



# Creating a Vision for Competitive Employment:

Engaging Students, Families, and Other Key Stakeholders

---

*Joette Hardin, MEd*

*TAMU Center on Disability and Development*

# State of the Nation:



TEXAS A&M  
UNIVERSITY

## Labor Force Participation Rates as of May 2023:

Labor Force	Ages 16-64	Ages 16+
Workers with Disabilities	40.2%	24.3%
Workers without Disabilities	77.6%	68.0%

Source: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/research-evaluation/statistics>, June 30, 2023

---

# State of the State:



TEXAS A&M  
UNIVERSITY

- 2021-22 Indicator 14 data reflects that 31% of students with IEPs were competitively employed one year after graduation. Further, 31% of graduates with disabilities reported not being engaged in any form of employment or postsecondary education.
  - The 2020 National Survey of State IDD Agency Day and Employment Services indicates that only 6% of Texans receiving IDD services participated in integrated employment services, compared with 22% nationally.
-



# Good News:

Research tells us how to improve those outcomes.

- How to make contact
    - Schools
      - Search the [VR office locator](#)
    - VR
      - Call your local school district central office special education department
  - Develop a collaborative plan
    - create a calendar for the year with scheduled meetings (send a calendar invite)
    - commit to attending the meetings you have agreed to
    - create a communication system
    - decide on roles and responsibilities
-

- Plan for inservice- How can VR meet with staff before school starts to introduce themselves and provide information
    - Are there other times VR could share information with staff?
  - Collaborate to educate families- Are there opportunities to connect with parents?
    - hold a transition fair
    - shared parent training
    - create a system for sharing information with families
-

- Coping with Staff Turnover
    - Turnover at Schools- Do not limit your contact to one person
      - Connect with a district's central office staff (special education director)
      - Connect with school administrators (high school principals)
      - Connect directly with teaching staff
    - Turnover at VR
      - [Start my VR](#)
      - Connect with other personnel
        - HireAbility Navigator
        - Community Outreach & Awareness Specialist (COAS)
        - Contact the local workforce office to see who's covering vacant positions
-

## What Does Research Tell Us?

- Students are more likely to become employed when parents have an expectation of employment (Carter, Austin, & Trainor, 2011; Wehman et al., 2014)
  - Family expectations of work was a stronger predictor of future employment than high school work experiences (Simonsen & Neubert, 2012)
  - Active family support of employment efforts is associated with more successful student work experiences and adult employment (Test et al., 2009)
  - Employment during high school and parental expectations were the strongest predictors of employment five years post-graduation. (Wehman et al. (2015) analyzed data from the NLTS2)
-



Families are vital for the success of a collaborative relationship.

- Start building relationships early
  - Discuss the importance of transition planning often
  - Help families envision a future that includes employment
  - Ask families to participate and make them part of the process
  - Encourage families to begin disability awareness early
-

- Dallas ISD Transition App
  - El Paso ISD Vision Statements
  - B/CS Success Conference
  - Purposeful Life Family Training Series
-

Students are the Cornerstone of the process.

- ***Have High Expectations***
  - Involve the student as early as possible
    - focus on developing of an understanding of themselves
    - give them a voice
    - ask probing questions to build a deeper understanding of the student's skills and aspirations
-

## The Student is the Cornerstone of the process.

- Person Centered Planning
    - create a plan WITH the student, not FOR the student
    - update and use the plan to share information with all involved
  - Create an understanding of Self-Determination and help students advocate for themselves
-

## Plug into what is already happening in the school.

- Middle School (7th & 8th grades) have specific Career and Technology (CTE) TEKS associated with Pre-ETS skills
    - New for 2023-24: Career and College Exploration
      - [Texas on Course](#)
      - [When I Grow Up](#)
  - Planning for High School- high school counseling office
    - 4 year plan
    - Choosing an endorsement
-

## Graduation Toolkit

TWC graduation brochures

Texas Education Agency

## Graduation Toolkit



- Graduation Program - *Overview*
- Distinguished Level of Achievement - *Benefits*
- Texas High School Diploma - *Steps*
- Endorsements - *Choices*
- Graduation Program - *Checklists*
- Information - *University*
- Information - *Workforce*
- Graduation Program - *Glossary*

- Provide training on accommodations, modifications, and UDL for CTE staff.
  - Have experienced staff mentor more hesitant teachers.
  - Work with your CTE Director to plan inclusive approaches, and consider co-teaching in CTE.
  - Collaborate with your Agricultural Extension Office to provide guest speakers, field experience, and external certification opportunities.
  - Collaborate on IEP goals and individualized exit criteria for CTE courses.
-

# Engaging Local Employers



TEXAS A&M  
UNIVERSITY

- Know your community's labor needs
    - [Workforce Solutions labor analysis](#)
  - Access your local Chamber of Commerce and small business organizations
  - Connect with family and friends
    - Have conversations with people you know about employment
  - Connect with TWC resources
    - HireAbility Navigators
  - Connect with employers through [informational interviews](#)
-





Questions?



# Contact Us

[robin.miller@tamu.edu](mailto:robin.miller@tamu.edu)

[jhardin@tamu.edu](mailto:jhardin@tamu.edu)

<https://cdd.tamu.edu/wbl-project/>

---