

## **Ability Training Through Partnered Education**

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### **ABSTRACT**

An ability training partnership model was designed for high school graduates with disabilities to execute results that were incorporated into a descriptive study. There are limited resources and employment for high school graduates with disabilities. The objective of the study was to develop a descriptive analysis of an ability training model as partnered efforts between colleges, universities and organizations seeking to provide resources to high school graduates with disabilities. One of the purposes of the research was to establish a proactive position for colleges, universities, and organizations against barriers that address disabilities stereotypes and practices in employment. The nature of disabilities has been study for the many years. However, few studies have been directed towards collaboration between colleges, universities, and organizations to develop programs for ability training or on-the-job training to high school graduates with disabilities. Hiring individuals with disabilities makes good business sense. These individuals can be qualified, productive, and dependable in the workplace. This explanatory study was designed to take information from learning theories and on-the-job training programs for high school graduates with disabilities and build a picture of current and future trends involving employment training for these individuals.

Keywords: ability training, disabilities, special needs, employment, learning theories, training programs, partnered education

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 1945, diplomats met to form the United Nations. The World Health Organization (WHO) came into force April 1948, and is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that coordinates authority on international public health (World Health Organization, 2009). The WHO's constitution and mission states its objective are "the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health, to combat disease, specially key infectious diseases, and to promote the general health of the people of the world" (World Health Organization, 2009).

An estimated 10% of the world's population experience some form of disability and according to WHO, about six hundred million people live with disabilities of various types due to – chronic diseases, injuries, violence, infectious diseases, malnutrition, and other causes closely related to poverty (World Health Organization, 2009). According to WHO, disabilities is an umbrella term covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions: impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty in executing a task or action; and participation restriction is a problem involvement in life situations. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, known more commonly as ICF, is WHO's framework for measuring health and disability at both individual and population levels (World Health Organization, 2009). The ICF definition of disability is "the outcome or result of a complex relationship between an individual's health condition and personal factors and of the external factors that represent the circumstances in which the individual lives" (World Health Organization, 2009). Importantly, the WHO organization is committed to work towards ensuring equal opportunities and promoting the rights and dignity of people with disabilities (World Health Organization, 2009).

In order to provide the highest possible level of health to the disabled people of the world, WHO, in partnership with other UN agencies, are assisting by: promoting early intervention and identification of disability; supporting the integration of community-based rehabilitation services; and facilitating the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in their societies. In addition, WHO promotes strengthening collaborative work on disability across the United Nations system and academia, private sectors and non-governmental organizations, including disabled people's organizations (World Health Organization, 2009).

## **UNITED STATES LEGISLATION**

Legislation in the United States (U. S.) has always played a major role in the history of education; much of the progress in educational needs of children and youths with disabilities is attributed to laws requiring states to include students with special needs in the public education system (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003). In 1975 a federal law was passed called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act and in 1990 the law was amended to become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In 1997, the federal law was again amended to ensure that all children and youths with disability have the right to a free, appropriate public education (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003). This federal legislation specified that to receive federal funds, every school system in the United States must provide a free, appropriate education for every student regardless of any disabling condition (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003). Thus, during the 1990s, the first comprehensive civil rights laws for people with disabilities were passed in the United States.

Cornerstones of IDEA and other federal laws focused on early childhood intervention with free, appropriate public education for every child or youth between the ages of three and twenty-one regardless of the nature or severity of the disability (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003) and The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibited discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, in public services, in public accommodations, and in telecommunications (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003) (U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2009). According to Buck (2009), students with disabilities have more academic options resulting from the ADA of 1996; the federal law ensures the right of individuals with disabilities to nondiscriminatory treatment in all aspects of their lives with protections of civil rights in the specific areas of employment, transportation, public accommodations, state and local government, and telecommunications. The law created opportunities for people with disabilities to overcome their shortcomings and master skills in the classroom; importantly, these skills can transfer into the real world (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003). The primary intent of the federal special education laws passed in the past decades has been to require educators to focus on the needs of individual students with disabilities (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003). Thus, with changes in the education system, students with disabilities have access to all the educational benefits that fully able bodied students enjoy.

### **U. S. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Integration into the larger society for people with disabilities began in the 1960s and continues today. A key factor toward more integration of people with disabilities into society was normalization, which is the belief that we should use means that are as culturally normative as possible to establish or maintain personal behaviors and characteristics (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003). Under this principle of normalization, the means and the ends of education for students with disabilities should be as much like those for nondisabled students as possible; other trends in integration have involved deinstitutionalization, self-determination, and inclusion (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003).

According to Hallahan and Kauffman (2003), early intervention and a program of education or treatment developed a better outcome for a child with disabilities. Studies by Bricker in 1995, and Kaiser in 2000, suggested a child's early learning provided the foundation for later learning, so a program of early intervention would have the child go further in learning more complex skills. Early intervention was likely to provide support for child and family. In addition, early intervention helped families adjust to having a child with disabilities and to finding additional support service, such as counseling, medical assistance, or financial aid (Bricker, 1995) (Kaiser, 2000).

Kahn, Hurth, Kasprzak, Diefendorf, Goode, and Ringwalt (2009) described approaches to long-term services for student with disabilities, which included state and local infrastructure, personnel development, service providers, and community settings that impact access and quality of services. According to Kahn et al. (2009) there was a need for identifying students with learning disabilities early – early collaborative intervention was designed to bring together information about the student's strengths and needs, which allowed educators to think about the student and match support and service to that student (Kahn et al., 2009). After determining the student's strengths, needs, and interest, individual assessments undertook to understand the student's strengths. Developed plans for differentiated instruction are then offered with

appropriate challenges and high-end learning opportunities (Kahn et al., 2009). According to Coleman and Hughes (2009), the allocation of resources followed the supports and services, and as the needs of the student increased, the educational resources combined to provide greater support. Thus, the goal of educational programs for disabled children should be the fullest possible development from preschool to completion of high school.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

What happens to students with disabilities when they leave high school? Many students with disabilities leave high school equipped with the skills and supports needed to realize their goals for adulthood; however, many students do not (Carter, Trainor, Sun, & Owens, 2009). According to the U. S. Department of Education 2000 (U. S. Department of Education, 2000), students with disabilities who graduated with a high school diploma has remained at about 25%. Students who do not complete high school are more likely to face difficulties in adult living than are those who have a high school diploma. In addition, studies by Malian and Love (1998), Wagner, Blackorby, Cameto, and Newman (2003), along with Yelin and Katz (1994), suggested students with disabilities who do not complete high school are more likely to have lower levels of employment and wages – and higher rates of problems with the criminal justice system.

According to Goldstein, Murray, and Edgar (1998), employment earnings of high school graduates with disabilities were slight higher than those of peers without disabilities for the first four years after leaving high school (because most of their peers were attending college). However, by the fifth year the earnings of graduates without disabilities outpaced those with disabilities (Goldstein, Murray, & Edgar, 1998). Thus, attending college or postsecondary training programs would increase the likelihood of obtaining employment and expand success as an adult (Heward, 2006).

### **EARLY INTERVENTION**

In order to address the importance of effective transition and preparatory programs to facilitate entry into the workplace, one must begin at the foundation of the planning process, which is that of early intervention. Howlin, Goode, Hutton and Rutter (2004) posit that a child's school district Special Education Department or committee is required by both federal and state regulations before the age of fourteen to develop a transition plan from school to life after school. This entails meeting with the parent or guardian, the child and community agencies when applicable to discuss the skills and knowledge that the child will need as an adult. The concern however, is not whether programs are in fact in existence for a child with disabilities. Rather, the attention must be directed toward the quality of the programs during the developmental process, along with the quality of training and development provided to those responsible for implementing and monitoring of the success or failure of such programs. The implication is that individuals working directly with the child serve as the catalyst for positive, negative or neutral outcomes, consequently warranting the need for immediate address as each child continues to move throughout the levels of the educational process.

According to The Colleges with Programs for Learning Disabled Students in 2010, The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates that colleges and universities provide services and/or accommodations for students with learning disabilities (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003) (U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2009) (Americans With Disabilities Act, 2009)

(Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997). Yet, the key to the success of the college program will largely be determined by the quality of early intervention found in the educational foundation provided during elementary and high school years. Consequently, the skills, knowledge, and abilities which have been acquired during this time in conjunction with external environmental factors are crucial toward the personal and professional outcomes of a disabled adult. Nuehring and Sitlington (2003) conceded that the goal in educating students with disabilities must be to help them become productive members of society as adults; however, few schools have directed these students into meaningful employment opportunities that are appropriate for their strengths and achievements. Although an adult vocational service could assist a student in this area, the high schools must serve their function in preparing students to become productive citizens as well.

### **TRANSITION**

An understanding of the definition of the term “transition” must therefore occur prior to the actual program development process within a high school or institution of learning. The 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003) (U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2009) (Americans With Disabilities Act, 2009) (Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 1997) (Colleges With Programs for Disabled Students, 2010), according to Nuehring & Sitlington (2003) defined transition services as a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that is 1) designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-secondary education, adult services, independent living or community participation; and 2) is based on the individual need of the student, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests. This is a multi-faceted outcome - oriented approach that encompasses future vocational placement, residential options, funding and community resources.

Sherman (2007) conceded that parents and guardians must take responsibility with regard to being careful about drafting goals and objectives in the transition individual education plan (IEP) in as much as services must be provided through the age of twenty-one or until the goals and objectives are met. Individuals that share the same diagnosis may not necessarily share the same needs, therefore a collective effort between home and school may increase the likelihood of the development of realistic and attainable transition-based strategies. Anonymous (2003) stated that a primary initiative in the field of education has been to promote the quality of scientific research that may serve as the foundation for instructional practice and that a tenet of the No Child Left Behind Act was that instructional practices needed to be research-based. Because of the range of questions that are important, the variability in the population, and the ecological and sociopolitical contexts of special education, important research questions that would lead to the improvement of educational practices for students with disabilities may require unique applications of scientific research methodology.

### **DISABILITY**

Amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) signed into law on September 25, 2008, clarified who is covered by the law’s civil rights protections (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003) (U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2009). The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 revised the definition of “disability” to more broadly encompass impairments that substantially limit a major life activity (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003) (U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity

Commission, 2009). The amended language also stated that assistive devices, auxiliary aids, accommodations, medical therapies and supplies (other than eyeglasses and contact lenses) have no bearing in determining whether a disability qualifies under the law (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003) (U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2009). Changes additionally clarify coverage of impairments that are episodic or in remission that substantially limit a major life activity when active such as epilepsy or post-traumatic stress disorder. These amendments took effect as of January 9, 2009 (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003) (U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2009).

### **ISSUES IN TRANSITION PLANNING AND RESEARCH STUDIES**

Successful postsecondary employment and furthering one's education are two areas important to students with disabilities as they leave the public school system (Williamson, Robertson & Casey, 2010). The study by Williamson et al. (2010) gives insight into the transition process and how best to prepare students with disabilities for postsecondary success. The focus of the study by Williamson et al. (2010) shows interacting characteristics of transition may be correlated to successful employment and/or postsecondary education outcomes for students with disabilities. However, according to Luecking and Wittenburg (2009), post-school employment rates for youth with significant disabilities remain intractably low. An important policy concern is whether youth who receive disability cash benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA) are securing the supports to make a successful transition to adult life (Luecking & Wittenburg, 2009). The SSA initiated the Youth Transition Demonstration (YTD) projects in an attempt to develop services and supports to assist youth in making a successful transition into adulthood and employment (Luecking & Wittenburg, 2009).

Enabling students to access and make progress in education has become a core requirement of federal law governing educational services for students with disabilities (Lee, Wehmeyer, Soukup & Palmer, 2010). The 1997 amendments to the IDEA, and subsequently the 2004 amendments, required schools to institute policies and practices to promote involvement with and progress in the education curriculum. This included providing supplementary aids and services and special education services to students with disabilities to promote such outcomes (Lee et al., 2010). The challenge presents itself in the realization that one cannot group all students with disabilities together in terms of educational programs and transition-based strategies when a child becomes of age to receive such services. For example, children in many school districts throughout the United States may be receiving 15-30 minute allocations of speech and occupational therapy per month, while the actual need may fall within the range of a minimum of 2 hours of speech therapy per week. An additional area of concern is that school districts that use the IEP as a specific funding source for individual students can be problematic because of budget constraints. Therefore, students that require higher levels of services are not receiving as such and ultimately be on the road for becoming institutionalized. Teachers have the added task of practicing a triage program while the students which illustrate progressive improvement are receiving the individual services necessary and those with less improvement may be relegated to the equivalent of a day care setting. According to Hernandez, Wadsworth, and Nietupski (2008), counseling professionals who served persons with disabilities in vocational settings often measured career outcomes through the assessment of employment outcomes that occurred in the competitive labor market. The underlying assumption therefore, was that successful community employment led to increased empowerment and is associated

with positive independent living outcomes for persons with disabilities (Hernandez et al., 2008). However, there is still a need to further understand the actual factors that lead to placement and economic success, especially in the transition stage.

A research study conducted by Fabian, Lent, and Willis (1998) reported that transition activities in which students with disabilities could explore and match their interests (i.e. job tryouts, job shadows, and internships) led to successful job entry. Beale and Holinsworth (2002) reported that low job production, job dissatisfaction, and personal distress occurred when jobs did not match student interests. In essence Hernandez and et al. (2008) concurred that the match between career interests and employment opportunities has been described by many career theories as a significant fact in transition planning stages. On the other hand, Beale and Holinsworth (2002) cautioned that unfortunately study participants with more severe disabilities received lower wages than did peers with less severe impairment, despite achieving employment which matched their interests. Consequently, students with disabilities may benefit from exposure to diverse career and interest opportunities and not necessarily positions found in the low wage category. However, the process does not end with a matching process. Downs and Carlon (2009) stated that although the “old” bureaucratic system might not have placed the person in his or her preferred setting, the “new” system must monitor the workplace and/or residential site through meaningful and continued support. As a result, Downs and Carlon (2009) suggested that the individual receive support while on the job for a minimum of 90 days after initial hire and then on a standard or as-needed basis. In addition, one-support person per employer process instead of the one-support person per person with a disability would begin with the employer need rather than employ.

### **FUTURE TRANSITION RESEARCH**

The need for continued research in the area of transition planning for students with disabilities is of paramount importance and timing is critical as the numbers continue to increase for students awaiting an uncertain future as well as just beginning the process within the educational system nationwide. Studies must take into account students who fail to be employed because of their disability or disabilities. It is imperative that the researcher examines the system from the beginning stages when the student enters the system at a young age throughout the process of young adulthood and ultimate transition into the workplace.

An examination of the needs assessment, program development, planning and implementation must be reviewed on a continual basis. Individuals responsible for transition planning implementation vis-à-vis directly providing educational and socially based curriculum and training, must be properly trained and qualified to do so. This is a cost-effective strategy in as much as an effective transition program can make the difference between independence vs. institutionalization. It is also necessary to examine how children with disabilities are characterized in terms of educational levels. In theory, one may state that the child is graduating from high school, yet the reality may be that the student is graduating with a sixth grade education.

### **PARTNERSHIP RESOURCES**

According to Carter, Trainor, Cakiroglu, Cole, Swedeen, and Owens (2009), career development and early work transition personnel reported having few community partners to support and

enhance these ability training experiences. Carter et al. (2009) surveyed 135 Chambers of Commerce and other employer networks to examine (a) whether and how these networks have partnered previously with local high schools on youth-focused career development activities, (b) the extent to which they would consider such involvement to be feasible, and (c) the influence of disability status of youth on their responses. Carter et al. (2009) stated most respondents considered a number of youth-focused support activities feasible; however, most had limited previous involvement or experiences and their views were clearly influenced by the disability status of those youths. Lastly, the study by Carter et al. (2009) recommended expanding the employer networks in supporting career development and early work experiences of students with disabilities. To assist with the development and implementation of ability training programs for youths with disabilities, organizations have a variety of networks and resources from which to select. Resources such as the Business Leadership Network, Easter Seals, local Achievement Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation Centers, and Workforce Development Boards have programs designed with partnerships in mind. Although there are differences in the resource entities, they all share the same mission: to provide job development, on-the-job-training, as well as follow up and support services.

There is need for partnerships between institutions of higher education and places of employment. According to Durlak, Rose and Bursuck (1994), an increasing number of students with disabilities were looking to postsecondary education and training to help them achieve success in career development and eventual job placement. Past research by Bursuck, Rose, Cowens, and Yahaya (1989) Rose and Bursuck (1990), Bursuck and Rose (1989), Benz, Doren, and Yovanoff (1997), along with Cameto and Wagner (2003), found an increasing number of community colleges, 4-year colleges, and universities were developing and providing services for students with learning disabilities. Bursuck and Rose (1989) found some postsecondary programs were reaching out to high school students in an effort to facilitate the transition to higher education, but high schools were not necessarily actively involved in this process.

Despite the urgent messages from researchers (e.g., Ward (1988)]; Bursuck & Rose (1989), the teaching of self-determination skills must occur at the secondary level; evidence of the existence of such programs were minimal Durlak et al. (1994). According to Ward (1988), self-determination was one component of secondary students' readiness for adulthood. In addition, the concept of self-determination varied according to its usage Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, and Wood (2001). However, Wehmeyer (1995) defined self-determination as an individual's freedom to exercise choice and make decisions associated to the quality of life; including education, work, and other important personal matters. Durlak et al. (1994) proposed a model training program to teach self-termination skills to high school students with disabilities. The results suggest that some students can acquire, maintain, and generalize skills that focus on the self-determination skills of self-advocacy and self-awareness [28]. The results of the study by Durlak et al. (1994) had implications for parents, educators, and employers. In particular, higher education was in the position of being able to teach students about the opportunities and expectations of the adult world and about ways in which acquisition of those skills will enable them to negotiate in that world. Lastly, according to Gillespie (1982), it was the fundamental responsibility of school personnel to make routine assessment of basic academic skills and learning abilities and disabilities. Thus, the study by Durlak et al. (2009) was a small step to education school personnel on the characteristics of students with disabilities.

Schooling and partnerships between colleges and organizations involves fostering in teaching and learning. Partners must focus on the need of the students with disabilities and have authentic assessments as those that sample the actual knowledge, skills, and dispositions of students with disabilities in teaching and learning contexts. According to Whipp and Scanlan (2003), teaching and learning communities should be inclusive of students across multiple dimensions of abilities or disabilities. While evidence shows that current partnerships between colleges, universities, and organizations exist as pockets of innovation, it is suggested (Whipp & Scanlan, 2003) that a systemic effort across institutions and employers to improve education and life opportunities for students with disabilities. Clearly, a contemporary challenge for both institutions and employers is to become simultaneously more efficient in their use of resources (e.g., human, fiscal, material, and tools) and more ambitious in their partnership outcome aims that include the elimination of gaps (between high school and post-secondary education) in achievement for students with disabilities (Whipp & Scanlan, 2003). Consequently, these partnerships might contribute to the broader improvement in teaching and learning so that career development and work experiences are not missed by students with disabilities (Whipp & Scanlan, 2003).

Are these partnerships helping youths with disabilities be qualified, productive, and dependable in the workforce? In efforts to examine these partnerships critically, it was suggested by Whipp and Scanlan (2003) the use of conceptual frameworks that cross defined boundaries between colleges and organizations. Whipp and Scanlan (2003) described four such frameworks: 1) a justice framework that draws from theory and on-the-job-training so students are touched by direct experience for the formation of the of the whole person; 2) an ethical care framework that pulls from social and behavioral theories so students grow academically, emotionally, morally, and physically; 3) a learning framework based on sociocultural learning theory and a professional learning community to deliver social and cultural learning situated in the contexts of everyday living and work; and 4) a vocational framework derived from business, management, and economic teachings oriented toward results and problem solving innovations. Each framework provides a valuable perspective from which to examine partnerships and reforms that are systemic and oriented toward social and educational justice for youths with disabilities (Whipp & Scanlan, 2003).

### **ABILITY TRAINING PARTNERSHIP MODEL**

The term model has a wide range of uses, from a physical scale model to a set of abstract ideas. Modeling is a resource utilized in the flow of decision making: decision makers have the ability to analyze the problems, identify the text techniques that can be used to resolve individual segments of the defined problem, and eventually elect or develop a model flow that will properly employ the techniques for problem resolution (Blanchard, 2004) (Cook, DeCaro, & DeCaro, 2009). Al-Fedaghi (2009) stated that information processing models have evolved since 1949 and methods have been proposed to extract requirements from policies and regulations using formal models (Blanchard, 2004). Geogini, Massacci, Mylopoulos, and Zannone (2005) described a framework that enables modeling actors and goals and their relationships: thus, modeling can be designed as an instrument based on information factors deemed to be important for partnership decisions and an analytical framework to understand ability training programs for youths with disabilities (Blanchard, 2004) (Geogini et al., 2005) (Cook, DeCaro, & DeCaro, 2009). A model represents a real world situation and is employed to aid decision makers with

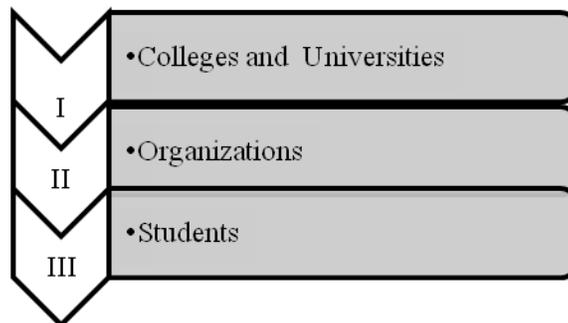
preferred solutions to problems through the evaluation of alternatives (Blanchard, 2004) (Cook, DeCaro, & DeCaro, 2009).

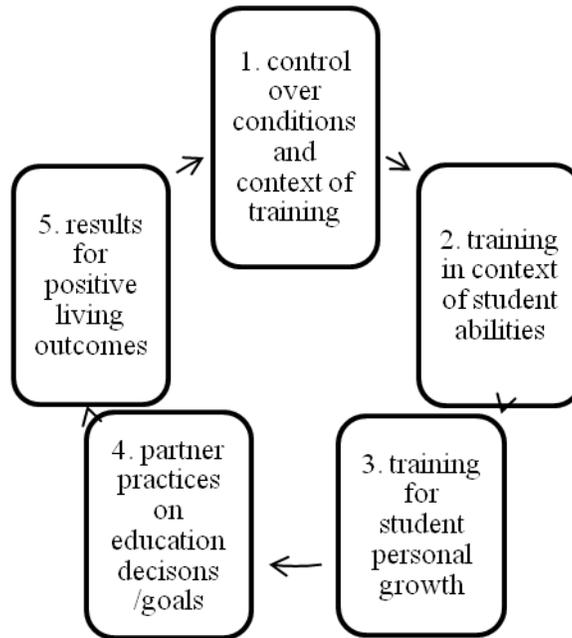
The following Ability Training Partnership Model (ATPM), Figure 1, suggests the partnership importance between colleges, universities, organizations, and students with disabilities, and can be seen as characterized by five criteria:

- 1) control over the conditions and context of the training, roles, experiences, and practices;
- 2) training conducted within the context of student’s abilities;
- 3) training that provides for deliberative or personalistic or critical reflection that addresses personal growth, professional relations, and the social context of the work from students with disabilities;
- 4) training should enable the partners to interrogate their own practices in the educational goals through their decisions about instruction and assessment within the institutional structures of the partners; and
- 5) the nature of the relationship between the partners is dialogic where students with disabilities and their evaluators enter into dialogue aimed towards success in ability training programs, resulting in positive independent living outcomes (Rennert-Ariev, 2005).

Efforts to create new forms of on-the-job-training programs, such as ability training through partnered education for youths with disabilities, has sought to transcend the limits of traditional programs with the design of instructional materials and activities representing flexibility in special content information (Lee et al., 2010). The unique way in which the partners are at work within the ATPM model is based on the belief that all partner action need to be geared towards the efficient social and practical fulfillment of on-the-job-training competencies involving students with disabilities (Rennert-Ariev, 2005).

**Figure 1:** ATPM Model





Source: Cook, DeCaro, and DeCaro, 2010

**THE STAR CENTER MODEL**

According to DeCaro and DeCaro (2010), a real-world practical model was developed by The Star Center Foundation, Inc. which incorporates a holistic combination of medical, therapies, and educational support. This particular model works well with children and young adults ranging in ages from three to twenty-one years of age. The model is incorporated in a school system within the state of Florida and what makes this model extremely interesting is that it blends the disciplines of psychiatry and neurology together to gain insight into a child in their formative years. The program also provides for the children the different types of therapies such as speech, occupational, physical and applied behavior analysis. What makes this program unique is that for the first time many children will be under the care of a physician who would actually be watching their progress to see if the primary diagnosis that was given to the child was correct and progressive adjustments can be made accordingly. In addition, DeCaro and DeCaro (2010) find that today a number of teachers that are graduating from schools of education are not necessarily qualified or prepared to address some of the severe mental disabilities which could be dangerous if appropriate intervention training is lacking. Teachers in our schools are being seriously injured by students who are suffering from a number of severe disorders, while behaviors continue to escalate. Unfortunately, it is after the teachers are hurt that schools take the necessary steps to see that the child is properly evaluated (DeCaro & DeCaro, 2010).

As the child moves toward adulthood, we find in a number of students with disabilities placed on sedatives which may not necessarily be helpful and may in fact impede the learning process. Therefore, what some school systems may unknowingly be promoting is the pre-positioning of institutionalization for the students. Alternatively, if we advance The Star Center Foundation’s

model, one can try to first teach the person how to learn and to be socially aware of their surroundings with the goal of living in the community as a contributing member of society. This would increase the likelihood in later years for assisting in making the transition process into college more viable. What is currently being developed between The Star Center Foundation and Greenleaf University is a specialized on-line curriculum which would make young adults with specific disabilities more active and interactive within this curriculum design (DeCaro & DeCaro, 2010). The future holds promise for young adults in achieving an academic and/or vocational degree which would help to remove the stigma of being “burdens” and rather become perceived as being viable contributors to our society. One of the benefits of this state of the art program is to identify those special gifts that these individuals may possess such as may be found in the areas of mathematics, music, the arts and technology, to name a few. The key is to be aware that individuals with disabilities learn differently from the typical student. Therefore, once we understand the individualized path of learning, we have thus succeeded (DeCaro & DeCaro, 2010).

### CONCLUSIONS

The nascent field of disabilities education is growing more clearly defined within the United States. This paper has conceptualized how partnerships between higher education and the workplace could inform and promote disabilities education in communities. They could benefit from a forged partnership based on a mission of learning with professional development resources. Such partnerships can be natural, convenient, and symbiotic settings for students with disabilities (Whipp & Scanlan, 2003). According to Gamoran and Long (2006), to counter the persistent evidence of inequalities in educational opportunities at all levels for many students in the United States, there were indications that some partnerships are offering a positive alternative for those who have been traditionally marginalized in schools (Whipp & Scanlan, 2003). The number of students with disabilities has increased in the United States (United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education programs, 2003). The Office of Special Education reported in their 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Report to Congress (2003) that 5.8 million students with disabilities were served in the public education system, with 49.2 percent of those students enrolled in special education programs due to specific learning disabilities (United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education programs, 2003). Thus, in order to ensure successful outcomes in terms of providing the opportunity for each child with a disability to attain his or her maximum potential, it is imperative that the proper resources and training be provided to those individuals working directly with the child in order to provide to the child the necessary resources and training preparation for transitioning from the high school to workplace environment. A collective effort between the parents or guardian of the child and the educational system increases the likelihood of successful outcomes for all parties. The Ability Training Partnership Model supports partnering from high school to post-secondary education and is a robust resource to improve education and life opportunities for students with disabilities.

In conclusion, the research has illustrated that matching the job to the *interest of the student at various levels of cognitive or physical functioning* has resulted in successful outcomes and possible new insight for future planning, along with monitoring progress during various intervals of employment. It must additionally be understood that an individual with a disability is not necessarily destined to become or remain a low-wage earner. The investment of time, effort and funds in the long-term can yield cost and social benefit for all parties. In essence, laws alone are

insufficient if they are not properly upheld and programs are not designed to ensure that children with disabilities along with society will benefit as a whole. As a result, Beale and Holinsworth (2002) contended that the benefits of matching between occupation and interests for young adults at various levels of functional severity of impairment, may offer new insight into the best practices for promoting the transition from high school to the workplace.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Partnership is vital to the development of ability training for students with disabilities. For this reason, partners, such as college, universities, and organizations, must work together to offer ability training for students with disabilities. Important issues include participant evaluation and selection, program orientation and standards, identifying participant needs for positive behavior support, legislative documentation and policy requirements, useful and relevant knowledge funneling to practitioners and families, and securing knowledgeable personnel for the ability training program. Most important is that partners be committed to action step communication from development, implementation, to assessments and outcomes in the ability training programs. In addition, the partners must have a common purpose of improving student self-achievement by ensuring effective instructional strategies for success in the workplace environment. Finally, partnerships can broaden, contribute, and promote collaborative ability training models for the future. Much future research remains to be done if we are to understand and facilitate partnerships in ability training for youths with disabilities.

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