The Work and College Opportunities (W.A.C.O.) project at Texas A&M University is a 5-week program held in the Summer for students who are blind or have low vision.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Director 3
Financials 4
About The Center on Disability and Development 5
What we Do 6
Research 6
Education/Training 6
Service and Outreach 6
Diversity Fellows 7
Programs 8
Parent Perspective 14
Successes 15
Our Impact 16
Our Team 19

Center Leadership Team and Staff

Dalun Zhang, Ph.D.
Center Director

Meagan Sumbera, Ph.D.
Associate Director

Cheryl Grenwelge, Ph.D.
Director of Transition Service Programs, Associate Professor, AgriLife Extension

Laura Stough, Ph.D.
Assistant Director, Director of Policy and Interdisciplinary Training, Program Coordinator for Learning Sciences, Educational Psychology

Nathan Clemens, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Educational Psychology, Director of Literacy and Language, Program Manager for ELM

Affiliated Faculty

Jamilia Blake, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Educational Psychology

Mack Burke
Associate Professor, Educational Psychology

Melissa Fogharty, Ph.D.
Assistant Clinical Professor, Educational Psychology

Jennifer Ganz, Ph.D.
Professor of Special Education, Educational Psychology

Jim Xiuguan Ji
Associate Professor, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Li-Jen Kuo
Associate Professor, Teaching, Learning, and Culture

Ol-man Kwok
Professor, Educational Psychology

Wen Luo, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Educational Psychology

Lakshmi Mahadevan, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Family Development & Resource Management

Marcia Montague
Adjunct Assistant Professor, Educational Psychology

Alexandra Pooley-Detwiler, MS
Visiting Instructional Assistant Professor

Constituent Advisory Council (CAC)

Steve Aleman
Policy Specialist, Disability Rights Texas

Cheryl Allen
CEO, Easter Seals East Texas

Ana Canaveros
Special Education Specialist, Texas Center for Disability Studies

Luis Castillo
Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor III / DARS / Division for Blind Services

Joanna Cordry
Planning Coordinator, Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

Karen Mayer Cunningham
Special Education Advocate, President of Gospel Revelation Ministries

Ellen Goudeau
Non-Army Education Advocate, Paralegal

Eddie R. Jessie
Program Manager-Collaboration For Action Employment Service, Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD Services of Harris County

Pan Lily
Department Director, IDD Waiver Services, MHMRA of Harris County

Tanya Baker
Communications Specialist

Aimee Day
Program Coordinator

Travis Hamil
Program Assistant

Elisa Beth McNeill, PhD, CHES
Clinical Associate Professor, Health and Kinesiology

Deb Simmons, Ph.D.
Professor, Educational Psychology

Kelly L. Wilson, PhD, MCHES
Associate Professor, Health and Kinesiology

Steven Woltering, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Educational Psychology, Director of the Neurobiological Lab for Learning & Development

Jackie Pacha, Ph.D., CRC
Executive Director, Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living (BVCL)

Rick Peterson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Liaison

José Ramirez, Jr., LCSW
Department Director, MHMRA of Harris County

Havilah Walsh
PATHS Program Alumni, Childcare worker at YMCA, Self Advocate

Erin Wilder, M.Ed., C.R.C.
Statewide Transition Specialist, Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services

Gail Wright
Region 6 Coordinator, PATH Project, Partners Resource Network Inc.
Dear Friends and Colleagues:

As Director of the Center on Disability and Development (CDD) at Texas A&M University, I am very pleased to share with you the work of the CDD. The CDD is a federally designated and funded University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The CDD supports the self-determination, community integration, and quality of life of people with developmental disabilities and their families through projects and activities centered around four overarching goals. These goals include (a) providing pre-service training and continuing education; (b) providing training and technical assistance, and services and support; (c) conducting research and evaluation studies; and (d) engaging in information dissemination activities. Currently, we are in Year One of a new five-year funding cycle from 2015 to 2020. Our five-year plan includes 25 objectives and over 70 individual projects focused on improving education services and outcomes that spans from preschool children at risk of developmental delay to college students with disabilities and on enhancing community quality of life for people with disabilities and their families.

We constantly assess the needs of the community and needs of individuals with disabilities and their families in Texas and in our local area. Based on the needs, we work with partners and develop new innovations to address these needs. Therefore, we always have new initiatives added to our project list each year. Examples of recently added new initiatives include “Purposeful Lives: Family Training Series,” a person-centered training for families entitled “Whose Life is it Anyways,” and a childcare focus in the PATHS (Postsecondary Access and Training in Human Services) program.

Our collaborations with the community and Texas DD partners have grown stronger. Together, we are making a difference in improving the quality of life outcomes of individuals with disabilities and their families in Texas.

On behalf of the faculty and staff of the CDD, thank you for taking the time to read this report and learn about our work. If you need any more information on any of the projects in this report, please visit our website through the links provided or contact us.

Dan D. Zhang, Ph.D.
Director, Center on Disability and Development
At Texas A&M University
In the 2015-2016 reporting period, the Center on Disability and Development leveraged over $4.2 million in additional federal and state funding beyond the UCEDD core grant.

**Funding Sources**
- **Core Grant**: $545,919
- Addition Federal and State Funding: $4.2 Million

**CENTER ON DISABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT MISSION**

The mission of the Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University (CDD) is to support the self-determination, community integration, improving educational outcomes, and quality of life of people with disabilities and their families within the following four core functions of the CDD:

- **Community Services** - provides training, and technical assistance to individuals with disabilities, their families, and those who support them.
- **Research and Evaluation** - to improve school services and outcomes, and increase the quality of community life.
- **Interdisciplinary Pre-service Training** - offers disability-related training through Texas A&M University.
- **Information Dissemination** - develops tools for people with disabilities and their support systems.

**OUR IMPACT**

- 10,113 People served at one or more of the CDD’s outreach and service projects in 2015
- 87 Adults with disabilities in certification program
- 148 Undergraduate TAMU students
- 76 Graduate TAMU students

**AUTISM ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTIONS**

Hours of intensive behavioral interventions provided to children with autism spectrum disorder in 2012-2013 through the CDD’s Autism Assessment Research and Intervention Clinic “The Autism Clinic”

**DISABILITY TIPS for FIRST RESPONDERS**

Users from all 50 states and in 40 countries across the world have visited the mobile-friendly website for information about disability-specific supports, an acronym guide, and disability resources in Texas.
The Center on Disability and Development (CDD) began work in July 2005 when it was awarded federal funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to establish a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). As a UCEDD, the CDD is part of a national network in universities and medical schools. In April 2007, the CDD received approval from the Board of Regents to operate as a designated Center within the Texas A&M University System. In 2015, the CDD was awarded renewal funding to take its programs through 2020. Over the years and continuing into the future, the CDD has partnered with local and state organizations to develop and implement outreach activities that will:

- ensure the CDD’s efforts are directly connected to education, community inclusion, and family support issues, and
- provide opportunities through which quality pre-service training, relevant and rigorous research, and exemplary community services and training can be implemented in full partnership with self-advocates and family members.

**Our Impact**

- 698 Students and teachers who took part in research studies with Project PACT, Project ELM, and the IVCS Project conducted to improve reading and language development in students from pre-K to high school.
- 58 Adults with disabilities received certification in direct support.
- 115 Texas A&M students active in Aggie Guide Dogs and Service Dogs puppy raising service program.
- 29 Puppies raised since 2005 preparation for specialized service dog training.
- 1700 Farmers and ranchers with disabilities and their families who received training, support, and accessibility equipment to continue working in their field of farming and ranching through the CDD’s AgrAbility partnership project.

**Overview**

- Autism Leadership Grant
- Directory of Community Services in Texas for Individuals with Disabilities and Their Families
- PATHS Certificate Program
- Project ABS
- Special Education Master’s Program
- Healthy Relationships Curriculum
- Autism Clinic
- Bridge to Care
- BVaS
- Camp LIF
- Childcare Program
- Institute for Person-Centered Practices
- LEAP
- PATHS Certificate Program
- Purposeful Life: Family Training
- Texas AgrAbility Project
- Texas Transition Conference
- W.A.C.O.
- Caregiver Support
- Early Literacy Measurement
- IVCS Project
- Emergency Preparedness Research (Project REDD)
- Project ELM
- Research to Improve Social, Behavioral, and Postsecondary Outcomes
- Aggie Guide Dogs
- Autism Clinic
- Bridge to Care
- BVaS
- Camp LIF
- Childcare Program
- Institute for Person-Centered Practices
- LEAP
- PATHS Certificate Program
- Purposeful Life: Family Training
- Texas AgrAbility Project
- Texas Transition Conference
- W.A.C.O.
- CDD Website
- CDD Newsletter
- Policy Consortium
- GEAR UP
- Career Technology Special Populations Training and Resource Education Center
- Low Incidence Disabilities
- 698 Students and teachers who took part in research studies with Project PACT, Project ELM, and the IVCS Project conducted to improve reading and language development in students from pre-K to high school.
- 58 Adults with disabilities received certification in direct support.
- 115 Texas A&M students active in Aggie Guide Dogs and Service Dogs puppy raising service program.
- 29 Puppies raised since 2005 preparation for specialized service dog training.
- 1700 Farmers and ranchers with disabilities and their families who received training, support, and accessibility equipment to continue working in their field of farming and ranching through the CDD’s AgrAbility partnership project.
Research
To address the needs of our community, the Center on Disability and Development conducts research on a variety of topics, including education and early intervention, disaster and community living.

Autism Alternative Communication
Autism Clinic
Bridge to Career in Human Services
Early Literacy Measurement
Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs
Integrated Vocabulary of Comprehension

Education
The Center on Disability and Development offers dozens of training opportunities to the community throughout the year on disability-related topics. From hour-long seminars to full conferences, these are opportunities for individuals, family members, and professionals to learn more about a variety of topics.

Autism Leadership Grant
Bridge to Career in Human Services
Career & Technical Education Special Populations Resource Center
Institute for Person-Centered Practices
Leadership, Employability, and Advocacy Project

Service & Outreach
The CDD has many ongoing community service and training projects that are all designed to increase quality of life, support self-determination, and/or facilitate community integration for people with disabilities and their families. These projects address a broad range of family and consumer needs.

Aggie Guide Dogs and Service Dogs
Autism Clinic
Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living
Camp LIFE
Directory of Community Services in Texas
Leadership, Employability, and Advocacy Project
Purposeful Life: Family Training Research and Evaluation on Disability and Disaster
Texas AgrAbility Project

PATHS Graduate selected as Ambassador for “Walk With Me” North Texas!
Easter Seals North Texas chose Darius Young as an Ambassador. In 2015, Darius completed the Postsecondary Access and Training in Human Services (PATHS) program at Texas A&M University. He earned a Direct Support Professional certification, which enables him to assist others with disabilities. With help from Easter Seals’ CLASS case management and employment services, Darius became employed soon after completion of his degree and currently has two jobs.

Undergraduate Researcher Scholar
Anais Charlez is a Special Education major from Houston and a member of the Fightin’ Texas Aggie Class of 2016. Upon graduation, she plans to attend graduate school and work towards earning a PhD in Special Education with a focus in transition education.

First Certified People Planning Together (PTP) Trainers in Texas
Shelbi Davenport and Justin Deleon both valedictorians from their PATHS program classes are candidates to become the first People Planning Together (PTP) certified trainers in Texas. This training is led by certified trainers with disabilities for audiences that include people with disabilities. This two day peer to peer training model provides hands on opportunities to discover how participants want to live their lives as they define it and to develop person centered plans that reflect the goals they choose to pursue. Justin and Shelbi reflect the outcomes of the training through the lives they live as advocates and teachers.

Graduate Student Highlight
Christina Gushanas, a Special Education doctoral student and AUCD trainee. Christina serves as the Practicum Coordinator of the PATHS postsecondary education program. She has developed and implemented the Practicum Preparation curriculum, collaborated with the Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living to ensure students are receiving appropriate supports such as Personal and Social Adjustment Training, and initiated a graduate/undergraduate leadership research team that will conduct research and collaborate.

Doctoral Student Helping to Pave the Way for “Healthy Relationships”
Christi Hays, M.Ed., CHES is a Health Education doctoral student at Texas A&M University. She works for IT3, an OAH funded project to support innovative teen pregnancy prevention programs. She is researching sexuality education for people with developmental disabilities, as the Department of Health and Kinesiology is collaborating with the Health Promotion office and research staff at the Center on Disability and Development (CDD) to develop a sexuality & healthy relationship education program to implement as part of the Bridge to Career (B2C) program at Texas A&M University.

Graduate Continues to Serve the Community
Margot Boles graduated from Texas A&M University in December with her PhD in Educational Psychology. She worked with the PATHS program and had the opportunity to work with a diverse group of individuals and help create a pathway of independence and success for their futures. She recently helped open and now run an autism clinic with Easter Seals East Texas in Texarkana. She works with individuals of all ages with autism spectrum disorders and creates an environment that promotes acquisition of socially valid goals driven by her clients.
Dear Dr. Grenwelge,

When Kyle and his brother came to me in June of 2014, they were scared and beaten down. They both were convinced they were "too stupid" to learn anything. He walked hunched over, never looking anyone in the face, never smiling, never laughing. Kyle’s vision problems put an end to his dream of a military career before it even started. I had serious second thoughts about him being in ROTC at Midway. But a conversation with Jeff Fisher, his Chief Warrant Officer, convinced me that it would be a huge disservice to Kyle to prevent the only military experience he’ll ever be able to have. So I consented and allowed him to stay in ROTC. The correct choice, believe me. Kyle is a team leader of his own freshman cadets this year, was promoted to Lance Corporal, and will believe me. Every time Kyle returns from Camp Life, or any of the other events I’ve mentioned, he is so re-energized, inspired and determined that he CAN do whatever he wants. He walks tall now, looks people right in the face – if not in the eyes, he laughs, he smiles, he is confident and eager to learn new things – to have new life experiences. In a word, he is simply amazing to me.

It is with great pride and anticipation that I look forward to Kyle and Shawn becoming my sons permanently next month. Enter DARS and TAMU. Luis Castillo made me aware of the possibilities and experiences awaiting Kyle. He has participated twice in the Technology Olympics. He has participated in two robotics training seminars (Initial and Advanced). He has been to Camp Life twice. He attended a weekend conference in Corpus sponsored by the American Foundation for the Blind. And, of course, LEAP.

RE: Project LEAP and Kyle Moore

When Kyle and his brother came to me in June of 2014, they were scared and beaten down. They both were convinced they were "too stupid" to learn anything. He walked hunched over, never looking anyone in the face, never smiling, never laughing. Kyle’s vision problems put an end to his dream of a military career before it even started. I had serious second thoughts about him being in ROTC at Midway. But a conversation with Jeff Fisher, his Chief Warrant Officer, convinced me that it would be a huge disservice to Kyle to prevent the only military experience he’ll ever be able to have. So I consented and allowed him to stay in ROTC. The correct choice, believe me. Kyle is a team leader of his own freshman cadets this year, was promoted to Lance Corporal, and will believe me. Every time Kyle returns from Camp Life, or any of the other events I’ve mentioned, he is so re-energized, inspired and determined that he CAN do whatever he wants. He walks tall now, looks people right in the face – if not in the eyes, he laughs, he smiles, he is confident and eager to learn new things – to have new life experiences. In a word, he is simply amazing to me.

It is with great pride and anticipation that I look forward to Kyle and Shawn becoming my sons permanently next month. Enter DARS and TAMU. Luis Castillo made me aware of the possibilities and experiences awaiting Kyle. He has participated twice in the Technology Olympics. He has participated in two robotics training seminars (Initial and Advanced). He has been to Camp Life twice. He attended a weekend conference in Corpus sponsored by the American Foundation for the Blind. And, of course, LEAP.

RE: Project LEAP and Kyle Moore

When Kyle and his brother came to me in June of 2014, they were scared and beaten down. They both were convinced they were "too stupid" to learn anything. He walked hunched over, never looking anyone in the face, never smiling, never laughing. Kyle’s vision problems put an end to his dream of a military career before it even started. I had serious second thoughts about him being in ROTC at Midway. But a conversation with Jeff Fisher, his Chief Warrant Officer, convinced me that it would be a huge disservice to Kyle to prevent the only military experience he’ll ever be able to have. So I consented and allowed him to stay in ROTC. The correct choice, believe me. Kyle is a team leader of his own freshman cadets this year, was promoted to Lance Corporal, and will believe me. Every time Kyle returns from Camp Life, or any of the other events I’ve mentioned, he is so re-energized, inspired and determined that he CAN do whatever he wants. He walks tall now, looks people right in the face – if not in the eyes, he laughs, he smiles, he is confident and eager to learn new things – to have new life experiences. In a word, he is simply amazing to me.

It is with great pride and anticipation that I look forward to Kyle and Shawn becoming my sons permanently next month. Enter DARS and TAMU. Luis Castillo made me aware of the possibilities and experiences awaiting Kyle. He has participated twice in the Technology Olympics. He has participated in two robotics training seminars (Initial and Advanced). He has been to Camp Life twice. He attended a weekend conference in Corpus sponsored by the American Foundation for the Blind. And, of course, LEAP.
Aggie Guide Dogs and Service Dogs
Since 1997, Texas A&M students have trained puppies to become service dogs through Aggie Guide Dogs and Service Dogs (AGS). With the help of these student puppy raisers, dogs learn how to obey and behave in public places and respond to commands unique to service dogs. AGS members provide services to the community via education and therapy dog programs.

Autism Augmentative and Alternative Communication
Deficits in communication and social interaction are central issues for people with autism spectrum disorder. Recent advances have indicated that intensive interventions and technologies, including augmentative and alternative communication, can help such individuals learn new skills.

Autism Clinic
The only provider of ABA therapy in the Brazos Valley. Serving individuals of all ages. The Autism Clinic provides a variety of services: Autism Assessment/Diagnosis 3-6 years of age, social clubs for all ages, private therapy, in home therapy and parent training.

Bridge to Career in Human Services (B2C)
Bridge to Career in Human Services is a two-semester program. This program provides qualifying students with developmental disabilities access to a post-secondary education program along with special educational supports, which will prepare them for employment in the field of health and human services, specifically to become Direct Support or Childcare Professionals.

Whose Life Is It Anyway?
This exciting training event brings together parents and students to learn how person-centered practices lead to plans that support students to get better lives based on what is important to them. On the first day of this two days of intensive training, students and family members will learn person-centered skills in different rooms. On the second day, students will join their parents to share what they want to do with their lives.

Work And College Opportunities Project
The Work and College Opportunities (W.A.C.O.) project at Texas A&M University is a 5-week program held in the Summer for students who are blind or have low vision. DARS-DBS Transition Program, Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living and Texas A&M Center on Disability and Development collaborate. Participants receive development and instruction in Professionalism, Self-determination and Teamwork. They live in on-campus dormitories. They experience and learn about college opportunities and work in the community 16-20 hours a week.
Supporting Teachers in Evidence-based Practices (STEP)
Project STEP combines community outreach, research, and hands-on learning experiences for TAMU students in an effort to produce positive outcomes for young children placed at risk. Ongoing professional development and support to Head Start teachers to promote social and emotional development and to decrease challenging behavior in young children.

Texas AgrAbility
Connecting, assisting and empowering people in production agriculture. Providing assistance through individualized consultation and assessment of agricultural work sites and tasks and make recommendations for farm equipment adaptation, home modifications and adaptive equipment.

Texas Autism Collaborative
Improving outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorders through research, training and outreach.

Texas Transition Conference
The Texas Transition Conference is an annual three-day conference that equips family members and professionals with information about students with disabilities in transition to improve outcomes for postsecondary education and better employment opportunities. The conference is co-sponsored by the Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University and other statewide organizations. Participants come from all over the state and include transition specialists, vocational coordinators, representatives of service agencies, educators and parents of youth with disabilities.

Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living
Promoting the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of community life. As a community outreach organization affiliated with the Center on Disability and Development, the BVCL provides opportunities for graduate student training and research and demonstration projects that address community quality of life issues for people with disabilities and their families.

Camp LIFE
LIFE—it stands for Leadership, Independence and Friends through Experiences. Camp LIFE creates an integrated setting for children with disabilities and their siblings to participate in a barrier-free camp adventure. It is held twice a year for a weekend in the fall and spring. Campers engage in horseback riding, ropes course, climbing wall, petting zoo, swimming, canoeing, fishing, dancing, zip line, biking, archery, crafts and more. Children with disabilities between the ages of 5 and 21 and their siblings between the ages of 5 and 12 are eligible to attend Camp LIFE.

Career & Technical Education Special Populations Resource Center
CTSP provides access to career and technical education (CTE) and special populations-related multimedia information to teachers, parents, and education professionals throughout Texas. Search our database of over 1100 new materials covering a range of CTE and Special Education Topics. Get online access to curriculum materials, videos and online courses, and more.

Directory of Community Services in Texas
Find disability related resources and community services throughout Texas! Customize your search by zip code, county, region, keyword, or category.
PROGRAMS

Postsecondary Access and Training for Human Services
The PATHS Certificate Program is a program offered at the Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University that will prepare graduates to be Direct Support Professionals or Child Care Professionals. This two semester certificate program prepares graduates for employment in a career serving people with disabilities.

Purposeful Life: Family Training
The Center on Disability and Development (CDD) at Texas A&M University, Down Syndrome Association of Brazos Valley (DSABV), Families of Autistic Children Engaged Together for Support (FACETS), and the Brazos Center for Independent Living (BVCIL) are hosting a free workshop series for parents and family members of children with exceptionalities.

Research and Evaluation on Disability and Disaster (REDD)
Project REDD was created in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in response to the overwhelming needs of the over 400,000 individuals with disabilities that were displaced to Texas following these disasters.

PATHS has helped me be more independent in career searching and also has helped me understand more the importance of helping others! With my certification from A&M and my certification from the CNA, I can lead a successful and fulfilling life and career!

— Spencer Langseth

Leadership, Employability, and Advocacy Project
The Leadership, Employability, and Advocacy Project (LEAP) provides training and experiences to youth with disabilities to develop their leadership and advocacy skills. Project LEAP selects youth participants from among high school juniors and seniors across the state. Participants learn the history of the disability rights movement, engage in career activities and explore assistive technologies. They also gain exposure to legislative activities at the Texas Capitol, such as mock testimonies and a legislative session, and a tour of the facilities and meetings with state legislators.

Institute for Person-Centered Practices
As a collaborative initiative between the Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University and the Texas Center for Disability Studies at the University of Texas, the Institute offers training in person-centered thinking and plan facilitation. The Institute’s goal is to offer extensive training for participants to gain an understanding of person-centered practices, and provide opportunities to learn specific tools to be used to actively help people have fulfilling lives. Those who are encouraged to attend the trainings include (but are not limited to): individuals with disabilities, family members, service coordinators, service providers, local authority and state department staff.

Integrated Vocabulary of Comprehension (IVC)
IVC is a Goal 2 development grant funded through the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), and is being conducted at Texas A&M University in collaboration with the University of Connecticut. The project aims to develop an innovative technology-enhanced learning system with the goal of building at-risk 3rd grade students’ knowledge and application of the vocabulary of comprehension, which is critical to understanding instruction and actively constructing meaning from text. Mrs. Smart, Evy, Lex and other “Vocabulator” characters bring the lessons to life through videos and interactive activities delivered via a website. Pilot studies are currently being conducted with 3rd grade students in College Station, Texas and Storrs, Connecticut.

Early Literacy Measurement (ELM)
Project ELM is working with teachers and using the data from the screening assessment in kindergarten, such as TPRI or DIBELS scores, to identify students who might be good candidates for the project. This project is investigating ways to monitor the reading progress of at-risk kindergarten students.

PROGRAMS

Leadership, Employability, and Advocacy Project
The Leadership, Employability, and Advocacy Project (LEAP) provides training and experiences to youth with disabilities to develop their leadership and advocacy skills. Project LEAP selects youth participants from among high school juniors and seniors across the state. Participants learn the history of the disability rights movement, engage in career activities and explore assistive technologies. They also gain exposure to legislative activities at the Texas Capitol, such as mock testimonies and a legislative session, and a tour of the facilities and meetings with state legislators.

Institute for Person-Centered Practices
As a collaborative initiative between the Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University and the Texas Center for Disability Studies at the University of Texas, the Institute offers training in person-centered thinking and plan facilitation. The Institute’s goal is to offer extensive training for participants to gain an understanding of person-centered practices, and provide opportunities to learn specific tools to be used to actively help people have fulfilling lives. Those who are encouraged to attend the trainings include (but are not limited to): individuals with disabilities, family members, service coordinators, service providers, local authority and state department staff.

Integrated Vocabulary of Comprehension (IVC)
IVC is a Goal 2 development grant funded through the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), and is being conducted at Texas A&M University in collaboration with the University of Connecticut. The project aims to develop an innovative technology-enhanced learning system with the goal of building at-risk 3rd grade students’ knowledge and application of the vocabulary of comprehension, which is critical to understanding instruction and actively constructing meaning from text. Mrs. Smart, Evy, Lex and other “Vocabulator” characters bring the lessons to life through videos and interactive activities delivered via a website. Pilot studies are currently being conducted with 3rd grade students in College Station, Texas and Storrs, Connecticut.

Leadership, Employability, and Advocacy Project
The Leadership, Employability, and Advocacy Project (LEAP) provides training and experiences to youth with disabilities to develop their leadership and advocacy skills. Project LEAP selects youth participants from among high school juniors and seniors across the state. Participants learn the history of the disability rights movement, engage in career activities and explore assistive technologies. They also gain exposure to legislative activities at the Texas Capitol, such as mock testimonies and a legislative session, and a tour of the facilities and meetings with state legislators.