

Service Learning for Students with Disabilities



**UMASS
BOSTON**

**ENHANCING OUTCOMES AT THE INTERSECTION OF
SPECIAL EDUCATION, TRANSITIONS, AND
INCLUSION**

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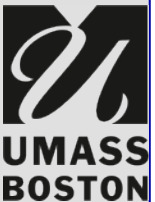
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Today's Session

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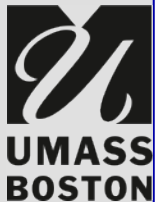
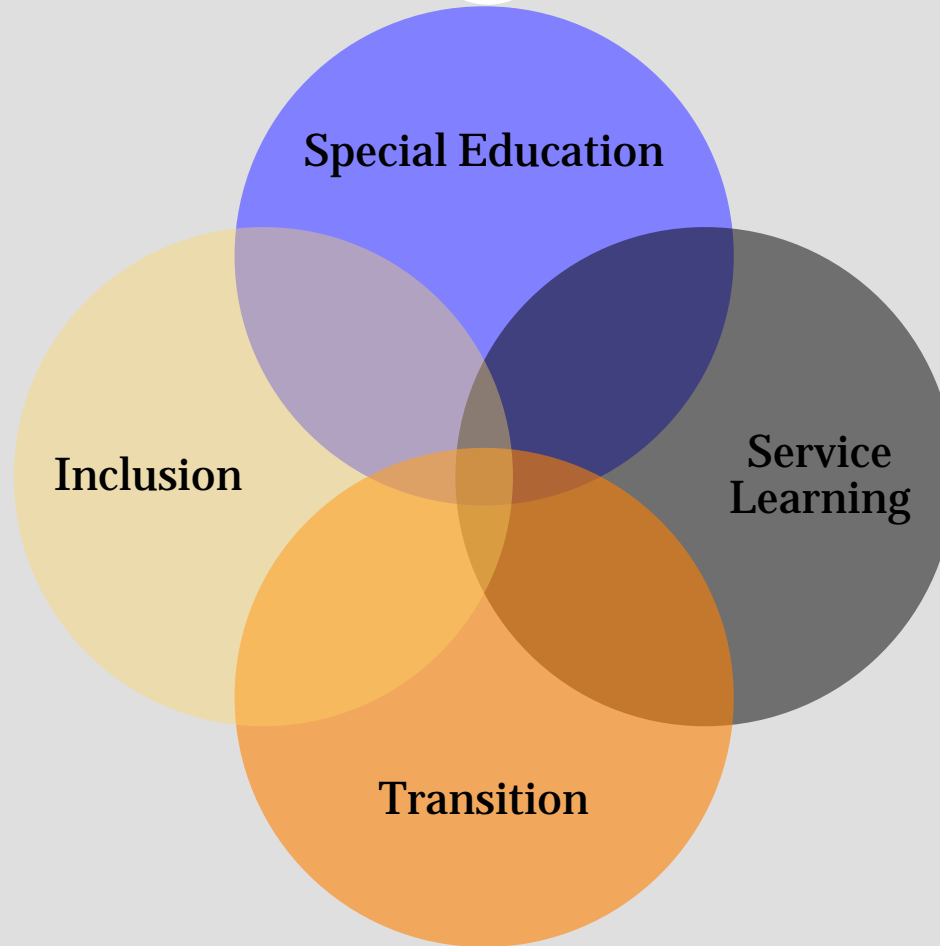
- **Purpose: Share use of Service Learning as an inclusive way to facilitate transition for students with disabilities**
 - Part 1: Service Learning as Transition Strategy
 - Part 2: Best Practices
 - Part 3: Project Impact as an example



Special Education
Transition

• Service Learning
• Inclusion

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Special Education Transition

• Service Learning • Inclusion

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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



Service learning in Special Education

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- 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

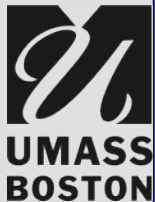


Transformations

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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

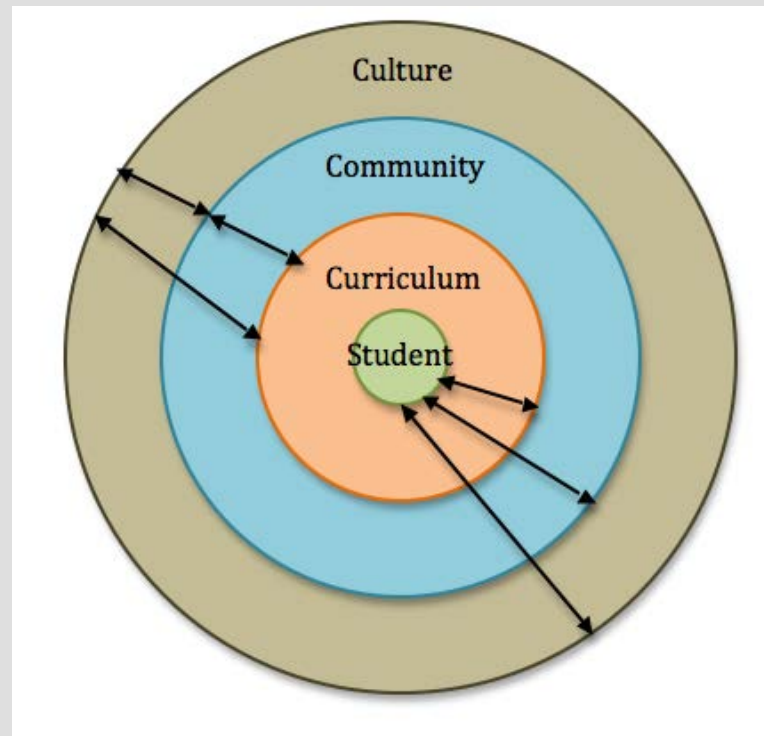


Transformations

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How do they happen?

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



Implementing Inclusive Service Learning for Transitions

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What best practices facilitate positive outcomes?

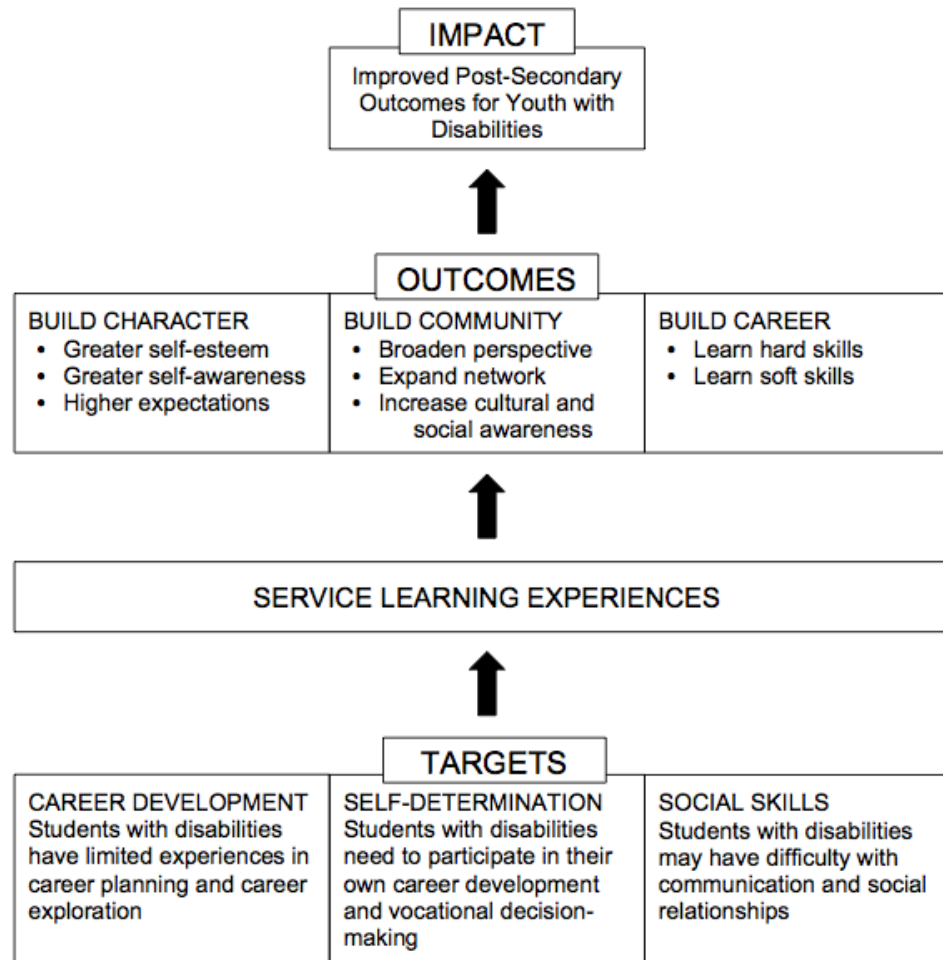
• Be Intentional

- ✦ 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



Conceptual Model

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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

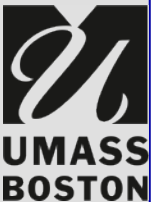
Year 1: 2009-2010; Year 2: 2010-2011



Purpose

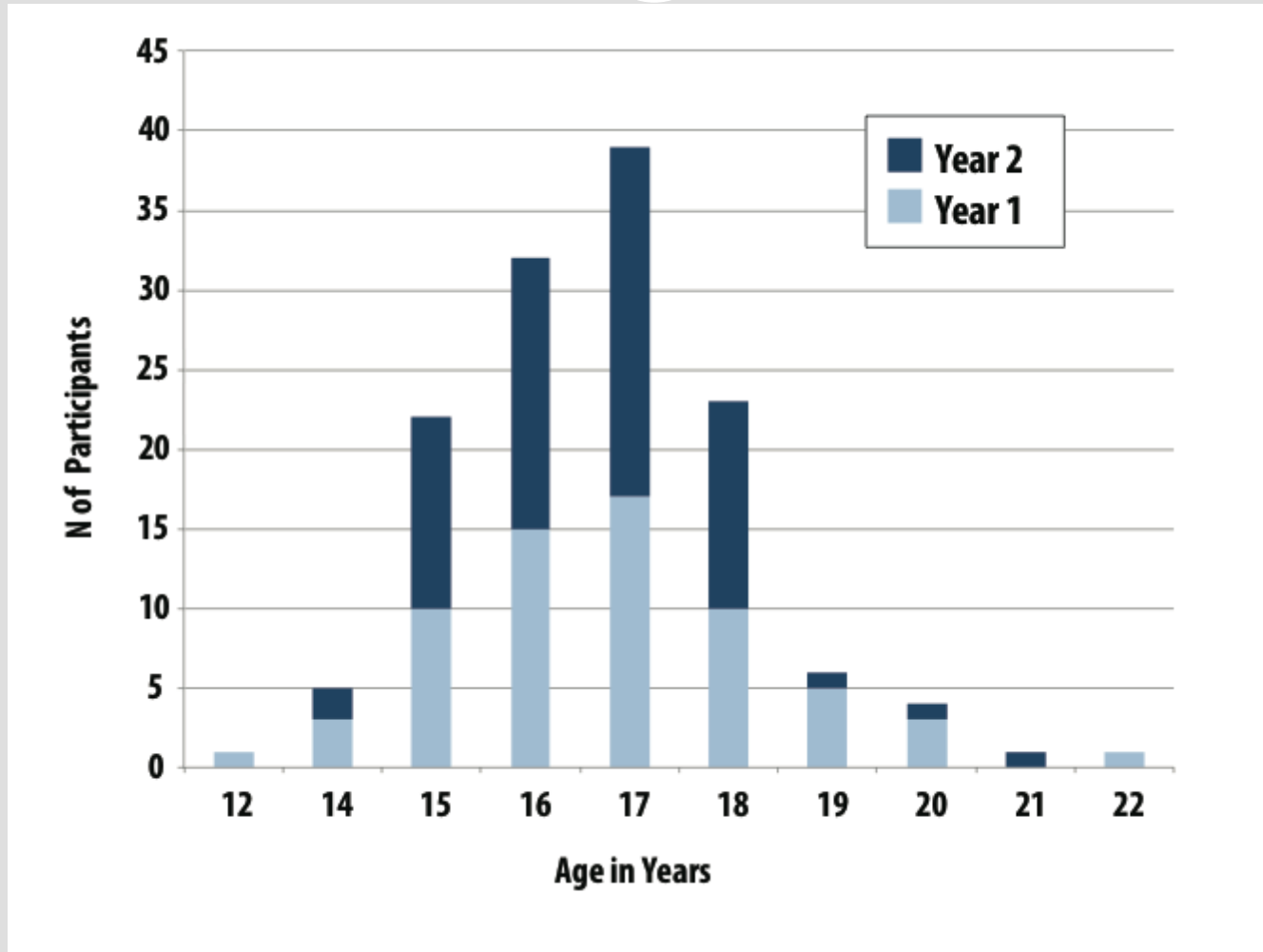
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- Introduce high school and college-age students with disabilities to AmeriCorps and their community with the intent of facilitating practical career exploration and preparation through the completion of a meaningful service experience
- Establish local, mutually-beneficial partnerships between AmeriCorps programs, and youth initiatives in schools, colleges, not-for-profit organizations with a focus on youth with disabilities



Demographics: Participant Age

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Demographics: Disability Type

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	Year 1 (N)	Year 2 (N)
Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder	3	1
Autism spectrum disorder	6	2
Emotional disturbance	2	1
Mental retardation	3	5
Orthopedic impairment	1	1
Other health impairment	2	0
Traumatic brain injury	1	0
Specific learning disability	40	39
Visual impairment including blindness	0	1
Multiple disabilities	8	18
Total	66	68

Demographics: Gender & Ethnicity

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		Year 1 (N)	Year 1 (%)	Year 2 (N)	Year 2 (%)
Gender	Female	25	37.3	41	60.3
	Male	42	62.7	27	39.7
Ethnicity	African American	25	37.9	29	42.6
	Asian	2	3.0	3	4.4
	Caucasian	28	42.4	27	39.7
	Hispanic	10	15.2	6	8.8
	Multi or biracial	1	1.5	3	4.4

Project Impact Activities

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Project Impact Activities

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Project Impact Activities

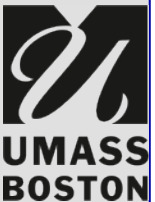
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Preliminary Findings

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- Building Character
- Building Career
- Building Community

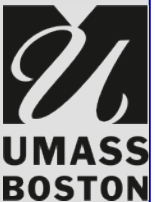


Building Character: Student Quotes

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“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.”

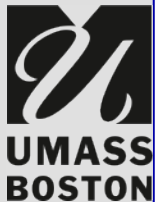


Building Career: Student Quotes

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“[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.”



Building Community: Facilitator Quote

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“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.”



Impact on Other Stakeholders

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“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

