Today’s Session

- Purpose: Share use of Service Learning as an inclusive way to facilitate transition for students with disabilities
  - Part 1: Service Learning as Transition Strategy
  - Part 2: Best Practices
  - Part 3: Project Impact as an example
Special Education • Service Learning
Transition • Inclusion

Vanderberg & Wilczenski, 2013
Special Education
- Customized education for individual differences and needs

Service Learning
- Philosophy, pedagogical technique, and community development strategy

Transition
- Designed to help adolescents with disabilities move into adult roles: independent living, civic engagement, social relationships, and employment.

Inclusion
- Process, a state of being involved, and a method for integrating those excluded (or at risk of being excluded) into the community

Vanderberg & Wilczenski, 2013
Service learning in Special Education

- Integrates curriculum goals with community work to optimize post-secondary transitions for students with disabilities
  - Intentional developmental strategy
  - Bridge between high school, post-secondary education, community life, and workforce preparation

Vanderberg & Wilczenski, 2013
Transformations

Why Service Learning?

• Goal: not just the participation in a community activity, but also using this experience to gain the skills that enable students to effectively transition from secondary education
  - Individual Transformations
    - Empowerment
    - Skills acquisition
  - Community Transformations
    - Inclusion – persons with and without disabilities working together
    - Perceptions – Movement from seeing persons with disabilities as recipients of services to seeing persons with disabilities as servers acting in the community

Vanderberg & Wilczenski, 2013
Transformations

How do they happen?

- Ecological model for interactions in Inclusive Service Learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1992)
Implementing Inclusive Service Learning for Transitions

What best practices facilitate positive outcomes?

• Be Intentional
  - Plan explicit connections among curriculum, service, and employment
  - Engage families by specifically communicating the value
  - Define and structure the mentoring role
  - Create collaborations with equal investment
  - Incorporate 4 stages of implementation (PARR, Search Institute, 2000):
    - Plan
    - Act
    - Reflect
    - Recognize
  - Customize – use Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2012) to anticipate and accommodate variability/disability

Vanderberg & Wilczenski, 2013
Conceptual Model

IMPART
Improved Post-Secondary
Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities

OUTCOMES

BUILD CHARACTER
- Greater self-esteem
- Greater self-awareness
- Higher expectations

BUILD COMMUNITY
- Broaden perspective
- Expand network
- Increase cultural and social awareness

BUILD CAREER
- Learn hard skills
- Learn soft skills

SERVICE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

TARGETS

CAREER DEVELOPMENT
Students with disabilities have limited experiences in career planning and career exploration

SELF-DETERMINATION
Students with disabilities need to participate in their own career development and vocational decision-making

SOCIAL SKILLS
Students with disabilities may have difficulty with communication and social relationships

Vanderberg & Wilczenski, 2013
Aim: To understand the how service learning contributes to employment skill building, career development, and career exploration for transition age youth with disabilities

Principal Investigators: Jaimie Timmons, Paul Martell, & Sheila Fesko
Institute for Community Inclusion Boston

Year 1: 2009-2010; Year 2: 2010-2011
Purpose

- Introduce high school and college-age students with disabilities to AmeriCorps and their community with the intent of facilitating practical career exploration and preparation through the completion of a meaningful service experience.

- Establish local, mutually-beneficial partnerships between AmeriCorps programs, and youth initiatives in schools, colleges, not-for-profit organizations with a focus on youth with disabilities.

Vanderberg & Wilczenski, 2013
Demographics: Participant Age

Vanderberg & Wilczenski, 2013
Demographics: Disability Type

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<th>Disability Type</th>
<th>Year 1 (N)</th>
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Vanderberg & Wilczenski, 2013
### Demographics: Gender & Ethnicity

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Project Impact Activities
Project Impact Activities
Preliminary Findings

- Building Character
- Building Career
- Building Community
“Project Impact made me feel like I wanted to be a hero for the very first time instead of being the enemy.”

“It made me think differently about myself. Really changed me. Sometimes I think about situations, other bad things going on in society, and wanting to be somebody that’s good and caring.”
“[My community service experience] taught me how to be more responsible--to stay on task and work harder--keep working at a steady pace and not overdo it.”

“They basically can help you experience a career choice or give you a taste of a career that you really never thought you could do or skills that you never thought you had.”
“They're able to go out and have that joy—receive that joy of giving back to their community, too. And that makes people feel good. It makes them feel good. It shows them that...there are a lot of things they can do.”
“It was nice to collaborate and get out of our own group of people, too. And I mean, it's always a learning experience to network. And especially with different types of people I never had networked with. You know, people with disabilities--the whole group before.”

—AmeriCorps member

Vanderberg & Wilczenski, 2013