

Date: June 23, 2010  
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**Building Capacity to Create Work Experiences and Competitive Employment Opportunities for High School Students with Disabilities  
 Grant Report**

Pathways to Employment/Academics in Career Education

This report will address questions as requested. The questions are in italics.

*A) What goals have you been working on and an update in achieving them - what have you accomplished since your last report?*

Intermediate District 287 and Northeast Metro 916 Pathways to Employment Academics in Career Education (ACE) team has been working on goal number one of our project. Goal number one is: Create and pilot an instructional program that integrates mathematics and reading into the career area of computer applications.

In March it was reported that the timeline for the grant awarded to Northeast Metro 916 and Intermediate District 287 runs from January 2010 through January 2011. Late in January 2010, districts 287 and 916 received approval to access funds awarded. According to the timeline, planning and preparation would take place during spring semester and summer of 2010. Instruction is scheduled to begin in September 2010.

Since the last report the collaborative team of individuals from the two intermediate districts met on two occasions to create the instructional program. Work continues as individuals find and create parts of the course as planned when we met together. During the session on May 12<sup>th</sup> each cohort from the team contributed their expertise, described their role in creating the course, and shared their ideas with the rest of the team.

Examples of roles, ideas, work to be done:

<b>Work Experience Coordinators</b>	<b>Teachers Licensed in EBD</b>	<b>Mathematics Teachers</b>	<b>Reading Specialists</b>	<b>Administrators</b>
Identify jobs where Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) skills are needed.	Include reading, math, and career exploration skills in the syllabus for the computer applications course.	Manipulate measurements; make explicit the use of rational number concepts.	Teach strategies to make high level text accessible.	Envision the project.
Identify and use a quality work-readiness survey.	Create lessons that have a computer application objective, and a math and/or reading objective.	Use diagrams and multiple representations.	Use a research based process for explicit vocabulary instruction.	Procure resources.
Include MOS work samples in student work experience portfolios.	Develop units that include reading and mathematics as well as application of MOS skills to work experience	Include study of math terms used in Microsoft Office.	Apply before, during, and after reading strategies.	Engage staff.
Student research papers using MOS have career exploration as the topic.		Apply math concepts to MOS, and show how concepts are applicable to other situations.	Use student writing projects to improve reading and MOS skills.	Support the project with scheduling, staffing, structure, and encouragement.

*How are you using the Guideposts in your activities?*

At the May 12<sup>th</sup> session all members of the team received copies of the Guideposts. There was dialogue about the alignment of our work with the Guideposts, particularly of the Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Experiences section.

*How are you enhancing the existing career preparation and work-based learning experiences/structures currently in place?*

The Building Capacity to Create Work Experiences project builds upon continuing projects initially funded by an ACE grant. With the addition of the Microsoft Office Specialist course students will have the opportunity for exposure, skill development, and work experiences in woodworking, culinary arts, and Microsoft Office skills. Existing staff bring their expertise to the project. Unit plans and rubrics from previous projects serve as templates for development of the current project. Past success of students engaging in work experiences and/or employment allow staff to envision ways computer skills can be applied in available environments.

*How many students are currently involved in the activities, how many staff, locations of activities etc.*

Students will be involved in the project beginning in September, 2010. Ten staff members are involved in development activities. Observation and consultation has taken place at South Education Center. Meetings involving the entire collaborative team have been held at Capitol View Center.

*What data do you have that shows students are improving?*

Since the project is still in course development mode, as yet there is no student improvement data.

*What has worked well thus far? What, if anything, has been a challenge?*

It has been especially helpful to the development process that some of the teachers and administrators who are working on the project have worked on previous projects involving academics in career education.

Consultation with teachers in other settings who have taught Microsoft Office Specialist Skills and study of the instructional materials help us understand that for many students in our specialized programs, the material may be daunting. We are working on ways to make the material accessible. Another concern is that current economic conditions limit the availability of competitive employment opportunities. We are planning to mitigate this limitation by creating "in house" employment experiences when necessary.

*How are these activities related to your end product?*

In order for students to maintain employment in a job related to computer application, the students must first acquire the necessary skills. Students with emotional and behavioral disabilities need effective direct instruction in computer application skills in "...learning environments that are small and safe, including extra supports such as tutoring..." (Guideposts for Success)

*How do you see the Guideposts framing the evaluation of your activities?*

Exposure to career opportunities, post-secondary opportunities, training to improve job-seeking skills, on-the-job training, and career assessment are at the core of the project. These aspects of the Guideposts will be addressed in the outcome data from the evaluation as described below.

*What outcome data are you considering for use in evaluation of your activities?*

Formative and summative evaluation of student learning is part of the unit plan. The *Transition/Work Readiness Skills Survey* will be used before and after completing the course. Rubrics will be used to evaluate particular reading and “soft” skills. From *Microsoft Office 2007 Introductory Concepts and Techniques*, (Shelly, Cashman, Vermaat, 2008) end of chapter reinforcements, tests, and application activities will be used to measure growth of computer skills. Mathematics teachers are working on identifying tools to measure growth of math skills.

Student grades and attendance records will contribute to the evaluation.

*B) Please describe one or more “highlights” that have been a part of your activities.*

The May 12 work session was productive and teachers continue to reference discussion from that session in later work. See attached PowerPoint for a summary of some highlights from that session.

*C) We are again looking for information beyond what the data can tell us. These would be the “stories” of impact on students, parents, staff and/or community?*

Unintended benefits include:

- EBD teachers studying model syllabi and unit plans to improve their ability to develop the course;
- Teachers planning with school colleagues to develop students’ prerequisite skills in earlier grades so by high school students are better prepared for Microsoft Office Specialist instruction;
- District investment in student computers to equip teachers and students for the MOS course;
- Revision and refinement of the Transition/Work Readiness Skills Survey.

*D) Even though your activities may be just past the beginning stages, we are beginning to consider outcome data and sustainability. What activities are taking place to ensure sustainability once the grant funds are expended?*

Intermediate District 287 and Northeast Metro 916 have a track record of sustaining career related projects once grant funds are expended. The collaborative team has had conversation on the topic, expressing the intention to extend the work beyond the activities and timeline described in the grant proposal. The project is not dependent on one or two individuals for its existence, or its sustenance. The team includes members who have worked on similar projects, and members who are new to the process. Because we work together interdependently, when conditions change there are still individuals in both districts who can carry the work forward. Our students’ pathways to employment are in connected hands.

