



Manitoba
Supported
Employment
Network

Preparing for Work...Preparing for Life

A Model for Implementing Supported Employment as part of the Transition to
Adulthood in High School Programming for Students with Disabilities

Preparing for Work...Preparing for Life

What is Supported Employment?

Supported Employment is a term used to describe supports provided to individuals with disabilities to acquire employment in inclusive workplaces.

The Manitoba Supported Employment Network (MSEN) has developed a specific definition for *Supported Employment* that includes real work (paid, minimum wage or standard pay for that position) in an integrated setting with ongoing support provide by an agency with expertise in finding employment for people with disabilities.

MSEN members strive to provide and promote:

- A range of individualized choices
- Integrated workplaces
- Long term support (as much support as needed with the least intrusive supports possible)
- Support to achieve maximum independence
- The development of natural supports to achieve social inclusion and true *interdependence* in the workplace
- The development of opportunities for employment
- Opportunities for employment-related skill development
- Provision of services in a timely and professional manner

How can High School Students with Special Needs More Smoothly Transition into Adulthood and Employment?

Transition planning begins when a student enters High School and they, and their support network of caregivers, educators and resource staff, etc, join as a team to consider what successful transition to the adult world will look like for that student.

Key components of a good transition plan can be found in Healthy Child Manitoba's "Bridging to Adulthood: A Protocol for Transitioning Students with Exceptional Needs from School to the Community." This interdepartmental protocol was revised in 2008 and has been approved by the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. Manitoba Education acted as the lead department on the revision.

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/transition/web/bridging_to_adulthood.pdf

A website detailing timelines in the transition process for students, caregivers, educators, and both children and adult service providers can also be found at:

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/transition/web/index.html

What is the Student's Role in the Process?

Any planning for work experience should incorporate and respect the choices and decisions of the students and their caregivers and /or advocates. Expectations placed upon the student during their high schools years should be aimed at preparing the student to be a member of the paid workforce if that is the path that the student and their caregivers choose to follow for their post-secondary life.

Students can aid the process by participating in the programming developed by their school team to help them realize their goals for the future. This programming might be aimed at increasing their levels of competence among nine essential skills for employment. These include:

1. Continuous Learning
2. Computer Use
3. Thinking
4. Working with Others
5. Oral Communication
6. Writing
7. Numeracy
8. Document Use
9. Reading

To learn more about essential skills, visit Workplace Education Manitoba at ***www.wem.mb.ca***.

What is the Role of the Caregivers and Support Networks of a Student Preparing for Transition?

A student's caregivers and support network play an important role in the collaborative planning process. They need to become informed about the opportunities that are likely to exist for the student. This is, in part, determined by the following factors:

- **eligibility** of the student for social support services
- **availability** of those services for the student,
- **economic climate** within their community,
- **student interests and abilities**, and
- other factors.

Guiding and mentoring the student to assume the necessary qualities for getting and maintaining employment is also important.

How are Potential Employers Recruited and Work Placements Fostered while Students are in the School System?

Many Manitoba high schools have developed partnerships with businesses and industry that provide students with a variety of work experience opportunities as part of school credits and the Career Development courses. These courses, available to all students in each high school year from 9 to 12, encourage career exploration, creation of a portfolio, the writing of resumes and cover letters, etc.

More information on the Career Development curriculum can be found at:

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/cardev/index.html>

For some students with special needs career development is expanded to take up increasing portions of their school day, especially if their plan involves employment or volunteerism upon graduation. In earlier years, work experience may take place in settings that encourage the acquisition of generic work skills that include punctuality, appropriate hygiene and dress, appropriate social skills on the job site, etc.

Later, as the student is better able to communicate their job preferences, suitable employers should be sought to help them to learn skills in the environment of their choice.

Closer to graduation, special emphasis should be placed on selecting a site where the student can best hone their skills. Employers should be aware of the goals of each work experience for the student. They should be encouraged to challenge the student to achieve the best of their abilities.

Sites should be chosen with employers who are supportive and understanding of the active role that they will assume with the placement of the student. They should be

willing to participate in supervision and agree to participate in the review of the student's progress at the conclusion of the work experience placement.

The goal of any work experience program should be the continued progress towards employability. The student should come through a work experience placement being closer to their goal of employability than when they started.

**Successful Futures for All Students:
A Guide to Career Development Programming for
Manitoba School Leaders**

http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/success_futures/

This Manitoba Education guide explains how career development programming helps Manitoba students complete school and transition to post-secondary education and/or the workplace. This guide also illustrates how Manitoba educators, schools, and school divisions can integrate career development concepts, programming, and resources with curriculum outcomes in their classrooms

What Role Can Supported Employment Play in the Transitioning Process?

As described in *Bridging to Adulthood*, community service providers include government funded community organizations that may provide direct services for those eligible for adult supports. Community service providers may help transition planning teams by:

- attending transition planning meetings as required,
- presenting specific information to teams about their services,
- assisting the team in determining the knowledge and skills critical for the student to transition successfully to adult supports (suggestions for high priority outcomes),
- providing direction for students and planning teams in preparing for, obtaining and maintaining employment (through assessment and assistance in developing work training outcomes and methods).

What Should We Be Looking for When Considering Options for Work Experiences or in a Supported Employment Agency?

It is important to consider the kind of support that the student will be needing, how the school can provide these supports during work experience, what the employer's expectations will be, and how a supported employment agency will be able to work with the student upon their graduation from high school. Key elements to good support and training models include:

- ***Least intrusive model of support*** - by either the instructor from school or supported employment agency. It supports independence and requires the minimum prompts to ensure that the job is done properly while not upsetting the culture of the workplace and attracting as little unusual attention to the student as possible;
- ***Supports natural to the workplace*** used as much as possible (co-workers as mentors, etc);
- ***Proactive training*** in anticipation of potential challenges that may exist on the job;
- ***Minimal artificial training*** or use of unusual processes to change behaviour;
- Elimination of teaching techniques that may convey negative images, stigma or devalued status;
- ***Respect for the business culture*** with integration of this culture into the student's support network;
- ***Diversity in the approaches used*** to train the student in the skills necessary for the given work experience;
- ***Empowerment of students and employers*** to become competent to provide and receive their own on-going training.

Indicators for Success

MSEN has developed a series of indicators that follow a student's progress in developing both their cultural capital (career awareness, job readiness training) and social capital (relationships with community based employers). These indicators are designed to help guide students, parents, educators and social service agencies, including Community Living disABILITY Services and the marketAbilities Program in a collaborative process of preparation for post-secondary life. That post-secondary life can and may include:

- Paid employment/Career development
- Increased adaptive skills (being able to function safely and securely in their day-to-day life in the community)
- Greater independence/Social inclusion
- Independent living

The goal of this preparation is to ensure that students graduating from high school who are pursuing supported employment:

1. Develop realistic expectations of what jobs may be available within their communities, the skills and qualifications necessary to do the jobs, and the wages they can expect to receive as remuneration.
2. Experience school programs that support the development of both general and more job-specific work skills.

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Initial

Purpose of Initial High School Work Placements

- Participate in short term job experiences.
- Develop positive work habits and social skills conducive to being a positive and effective employee.
- Develop areas of interest re: employment and future job placement.
- Develop a sense of self-motivation, and be given a clear understanding of what an employer will expect from them.
- Learn to use public transportation and/or navigate in their community.

Suggested Type of Initial High School Work Experience:

- Community-based supportive employment site.
- Focus on learning generic work skills and skills which are transferable to other sites.
- Focus on simple task acquisition, not necessarily on productivity.
- Attention given to issues relating to punctuality, appearance, responsibility, communication, manners and politeness.

Suggested Duration of Initial Work Experience:

- Short term/2 to 3 weeks maximum
- Half-days
- 2 to 3 different placements over the course of a semester

Suggested Roles/ Strategies to Support Initial Work Experiences

- Communicate goals to employer
- Provide support that fades as student gains skills
- Serve as intermediary and a role model for both the employer and the student
- Use least intrusive method to provide any supports
- Help student develop and discuss the goals of the work experience and provide them with regular feedback
- Review the work experience after it is over and share information with the student, their caregivers and other support workers as appropriate

Role of Employer

- Be aware of work experience goals
- Communicate directly with the student regarding directions and feedback
- Review the experience with the student and school staff with the purpose of giving accurate information that may influence future planning.

Intermediate

Purpose of Intermediate High School Work Experience Placements:

- Participate in a number of short-term job experiences.
- Practice positive work habits and social skills conducive to being a positive and effective employee
- Increase areas of responsibility and improve productivity while beginning to learn some industry specific skills.
- Further refine areas of interest re: employment and future job placement.
- Continue developing self-motivation to do their best, and be given a clear understanding of what an employer will expect from them.
- Become more confident and independent about using public transportation and/or navigating in their community.

Suggested Type of Intermediate Work Experience:

- Community-based supportive employment site
- Continued focus on general and transferable skills
- More expectation regarding work productivity
- More complex tasks taught so that the student experiences more of what a “real” job feels like.

Duration of Work Experience:

- Short term/2 to 6 weeks maximum.
- Half-day to full day.
- 3 to 6 different placements over the course of one or both school semesters.

Suggested Roles and Strategies to Support Intermediate Work Experiences:

- Communicate goals to employer.
- Provide support that fades as student gains skills
- Serve as a role model for both employer and student and foster natural supports where possible.
- Provide student training using a variety of techniques and with the goal of making the student independent as soon as possible.

Role of Employer

- Be aware of work experience goals
- Communicate directly with the student regarding directions and feedback
- Review the experience with the student and school staff, giving accurate information and indicating to the student any areas which may need improvement should they want to be employed in that field.

Just Prior to Transition

Student Goals:

- Participate in a longer term work experience.
- Demonstrate positive work habits and social skills that will be transferable to any job site.
- Gather enough information and experience to be able to narrow focus of interest re: employment and future job opportunities.
- Gain an understanding of the vocational options and services that may be available after graduation.
- Be motivated to work, having an understanding of what will be expected of them in a “real” job.
- Be confident and able to take public transportation or navigate in their community with greater independence.

Suggested Type of Transitional Work Experience:

- Community-based supportive employment site
- Greater expectation regarding productivity, accuracy
- Refinement of skills involving more complex tasks
- Continued focus and refinement of generic work skills: punctuality, politeness, responsibility, communication, etc.

Suggested Duration of Transitional Work Experience:

- Long term/2 to 3 month.
- Full time placement.
- Consider transition to supported employment through self-referral, the marketAbilities Program or Community Living disABILITY Services.

Suggested Roles and Strategies to Support Transitional Work

Experience Placements:

- Communicate goals to employer.
- Help student develop a portfolio detailing work experiences, learning styles, etc, that can be shared with community agencies.
- Organize transition meeting with identified agency/service provider and adult services worker from either the marketAbilities Program or Community Living disABILITY Services.

Role of Employer

- Be aware of work experience goals and encourage the student to work to their potential.
- Communicate directly with the student regarding directions and feedback
- Participate in evaluating the student’s progress and provide reference for future employers.

MSEN Membership

Association for Community Living,
Beausejour, Supported Employment
Options

Association for Community Living,
Interlake Employment Services

Eastman Employment Services

Career Connections Inc.,

Career & Employment Youth Services

Canadian Mental Health Association,
Winnipeg Region Inc Employment
Dimensions

Community Living – Manitoba

Connect Employment Services

Diversity World

Employment Development &
Placement Services

Epic Opportunities

Equal Opportunities West

Focus on Employment

Independent Living Resource Centre

Opportunities for Employment

Opportunity for Independence

Parkland Residential Vocational
Services

Premier Personnel

Red River College

Reaching E-Quality Employment
Services

Rose Inc

Sair Centre of Learning

SAM Inc (Portage)

Sara Riel – Work Placement Force

SCE Lifeworks

Segue Career Options

SMD Manitoba

The Pas Association for Human
Development

Trail Blazer Life Choices Inc

Transcona Springfield Employment
Network

Versatech Industries

W.A.S.O. Inc.

Westman Coalition for Employment
Opportunities Inc.

**For a complete listing of Employment Training Centres, and Supported Employment
Providers throughout Manitoba, visit:**

http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/pwd_work/where.html - supported



Manitoba Supported Employment Network

www.msen.mb.ca

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