenings for families, professionals and
students to attend and gather information from over 30 agency representatives.

The majority of daytime LEAPP events planned for students are held at community businesses. LEAPP plans and sponsors
transition/learning events such as the Game of Life, Tools for Success, You’re Hired, Job Olympics, Looking Ahead and It’s My
Life. They also feel that recreation and leisure are an important part of transitioning into life so a few of the district’s plan
and host such events as Harvest Fest, Winter Carnival, Karaoke Dance and a Spring Fling Dance that LEAPP district’s are
invited to.

For more information about LEAPP and their events you can contact: Chris Jackson, Wauwautosa School District Transition
Support Services, 414-773-1009, jacksoch@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Articles of Interest

Peer Partner Project (P3): Interventions for Successful Social Connections Enters Its Final Year
by Colleen Moss, Outreach Specialist: Waisman Center, UW Madison

The Peer Partner Project (P3), a research study based out of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Vanderbilt University, is examining ways to further include students with disabilities in and out of the classroom. We know that students with disabilities who are fully included in their school setting are more likely to be engaged in both the academic and social life of the school and have more friends and social interactions. However, we also know that just placing students with disabilities in general education classrooms does not necessarily lead to this type of beneficial inclusion. In fact, research has shown that even when students with disabilities spend a good part of the day in the same locations as their typically developing peers, they often have very few interactions with these peers. This is concerning because not only are friendships essential in adolescence, but all individuals will need skills to communicate effectively and develop meaningful relationships with individuals without disabilities as they leave the school system and enter the workforce. In order to prepare individuals with disabilities for a life after high school, it is also imperative that students are able to interact with others without a mediator. In schools, a well-meaning paraprofessional can sometimes become a barrier between students with disabilities and their typically developing peers. The Peer Partner Project has been studying the way two different interventions that utilize peers impact students with disabilities’ inclusion within the school. Specifically, the Peer Partner Project is investigating how social and academic interactions, friendships, and social contacts change when peers take an active role in the lives of students with disabilities through either peer support or peer network arrangements.

In peer support arrangements, one to two typically developing peers in an inclusive classroom are selected to provide academic and social support to a classmate with a disability. These peers are generally identified by a classroom teacher, special educator, and/or paraprofessional. The peers receive a brief training on how to best communicate with and support the individual with a disability. Ongoing guidance and feedback is provided by the paraprofessional and/or other support staff as the students work together. One main goal of this arrangement is for the adult facilitator to take a more indirect, albeit essential, role in supporting the student with disabilities by guiding the peers to provide social and academic support to the student. For example, instead of stepping in to help the student find the right page in the textbook, the adult facilitator may prompt the peer to provide this assistance. Doing so provides more opportunities for natural peer interactions to occur. Students with and without disabilities who participate in peer supports report gaining friends, increasing academic engaged time, and having more interactions within the general education classroom. Through these interactions, adolescents with disabilities have the opportunity to practice collaboration and teamwork, learning essential skills for life after high school.

Peer networks occur in the school building but outside of the classroom and involve identifying a group of typically developing students (usually three to six) to meet weekly with a student with a disability. Interaction opportunities are also planned to occur with the student throughout the week in hallways, the lunchroom, and/or before and after school. A school staff member, such as a special education or regular education teacher, or counselor meets with the group weekly to provide ongoing support. Students with and without disabilities who participate in peer networks report gaining friends and having more social contacts and interactions throughout the school day. Students with disabilities also practice vital social communication skills through the network that are important in navigating postsecondary life.

School staff and peers who have participated in the P3 project report that these strategies are fairly easy to implement and embed throughout the high school day. Preliminary results from the Peer Partner Project indicate that these interventions demonstrate benefits for increasing the social competence and social circles of adolescents with disabilities for increased enjoyment of high school and in preparation for a life outside of high school.

As the Peer Partner Project enters the last year of intervention and data collection, we will be presenting at state and national conferences and releasing a website in Spring 2014. For information please contact Colleen Moss at moss@wasiman.wisc.edu
Popping the Bubble Wrap: Teachers Empowering the Mastery of Self-Advocacy in Students

By Lisa Hebgen, Outreach Specialist: Education Outreach & Partnerships, UW Madison

Strong self-advocacy skills give students with disabilities the tools needed to break free from the fostered dependence that can be the result of adults who underestimate these students’ ability to make decisions about their own lives (Wehmeyer, 2002). According to Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, & Eddy (2005), there is an essential set of self-advocacy concepts that every student needs to not only be aware of, but also have the opportunity to learn and practice. These concepts include: 1) the knowledge of self; 2) the knowledge of rights; 3) the communication of one’s self and rights; and 4) leadership skills that include knowing when and how to advocate for one’s self, and when appropriate, group rights (2005).

As a former special education teacher, I believed that I was meeting the needs of my students. I believed this because my students attended their IEP meetings, they heard me talk about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and when I talked about accommodations with their teachers my students were in the room. During my compliance reviews I was always able to check all the boxes, I understood transition, and it was a source of pride that almost all my students applied to and attended postsecondary education. Notice here, I didn’t say graduated from postsecondary. It wasn’t until I left the high school environment that I truly understood the layers of protective bubble wrap that I covered my students in over the years. When I entered the world of postsecondary education, specifically as a disability support specialist, I didn’t really understand what students with disabilities had to face after leaving high school. I didn’t understand that students had to fully articulate their disability status, stating not only the name of their disability, but also what it meant for them specifically. I certainly didn’t expect that students also needed to be able to problem solve with their instructors offering other accommodations if initial suggestions were not allowed. Finally, I didn’t understand that students must be able to articulate this information over and over again - semester after semester, year after year. In essence, I learned that I didn’t fully prepare my students. I talked to them about some of these essential concepts but that’s all I did was talk to them. I never gave my students the opportunity to learn about themselves and their accommodations, I never gave them the opportunity to consider their strengths and challenges and then consider what other accommodations might be more practical. Overall, I never set up the structure for them to practice advocating for themselves before they were sent out into the world to do it on their own.

In wishing to remedy my past failures and to better support the special education teachers that I worked with, my colleague and I went to work on the creation of a self-advocacy curriculum. In 2004, the Becoming a Self-Advocate curriculum was born. While it has gone through several iterations it now consists of 11 learning plans that include the following learning objectives:

- Define the importance of self-advocacy and related terminology and utilize it
- Assess disability and identify accommodations needed
- Determine career options based on interest and skill level
- Determine employment options based on career market criteria
- Comprehend federal and state laws pertaining to individuals with disabilities
- Research postsecondary educational options
- Assess admission requirements for postsecondary institutions
- Implement plan for postsecondary enrollment
- Research accommodations procedures
- Create a plan for disclosure
- Create and utilize a list of self-advocacy resources

Feedback from Wisconsin schools point to the positive results! Activities that focused on self-reflection resulted in students describing their disability as a source of strength, and not as a weakness. Activities that connected these self-reflections to real world rights and responsibilities empowered students toward action. Results show that these empowered self-advocates more frequently approach regular education teachers to discuss their needs. Surveys also indicate an increase in the number of students who identify college as a possibility for their future. In essence, these students are learning to depend upon themselves, breaking free of the protective bubble wrap.

For more information about this curriculum please contact Lisa Hebgen at lhebgen@wisc.edu.
Contact Information for Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) Staff

Wendi Dawson
Grant Director
125 S. Webster Street
Madison, WI 53704
wendid@wsti.org
608-266-1146

Pam Jenson
TIG Project & Data Coordinator
CESA #2
1221 Innovation Drive, Suite 205
Whitewater, WI 53190
pamj@wsti.org
608-921-1400

Mary Kampa
TIG Post School Outcomes Coordinator
CESA #10
725 West Park Avenue
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729
maryk@wsti.org
715-416-0609

LaNae Jabas
TIG Eastern Regional Coordinator
CESA #1
Supporting CESA’s 1, 6, & 7
N25W23131 Paul Road, Suite 100
Pewaukee, WI 53072
lanaej@wsti.org
262-787-9500

Brenda Swoboda
Western Regional TIG Coordinator
Supporting CESAs 4, 10 & 11
CESA #4
923 E. Garland Street
West Salem, WI 54669
brendas@wsti.org
608-786-4841

Tammi Biddle
TIG Administrative Assistant
CESA #5
626 E. Slifer Street, P.O. Box 564
Portage, WI 53901
tammib@wsti.org
608-745-5489

Jennifer Jacobs
TIG Post School Outcomes Outreach
CESA #7
595 Baeten Rd.
Green Bay, WI 54304
jennyj@wsti.org
920-492-5960

Brian Kenney
TIG Southern Regional Coordinator
Supporting CESA’s 2, 3, & 5
CESA #5
626 E. Slifer Street, P.O. Box 564
Portage, WI 53901
briank@wsti.org
608-745-5488

Kathy Tuttle
Northern Regional TIG Coordinator
Supporting CESAs 8, 9 & 12
CESA #9
304 Kaphaem Road
Tomahawk, WI 54487
kathyt@wsti.org
715-453-2141 x-223

Additional Resources
College and Career Readiness Information for Students and Staff

General Information
http://www.postsecondarychoices.org/, http://www.thinkcollege.net/topics/resources-for-families
College and Career Readiness Information for Students and Staff (continued)

Websites for Students
http://weconnectnow.wordpress.com/
http://www.thinkcollege.net/think-college-island
http://www.wiyouthfirst.org/

Wisconsin Department of Instruction’s Transition Information and Opening Doors Series
http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_transition

Cutting Edge Program at Edgewood College-Madison, Wisconsin
http://www.edgewood.edu/ProspectiveStudents/CuttingEdge.aspx

Youth Options

Apprenticeships
http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/
http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/youthapprenticeship/
http://www.witechcolleges.org/explore_careers/apprenticeship/apprenticeship_programs.php

Disability Documentation and Accommodation Information
http://systematic.wtcsystem.edu/Studentserv/virtualresource/disabilitiesR.htm
http://www.ahead.org/about

Disability Disclosure Information
http://www.thinkcollege.net/october-2010/disclosure-of-disability

Contact Information for College/University Disability Services
University of Wisconsin 2-Year Colleges http://uwec.edu/students/accessibility
University of Wisconsin 4-Year Colleges http://www.uwsa.edu/acss/disability/cssd/index.htm
Wisconsin Independent Colleges
http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cedd/connections/pdfs/2012_WI_Independent_College_DS_Contact_List.pdf

Paying for College
Saving for College
http://www.thinkcollege.net/topics/paying-for-college

Finding a Benefits Specialist and Your Local ADRC
http://www.eri-wi.org/benefits-specialists
http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/ltcare/adrc/customer/map/index.htm

Scholarships

Financial aid and the Higher Education Opportunity Act
http://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/intellectual-disabilities
http://www.thinkcollege.net/topics/opportunity-act