

Capacity Building Focus Group Data
TWC Region 1: West Texas

Positive Highlights

- Teachers and paraprofessionals working in SEAL and other summer programs
- Start My VR is helpful
- Charting the Course and ONET
- OnCourse, Middle Galaxy, and Texas Reality Check are engaging
- Co-teaching Pre-ETS skills with certified teachers and CRPs
- Districts and VR are co-hosting transition nights for students and parents
- El Paso ISD is developing student vision statements in first ARD and revising annually

Common Themes

Collaboration Between School Districts and VR

Challenges:

- Limited knowledge of each other's systems and jargon
- Staff turnover results in varying skill levels, limited relationships
- Need a process to determine when to involve VR based upon student needs

Opportunities:

- Include VR in professional development in August, PLCs, campus staff meetings
- Training on each other's systems, jargon, timelines, and services
- Meet to plan service coordination and define roles
- Formal testing during high school instead of relying on REEDs
- Get consent and provide student information to VR or hold a joint staffing prior to ARD
- Provide time and space for VR to work with students on campus
- Inform each other when staff turnover happens

Working with Parents

Challenges:

- Resist employment because they fear losing benefits or don't see the students as employable
- Some have unrealistic expectations for employment/postsecondary education
- Parents don't understand how services and accommodations change after graduation
- Immigrant families fear accessing services due to legal status
- Disability, education level, and cultural or language barriers may complicate access to services
- TWC presentations aren't engaging and are too technical for parents

Opportunities:

- Begin parent training sooner, including sharing clear information about the disability and the student's performance levels
- Provide joint parent training sessions
 - TWC services and community resources
 - Guardianship and alternatives
 - Accommodations in the workplace and post-secondary education
 - Disability fact sheets with disability-specific resources
 - Transition fairs and recurring evening meetings

Working with Younger Teens

Challenges:

- Maturity level: 14-16 year-olds aren't thinking about employment or careers
- Limited or unrealistic career goals: need career exploration
- Limited understanding of their disabilities and accommodations
- Transportation
- Child labor laws limit options for this age group
- Presentations aren't engaging and are too technical for students
- Need high-quality, engaging Pre-ETS curricula
- Need to educate students about their disabilities and use clear language
- Meetings are too rushed for students and parents to understand the plan &/or the disability

Opportunities:

- After-school services, community-based career exploration
- Training in independent living skills and social skills, including parent training
- Provide group training & services during lunch if the topic isn't confidential
- Training in self-advocacy and student-led ARDs
- Use paid work experience as an incentive to gain student buy-in & develop employability skills
- Visual resumes or resumes with embedded videos of students working
- Share Pre-ETS skill checklists, etc., with teachers to help schools scaffold instruction. (TWC form 1404, Leander ISD form available from ESC13)

Collaboration with CTE and General Education

Challenges:

- Difficulty accessing CTE courses and pathways, especially those with certifications
- Working around students' schedules and finding space to meet or provide services

Opportunities:

- Fewer barriers to CTE inclusion in rural districts
- Hands-on CTE courses are more accessible and teachers are supportive

Coordination of Services Beyond the LEA-VR Team

Challenges:

- Lack of providers in some areas
- Providers want to concentrate on more profitable services (VAT vs. SEAL)

Opportunities:

- Clarifying the role of Hireability Navigators can improve outcomes
- Involve VR earlier for students who may need SEAL, etc.