

IMPROVING TRANSITION OUTCOMES

An Innovative State Alignment Grant for Improving Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities Through the Use of Intermediaries

An Exceptional Iowa Product

A local consortium, lead by Hope Haven, Inc. and West Sioux Community School District, applied for and received funding from the Improving Transition Outcomes grant administered by Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services. The consortium sought funds to pursue the goal, “Youth with disabilities will make empowered and well-informed career choices that result in employment consistent with their vocational goals.”

Focused on improving transition outcomes for youth with disabilities, the consortium knew exactly how they wanted to use the grant funds. Hope Haven had developed a curriculum specifically for youth transitioning from high school to the adult world. Derived from the person-centered model of service known as Intensive Psychiatric Rehabilitation (IPR), they had used the curriculum with a few youth referred to them by Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services. They believed the curriculum could be used in a classroom setting. Kim Buryanek, Principal at West Sioux agreed. Working in partnership, they named the curriculum Career Awareness and Self-Exploration (CASE).

Believing that work experience enhances vocational exploration, the consortium planned an entrepreneurship component for CASE. They were acutely aware of the importance of maintaining a good partnership with the local business community. Whatever work experience they created must not compete with or displace a local business. Brainstorming consortium members soon settled on establishing an in-school coffee shop.

In January 2005 juniors and seniors in West Sioux’s Resource Room began using CASE. Melanie Pottebaum, IPR Practitioner with Hope Haven, worked one-on-one with Arlys Cauwels, Special Education Teacher with West Sioux, to implement the curriculum. When school started again in August 2006, this train-the-trainer approach had prepared Cauwels to independently use the 1st Phase of the CASE curriculum with a new group of students while continuing to work with Pottebaum and the first group of students on Phase 2. In this way they worked through all 3 phases of the CASE curriculum with Cauwels becoming more independent each semester.

Throughout each semester Cauwels and Pottebaum noted wording, formatting, instructions, etc. that were stumbling blocks for the youth. Periodically, Cauwels, Pottebaum, Buryanek, and Suzan Loverink, IPR Supervisor with Hope Haven, met to revise the curriculum. For two years they continually refined CASE in this way.

The time that Cauwels devoted to learning about and using the CASE curriculum was above and beyond her regularly assigned teaching duties. She pulled “double duty” until the West Sioux Curriculum Cadre approved the finalized CASE Curriculum.

Throughout the entire implementation and revision of CASE, the West Sioux School Board supported Buryanek and Cauwels in testing this innovative curriculum. Several School Board members attended Falcon Joe’s grand opening in March 2005. CASE updates were a regular School Board agenda item until the curriculum was officially approved in the summer of 2006.

Iowa Department for the Blind

Iowa Department of Education

Iowa Department of Human Services

Iowa Division of Persons with Disabilities

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Iowa Governor's Developmental Disabilities Council

Iowa Workforce Development

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Not only is CASE now an established curriculum at West Sioux but in response to parents voicing the need for all students to fine-tune their plans for life after high school, the CASE class was opened up to the general student population. Should demand for the class exceed capacity, priority will be given to youth with disabilities.

In addition to Hope Haven and West Sioux, consortium members include: Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Workforce Development Center, Hawarden Area Partnership for Progress, Youth and Parents, Northwest Area Education Agency, and the local Northwest Transition Advisory Board.

Hawarden Area Partnership for Progress members have provided job shadow opportunities for the youth and served as guest speakers for the CASE class. Hawarden community members have also been very supportive. Local groups, such as the Red Hat Society have held meetings at Falcon Joe's and several individuals in the community have "standing" specialty coffee orders. Now a viable, self-sustaining business, Falcon Joe's provides work experience for CASE youth and generates revenues averaging \$30-\$75 per day.

Youth have consistently risen to the occasion in the classroom, vocational exploration activities, public speaking opportunities, and working at Falcon Joe's. Comments from youth often refer to accomplishing things they would have never imagined possible – such as standing up in front of a group of community members and sharing their CASE and Falcon Joe's experience. In November 2005 two youth accompanied Buryanek and Cauwels to the Iowa School Board Association conference for a "Show & Tell and Share the Success" presentation. Buryanek and Cauwels were available to answer questions but it was the youth who visited with the majority of conference attendees stopping by the booth to sample the lattes and learn more about Falcon Joe's.

With the curriculum finalized the consortium turned their efforts to marketing. Partners West Sioux and Hope Haven plan to use profits from sale of the curriculum to sustain, market and expand CASE to educators throughout the United States. Principal Buryanek and Cauwels have presented at several education and youth conferences over the years. Hope Haven has also promoted the curriculum at conferences. In August 2006 Loverink shared CASE at the Rehabilitation Services Administration national conference. The partners also co-present. In July 2006 Pottebaum and Cauwels shared CASE at a Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy national conference. Sometimes CASE promotion comes from recognition of their outstanding accomplishments! In April 2006 Hope Haven received the Innovation and Quality Award from the Iowa Association of Community Providers for CASE.

CASE may have originated in northwest Iowa but before long it could be used in schools throughout Iowa, in neighboring states, and perhaps across the nation. Hope Haven, Inc. and West Sioux Community School District are marketing the CASE curriculum; purchase includes a 2-day training by Cauwels and Pottebaum.

The Maurice, Orange City, Floyd Valley (MOC/FV) School District is currently implementing CASE in their high school. Their entrepreneurship component is an in-school smoothie shop.

The CASE Curriculum is a product of the West Sioux Community School District and Hope Haven, Inc. partnership. Henry Ford said, "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." Without a doubt the West Sioux – Hope Haven partnership is a success.

Please join us in recognizing and promoting this exceptional Iowa-grown product!

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