

**Community Transitions Partnership Advisory Group
December 8, 2016 – District Office Meeting Room
Key Communications**

Remaining 2016-17 meeting dates: 1/19

Introduction

Bethany Verner, assistant director of special education, welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited the group to introduce themselves.

Bethany briefly reviewed information from the last meeting in November as a recap. Prior to today's meeting, Bethany asked members to research and share information on colleges that have transition programs and to give an overview of their findings.

Dominique Lantagne, teacher of Community Transitions, gave an overview of Bellingham Public Schools Community Transitions and the students they serve. She also went over the CT four areas of focus: Live, Learn, Work and Play.

College Report

Members were given a homework assignment to contact various colleges and share with the group their findings, how the college operates their transition program and how we can model after them.

Bethany opened the discussion by sharing her research on Skagit Valley College (SVC). She told the group that SVC collaborates with a couple neighboring school districts, how they interact with the transition student and SVC's overall structure of their program. The college has taken on a majority of the responsibility in operating their transition program. One item discussed was that SVC is now responsible for hiring staff. Bethany shared that Skagit Valley is looking at a way to integrate the student into the college atmosphere. The Skagit program currently has nine students enrolled.

Liz Madden, CT teacher, shared information about her college assignments: Shoreline Community College. Currently, Shoreline's hired staff include: two teachers, three behavioral specialists, and five one-on-one assistants. Their policy is if a staff member has more than 15 students, they will hire another teacher. Other information gathered was Shoreline pays rent, they have a kitchen they can utilize and do not have a designated office for this program. They do not service students with severe medical needs and do not provide lunch. In addition, a student cannot be dual enrolled and they do not earn a degree.

Dominique added that a transition student would need to apply and qualify to attend program. Shoreline has a vocational vender that assists during the week. Dominique spoke of the similarities between Shoreline's and Bellingham's CT programs. One of the differences is that Bellingham works with students with severe disability and Shoreline does not.

The next college was Lewis and Clarke College; however, due to limited information available, Liz advised she would be able to share more at the next meeting. Liz learned that a student can earn credit, has reduced fees and can receive vocational assistance through the teaching program. Students in the transition program have access to a student card that allows them to attend events and utilize the gym. The student card allows the transition student to feel more included among other students.

Liz shared information about Spokane Community College. Spokane serves 400 students with moderate to severe disabilities and they must be attending high school or have graduated. On campus, there is a student success group that continues to assist the transition student. To add, the student is able to obtain paid work experience, trial work experience and have an option to attend activities with a staff member or with a peer mentor. Currently, Spokane does not offer a degree but the transition student is able to earn college credits while attending their college.

Dominique spoke about Highline College and shared that they are considered having the model program for Washington. The transition student, if qualified, is able to obtain financial assistance through FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). A transition student who attends Highline should be able to take care of their own personal care needs or have an aide and is responsible for tuition and fees. Highline College does not offer a degree; instead, they offer a Fast Track to Employment Certificate or the Comprehensive Transition Certificate. Dominique expressed that the difference between the two certificates is that the comprehensive certificate is double the requirements.

Jana Burk, parent of a former CT student shared some information on Bellevue College. Bellevue is not in direct connection with a school district and their program takes approximately four years. The transition student is allowed to select their own area of interest and they are allowed to attend school events, utilize the gym, etc. Currently, the classes that the transition student attends are not integrated within the campus and the general population. The transition student is responsible for their financial obligation and must provide their own transportation.

Keith Hyatt, professor at Western Washington University, gave a report for his campus. He spoke about students who are college bound and involved with their intensive English program. One advantage for the student is they may apply simultaneously to the intensive English program and receive conditional admission to WWU without English test scores. He shared ideas for a transition student such as obtaining housing privileges in the dorm and a student mentor who already receives assistance. The mentor would be a good resource and can speak about their own experiences. Keith informed the members that his resource at the university was David Brunnemer, Director/Registrar.

The group unanimously agreed they did not want to see another special education program within the WWU campus; rather, they want a transition student to feel included, not secluded from the general experience of a college student. Keith also spoke about their disability resources for students (disability outreach center) as another area where a transition student may obtain additional assistance. Keith shared his optimism about their support for the transition student and suggested to start off slow as they work on this program and progressively build upon the smaller structure to obtain positive results. Another suggestion would be to work with people responsible for grants for future planning.

Melissa Anderson, Access & Disability Services Specialist, is a representative for Whatcom Community College. She joined the group and advised that a good resource at WCC is to speak with Carla Gelwicks, Director for Transitional Learning.

Upcoming Campus Visitations

Spokane/Lewiston: Jana Burk & Liz Madden (Liz to make arrangements)

Highline/Shoreline: Keith Hyatt & Dominique Lantagne (Dominique to make arrangements)

Closing

Bethany spoke on three key areas:

1. Information and accessibility
2. Campus visitation
3. Dream and create a program

Bethany would like to see colleges offer a range of classes and opportunities and to be inclusive and advocate for transition students. Bethany would like us to work towards having a strong support system and how to collaborate together. As we are in the pioneer stage, colleges and universities are reviewing funding now for future planning and growth. Ideally, we want to strive toward becoming an all-inclusive model program for Whatcom County.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.