Minnesota High School/High Tech
Teacher’s Guide

In Partnership with the State of Minnesota’s Pathways to Employment

Supported by
The U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy
and
The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth
Minnesota High School High Tech Teacher’s Guide

Contents

Section 1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 4

Section 2. Program Overview .......................................................................................................................... 6

Section 3. Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences ......................................................... 15
  Component 1: Career Assessment .................................................................................................................. 15
  Component 2: Structured Exposure to Postsecondary Education and Other Life-Long Learning Opportunities .................................................................................................................................. 16
  Component 3: Exposure to Career Opportunities ......................................................................................... 17
  Component 4: Developing Work-Readiness Skills ....................................................................................... 22
  Component 5: Industry Site Visits and Tours ............................................................................................... 26
  Component 6: Job Shadowing ..................................................................................................................... 28
  Component 7: Volunteer Work and Service Learning ................................................................................. 30
  Component 8: Internships ............................................................................................................................. 31
  Component 9: Entrepreneurship .................................................................................................................. 35
    Exhibit: Sample Online Career Assessments .............................................................................................. 40
    Exhibit: Examples of Informal Career Assessment Activities ..................................................................... 41
    Exhibit: Disability Etiquette .......................................................................................................................... 44
    Exhibit: Steps to Follow to Conduct an Effective Informational Interview .............................................. 45
    Exhibit: 20 Questions for an Effective Informational Interview ................................................................... 46
    Exhibit: Disability Disclosure: Advantages and Disadvantages ................................................................. 47
    Exhibit: Sample Internship Learning Agreement ...................................................................................... 48
    Exhibit: Sample Internship Agreement ...................................................................................................... 50
    Exhibit: Sample Internship Work Log .......................................................................................................... 51
    Exhibit: Sample Internship Time Sheet .......................................................................................................... 53
    Exhibit: Sample Internship Evaluation ......................................................................................................... 54
    Exhibit: Sample Mid-Internship Youth Survey ............................................................................................ 56
    Exhibit: Sample Internship Parent Survey .................................................................................................. 57

Section 4. Youth Development and Youth Leadership ...................................................................................... 58
  Component 1: Putting Youth in Control of Their Destiny .......................................................................... 58
  Component 2: Supportive Adults ................................................................................................................... 62
  Component 3: Opportunities for Personal Growth ....................................................................................... 65
  Component 4: Leadership Opportunities ...................................................................................................... 68
    Exhibit: Qualities of an Effective Mentor ...................................................................................................... 73

Section 5. School-Based Preparatory Experiences ............................................................................................ 75
  Component 1: Programs Based on Standards ................................................................................................. 75
  Component 2: Qualifications of Teachers and Transition Staff ..................................................................... 75
  Component 3: Assessments and Graduation Standards ............................................................................... 76
Component 4: Universal Design of Learning ................................................................. 77
Component 5: Supporting Learning Environments That Are Small and Safe and Include Extra
Supports Such as Tutoring .................................................................................. 78
Component 6: Helping Students Use Their Individual Transition Plans to Drive Their
Personal Instruction ............................................................................................. 80

Section 6. Connecting Activities .............................................................................. 84
  Component 1: Mental and Physical Health Services ................................................. 84
  Component 2: Transportation ................................................................................ 86
  Component 3: Academic Tutoring ......................................................................... 88
  Component 4: Financial Planning ......................................................................... 89
  Component 5: Connecting to Continuing Education Opportunities and the Workforce ... 89
  Component 6: Connecting to Other Programs and Opportunities ......................... 91
  Component 7: Assistive Technology ..................................................................... 93
    Exhibit: Making Connections to One-Stop Centers ............................................. 96
    Exhibit: Making the Connection to Vocational Rehabilitation .......................... 100

Section 7. Family Involvement and Supports .......................................................... 104
  Component 1: High Expectations ....................................................................... 105
  Component 2: Ensuring Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum .......... 106
  Component 3: Taking an Active Role in Transition Planning ............................... 107
  Component 4: Having Information on Programs, Services, Supports, Accommodations,
    Rights, and Responsibilities ............................................................................ 108
    Exhibit: Online Resources to Promote Parental Involvement in Transition Planning........ 111
  Appendix A Performance Indicators for Technology-Literate Students ................. 113
Section 1. Introduction

High School/High Tech (HS/HT) is a national network of state and locally operated programs designed to provide young people with all types of disabilities the opportunity to explore jobs or further education leading to technology-related careers. As one of the most promising comprehensive models for preparing youth with disabilities to explore careers in math, science, and technology, HS/HT effectively links youth to a broad range of academic, career development, and experiential resources and experiences that will enable youth with disabilities to successfully meet the workforce demands of the 21st century. HS/HT programs help youth with disabilities make better, more informed decisions about their career and their futures. HS/HT also works closely with schools, colleges, community organizations and local employers to ensure that all youth have access to all needed supports as they transition to adulthood.

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is supporting the expansion of HS/HT and provides technical assistance through the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. The State of Minnesota, through its Pathways to Employment Project, is developing the first Minnesota HS/HT sites with support from the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota.

The HS/HT framework is based on the Guideposts for Success and five areas of support needed by all youth and by youth with disabilities.
1. School-Based Preparatory Experiences
2. Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences
3. Youth Development and Youth Leadership
4. Connecting Activities
5. Family Involvement and Supports

For many students, HS/HT serves as the true beginning of their exposure to technology instruction and related work experiences. By combining activities that form the Guideposts for Success with technology skill development, students will be much better prepared to meet the needs of Minnesota businesses in the 21st century.

The following lists program components of each of the five Guidepost areas prioritized for the HS/HT program. Each of the sections is developed more fully later in this guide. Most of the materials in this guide came directly from the national High School/High Tech Program Guide that is found here: http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources & Publications/hsht_manual.html.
This guide was developed for four reasons:

- To introduce a state-based strategy to build and expand HS/HT across the country.
- To get new HS/HT programs off the ground. The guide is NOT intended as a stand-alone cookbook for program success; it simply provides a programmatic shell and implementation suggestions for HS/HT programs. One key ingredient in all HS/HT sites is creativity.
- To introduce new resources and practices within the existing network of HS/HT sites. Established sites will notice several improvements; among them the standards-based design features and affiliation process.
- To inform sites as they begin to think about how practice, research, and policy work together to make stronger, more successful programs.

Other materials have been added since April, 2007, when High School/High Tech began in Minnesota. Many of these materials are local resources developed in conjunction with staff from Fridley High School and from the State of Minnesota’s Pathways to Employment Project.

The national HS/HT Program Guide is published by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth from funding from the US Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy.
Section 2. Program Overview

The HS/HT program was created as a means of improving postsecondary outcomes for transition-age youth with disabilities. Among other strategies, the program achieves its objectives by maintaining high expectations, exposing youth to high growth industries, facilitating youth development and leadership, and encouraging the involvement of family members and caring adults.

1. HS/HT is designed to address the needs of transition-age youth (ages 14-24) with all types of disabilities.

2. HS/HT focuses on exposing transition-age youth with disabilities to careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (the STEM careers) and other technology-related professions.

3. HS/HT is a year round program that provides a sequential progression of activities that are both age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate. Activities may be conducted in-school, after school, on weekends, and during the summer.

4. HS/HT incorporates a variety of activities addressing a wide range of needs identified in the Guideposts for Success to create a comprehensive program of transition services.

5. HS/HT provides students with disabilities with appropriate college and career planning information and guidance, and encourages youth to pursue additional training and education to prepare for the STEM careers.

6. HS/HT provides employers with a potential source of educated, qualified employees.

To maximize its impact, HS/HT must continue to enroll more students with disabilities in existing sites, expand the program to new sites, and ultimately be made available to youth with and without disabilities. To that end, the contents of this guide are driven by the belief that:

- Multiple public and private stakeholders must act in concert (e.g., forming partnerships and blending and braiding resources) to alter the conditions that inhibit the ability of youth with disabilities to successfully engage in employment.

- The design of HS/HT programs must be evidence-based, rooted in high expectations, and incorporate promising and effective practices that promote the personal development of young people and expose them to multiple career options.
The Guideposts for Success: The Key Components of HS/HT

After undertaking an extensive review of nearly three decades of research, demonstrations and promising practices, including the experiences of HS/HT programs, NCWD/Youth, in conjunction with ODEP, created a set of guiding principles and identified a comprehensive set of services, supports and activities that all youth, including youth with disabilities, need to succeed in transitioning from high school to adult life. The resulting framework, referred to as the Guideposts for Success, provides a:

- statement of principles;
- direction that will lead to better outcomes for all youth; and
- method for organizing policy and practice.

The Guideposts are based on a number of important assumptions, including:

- high expectations for all youth, including youth with disabilities;
- equality of opportunity for everyone, including nondiscrimination, individualization, inclusion, and integration;
- full participation through self-determination, informed choice, and participation in decision-making;
- independent living, including skills development and long-term supports and services;
- competitive employment and economic self-sufficiency, which may include supports; and
- individualized, person-driven, and culturally and linguistically appropriate transition planning.

The Guideposts describe what is needed for comprehensive transition service delivery at both the program and policy level. They can be used in many ways. For example, the Guideposts can be used for resource mapping to determine exactly what transition services are available in a community and to identify gaps in transition services. They can also be used to assist a young person with a disability in determining what should go into his/her Individualized Education Program (IEP), including the special education and related services the school should be providing. In addition, parents can use the Guideposts to evaluate whether the services their sons or daughters are receiving are such that they are most likely to lead to post-school success.

The remainder of this section provides a brief introduction to each of the five categories of the Guideposts for Success. The following exhibit provides a chart that displays all five categories of the Guideposts and the individual components under each Guidepost. Note that the original order of the guideposts is given here; for the Minnesota HS/HT Teacher’s Guide, the order is adjusted to reflect Pathways to Employment priorities.

1. **School-Based Preparatory Experiences**

School-based preparatory experiences include the activities and services undertaken in collaboration with and in support of the youth’s educational program. Activities under this Guidepost include: participating in academic programs based on clear state standards; using curriculum and program options based on universal design of school and work; participating in community-based learning experiences; and receiving support from and by highly qualified staff. While HS/HT does not have control over what happens within the educational environment, it can actively promote the things that are needed to create a high quality education environment.
and support activities that complement what students are learning and experiencing in school. The HS/HT activities undertaken in support of this Guidepost should be conducted in environments where youth feel accepted and nurtured, and should facilitate academic pursuits that provide exposure to and encourage pursuit of the STEM careers.

This section explores School-Based Preparatory Experiences. While HS/HT programs are locally housed in any number of places (schools, Career Technical Education programs, Independent Living Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation offices, One-Stop Centers, etc.), and may involve activities during the school day, after school, on weekends, and during the summer, HS/HT is intended to be an enrichment program that complements what students are learning in school. School-based preparatory experiences identify those things that are necessary to ensure a high quality educational system and are primarily the responsibility of the schools. There are six components to this section:

1. Programs based on standards
2. Qualifications of teachers and transition staff
3. Assessments and graduation standards
4. Universal design of learning
5. Supporting learning environments that are small and safe and include extra supports such as tutoring
6. Helping students use their individual transition plans to drive their personal instruction

2. Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences
Career preparation and work-based learning experiences include a range of activities that expose students with disabilities to the STEM careers and build towards participation in on-the-job experiences. These experiences include such things as vocational exploration, career assessments, industry site visits, job shadowing, internships, entrepreneurial ventures, and paid employment (full or part time). For youth with disabilities, activities designed to help them learn to find, formally request, and secure appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations in education, training and employment settings would fall under this Guidepost. Whatever the activity, the lessons learned during such activities should be reviewed to ensure that the young person makes the connection between what s/he is learning in the HS/HT program and in school generally, and what is expected in the world of work.

Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences includes information on assessments, developing soft skills, exposure to postsecondary education options, industry site visits, job shadowing, and internships opportunities as core activities. This section also includes information on entrepreneurship, an optional activity that has been developed by a few and should be explored by all HS/HT programs because of the unique opportunity it affords and the many useful lessons that can be learned. There are nine components to this section:

1. Career assessment
2. Structured exposure to post-secondary education and other life-long learning opportunities
3. Exposure to career opportunities
4. Developing work readiness skills
5. Industry site visits and tours
6. **Job shadowing**  
7. **Volunteer work and service learning**  
8. **Internships**  
9. **Entrepreneurships**

### 3. Youth Development and Leadership

Youth development and leadership activities help young people become self-sufficient and productive members of society. The activities and services under this *Guidepost* include such things as developing relationships with supportive adults, developing independent decision-making skills, engaging in service learning opportunities, and learning self-determination and self-advocacy skills. Each of these elements is also interwoven and fostered throughout all of the *Guideposts*.

This section examines youth development and leadership activities within HS/HT programs. Youth development and leadership are not isolated events that occur only at an annual workshop or at periodic meetings. Opportunities to develop personal and leadership skills must be cultivated into a variety of HS/HT activities and events. There are four components in this section:

1. **Putting youth in control of their destiny**  
2. **Supportive adults**  
3. **Opportunities for personal growth**  
4. **Leadership opportunities**

### 4. Connecting Activities

This *Guidepost* examines the need to connect youth to the programs, activities, services, and supports they will need to access as they transition to the next phase in life. The ultimate goal is to engage in employment that will provide for economic self-sufficiency. The focus is on services and activities requiring support from other organizations, such as tutoring, mentoring, assistive technology, personal assistance services, and transportation. Youth participating in HS/HT programs must connect with other agencies and services, particularly as they pursue options in postsecondary education and the STEM careers.

This section examines the connecting activities necessary to assist HS/HT participants as they transition to their next phase in life — one that will hopefully include additional technical training, postsecondary education, and/or work leading to economic self-sufficiency. As such, this section focuses on the services and activities requiring support from individuals or organizations outside of the educational setting, such as tutors to improve academic performance, assistive technology to address accommodation needs, and transportation. Youth participating in HS/HT programs will also need to work with other agencies as they pursue options in postsecondary education and high tech careers. There are seven components in this section:

1. **Mental and physical health services**  
2. **Transportation**  
3. **Academic tutoring**  
4. **Financial planning**
5. Connecting to continuing education opportunities and the workforce
6. Connecting to other programs and opportunities

5. Family Involvement and Supports
The involvement of parents, family members, and other caring adults promotes the social, emotional, physical, academic, and occupational growth of youth, which usually translates to better post-school outcomes. The activities and services under this Guidepost include having parents and caring adults take an active role in transition planning, and having knowledge of the rights and responsibilities under various disability-related laws.

This section examines the fifth Guidepost, Family Involvement and Supports, and its positive effect on youth with disabilities, particularly with respect to success in school and improved post-school outcomes. Research has shown that the involvement of parents, family members, and/or other caring adults promotes the social, emotional, physical, academic, and occupational growth of young people, and leads to better post-school. There are four components to this section:

1. High expectations
2. Ensuring access to and progress in the general curriculum and understanding how a youth’s disability might impact his/her education, employment, and daily living options
3. Taking an active role in transition planning
4. Having information on programs, services, supports, accommodations, rights, and responsibilities
## The Guideposts for Success

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<th>General Needs</th>
<th>Specific Needs</th>
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| **1. School-Based Preparatory Experiences** | In order to perform at optimal levels in all education settings, all youth need to participate in educational programs grounded in standards, clear performance expectations and graduation exit options based upon meaningful, accurate, and relevant indicators of student learning and skills. These should include:  
- academic programs that are based on clear state standards;  
- career and technical education programs that are based on professional and industry standards;  
- curricular and program options based on universal design of school, work and community-based learning experiences;  
- learning environments that are small and safe, including extra supports such as tutoring, as necessary;  
- supports from and by highly qualified staff;  
- access to an assessment system that includes multiple measures; and  
- graduation standards that include options.  

In addition, youth with disabilities need to:  
- use their individual transition plans to drive their personal instruction, and use strategies to continue the transition process post-schooling;  
- have access to specific and individual learning accommodations while they are in school;  
- develop knowledge of reasonable accommodations that they can request and control in educational settings, including assessment accommodations; and  
- be supported by highly qualified transitional support staff that may or may not be school staff. |
| **2. Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Experiences** | Career preparation and work-based learning experiences are essential in order to form and develop aspirations and to make informed choices about careers. These experiences can be provided during the school day or through after-school programs and will require collaboration with other organizations. All youth need information on career options, including:  
- career assessments to help identify students’ school and post-school preferences and interests;  
- structured exposure to postsecondary education and other life-long learning opportunities;  
- exposure to career opportunities that ultimately lead to a living wage, including information about educational requirements, entry requirements, income and benefits potential, and asset accumulation; and  
- training designed to improve job-seeking skills and work-place basic skills (sometimes called “soft skills”). |
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<th>General Needs</th>
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<td>In order to identify and attain career goals, youth need to be exposed to a range of experiences, including:</td>
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<td>• opportunities to engage in a range of work-based exploration activities such as site visits and job shadowing;</td>
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<td>• multiple on-the-job training experiences, including community service (paid or unpaid) that is specifically linked to the content of a program of study and school credit;</td>
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<td>• opportunities to learn and practice their work skills (“soft skills”); and</td>
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<td>• opportunities to learn first-hand about specific occupational skills related to a career pathway.</td>
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<td>In addition, youth with disabilities need to:</td>
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<td>• understand the relationships between benefits planning and career choices;</td>
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<td>• learn to communicate their disability-related work support and accommodation needs; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>• learn to find, formally request and secure appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations in education, training and employment settings.</td>
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<p>| 3. Youth Development &amp; Leadership | Youth development is a process that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them gain skills and competencies. Youth leadership is part of that process. In order to control and direct their own lives based on informed decisions, all youth need: |
|-----------------------------------|• mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with adults through formal and informal settings; |
| • peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities; |
| • exposure to role models in a variety of contexts; |
| • training in skills such as self-advocacy and conflict resolution; |
| • exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, including community service; and |
| • opportunities that allow youth to exercise leadership and build self-esteem. |
| Youth with disabilities also need: |
| • mentors and role models including persons with and without disabilities; and |
| • an understanding of disability history, culture, and disability public policy issues as well as their rights and responsibilities. |</p>
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| **4. Connecting Activities** | Young people need to be connected to programs, services, activities, and supports that help them gain access to chosen post-school options. All youth may need one or more of the following:  
- mental and physical health services;  
- transportation;  
- tutoring;  
- financial planning and management;  
- post-program supports through structured arrangements in postsecondary institutions and adult service agencies; and  
- connection to other services and opportunities (e.g., recreation, sports, faith-based organizations).  
In addition, youth with disabilities may need:  
- acquisition of appropriate assistive technologies;  
- community orientation and mobility training (e.g. accessible transportation, bus routes, housing, health clinics);  
- exposure to post-program supports such as independent living centers and other consumer-driven community-based support service agencies;  
- personal assistance services, including attendants, readers, interpreters, or other such services; and  
- benefits planning counseling including information regarding the myriad of benefits available and their interrelationships so that they may maximize those benefits in transitioning from public assistance to self-sufficiency. |
| **5. Family Involvement & Supports** | Participation and involvement of parents, family members, and/or other caring adults promote the social, emotional, physical, academic and occupational growth of youth, leading to better post-school outcomes. All youth need parents, families, and other caring adults who:  
- have high expectations that build upon the young person’s strengths, interests, and needs and fosters their ability to achieve independence and self-sufficiency;  
- remain involved in their lives and assist them toward adulthood;  
- have access to information about employment, further education and community resources;  
- take an active role in transition planning with schools and community partners; and  
- have access to medical, professional, and peer support networks.  
In addition, youth with disabilities need parents, families, and other caring adults who have:  
- an understanding of their youth’s disability and how it affects his or her education, employment, and/or daily living options;  
- knowledge of rights and responsibilities under various disability- |
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<td>related legislation;</td>
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<td>• knowledge of and access to programs, services, supports, and accommodations available for young people with disabilities; and</td>
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<td>• an understanding of how individualized planning tools can assist youth in achieving transition goals and objectives.</td>
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The following sections provide resources, curriculum ideas, and activities that teachers and others can integrate into school or community based programming to meet the needs of program participants. Because of the high priority for work-based activities, the first section is the largest and most fully developed.
Section 3. Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences

Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences includes information on assessments, developing soft skills, exposure to postsecondary education options, industry site visits, job shadowing, and internships opportunities as core activities. This section also includes information on entrepreneurship, an optional activity that has been developed by a few and should be explored by all HS/HT programs because of the unique opportunity it affords and the many useful lessons that can be learned. There are nine components to this section:

1. Career Assessment
2. Structured Exposure to Post-Secondary Education and Other Life-Long Learning Opportunities
3. Exposure to Career Opportunities
4. Developing Work Readiness Skills
5. Industry Site Visits and Tours
6. Job Shadowing
7. Volunteer Work and Service Learning
8. Internships
9. Entrepreneurships

Component 1: Career Assessment

Career assessment is the process through which students explore career options for the purpose of identifying those that are compatible with their personal goals, interests, and abilities. It is a key step in a continuous process to help young people make informed choices about their futures. HS/HT program operators must collect information regarding the young person’s likes, dislikes, interpersonal relations, skills, abilities, capabilities, interests, personality traits, and responses to specific environment conditions. The career assessment process differs for each student.

To address different learning styles, cultural differences, language barriers, academic difficulties, and challenges, there are three basic types of assessment that are used to assist youth in this process: formal assessment, information assessment, and work-based learning experiences.

Formal (standardized) assessments are those that are typically administered, scored, and interpreted only by people who have been trained to do so (e.g., psychologists, vocational evaluators, qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors, etc.). While there are four key domains of assessment (i.e., Educational Domain, Psychological Domain, Vocational Domain, and Vocational and Medical Domain), HS/HT should be primarily interested in assessments within the vocational domain to address this Guidepost.

To learn more about formal assessments, check out one of NCWD/Youth’s most popular and requested documents reflecting the most up-to-date developments in assessments: Career Planning Begins with Assessment: A Guide for Professionals Serving Youth with Educational & Career Development Challenges. This revised version of the Assessment Guide can be purchased from NCWD/Youth or downloaded for free at: http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/assessments.html.
Informal assessments include, but are not limited to, online inventories, interviews with youth and family members, and career portfolios. They are typically conducted in unstructured settings to help individuals identify their career interests, improve their performance and identify possible learning disabilities. The HS/HT program operator may gather information about the young person by interviewing the youth and/or members of his/her family, observing the youth in class, and reviewing records and other formal assessment results. Often, information gathered during informal assessments leads to referrals for formal assessments and becomes part of the formal assessment record when preparing comprehensive reports or career profiles. (See Exhibits for Sample Online Career Assessment.)

HS/HT program operators can get additional information about a young person’s interests, skills, and abilities by conducting their own informal career assessment activities. See exhibits for examples of informal assessment activities that HS/HT programs can undertake to determine the career interests and basic work performance skills of participating students.

Component 2: Structured Exposure to Postsecondary Education and Other Life-Long Learning Opportunities
An increasing number of jobs in today’s labor market require education and/or training beyond high school. While many people view vocational training beyond high school as an appropriate option for youth with disabilities, a college education is not always seen in the same light. Unfortunately, due to low expectations, many people do not expect youth with disabilities to go to college. When these low expectations are communicated to youth, either directly or indirectly, such youth are not likely to view postsecondary education as an option. This situation can and should change, and HS/HT programs can be a major factor in facilitating such a change.

The exploration of postsecondary education options are an important aspect of every HS/HT program. There are several options within the realm of postsecondary education: career and technical education; community colleges; and four-year colleges and universities. Technical schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities differ in three important areas: 1) the type of programs offered; 2) the type of degree earned; and 3) the cost of attending. In addition to looking at career and technical education options, HS/HT coordinators should assist their student in exploring the differences in two-year community colleges, four-year colleges and universities.

Online Resources to Consider

“ACT Prep Course Options,” sponsored by The Princeton Review, provides information on the ACT test and options for preparing for the ACT test based on a student’s learning style. The options include: classroom courses, online courses, private tutoring, small group tutoring, and books. Visit: http://www.princetonreview.com/college/testprep/testprep.asp?TPRPAGE=2&type=ACT-HOME.
“College MatchMaker” can be used to search for two- and four-year schools, colleges and universities that meet your individual needs. Visit: http://apps.collegeboard.com/search/adv_typeschool.jsp.

“Colleges and Technical Schools” provides ideas on questions to ask before enrolling in a career college or a technical school (e.g., is the school accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or licensed by the state in which it is located). This section of the ED.gov website can help in choosing the right school to meet one’s career goals. Visit: http://www.ed.gov/students/prep/college/consumerinfo.


“Getting Ready for College: Advising High School Students with Learning Disabilities” provides information specific to youth with learning disabilities who are preparing for college. This resource is sponsored by the HEATH Resource Center. Visit: http://www.kidsource.com/Heath/gr.html.


“Post-ITT: Postsecondary Innovative Transition and Technology Project,” funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, contains a collection of resources and activities established to aid students, parents, educators, and disability services coordinators in the task of planning for a student's transition from secondary to postsecondary education. It contains activities and planning worksheets for students as well as a teacher’s manual. Visit: http://postitt.org.

“SAT Preparation” it the College Board website that includes all kinds of information on the SAT test, including an SAT Preparation Center, an SAT Subject Test Center, and a Learning Center. It also includes information on planning for, finding, applying for, and paying for college. Visit: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html.


Component 3: Exposure to Career Opportunities
Exposure to career opportunities is the process of exposing youth to information about the job market; job-related skills; minimum requirements such as education level; characteristics of different work environments; and the overall culture of specific occupations. Unfortunately,
most young people, including youth with disabilities, have little knowledge of the range of jobs and careers that make up today’s labor market. Also at issue is that youth with disabilities have historically been steered towards certain types of jobs based on low expectations. These jobs, often referred to as the 6 F’s, include food (food services), filth (garbage or custodial jobs), filing (administrative/clerical work), flowers (grounds keeping), fetching (errand boy/girl), or folding (housekeeping and retail stockroom work). Many of these jobs offer little in the way of a career ladder and, as a result, youth with disabilities end up looking at jobs rather than careers.

HS/HT programs are changing these trends by providing students with disabilities with opportunities to explore a wide range of careers, including the STEM careers. HS/HT activities are structured specifically to help youth with disabilities see the STEM careers and other technology-focused professions as options that are available to them.

The following are some suggested ways to expose HS/HT students to the wide array of opportunities within the STEM careers and to the pervasiveness of the use of technology in many of the jobs in today’s labor market.

1. Guest speakers are an important part of the HS/HT year-round program. They can offer participants specific information about the STEM careers; guidance in identifying and planning for future goals; and a chance to discuss the skills necessary for successfully engaging in different types of work. It is critically important to include professionals with disabilities among the guest speakers you recruit. Beyond that, the range of speakers and topics is limited only by the interests of the audience and the creativity of the program operator. Guest speaker workshops or presentations can be held in various sites — at the local high school, university, a worksite, or other community location. You may be able to get additional support for this program by extending invitations to family members and guardians.

   • Contact your local Chamber of Commerce or other business organizations involved in promoting business/education partnerships. They may have a speaker’s bureau that can provide you with ideas about potential speakers. To find your local Chamber, visit: http://www.uschamber.com. Asking employers to speak at a HS/HT event is a great way to get them in the door. They are more likely to commit to additional activities once they learn more about the program.

   • Include a wide variety of topics: marketable technology skills; technology careers; work ethics and soft skills; information on how to talk to a supervisor; how to discuss your disability with an employer; how to ask for a reasonable accommodation in the workplace; benefits planning; finding and securing financial aid; setting attainable goals; the value of internships (both paid and unpaid); tips for your first internship or job; study skills; computer literacy; motivation; resume writing; and independent living options.

   • Brief your speakers on disability etiquette including: using acceptable language; speaking directly to the person, not to the person’s interpreter; reading a power point presentation out loud if anyone in the audience is visually impaired; and not leaning on the chair when talking to a person who uses a wheelchair. (See Exhibits for additional suggestions related to Disability Etiquette.)
2. Create obtainable goals and objectives for each event where a guest speaker is part of the program.
   - The primary goal of this event is…
   - The learning objectives (for HS/HT program participants) are…
   - The expected outcome of this event is…
   - The intended audience is…
   - As a follow-up, I will…
   - As a follow-up, HS/HT participants will…

3. Informational interviews are one of the best sources for gathering information about what is happening in a specific occupation or industry. Young people can initiate an informational interview by contacting professionals working in that particular field and asking questions about the careers associated with that field. Remember, the purpose of an informational interview is to obtain career information, not to get a job. *(Exhibits at the end of this section outline Steps to Follow to Conduct an Effective Informational Interview and provides 20 Questions for an Effective Informational Interview.)*

   Top 5 reasons to conduct informational interviews:
   - Explore careers, clarify career goals, and identify career strengths and needs;
   - Discover unadvertised opportunities;
   - Expand personal networks;
   - Build confidence for future job interviews; and
   - Reveal up-to-date career information.

4. Research-based activities include scanning professional magazines, periodicals, newspapers, and the Internet. These are all excellent ways for young people to learn about specific occupations while using critical academic skills to gather and sort through such information.

5. Community resource mapping is another way to acquaint youth with the culture, resources, barriers, and potential partners within your community. Consider creating a scavenger hunt and include clues relating to local businesses and employment opportunities (local Chamber of Commerce), transportation (including accessible transportation), community resources (recreational, religious, etc.), human resources (public and private service agencies, community colleges, etc.), and employment and training services (One-Stop Career Centers, the State Vocational Rehabilitation agency, Independent Living Centers, etc.).

   Remember to follow up with your speakers, those granting informational interviews, and any partners who have provided research-based activities. Write a letter of thanks and ask each young person to write one as well.

**Online Resources to Consider**

In addition to researching job openings in the newspaper and on the Internet, these links may be helpful in assisting HS/HT students as they explore different career paths.
“America’s CareerInfoNet” is a Career One-Stop that contains a wealth of information on the knowledge, skills, abilities, and tasks for selected occupations; skills credentialing; informed career decision making; training and education; labor market trends; and career tools; as well as links to career videos and state-specific career information. Visit: http://www.careeronestop.org.


“America's Service Locator” helps people find a range of local services including workforce centers, unemployment benefits, job training, education opportunities, and other workforce services. Visit: http://www.ServiceLocator.org.

“Birkman Quiz” helps students explore their personality and skills. The quiz can help guide students as they embark on career planning. Visit: http://www.princetonreview.com/cte/quiz/career_quiz1.asp.

“CareerBuilder” puts jobs in front of poised job seekers, wherever they are – at home or at work – in print and on the Internet. It is one of the nation’s leading recruitment resources, with presence in more than 130 local newspapers. Visit: http://www.careerbuilder.com.

“Career Exploration” provides online exploration activities related to vocational and technical careers at the Vocational Information Center’s website. Each career path page includes links to various career descriptions as well as links to educational sites relating to the specific career, such as tutorials, directories, associations, industry news, glossaries, and related academics. Visit: http://www.khake.com/page2.html.

“Career Interests Game” is sponsored by the University of Missouri. Based on Dr. John Holland’s theory that people and work environments can be loosely classified into six groups (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional), the Career Interests Game is designed to help match an individual’s interests and skills with relevant careers. It focuses on how personalities fit into specific work environments and careers. Sample jobs are directly linked to DOL’s Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Occupational Outlook Handbook website for detailed job outlook information. Visit: http://career.missouri.edu/students/explore/thecareerinterestsgame.php.

“Career Key” is an online interest assessment that measures skills, abilities, values, and interests. It allows the user to identify promising jobs and locate accurate information about them. Visit: http://www.careerkey.org/english.

“Career Voyages” is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education that provides information on high growth, in-demand occupations along with the skills and education needed to attain those jobs. It includes information on training and education available to assist people in preparing for these occupations and to help people advance in different careers. Visit: http://www.careervoyages.gov.
“Hire Disability Solutions, LLC” is a national organization that specializes in job services and placement for individuals with disabilities, in collaboration with the online job search site Monster.com. The career resources section of their website contains information for job seekers with disabilities and for businesses seeking information on hiring individuals with disabilities. It permits the posting of resumes and job opportunities, and contains information on workplace accessibility and various pieces of legislation that impact the employment and education of individuals with disabilities. Visit: http://www.hireds.com.

“JobWeb,” sponsored by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, includes links to Find an Employer, Search JobWeb, Articles Library, Contact JobWeb, Shop JobWeb, Online Career Fair, Resumes & Interviews, Career Development, Internships/Co-ops, Salary Information, Job Market Research, and After College. Also included is an “Ask the Expert” section which houses archived questions related to disability. Visit: http://www.jobweb.org.

“LifeWorks,” sponsored by the National Institutes of Health’s Office of Science Education, explores careers in health and medical sciences. See interviews with more than 70 professionals and learn what their typical workday involves and why they chose their career. Find out which careers match your interests and skills. Visit: http://science.education.nih.gov/LifeWorks.

“NCDA” is the National Career Development Association, a division of the American Counseling Association (ACA). NCDA provides service to the public and professionals involved with or interested in career development. Internet links provide information on self-assessment, career development process, occupational information, employment trends, military information, distance education, etc. Visit: http://www.ncda.org.

“O*NET” is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and provides the general public with broad access to a large database of occupational information. The O*NET database provides access to continually updated occupational information and labor market research. It includes information on skills, abilities, knowledge, work activities, and interests associated with approximately 1,000 occupations. Visit: http://online.onetcenter.org.

“Teacher's Guide to the Occupational Outlook Handbook” is a handbook sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics that describes hundreds of occupations. For each occupation, it tells what workers do, what the working conditions are, the training and education needed, earnings potential, and expected job prospects. Job search tips, state-specific job market information, articles about specific occupations and industries, and additional career information are included. Visit: http://www.bls.gov/oco/teachers_guide.htm.


“Vocational Information Center” is a central online location for career and technical education students and educational professionals to access links, resources, and lesson plans in areas such as: career activities, preparing for career and school (including portfolios and related resources), applied academics (including math and science), exploring different industries, and work-related activities. Visit: http://www.khake.com.
“Your Employment Selections (YES!)” is a motion-video, Internet-based job preference program for youth and adults with disabilities. It allows youth and adult participants with limited or no reading skills to watch videos of jobs, listen as a narrator describes key tasks in each job, and select preferred ones. Produced by the Technology, Research, and Innovation in Special Education (TRISPED) Project at Utah State University, the program includes videos for 120 different jobs. Visit: http://www.yesjobsearch.com.

The following websites are examples of STEM related jobs and careers.


Astronauts, visit: http://www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents.

Meteorologists, visit: http://www.ametsoc.org/pubs/careers.html


Veterinarians, visit: http://netvet.wustl.edu/vcareer.htm.


Component 4: Developing Work-Readiness Skills

Work-readiness skills are the basic soft skills that complement the technical knowledge and skills (e.g., reading comprehension, mathematics, science, computer skills, etc.) needed to perform a job. Work-readiness skills have consistently been documented by employers as the weakest link between graduates of both high school and college and the world of work.

In 2006, four organizations (The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management) collaborated on a survey of over 400 employers across the United States to determine the skill sets employers were seeking when bringing new employees into the workforce, particularly when hiring recent graduates from high schools, community colleges, technical schools and four-year colleges. According to their findings, employers value applied skills (e.g., professionalism/work ethics, oral and written communication skills, teamwork/collaboration, and critical thinking/problem solving) more than educational attainment and basic knowledge of specific subjects such as math and reading comprehension. The survey also indicated growing
frustration among employers over the lack of these applied skills in the new people entering the workforce.

*Soft Skills Development Activities*

“Soft skills” refer to the cluster of personality traits, social graces, language skills, personal habits, work habits, and attitudes that are characteristic of people across all occupations to varying degrees and that are necessary to succeed in the workplace. Soft skills, which complement a person’s ability to perform the technical requirements of a job, include a variety of things that can be learned such as good oral communication skills, honesty, self-motivation/taking initiative, creativity, organizational skills, problem solving skills, a willingness to learn, teamwork/collaboration skills, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, flexibility/adaptability, ability to work under pressure, dependability, punctuality, customer service skills, and social etiquette skills (e.g., dressing and acting appropriately).

Although it is important to interweave learning soft skills into educational activities generally, there is often not enough time in the school day to emphasize all these important skills. Consequently, HS/HT programs need to devote substantial time and resources to addressing this well recognized weakness in all youth in order to help youth with disabilities compete in the world of work. After school and summer activities sponsored by HS/HT provide excellent opportunities to assist youth with disabilities in developing these all important work-readiness skills.

In developing HS/HT activities/curriculum to address the development of soft skills, opportunities should be provided for students to practice the following:

- **Teamwork.** Encourage team projects and team activities, such as writing a quarterly newsletter, jointly interviewing potential guest speakers, working as part of a team that is creating something, undertaking a community services project, or creating a website.

- **Communication.** Organize opportunities for students to practice presenting themselves to employers. Ask guest speakers to provide mock interviews for students. Videotape these interviews and provide immediate feedback. Take students to a local career fair where they can gain experience talking to potential employers. Have students present a project they have completed.

- **Problem Solving.** Arrange for students to create and manage hands-on projects. Present students with a problem and divide them into groups to solve it. Ask the groups to report back to the larger group.

- **Customer Service.** Provide role-playing opportunities that allow students to respond to requests from potential “customers” through face-to-face contact, email, and telephone.

- **Social and Business Etiquette.** Model socially effective work behaviors like good manners, appropriate body language, arriving on time to work or meetings, appropriate dress, and good grooming. It is important to clearly communicate the expectation for social and business etiquette.
It is particularly important to address these skills prior to approving any HS/HT student’s participation in an internship (either paid or unpaid). Acquiring these soft skills can be a critical factor in ensuring the success of an internship or of a job placement.

**Job Search Skills Activities**

Students can also benefit greatly from opportunities to explore and expand their job search skills. HS/HT coordinators should assist students in learning about the different types of resumes and help them develop an effective resume. All youth may not understand that conveying their experiences such as baby sitting, caring for a neighbor’s animals, or cutting grass can provide valuable information to employers. Additionally, emphasize the value of volunteer work and community service, as such experiences are also viewed as basic work experience.

**Suggested Activities**

Create Resumes: Have sample resume templates available on a computer. As some young people will have more work experience than others, make functional (skills-based) resume templates available in addition to chronological ones.

“Experience” resumes may include:
- Name, address, phone/fax numbers, e-mail address
- Career Objective
- Education (dates, institution, city, degree/major, specialties)
- Employment (dates, company, city, job title, details of position, description of accomplishments — include internships and volunteer jobs!)
- Summary of qualifications
- Languages
- Computer skills (programs you can operate)
- Awards received
- Interests/activities
- References (supervisors and teachers)

“Skills” resumes may include:
- Name, address, phone/fax numbers, e-mail address
- Career Objective
- Functional skills summary (includes skills from school, positive personality traits, grades if good, special projects, etc.)
- Volunteer experience (dates, locations, city, details of position, description of accomplishments – include in-school jobs!)
- Languages
- Computer skills (programs you can operate)
- Awards received
- Interests/activities
- References (supervisors and teachers)
Write Cover Letters: Basic job seeking skills also include developing an appropriate cover letter that highlights things relevant to the job being sought and exploring what is likely to be involved in a job interview. HS/HT programs should provide opportunities for youth to draft cover letters for specific jobs of interests and to respond to questions that are likely to be asked during interviews for different types of jobs.

Practice Interviews: Students often practice mock interviews in groups of twos and provide feedback to one another. In some programs, HS/HT staff videotape these mock interviews as a means of providing constructive feedback. It is particularly useful when peers provide concrete examples of what the young person did well and identify areas for improvement. Some HS/HT programs ask employers to come in, conduct the mock interviews, and provide feedback to participating students.

Discuss Disclosure: Don’t forget to discuss issues surrounding disability disclosure and what a young person might expect during a job interview with regard to their disability. Talk about appropriate and inappropriate questions regarding one’s disability. Discuss disability disclosure as it applies to a job interview as opposed to actual acceptance of a job and the need to request reasonable accommodations. Deciding if and when to disclose a disability is a highly personal decision and can be challenging. Much depends on individual preference and the disability involved. Program operators should never disclose a HS/HT participant’s disability to an employer. It is up to the young person to disclose this information. Training may be needed in order to practice disability disclosure. (See Exhibits for information on Disability Disclosure: Advantages and Disadvantages.)

When practicing disability disclosure, help the young person focus on what s/he CAN do (abilities)—and what s/he has to OFFER a potential employer. The more positive a young person is, the more s/he will convey, “I am a qualified candidate for this position.”

A great source of information on disability disclosure is the 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities, produced by NCWD/Youth. This workbook is designed for youth, and adults working with them, to learn about disability disclosure. It helps young people make informed decisions about whether or not to disclose their disability and understand how that decision may impact their education, employment, and social lives. Based on the premise that disclosure is a very personal decision, the workbook helps young people think about and practice disclosing their disability. This workbook guides adults as they help young people disclose. The workbook can be used in one-on-one situations or in classrooms and group settings. The 411 on Disability Disclosure can be purchased or downloaded free of charge at: http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/411.html.

Online Resources to Consider

Below are some links that can assist HS/HT students as they prepare resumes, write cover letters, prepare for job interviews, and think about disclosing their disabilities.

“Job Accommodation Network” (JAN) is a service of the Office of Disability Employment Policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. JAN’s mission is to facilitate the employment and retention of workers with disabilities by making information on job accommodations, self-
employment, and small business opportunities readily available to interested parties. The website includes information on disability disclosure. Visit: http://www.jan.wvu.edu.


“Life Skills for Vocational Success (LSVS)” contains over 60 lesson plans for educators, counselors, job coaches, and other professionals working to increase the employability of people with disabilities. Lessons focus on social skills, decision-making skills, employability, money management, transportation, health, family responsibilities, basic understanding of the law, and telephone skills. Visit: http://www.workshopsinc.com/manual.


“WorkabilityIV” is a pre-employment program for San Jose State University students with disabilities. The website includes rules for a good disclosure. Visit: http://www.work4.sjsu.edu/jobsearchtips/disclosure/disclosure.html.

Component 5: Industry Site Visits and Tours
Industry site visits and tours typically involve a group of young people (accompanied by adult chaperones) visiting various job sites to be exposed to and learn about real-life work environments. Such visits give students an overview of many facets of a particular business or industry and often provide them with their first exposure to the day-to-day operations of technology related careers. The itinerary for any site visit should depend on the interests of the students involved and on the host organization’s programs or facilities. Visits and tours are generally scheduled for a few hours or one full day. No matter how much time is spent at the site, it is crucial to work closely with the host organization’s representative to develop a clear understanding of expectations and intended outcomes. It is also important to inform the staff hosting the visit about any accommodations that might be needed by participating students. Finally, it is extremely important to clearly communicate to students your expectations of them during an industry site tour.

Site visits and tours can be especially enriching and motivating for students. For example, talking with a company employee may spark a student’s interest in a particular occupation, while seeing a research lab in action may help another student develop a better overall understanding of science careers and methods to conduct investigations and research.

As an added benefit, contact with host organization representatives can be a foundation for strong, lasting relationships that may result in additional involvement in the future such as providing internships or other enrichment opportunities for youth. Site visits provide
opportunities for employers to view young people with disabilities as potential members of the future workforce.

**Examples of HS/HT Site Visits and Industry Tours**
- Medical technology facilities at hospitals
- Science and natural history museums
- Planetariums and observatories
- Aerospace firms
- Medical instrument manufacturing companies
- Bio-engineering research firms
- Biomedical research firms
- Electric utility companies
- Bank data centers
- TV and radio stations
- Chemical manufacturing plants
- Agricultural research facilities
- Marine research facilities
- Technology training institutes
- Universities
- NASA space flight facilities
- Computerized libraries
- Private research and development laboratories
- Government laboratories and research facilities

**When coordinating site visits and industry tours:**

1. Ask your industry representative to:
   - provide a tour of the facility.
   - explain the responsibilities of various departments of the organization.
   - describe a typical day of an employee in the organization.
   - answer questions about the site specifically and the industry in general.
   - provide an opportunity for youth to talk with a variety of employees.

2. HS/HT program operators should:
   - identify the goals and learning objectives of the visit.
   - create an interesting and enriching visit for young people.
   - relate the visit to high-tech careers.
   - mesh the visit with other program components.
   - create an itinerary including time required (door to door) and lunch or refreshment necessities.
   - decide how many participants can be accommodated on the visit.
   - obtain signed permission forms from parents or guardians.
   - arrange overnight accommodations if necessary.
   - conduct an accessibility assessment to make sure the site is “disability friendly.”
   - coordinate transportation and chaperones.
- determine follow up assignments for students.
- plan an evaluation of the visit.

3. HS/HT participants should:
- research the company (industry) in advance and develop a list of relevant questions.
- articulate the purpose of the site visit as well as appropriate rules for behavior.
- complete any follow up assignments.

The possibilities for HS/HT site visits should originate from your community or region. If some youth are interested in careers not available within your geographic location, consideration should be given to developing a field trip to another community—even for one youth if s/he has taken responsibility for researching that particular career. This may require working with the parents, finding funds to support travel expenses, and coordinating transportation. In the spirit of HS/HT, geography should not be a limiting factor, if at all possible. Also, consider a virtual site visit where a telephone call with a representative of an industry of interest is combined with a guided tour of their website.

Component 6: Job Shadowing
Job shadowing is a motivating activity designed to give youth an up-close look at the world of work and to bridge the gap between academics and the adult world. During a job shadow, students accompany employees as they do their work, providing an opportunity for the students to learn about a specific occupation or industry. Job shadowing gives students the opportunity to explore various facets of a career field and can help students select or narrow their career focus. A job shadow is a good way to team an experienced worker with a student, and to provide students with adult role models. Often times, job shadows can lead to internships or mentoring opportunities.

Youth should be required to note different aspects of the workers’ activities and performance so they can be discussed during follow-up or debriefing meetings with other HS/HT participants and program operators.

When setting up job shadowing experiences, be sure to delineate for all parties involved the expectations of the activity, such as ensuring that the youth is able to observe actual work and not just be taken on a tour of the facility. Remember, job shadowing is a valuable way for a student to gain closer insight into a particular technical job or a facet of that job.

When coordinating job shadow opportunities:

1. Ask the business or community partner to--
- explain to the HS/HT program staff what will be observed.
- clarify logistics, responsibilities, safety, health, security, and/or confidentiality issues related to the employment site with the program staff.
- identify an employee who wishes to provide the job shadow experience.
- brief that employee on the goals of the activity.
- ensure the employee will be doing something from which the youth can see and learn.
2. HS/HT program operators should--
   • coordinate the job shadowing experience with the business or community partner.
   • take care of administrative details for the work-based learning experience, including abiding by any federal, state, and/or local policies, requirements and regulations. Check with your local Chamber of Commerce or school district to obtain this type of information.
   • design activities that relate academic content to the job shadowing opportunity.
   • prepare the students in advance by clarifying and reviewing any logistics, responsibilities, safety, health, security, and/or confidentiality issues.
   • arrange for transportation.

3. HS/HT program participants should--
   • provide a positive attitude and a commitment to learning more about the targeted job being observed.
   • dress properly and abide by appropriate rules for behavior.
   • ask questions (see sidebar).
   • write a letter of thanks to the individual shadowed.

Sample job shadow questions for students.
   • What is your title or position?
   • What are your responsibilities in this position?
   • What were the minimum requirements for your job?
   • How are technology, computers, and electronics used in your job?
   • What training, education, and experience do you have?
   • What is your work environment like? Stressful? Laid back?
   • What is the hardest part of your job?
   • What do you like the most about your job?
   • What do you like least about your job?
   • What do you think makes you successful at your job?
   • Do you have opportunities for professional development?
   • Are there opportunities for advancement at your company?
   • What suggestions do you have for someone who wanted to get a job like yours?

Time Commitment

Generally, a job shadowing experience will last from three to six hours in the course of one day, although some may last as long as a week. Often the job shadow will last an entire day. In addition, the person coordinating the job shadow may expect to spend two to five hours helping to arrange the job shadowing opportunity. This time may include speaking to department heads, supervisors, and employees within the organization about the job shadow; reviewing details with the school staff coordinator; and preparing any pertinent background information.
Online Resources to Consider

“Disability Mentoring Day (DMD)” sponsored by the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), DMD is a nationally coordinated effort to secure job shadowing opportunities for youth with disabilities. Although DMD began as a single day set aside in October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, localities now have the option of coordinating a kickoff event such as a career fair in October as a means of introducing youth with disabilities to employers who may subsequently be willing to become involved in a year-round relationship such as mentoring or job shadowing. In several states, HS/HT functions as the coordinator for the statewide effort. Visit: http://www.dmd-aapd.org.

“Groundhog Job Shadow Day” sponsored by the National Job Shadowing Coalition gives students an up-close look at the world of work. The program, which is a joint venture of America’s Promise-Alliance for Youth, Junior Achievement, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Labor, begins each year with a nationwide kickoff and continues throughout the school year. As students all over America “shadow” workplace mentors through a normal day on the job, they get to see firsthand how the skills learned in school relate to the workplace. Additional sponsors and supporters (e.g., Hyatt, Monster.com and the News Corporation) have joined the effort during the program’s ten year history as the program has grown to have more than one million students and 100,000 businesses participate nationwide. For more information, visit: http://www.jobshadow.org.

Component 7: Volunteer Work and Service Learning

Work-based learning experiences involve both paid and unpaid work opportunities. While volunteer work and service learning opportunities are generally unpaid, they still represent excellent ways to expose students to the soft skills associated with the world of work and give them opportunities to develop the basic skills needed to get and keep a job. Recognizing the value of volunteer work, many high schools and middle schools now require each student to participate in a certain number of hours of volunteer work as a requirement for graduation. Service learning has also become very popular. Service-learning offers opportunities for students to get involved with their communities in a tangible way by integrating service projects with classroom learning. Service-learning engages students in the educational process, using what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems.

When youth are involved in volunteer work and/or service learning, they can make the connection between what they are learning in school and how it will apply in the world of work. They get to observe the practical application of science, math, writing skills and oral communication skills in different areas of community work, thereby enriching the content of student learning. Volunteer work and service learning are a developmentally appropriate way for youth to begin exploring different types of jobs and, in some cases, to re-affirm their career choices. Such opportunities can be used to begin building a young person’s resume. Some HS/HT programs use such opportunities as one of the progressive steps a HS/HT student must go through to be eligible to participate in a paid internship.
**Online Resource to Consider**

“Learn and Serve America,” sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Services, supports and encourages service-learning throughout the United States, and enables over one million students to make meaningful contributions to their community while building their academic and civic skills. For more information, visit: [http://www.learnandserve.org](http://www.learnandserve.org).

**Component 8: Internships**

An internship is a situation in which a student works for an employer for a specific period of time to learn about a particular industry or occupation. Activities undertaken by interns may include special projects, a sample of tasks from different jobs, or tasks from one specific job. Internships provide opportunities for youth to obtain direct exposure to different careers in a structured paid or unpaid work setting. Through internships, students see a variety of applications of what they are learning. They discover more about their talents and their skills. Although internships are intended to provide a structured work experience for youth in a career field that is of interest to them, participation in an internship may help a young person discover that they are really not interested in a particular type of work. Such experiences can be extremely valuable in formulating initial career choices. Although internships are usually short-term, typically lasting for a few weeks to a few months, youth benefit by developing an understanding of what is required to be a successful employee as they are introduced to the performance expectations of the “real world.”

Internship programs often generate both formal and informal workplace mentors. A formal mentor relationship requires a pre-assigned match (see Section 5, Connecting Activities). Informal mentor relationships tend to be established at the worksite and may be coordinated by the employer for the duration of the internship. They may also be unprompted, more naturally occurring relationships that develop without direct, guided involvement from the HS/HT program operator. These relationships may be based on work or non-work issues and may develop from casual relationships and interactions.

Although developing and monitoring internships requires a significant investment of time, it is one of the most important predictors of success after school. Internship experiences (both paid and unpaid) are an ongoing, regular component of career development in the HS/HT program. Some HS/HT programs have explored the idea of internships for school credit.

In developing effective internships experiences, most HS/HT programs do some or all of the following:

- Establish criteria for students’ participation in both paid and unpaid internships. For example, paid internships may be used as rewards by reserving them for participants who have shown responsibility by regularly attending HS/HT meetings and events, maintaining a specific grade point average, and participating in an orientation to internships.

- Institute criteria that explain the differences between paid and unpaid internships and that lay out the order of internships (for example, requiring successful completion of an unpaid internship before becoming eligible for a paid internship).
• Identify students who are interested in participating and have demonstrated the level of maturity necessary to successfully complete an internship. Most HS/HT programs reserve internships for students who are juniors or seniors in high school.

• Advise students on available internship opportunities and help them select options they will find stimulating and relevant to their interests. Remember that the quality of the work activity is paramount.

• Draft an “Agreement” or “Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)” to use with employers who are willing to provide internship opportunities. You may obtain a sample MOU from the local Chamber of Commerce, a school-based partnership, or a Vocational Technical Center, and adjust it to meet the needs of HS/HT. *(See Exhibits for a Sample Internship Learning Agreement.)*

• As necessary, determine who will pay for any assistive technology that the student requires. The employer may pay for this directly or it can be done through collaboration with vocational rehabilitation or the school.

• Educate work supervisors at the internship sites about the HS/HT program and the goals of the internship program. This might be accomplished through one-on-one meetings with an employer who has agreed to provide an internship, or by holding a breakfast meeting for employers who might be willing to provide internship opportunities.

• Ask the young person, his or her parents, and the employer to complete a letter of agreement specifying the terms of the internship. *(See Exhibits for a Sample Internship Agreement.)*

• Communicate with both the employer and the HS/HT student during the course of the internship to monitor the youth’s progress and the satisfaction of both the youth and the employer. A work log could be used to record the hours the student is involved in the internship, as well as relevant weekly activities. *(See Exhibits for a Sample Internship Work Log and Exhibits for a Sample Internship Time Sheet.)*

• Celebrate accomplishments and the employer’s contributions. For example, host an appreciation breakfast or lunch to recognize and thank the youth and employers who have been involved in internships.

• Send thank-you letters to key personnel at the worksites of all interns and encourage the interns to send letters as well.

• Develop methods to evaluate the internship from the youth’s, parent’s, and employer’s perspective. Evaluation data could be gathered using student/employer evaluation and feedback forms. *(See Exhibits for sample evaluation/survey forms.)*

• Analyze the evaluation data, share with your advisory council and partners, and make changes or improvements as determined necessary.
Some additional strategies for developing HS/HT internships:

1. Ask the business or community partner to:
   - explain to the HS/HT program staff the various areas and departments within the organization;
   - identify what would be available and appropriate for an internship;
   - identify and provide training to youth on any logistics, responsibilities, safety, health, confidentiality, and/or security issues related to this experience;
   - establish what the student will do and what the expected outcomes will be;
   - instruct, supervise, support, and evaluate the youth during the internship; and
   - involve the union (if any) in planning.

2. HS/HT program operators should:
   - coordinate the internship with the business or community partner;
   - take care of administrative details for the internship experience, making sure to attend to any federal, state, and/or local policies, regulations, and/or requirements;
   - work with the employer and youth to set clear objectives for the internship;
   - prepare the youth in advance by reviewing any logistics, responsibilities, safety, health, confidentiality, and/or security concerns;
   - assist youth in connecting workplace experiences to coursework; and
   - assist the youth in arranging transportation.

3. HS/HT participants should:
   - sign a formal agreement stipulating the rules, behaviors, dress, and task expectations of the worksite;
   - request assistance from the designated supervisor as needed;
   - view themselves as employees with the responsibilities and consequences associated with actually holding the job; and
   - keep a journal of experiences and tasks, especially if earning credit for school.

Time Commitment

An internship may be full-time or part-time and last anywhere from 3 to 18 weeks. In addition, the person coordinating the internship for the organization may spend time in establishing the objectives of the experience. This may include speaking to department heads, supervisors, and employees within the organization about the internship; reviewing details with the school staff coordinator; preparing any pertinent background information; and mentoring the youth.

Summer is a logical time for youth to engage in both unpaid and paid internships, though they can occur throughout the year-- particularly if your site serves a large number of out-of-school youth; if students are in a school that uses block scheduling; or if the internship is a part of a career-technical education program of study. When an internship is part of career-technical education, it is often undertaken as a for-credit experience that is applied towards the student’s graduation requirements. The internship duration varies depending on the number of hours worked each week and the worker’s and internship supervisor’s preferences. Ideally, the young
person should work at least 25 hours per week during the course of a summer internship, for a minimum of six weeks.

Selection of an internship should be made by the youth, in consultation with the HS/HT program operator. Internships should be a coordinated effort of employers, youth, and program management. In many sites, youth apply for and are interviewed for an internship position just as they would for any job. When helping a young person identify and select an internship opportunity, remember that the quality of the work activity is more important than the quantity of work experience. In most cases, the young person will be working at the employer’s worksite, although telecommuting from home may be a viable option in some situations.

Benefits Associated with Internships

Internship benefits for HS/HT students include:
- learning skills, including computer skills, directly related to jobs in the STEM careers;
- gaining self-confidence;
- earning a paycheck, often for the first time, and learning how to manage the money earned;
- gaining an understanding of the benefits of work and how individual effort contributes to a common goal;
- gaining an understanding of how what they are learning in school is relevant to the world of work;
- learning to use public transportation or to travel independently;
- developing a resume and obtain recommendations;
- learning about the importance of punctuality, appropriate attire, and professional behavior;
- establishing relationships that may lead to internships and permanent or future employment;
- meeting people who are successful in the STEM careers;
- receiving feedback from supervisors and co-workers about college choices and future training plans;
- learning what careers you are not interested in pursuing;
- learning accommodation needs in the work world;
- connecting with workers who have disabilities; and
- obtaining credit towards graduation requirements as appropriate.

Internship benefits for employers include:
- providing assistance for permanent staff on projects;
- undertaking projects postponed for lack of time and/or staff resources;
- developing awareness about the potential for youth with disabilities to be successful, productive workers;
- increasing the organization’s overall comfort with persons with disabilities;
- improving their understanding of reasonable accommodations in the workplace; and
- fulfilling a corporate community responsibility role.

Internship benefits for partnering funding sources include:
- increased awareness about the capabilities of youth with disabilities;
- gaining information about individual participants’ skills and achievements; and
• developing a better understanding of the academic and work-related requirements of the business community, particularly high-tech employers.

(Source: Goddard/NASA Space Flight Center/UCP Prince George's & Montgomery County (MD) and the National Employer Leadership Council)

Online Resource to Consider

“Work-Based Learning” is one way youth can identify interests, strengths, skills, and needs related to career development. To access the brief, "Work-Based Learning and Future Employment for Youth: A Guide for Parents and Guardians," by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), visit: http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=1222.

Component 9: Entrepreneurship

Business ownership has always maintained its place in our country as part of the American dream. Entrepreneurial firms contribute to the U.S. economy in two ways. They provide change and competition, while also providing opportunities for many people to enter the mainstream economy. The U.S. economy’s recent success comes from change and competition as large firms adapt to new conditions (Kuratko, 2003). As new firms are created to capture new opportunities, this has led more women, minorities, immigrants, and other populations to enter the economy. In fact, minority groups and women are increasing their business ownership at a much higher rate than the national average (U.S. Census Bureau 2005).

Interest in entrepreneurship and self employment is everywhere. Youth, including those with disabilities, can gain self sufficiency through self-employment and entrepreneurship. A poll conducted by Junior Achievement (JA) in 2005 found that 68.6% of the teen-aged youth interviewed wanted to become entrepreneurs, even though they knew that it is a difficult proposition. While entrepreneurship and self-employment are not for everyone, such activities can help in the development of a young person as they transition to becoming an adult.

Some HS/HT programs have experimented with entrepreneurial ventures to provide their students with a different view of employment. The possibility of earning money and the responsibility associated with running a business can be a great motivator and incentive for youth. In addition, by sponsoring HS/HT students, small businesses provide an opportunity for youth to learn entrepreneurial and organizational skills.

Young people can create and operate a small business often with a consultant from the local business community, through Junior Achievement, or under the auspices of a school-based enterprise in retail, construction, hospitality, and a variety of other careers. Although there are many enterprises developed without the assistance of business, the support of local businesses is invaluable to youth. In thinking ahead to leadership development activities, business consultants can also serve as role models and mentors.
As HS/HT continues to grow and expand, many programs have adopted a multi-year program model. Within these multi-year programs, a program-sponsored small business is a particularly effective way to link students, curriculum, and the world of work. A HS/HT small business venture is a work-based learning opportunity in which a group of youth produces goods or services for sale, participates in multiple aspects of a business, and relates service and production activities to academics. Thus, these small businesses provide “real world” experiences in which youth play key roles as they produce and deliver products and services. Properly designed, a HS/HT entrepreneurial venture can effectively teach youth both academic and work-related skills. As young entrepreneurs design and operate businesses, they learn and apply academics while practicing leadership, teamwork, problem solving, and analytic thinking skills. Their collective and individual performance has a decisive impact on the business’ operation.

1. If you choose to work with an outside business or community partner to support your business, identify an individual who is willing to:

- consult with the HS/HT program on running a business in a school environment and on a school schedule;
- describe the basic management skills necessary to run the identified business;
- assist the HS/HT program operator and youth in learning about the industry;
- collaborate with HS/HT staff to determine the participation of students in the program-based enterprise; and
- serve as a resource for HS/HT staff.

2. HS/HT staff will need to:

- assist youth to research appropriate and interesting business opportunities;
- contact local small business entities and invite them to speak at a HS/HT activity;
- locate start-up funding to get entrepreneurial activities up and running;
- find staff (paid or volunteer);
- connect the activities outlined in developing the business to the student’s academic program;
- maintain ongoing communication with any employer partners; and
- identify and assist in the development of training on safety, health, and/or security concerns.

**Time Commitment**

The time commitment necessary to pursue an entrepreneurship will depend on the nature of the program-based enterprise being developed. In some cases, the HS/HT staff assigned to the program-based enterprise will need to work within the school’s schedule. In addition, given the nature of the business and its location, it may not be possible to run the business year-round. It will be very important to clearly define the extent and hours of the business.

Young people who work in small-business entrepreneurial ventures learn and apply a myriad of business skills that employers seek in new applicants. For example, youth

- use current technology found in many businesses (spreadsheets, databases, online sales);
- learn to develop a business plan;
• become familiar with real-world business practices (e.g., ordering supplies, controlling inventory, implementing standard accounting and money management practices, developing and carrying out marketing/advertising strategies, developing and maintaining positive customer relations);
• learn and implement quality control procedures as applied both to the product/service and to the mathematical, written, and verbal processes used for operation;
• form, sustain, and work within teams;
• supervise and provide feedback about the performance of others;
• communicate effectively with a wide range of individuals, including both peers and adults in the community;
• make key decisions regarding products/services;
• conduct marketing and feasibility studies;
• work with HS/HT staff and local business leaders to create business plans;
• develop governing structure, personnel policies, and hiring policies, practices, and procedures;
• screen, interview, and select new or additional participants;
• help design incentive structures for participating students;
• determine how, when, and by whom the product/service will be produced and delivered (including costs, price structures, production, advertising, and distribution); and
• deal effectively and appropriately with the myriad of interpersonal, communication, scheduling, and other issues inherent in a new business venture.

**Online Resources to Consider**

“**Abilities Fund**” is the first and only nationwide community developer targeted exclusively to advancing entrepreneurial opportunities for Americans with disabilities. Services are designed specifically for individuals with disabilities interested in business ownership and the organizations that serve them. Services focus on three primary markets: entrepreneurs with disabilities; microenterprise development organizations; vocational rehabilitation agencies; and other disability-related organizations. Visit: [http://www.abilitiesfund.org](http://www.abilitiesfund.org).

“**Association for Enterprise Opportunity**” (AEO) is the national association of organizations committed to microenterprise development. AEO provides its members with a forum, information, and a voice to promote enterprise opportunity for people and communities with limited access to economic resources. A listing of programs can be found on the website. Visit: [http://www.microenterpriseworks.org](http://www.microenterpriseworks.org).

“**Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education**” is a national membership organization that provides leadership and advocacy for the growth of the field of entrepreneurship education as a lifelong learning process. Visit: [http://www.entre-ed.org](http://www.entre-ed.org).

“**Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation**” works with partners to encourage entrepreneurship across America and to promote entrepreneurial success at all levels. The Foundation works to
further understand the phenomenon of entrepreneurship, to advance entrepreneurship education and training efforts, to promote entrepreneurship-friendly policies, and to assist entrepreneurs and others in commercializing new technologies that promise to improve the economic welfare of our nation. Visit: http://www.kauffman.org.

**Junior Achievement (JA):** JA uses hands-on experiences to help young people understand the economics of life. In partnership with business and educators, JA brings the real world to students, opening their minds to their potential. Visit: http://www.ja.org.

**“Mind Your Own Business”** was created by the U.S. Small Business Administration and Junior Achievement to provide where people can turn their entrepreneurial dreams into reality. The site outlines five easy steps to business ownership and includes information on the challenges and rewards of being an entrepreneur. Visit: http://www.mindyourownbiz.org.

**“Self-Employment for People with Disabilities Listserv”** was established by Diversity World to promote the development of more self-employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It is intended to be a networking forum for entrepreneurs with disabilities and individuals or organizations who have an interest or role in this arena. Members are invited to post comments and questions and promote related events, publications, organizations and similar resources. Visit: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pwd_self-employment.

**“Small Business and Self-Employment Service (SBSES)”** has a group of consultants who can provide ongoing business development supports and links to specific mentoring resources in your area. Contact them directly for additional information at 1-800-526-7234 or visit: http://www.jan.wvu.edu/entre.

**“START-UP/USA”** (Self-Employment Technical Assistance, Resources, & Training) is a partnership between Virginia Commonwealth University and Griffin-Hammis and Associates, LLC, and funded by a cooperative agreement from the Office of Disability Employment Policy in the U.S. Department of Labor. START-UP/USA provides technical assistance and disseminates resources nationally to individuals interested in pursuing self-employment. It sponsors a live web cast series with successful entrepreneurs sharing their secrets for success. Visit: http://www.start-up-usa.biz.


**“The Road to Self-Sufficiency: Guide to Entrepreneurship for Youth with Disabilities”** is a publication by NCWD/Youth that promotes the benefits of entrepreneurship education and self-employment for all youth, including youth with disabilities. It also provides tools to assist those working in this area in providing quality programs. This Guide may be purchased from NCWD/Youth or downloaded from their website at: http://www.ncwd-youth.info.
Getting Organized

The following things will help you create exciting and rewarding work-based opportunities and learning experiences for HS/HT participants.

- **Familiarize** yourself with your local labor market statistics and the STEM employment opportunities in your community.

- **Contact** business leaders in your community through organizations such as the local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Lions Club, Business Leadership Network (BLN), Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), and industry associations such as the Information Technology Association of America. Ask questions such as:
  - What are the key information technology skill requirements for most of your businesses?
  - What is your preferred process for establishing a partnership with education and training programs?
  - What would you expect from such a partnership?

- **Team** with career and technology coordinators in your local public schools to pool your work-based/job search partnering resources.

- **Familiarize** yourself with the local business media to seek potential work-based partnerships and publicity.

- **Seek** a variety of employer partners that represent a diverse range of companies (large corporations, small business, self-employment situations, private companies, non-profits, faith-based organizations, state and local government agencies, etc.).

- **Evaluate** the disability-friendliness of potential employer partners. Is the building physically accessible? Are the rest rooms accessible? Is Braille on the elevator panels? Has the organization offered disability awareness training to staff?

- **Provide** employers with information about working with youth with disabilities (e.g. tax incentives, etc.) that can be obtained from your local Business Leadership Network (BLN), local One-Stop Career Center, or Vocational Rehabilitation office.
Exhibit: Sample Online Career Assessments

Online career assessments can be fun and informative, but many have not been evaluated for reliability and validity, including those that are abbreviated versions of pencil and paper tests. Many sites do not provide interpretations of results. Be sure that the results are considered along with other career preparation activities and information.

- **Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment** — These free assessments evaluate youth life skills. They are completed online and automatically scored. Visit: [http://www.caseylifeskills.org/pages/assess/assess_index.htm](http://www.caseylifeskills.org/pages/assess/assess_index.htm).

- **The Career Key** — This assessment tool was developed to help people with career choices -- career changes, career planning, job skills, and choosing a college major or educational program. It is based on the best science and practices of career counseling, and the most complete and accurate information available. It has been used by career counselors for over 20 years. Millions of students and adults use this website. More than 1,000 schools, colleges, libraries, and career services link to it. Visit: [http://www.careerkey.org/english](http://www.careerkey.org/english).

- **Type Focus Personality Type Profile** — This quick and easy 66-question assessment reports a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and offers a bit of career direction. Visit: [http://www.typefocus.com](http://www.typefocus.com).

This list of online assessments is for informational and educational purposes only and should NOT be interpreted as a recommendation for any test instrument.
Exhibit: Examples of Informal Career Assessment Activities

The following represent some examples of informal career assessment activities that HS/HT staff can use with students to identify their career interests, explore their work styles, and gauge their understanding of the soft skills needed to succeed in the workplace.

1. Create generic interest surveys and structured interviews using questions and prompts such as the following to obtain information about HS/HT participants.
   - List three occupations of interest.
   - What do you see yourself doing after high school?
   - List two jobs at which you think you could succeed.
   - What skills would you like to learn while still in school?
   - What do you do in your free time?

2. Use rating scales to assess school and work performance. For the purpose of the HS/HT program, these questions might be in the areas of employment, independent living, and personal/work-related skills. Rating scales might include a self-assessment where the young person assesses his or her skills independently. Alternatively, a parent/guardian or other appropriate representatives (such as a teacher or transition counselor) may be asked to complete a short form with a list of specific questions about the young person’s performance in other environments. Rating scales can be purchased commercially or can be easily developed by program operators. Consider questions targeted to obtain information on such things as:
   - Attendance and punctuality
     - Misses less than 3 days per quarter
     - Misses 4-5 days per quarter
     - Misses 6-7 days per quarter
     - Misses 8-9 days per quarter
   - Communication skills
     - Freely expresses thoughts and needs
     - Expresses thoughts and needs with prompts
     - Experiences difficulty expressing thoughts and needs
   - Initiative
     - Seeks out work as needed without needing to be asked
     - Will do extra work if asked, asks questions to clarify
     - Completes duties as assigned without prompting
     - Requires prompts to move to the next task assignment
• Quality of work

___Displays consistent quality of work; independently spots and corrects mistakes
___Displays consistent quality of work/usually does not spot errors
___Displays inconsistent quality of work

3. Consider creating informal work samples to discover pre-existing knowledge (or present levels of performance) in the following areas:

• Computer operations such as work processing, spreadsheets, and PowerPoint;
• Math skills and technical writing; and
• Ability to follow tasks requiring multiple-step directions.

4. Notice environmental conditions when engaging participants in activities, noting under what conditions they work best. For instance, does the young person prefer and/or perform best when:

• In a group or alone?
• In a noisy or quiet environment?
• Receiving visual (written) or auditory (spoken) directions?
• In a fast paced or a more relaxed pace?
• Completing routine or varied multiple tasks?

5. Use the Internet for career-related, interest, and personality assessments. Since some relevant websites will be more useful and applicable than others, HS/HT program operators should preview all websites prior to use by program participants in an effort to determine the value, the time needed for administration, etc. When deemed appropriate, online assessments are not only convenient and fun, but also provide for computer and technology-related learning experiences as well as opportunities for observing the computer or keyboarding skills of youth participating in HS/HT.

6. Consider disability-related accommodation needs. Some youth with disabilities may require specific accommodations in order to generate accurate assessment results. Questions to consider during the career assessment process include:

• Does the student have the physical and/or sensory abilities to perform the tasks? If not, what modifications or accommodations are needed to enable the student to perform the tasks? If needed, are the modifications readily available, and if not, how long will it take to secure or develop them?

• How should instruction be delivered, or is the purpose to learn more about how the individual learns best? Is the use of picture cues, lists, or other such prompts
needed? If so, are these already in place or will they need to be developed during the course of the assessment?

- Has an accommodation been documented in the young person’s Individualized Education Program, Individualized Transition Plan, 504 Plan, Individualized Plan for Employment, etc. (if necessary)?
Exhibit: Disability Etiquette

1. Speak directly to the person, rather than to a companion or sign language interpreter who may be present.

2. Offer to shake hands when introduced. People with limited hand use or an artificial limb can usually shake hands and offering the left hand is an acceptable greeting.

3. Always identify yourself and others who may be with you when meeting someone with a visual disability. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking. When dining with a friend who has a vision disability, ask if you can describe what is on his or her plate.

4. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen or ask for instructions.

5. Treat adults as adults. Address people with disabilities by their first names only when extending that same familiarity to all others. Never patronize people in wheelchairs.

6. Do not lean against or hang on someone’s wheelchair. Bear in mind that people with disabilities treat their chairs as extensions of their bodies; so do people with guide dogs and help dogs. Never distract a work animal from his or her job without the owner’s permission.

7. Listen attentively when talking with people who have difficulty speaking and wait for them to finish. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers or a nod of the head. Never pretend to understand; instead repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond.

8. Whenever possible, place yourself at eye level when speaking with someone in a wheelchair or on crutches.

9. Tap a person who has a hearing disability on the shoulder or wave your hand to get his or her attention. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to establish if the person can read your lips. If so, try to factor the light source and keep hands, cigarettes, and food away from your mouth when speaking. If a person is wearing a hearing aid, don’t assume that he or she has the ability to discriminate your speaking voice. Never shout at a person; speak in a normal tone of voice.

10. Relax. Don’t be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as “See you later” or “Did you hear about this?” that seem to relate to a person’s disability.

Exhibit: Steps to Follow to Conduct an Effective Informational Interview

1. **Identify the occupation or industry you wish to explore.** — In what occupation are you interested?

2. **Prepare for the interview.** — Read something about the field prior to the interview. Decide what information you would like to know about the specific job. Prepare a list of questions that you would like to have answered.

3. **Identify people to interview.** — Start with a list of people you already know — friends, relatives, teachers, neighbors, members of your church, etc. Look through the Yellow Pages for additional ideas. Try to get a contact person’s name before calling a specific business.

4. **Arrange for the interview.** — Contact the person to set up an interview by telephone, by e-mail, or by having someone who knows the person make the appointment for you.

5. **Conduct the interview.** — Dress appropriately, arrive on time, be polite, and professional. Refer to your list of prepared questions, stay on track, but allow for discussion. Before leaving, ask your contact to suggest names of others who might be helpful to you and ask permission to use your contact’s name when contacting these people.

6. **Follow up.** — Immediately following the interview, record the information gathered. Be sure to send a thank-you note to your contact within one week of the interview.

**NOTE:** After considering the information you have received, you may want to adjust your job search, resume, and/or career objective to reflect what you learned about the job and about your continued interest in that area of work.

(Source: Job Service Wisconsin, Wisconsin Department of Industry Labor and Human Relations)
Exhibit: 20 Questions for an Effective Informational Interview

Prepare a list of your own questions for your informational interview. The following are some sample questions for your consideration.

1. On a typical day in this position, what do you do?
2. What training or education is required for this type of work?
3. What personal qualities or abilities are important to being successful in this job?
4. What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?
5. How did you get your job?
6. What opportunities for advancement are there in this field?
7. What entry-level jobs are best for learning as much as possible?
8. What is the salary range for various positions in this field?
9. How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
10. Is there a demand for people in this occupation?
11. What special advice would you give a person entering this field?
12. What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field?
13. What are the basic prerequisites for different jobs/positions in this field?
14. Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
15. What do you think of the experience I’ve had as it would apply to my entering this field?
16. From your perspective, what are the problems you see working in this field?
17. If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same career path for yourself? Why? What would you change, if anything?
18. With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research before I make a final decision?
19. What do you think of my resume? Do you see any problem areas? How would you suggest I change it?
20. Whom should I talk to next? When I call him/her, may I use your name?

(Source: Job Service Wisconsin, Wisconsin Department of Industry Labor and Human Relations)
Exhibit: Disability Disclosure: Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages of Disclosure

- Disclosure allows a young person to receive reasonable accommodations so that s/he can pursue work, school, or community activities more effectively.
- Disclosure provides legal protection against discrimination (as specified in the Americans with Disabilities Act).
- Disclosure reduces stress, since protecting a “secret” can take a lot of energy.
- Disclosure gives a young person a clearer impression of what kinds of expectations people may have of him/her and his/her abilities.
- Disclosure ensures that a young person is getting what s/he needs in order to be successful (for example, through an accommodation or medication).
- Disclosure provides full freedom to examine and question health insurance and other benefits.
- Disclosure provides greater freedom to communicate should a young person face changes in his/her particular situation.
- Disclosure improves a young person with self-image through self-advocacy.
- Disclosure allows a young person to involve other professionals (for example, educators and employment service providers) in the learning of skills and the development of accommodations.
- Disclosure increases a young person’s comfort level.

Disadvantages of Disclosure

- Disclosure can cause a young person to relive bad past experiences that resulted in the loss of a job or negative responses from his/her peers.
- Disclosure can lead to the experience of exclusion.
- Disclosure can cause a young person to become an object of curiosity.
- Disclosure can lead to a young person being blamed if something doesn’t go right.
- Disclosure can lead to a young person being treated differently than other youth.
- Disclosure can bring up conflicting feelings about a young person’s self-image.
- Disclosure can lead to a young person being viewed as needy, not self-sufficient, or unable to perform on par with peers.
- Disclosure could cause a young person to be overlooked for a job, team, group, or organization.
- Disclosing personal and sensitive information can be extremely difficult and embarrassing.

(Source: National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. (2005). The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities.)
**Exhibit: Sample Internship Learning Agreement**

This agreement must be read, understood, and signed by the intern and the person who will be acting as the intern’s supervisor. It will also be signed by HS/HT staff and the parent, if appropriate, to ensure that all parties concur with the goals and expectations of the internship. (Please attach additional sheets if necessary.)

Name of Student: ________________________________________________

Company/Organization: __________________________ Dept. _______

Address of Internship Location: ________________________________

Name of Contact Person: __________________________ Title: ___________

Telephone: ___________ Fax: ________________ E-mail: ______________

The internship is set up for a minimum of ___ hours per week for ___ weeks.

**Internship Schedule:**

Begins ___/___/___ Ends ___/___/___ Planned Absences: __________________________

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The student will report to:

Name: ___________________________ Title: __________________________

Telephone Number: _______________ E-mail Address: _______________

**Internship Goals/Learning Objectives:**

1.

2.

3.

**General Responsibilities and Duties:**

**Specific Projects and Products:**
Student:
I, __________________________, agree to the following expectations:

1. To attend regularly and on time for my assigned internship.
2. To adhere to the regulations of the organization in which I am interning.
3. To notify my supervisor on days that I will be absent.
4. To notify my HS/HT program operator if any problems or concerns arise.

Supervisor:
I, __________________________, agree to do the following:

1. Provide assignments and duties that contribute to the learning experience of the student.
2. Provide mentoring for the student.
3. Provide assessment and feedback to the HS/HT program operator, as requested.
4. Notify the HS/HT program operator at any time if work performance is unsatisfactory or there are any problems with the placement.
5. Notify the HS/HT program operator if the supervising manager changes.
6. Review the youth’s training progress at regular intervals to determine whether the internship should become paid (i.e., if it is an unpaid internship).

Internship Training Plan
The following specific resources and strategies will be used to achieve the goals listed in the internship agreement:

Goal 1:

Goal 2:

Goal 3:

Comments:
Exhibit: Sample Internship Agreement

For many youth, this will be the first internship and for others it may be the first paid internship experience. Please read this information carefully. Print or type all information.

Date: ___________________
Name:__________________________________________________________
Home Telephone: ______________ Work Telephone: ______________
E-mail Address: __________________________________________________
In case of an emergency, please contact: ______________________________
Emergency phone number(s): _______________________________________

READ AND INITIAL EACH STATEMENT BELOW:

_____ I will arrive at my job site at my scheduled time.
_____ I will work a maximum of ____ hours per week and record my hours correctly on my time sheet.
_____ If I obtain a paid internship, I will receive payment only for the actual amount of time I have worked during the pay period.
_____ I will dress appropriately according to the standards set by my job site.
_____ My supervisor’s name is: ________________________________________.
_____ My mentor’s name, if different than my supervisor, is: ______________.
_____ I will make every effort to attend all special activities that have been planned for me.
_____ I will take the appropriate time allowed for lunch and check in with my supervisor/mentor before I leave and when I return.
_____ If I am sick, I will immediately contact my supervisor/mentor at ____________________________.
_____ If an accident or injury occurs, I will notify my supervisor/mentor and the HS/HT program operator immediately.
_____ I will not make or receive personal phone calls from the worksite or use worksite equipment or supplies for personal use. I understand that if I am assigned to a computer workstation, I will not abuse my privileges by using my system for games, chat rooms, or sending unauthorized electronic messages.
_____ I understand that I may be suspended or released from my job if I have three or more unexcused absences, have repeated tardiness, leave work without permission, or break any of the behavior standards of the organization.

Student Signature:________________________________________ Date:_____________________

Supervisor Signature:____________________________________ Date:_____________________

(Source: Adapted from the Florida HS/HT Summer Internship Manual)
Exhibit: Sample Internship Work Log

Please copy this form (one for each week). Complete and return to ___________________ at the end of _____ each work week _____ or every two weeks of work.

Intern Name: ____________________________________________________________

Week(s) of: _____________________________________________________________

Duties Performed: _______________________________________________________

________________________________________________

________________________________________________

New Skills Learned: ______________________________________________________

________________________________________________

________________________________________________

Comments: ____________________________________________________________

________________________________________________

________________________________________________

Dates Worked:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month/Day/Year</th>
<th>Hours (from – to)</th>
<th>Hours Worked</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
Total Hours Worked: ___________________

Supervisor Signature: ___________________________ Date: __________

Supervisor Name (Print): _______________________________________

(Source: Adapted from the Florida HS/HT Summer Internship Manual)
**Exhibit: Sample Internship Time Sheet**

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Employer: ___________________________________________________________

Work Location: _______________________________________________________

Supervisor/Mentor: ____________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (mm/dd/yy)</th>
<th>Time in</th>
<th>Lunch*</th>
<th>Time Out</th>
<th>Total Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong></td>
<td>Date: 10/10/02</td>
<td>Time in: 9:00</td>
<td>Lunch: 12-12:45</td>
<td>Time Out: 3:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Time in:</td>
<td>Lunch:</td>
<td>Time Out:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Time in:</td>
<td>Lunch:</td>
<td>Time Out:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Time in:</td>
<td>Lunch:</td>
<td>Time Out:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Time in:</td>
<td>Lunch:</td>
<td>Time Out:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Time in:</td>
<td>Lunch:</td>
<td>Time Out:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Lunch breaks are NOT working hours & should not be included in Total Hours recorded.

Total Hours: ___________________
Your time should be calculated as follows:
1 hour = 1.0
3/4 hour = .75
1/2 hour = .50
1/4 hour = .25

I certify that the above information is true and correct.

HS/HT Participant Signature: __________________________ Date: __________

Supervisor/Authorized Signature: __________________________ Date: __________

All time sheets are due to the HS/HT program operator on __________ (day), by __________ (time).

(Source: Adapted from the Florida HS/HT Summer Internship Manual)
Exhibit: Sample Internship Evaluation

To be completed by the supervisor/mentor:

HS/HT Participant’s Name: ________________________________

Business Name: _________________________________________

Duties - List the top four job duties below:
1. ______________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________
4. ______________________________________________________

On the list below, rate the young person using the following number scale. Please compare to your average employee:

4 = Exceptional  3 = Above average  2 = Average  1 = Below average
N/A = does not apply

Work Habits and Skills

_____ 1. Constructive criticism. Takes it in stride and tries to improve.

_____ 2. Appearance: Clean and wears suitable clothing to work each day.

_____ 3. Attendance: Shows up and regularly returns from lunch and breaks on time.

_____ 4. Attitude: Shows interest and pride in work and is willing to complete assigned tasks.


_____ 6. Creativity: Demonstrates the aptitude to create new procedures if necessary.

_____ 7. Follows instructions: Performs tasks assigned and follows procedures step by step.

_____ 8. Follows rules: Obeys all work-site regulations and safety rules.

_____ 9. Independence: Able to work without supervision.
10. Initiative: A self-starter, willing to go on to the next step or asks for more work.

11. On task: Pays attention to the task (even if routine) and keeps busy the entire work day.

12. Problem-solving skills: Makes appropriate decisions when needed.


15. Social skills: Interacts well with other co-workers; demonstrates cooperation and maturity.

16. Use of equipment: Uses and cares for all equipment properly.

OVERALL RATING: ____________________

Additional Comments: __________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Supervisor’s or Mentor’s Name & Title: _______________________________________

Date: ____________________

Thank you for completing this evaluation & providing a youth-based internship.
Your participation in our HS/HT program is appreciated!

(Source: Adapted from the Florida HS/HT Summer Internship Manual)
Exhibit: Sample Mid-Internship Youth Survey
(To be completed by the HS/HT Student.)

Please take a few moments to complete this survey. We will use this information to plan the rest of your internship experience. Please return it to the HS/HT program operator.

What have you have learned (or observed) about the use of technology on your job or within the agency where you are working?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
What types of technology have you used while participating in this internship?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
What skills have you developed or improved through your participation in this High School/High Tech summer internship?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Are there any opportunities you would like to explore in the remaining weeks of this internship?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________
Job Site: ___________________________
Job Position: ___________________________

(Source: Adapted from the Florida HS/HT Summer Internship Manual)
Exhibit: Sample Internship Parent Survey

Please complete this survey and return it to:______________________________

Were your expectations for your son/daughter’s HS/HT internship met?

(Circle one) YES NO

If “no” please explain:____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Describe the benefits your child received from his/her participation in this internship.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Describe the benefits you received from his/her participation in this internship.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Would you recommend a HS/HT summer internship to other parents and students? (Circle one)

YES NO

Please explain why or why not:____________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

What changes would have made this internship more beneficial for your son/daughter?_______
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Your Name:__________________________________________ Date: ____________

Student Name:_________________________ Job Position: ________________

(Source: Adapted from the Florida HS/HT Summer Internship Manual)
Section 4. Youth Development and Youth Leadership

This section examines youth development and leadership activities within HS/HT programs. Youth development and leadership are not isolated events that occur only at an annual workshop or at periodic meetings. Opportunities to develop personal and leadership skills must be cultivated into a variety of HS/HT activities and events. There are four components in this section:

1. Putting Youth in Control of Their Destiny
2. Supportive Adults
3. Opportunities for Personal Growth
4. Leadership Opportunities

Often, and mistakenly, the terms “youth development” and “youth leadership” are used interchangeably. Based on research of existing definitions, NCWD/Youth has adopted the following working definition of youth development and youth leadership.

“Youth development is the process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences that help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Youth leadership is an important part of the youth development process.”

“Youth leadership is both an internal and an external process leading to (1) the ability to guide or direct others on a course of action, influence their opinion and behavior, and show the way by going in advance; and (2) the ability to analyze one’s own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and vocational goals, and have the self-esteem to carry them out.”

Although research shows that youth who participate in youth development and leadership experiences are more likely to do well in school, be involved in their communities, and positively transition through adolescence to adulthood, youth with disabilities have often been isolated from mainstream youth development programs.

Component 1: Putting Youth in Control of Their Destiny

The idea of taking control of one’s life can be very exciting, but it can also be very overwhelming. There are three skills that youth with disabilities should learn to utilize to better take control of their lives and start making informed decisions about their future: informed choice, self-determination, and self-advocacy.

Self-Determination

Self-determination refers to being in charge of one’s own life to the greatest degree possible. It means having the freedom to plan one’s life and the authority to control the resources one has to the maximum extent possible. It also means taking responsibility for the consequences of one’s
choices. Self-determination may also include the responsibility of participating in and contributing to one’s community.

Self-determination can be broken down into a number of component parts, including:

- making choices;
- taking responsibility for making decisions;
- actively engaging in problem solving;
- setting and attaining goals;
- doing a self-evaluation;
- pursuing self-instruction;
- becoming self-aware;
- seeking self-knowledge; and
- practicing self-advocacy.

Within the various individualized planning processes outlined in various pieces of legislation, self-determination should play a major role in determining what goes into a written plan. For example, when a special education student reaches high school (if not sooner), s/he should be involved in selecting individuals to serve on his/her IEP team and individualized transition team (ITP); setting the agenda for meetings; and, to the extent possible, taking the lead in running these meetings. When a young person is determined eligible for VR services, s/he should receive the support necessary to exercise informed choice as decisions are made about employment goals to pursue, the services needed to reach those goals, and the providers of these services. Similarly, if a young person is receiving services through a One-Stop Center, s/he should be involved in decisions about the nature and duration of the services to be received.

Clearly, a young person may be able to exercise self-determination in some areas of life, and not in others. In some instances, HS/HT staff will need to work with their students to identify the decisions they can control now as well as those that they will want to control later in life.

The Youth Advisory Committee for the National Council on Disability has identified the following ways that youth can be more self-determined:

- Having confidence and believe in one’s self;
- Identifying what one’s dreams and goals are;
- Clearly communicating and sharing one’s wants and needs;
- Knowing one’s strengths and limitations;
- Having a positive attitude;
- Learning from mistakes;
- Taking responsibility for one’s choices;
- Being aware of one’s rights;
- Having opinions about everything that affects you;
- Knowing how and when to ask for help;
- Setting realistic and achievable goals;
- Making educated decisions; and
- Never giving up!
Informed Choice

Informed choice refers to having the right information to make the right decision at the right time. It also means being able to understand the big picture and come up with new and appropriate solutions when faced with problems. In order to make an informed choice, a young person must obtain relevant information in an understandable and developmentally appropriate format. Young people must explore and be able to recognize potential consequences of different choices (i.e., both good and bad) and be ready to accept responsibility for their choices.

HS/HT youth development and leadership activities need to be organized to capture the fundamentals of effective youth development programming. This includes providing supportive adults and peers through role modeling; supporting youth development through goal setting, self-advocacy training, and conflict resolution; and offering growing opportunities for leadership development. Setting goals, solving problems, and making wise decisions are not just skills for leaders, but are necessary skills for leading a successful life. They are also skills which are of utmost importance to success in the workplace.

Another important aspect of informed choice is the “freedom to fail.” It is safe to assume that all program staff would like to see the youth they are working with be successful. However, a supportive environment is also one that encourages a variety of learning experiences, including the learning that comes from failing at a task. Though meaning well, sometimes programs will either lower expectations for students with disabilities or create a system of permanent safety nets to avoid upsetting or disappointing students with disabilities or their parents. It is important that programs allow for both risk taking and failure in the learning process and help students review mistakes, refine goals, and revise their plans when things do not go well. The entrepreneurship activities discussed in the career exploration and work-based learning section are examples of one type of activity that would promote risk taking.

Online Resources to Consider

“Teaching Self-Determination in Alaskan Schools: A Toolkit for Teachers,” a project sponsored by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, has developed a toolkit for teachers, parents, students, and other professionals who are interested in promoting self-determination within home, school and community settings. Visit: [http://www.alaskachd.org/toolkit](http://www.alaskachd.org/toolkit).

“Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination Synthesis Projects” sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC), synthesizes information on research results and best practices related to self-determination and self-advocacy interventions. The effort is to improve, expand, and accelerate the use of this knowledge by the professionals who serve children and youth with disabilities and the parents who rear, educate, and support their children with disabilities. Visit: [http://www.uncc.edu/sdsp/resource_list/sd_lesson_plans.asp](http://www.uncc.edu/sdsp/resource_list/sd_lesson_plans.asp).

“What’s self-determination, and why is it important?” is a brief that outlines research on self-determination, suggesting that youth with disabilities who actively direct their own lives are more likely to successfully transition into adult life. It addresses the development of self-
determination skills and student-led IEP meetings and includes descriptions and contact information for several self-determination curricula as well as helpful web links. Visit: http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=962.

Self-Advocacy

Expressing one’s desires, needs, and rights is an essential component of youth development. It is also a pre-requisite to becoming a responsible, independent adult. Self-advocacy involves making decisions and communicating one’s desires and needs to others. As a young person moves from high school to post-school activities, self-advocacy skills take on a new importance. While in school, young people tend to rely heavily on the support of their parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and other adults to help them make choices and obtain needed services and supports. As a young person with a disability leaves high school, s/he needs to be preparing for increased independence in order to be better equipped to make his/her own decisions in the future. The more a young person takes control of the choices and decisions made while still in school, the easier it will be to make choices and decisions after leaving high school.

Providing the opportunity and training for young people to practice self-advocacy can benefit youth with disabilities in many ways as they transition from school to higher education or to a career. Such training can help youth with disabilities:

- set goals and become more involved in developing their Individual Education Programs (IEPs) while in school, particularly the transition component of the IEP;
- explore, identify, and pursue occupational interests;
- make informed academic, career, and life decisions;
- seek education, training, and employment that fulfill their aspirations, challenge them, and make the most of their abilities;
- identify and develop beneficial mentoring relationships, service learning opportunities, internships, and other learning experiences;
- obtain needed accommodations/modifications in academic, work, and social situations;
- understand their rights and seek legal protection if needed;
- have the confidence they need to live independently;
- become effective mentors and role models; and
- become leaders within local, state, and national disability communities and in the larger society.

One of the most critical features of self-advocacy skills for youth with disabilities involves disability disclosure—to both employers and postsecondary educational institutions. Disclosure of a disability is always a choice. Youth must make individual decisions about disclosure for each job lead pursued. HS/HT staff should help young people with disabilities ponder this question: “Does disclosure of my disability at this time and in this way support my objectives (being successful in my college course work, getting hired for a specific job, receiving accommodations, etc.)?”
Online Resources to Consider

“The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities” was designed by people with disabilities to walk youth through the experience of disclosure. Created by NCWD/Youth, it helps young people make informed decisions about whether or not to disclose their disability and understand how that decision may impact their education, employment, and social lives. The Workbook is available for purchase from NCWD/Youth or it can be downloaded free of charge at: http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/411.html.

“The Self-Determination Synthesis Project,” at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, has created lesson plan starters based on data-based research studies in which students or adults were taught a new self-determination skill or set of skills. The lesson plan starters were developed based on the description of the intervention and data collection procedures provided in each study and each includes lesson objectives, setting and materials, lesson content, teaching procedures, evaluation methods, and, if a published curriculum is referenced in the lesson plan, cost and contact information for the curriculum. Visit: http://www.uncc.edu/sdsp/sd_lesson_plans.asp.

Component 2: Supportive Adults

Role Models
A role model is a person whose behavior in a particular position is imitated by others. For youth, career role models are often people with whom they have contact in everyday life or see in the media — teachers, parents, nurses, doctors, clergy, police officers, athletes, musicians, and actors. Many youth do not meet or spend time with adults who work in high-tech occupations such as the STEM careers - people who could become important role models. HS/HT can help make this connection so young people can experience first-hand what it feels like to work in a STEM field or a high-tech industry.

Role models can help youth:
- gain understanding of specific high-tech occupations and education/training requirements for entering those occupations;
- learn about the personal experiences of people in STEM careers and other high-tech occupations;
- ask questions about the STEM careers, particularly specific areas of interest’
- learn about the importance of leadership by meeting leaders in a particular field;
- interact with successful adults with disabilities; and
- make valuable networking contacts with people working in fields of interest.

Role models can be either adults or experienced peers, and they can be persons with or without disabilities. Role models can be found in many settings, including business and industry, government agencies, secondary schools, colleges and universities, professional or trade associations, volunteer organizations, and student leadership organizations or clubs. Youth can also find examples of role models in books, in trade or popular magazines, and on the Internet.
Online Resources to Consider

“Career Scientists Who Are Disabled Role Models” offers career stories about scientists with disabilities. It provides information on what their job duties entail and what accommodations they used to successfully perform their work. Visit: http://www.as.wvu.edu/~scidis/organize/fsdrole.html.

Mentors

NCWD/Youth defines mentoring as, “a trusting relationship, formalized into a program of structured activities, which brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee.”

Mentors are good listeners, people who care, people who want to help young people bring out the strengths they already possess. In the broader definition, a mentor is an experienced person who goes out of their way to help another person reach important life goals. The “formal” mentor agrees to an ongoing planned partnership that focuses on helping another reach a specific goal over a specific period of time. HS/HT program operators can effectively partner with local and state community organizations in order to provide formal mentors.

Research shows that successful mentoring relationships last for a minimum of one year. Although hybrids of mentoring models exist, there are four basic types of mentoring models.

Traditional One-to-One Mentoring – A mentoring model in which one adult is paired with one young person. Typically, there will be an extensive matching process to ensure a strong relationship, and it is expected that the commitment will be for one year or longer.

Peer Mentoring – A mentoring model in which peers from a similar developmental stage provide support and advice to mentees. Peers can be close in age or farther apart, depending on the circumstances.

Group Mentoring – This form of mentoring matches one or more adults with a group of youth in a structured setting. This could include an individual or group of adult volunteers working with several youth in a school or a faith-based program, or a group of employees from one company working with students from a local school in a work-based mentoring program.

E-Mentoring – A contemporary model commonly used in schools in which one (or more) youth is (are) matched with a mentor. The youth and mentor regularly exchange e-mail messages for a designated period of time. In ideal circumstances, e-mentoring includes occasional face-to-face meetings to provide a more personal connection. In many instances, a program coordinator (often a teacher) will monitor all correspondence and meetings.

HS/HT coordinators can help youth meet role models and potentially recruit mentors by:
- inviting successful high-tech professionals to speak at meetings;
- inviting college students who are planning to enter STEM and high-tech careers to speak to groups of HS/HT students;
• organizing, or helping HS/HT participants organize, a career fair at which youth can meet with professionals in the STEM careers and other high-tech occupations or with students in related academic programs;
• encouraging youth to conduct informational interviews with representatives of disability groups such as staff at Independent Living Centers and leaders of various disability and social service organizations;
• encouraging youth to conduct informational interviews with various workers at their internship sites or with adults who work in the STEM careers and other high-tech occupations;
• encouraging HS/HT participants to share information about role models;
• asking youth to research and write about a leader in a high-tech field of interest;
• asking youth to identify and correspond by mail or e-mail with role models in a selected field to learn about how those people entered the field, what their work entails, and how they progressed in their profession;
• finding ways for youth to participate in professional conferences attended by role models in a field of interest, or to serve on student committees of professional or trade organizations; and
• tapping into an existing mentoring program or creating your own e-mentoring program.

In recent years, e-mentoring programs have become more and more popular. E-mentoring programs share many of the most important characteristics of traditional mentoring, including caring relationships; an experience person fostering of the skills of a young person; ongoing, regular communications; relationships characterized by trust, warmth, and support; clear boundaries of the parameters of the mentoring relationship; and administration by an organization that oversees the mentoring relationship. However, e-mentoring differs from traditional mentoring in a number of ways, including:
• communication occurs mostly through e-mail, rather than face-to-face;
• relationships are often time-limited;
• screening and monitoring procedures may differ;
• mentors can often engage in e-mentoring during their work day;
• e-mentoring offers the convenience of communicating online; and
• relationships can span geographic boundaries.

There are several ways to approach e-mentoring. Similar to regular mentoring, e-mentoring can focus on one-to-one mentoring in which each young person has a mentor. E-mentoring can also be a situation in which various mentors provide guidance to a group of people. For example, teachers sometimes recruit experienced professionals to guide complex classroom projects. It can also be project-based learning in which a mentor works with a student to complete a specific project. It can take the form of curriculum-based mentoring in which the teacher posts discussion questions relevant to curriculum for the mentor and mentee(s) to discuss. It can also take the form of unstructured interactions in which mentors and mentees allow the relationship to unfold in keeping with common interests. Or, it can be any combination of these.

**Online Resources to Consider**

“Connecting to Success E-Mentoring Program” is an electronic mentoring program designed to promote the successful transition of youth with disabilities to adult life and to help schools,
community organizations, and businesses make valuable connections to youth with disabilities. Visit: [http://ici.umn.edu/ementoring](http://ici.umn.edu/ementoring).

“Creating an E-Mentoring Community Information Brief” was published by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) to explain the University of Washington’s DO-IT e-mentoring program. The brief explains how DO-IT creates and sustains an e-mentoring community to promote the success of youth with disabilities in school, careers, and other life experiences. Visit: [http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=3170](http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=3170).

“Maryland Mentoring Partnership” has created mentoring materials geared for employer-youth mentoring partnerships. A mentoring binder was compiled by the Baltimore Giving Project and revised by the Maryland Mentoring Partnership with assistance from Big Bang Products. Visit: [http://www.marylandmentor.org/](http://www.marylandmentor.org/).

“Paving the Way to Work: A Guide to Career-Focused Mentoring for Youth with Disabilities” is a mentoring guide developed by NCWD/Youth specifically to address the needs of youth with disabilities during their transition from school to work. Visit: [http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/mentoring.html](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/mentoring.html).

“The National Center for Mentoring Youth with Disabilities,” sponsored by Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD), provides opportunities to learn about best practices, connect with others who are committed to similar work, learn about upcoming conferences, and receive training and technical assistance. Visit: [http://www.pyd.org](http://www.pyd.org).

Component 3: Opportunities for Personal Growth

Youth development and leadership activities are not reserved for young people who strive to be president of the student council or take on other types of high-visibility positions. Rather, they are a means through which any young person can learn the skills necessary to improve his/her own life. By developing and expanding skills related to personal growth, youth will be better prepared to:

- explore and identify their personal goals, strengths, assets, skills, interests, challenges, and accommodation/modification needs;
- assume responsibility for, initiate, and follow through with personal education, transition, and career plans;
- identify and access people and resources that will help them succeed in school and as they transition to postsecondary education, work, and other adult activities;
- become involved in activities that promote positive change in a range of environments;
- advocate for themselves and others at work, at home, and in their communities;
- maintain high personal expectations, a positive personal identity, and high self-esteem;
- engage in self-determination, make effective decisions, and successfully resolve personal or community problems;
- develop strong, effective relationships with adults and other youth;
- respect and interact well with people from other cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds; and
- diagnose and resolve conflicts that arise in diverse community settings.
Goal Setting

Learning to identify and explore both personal and academic strengths is an essential skill for young people. Taking the next step and setting pragmatic goals based on this personal exploration is fundamental to positive youth development. To be active participants in their HS/HT program, youth with disabilities need to learn the skills necessary to develop goals and a plan for achieving those goals. Periodically, young people should step back and evaluate whether they have met their goals.

Successful efforts to promote goal setting and attainment should focus on the following steps:
- identifying specific long-term goals;
- breaking the long-term goals into short-term, attainable objectives;
- articulating (describing) these goals;
- taking actions necessary to achieve a desired outcome;
- monitoring progress and adjust the strategy and goal as needed; and
- establishing a new plan when goals have been attained.

When assisting HS/HT participants in setting career and life goals, keep in mind the following:
- goals should be specific, measurable, and attainable;
- goals should focus on something the youth wants to achieve;
- goals should have specific, reasonable starting and finishing dates;
- goals should be written (or typed); and
- youth should be able to visually track their progress on each goal.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is the process through which individuals address a problem, get to the root of the disagreement, and apply problem-solving methods in a way that simultaneously achieves everyone’s goals. It is a constructive approach to resolving interpersonal and inter-group conflicts. A major part of youth development and leadership is learning how to handle conflicts that arise in different settings. When handled appropriately, conflict can often help to clarify issues, increase involvement, promote personal growth, and strengthen relationships.

Conflict resolution skills can support leadership development efforts by helping youth to:
- form more caring relationships with peers and adults;
- listen and communicate more effectively and assertively;
- collaborate to achieve shared goals;
- develop social and emotional competence;
- improve problem-solving skills;
- manage anger;
- become more aware of bias and different viewpoints;
- develop and promote multicultural understanding;
- build productive, healthy adult lives; and
- learn to negotiate and compromise.
In addition, collaborative conflict resolution can enhance the self-confidence, competence, self-worth, and empowerment of the involved individuals, thereby increasing their capacity to respond to conflict in the future. HS/HT program operators can help students learn valuable conflict resolution skills by participating in conflict resolution training, serving as conflict resolution facilitators and coaches, and serving as role models. HS/HT program coordinators should look for opportunities for HS/HT students to access conflict resolution curricula or participate in related training programs, and encourage youth to use conflict resolution skills in all aspects of their lives.

The following are some suggestions for incorporating personal growth skills into HS/HT:

1. Offer workshops, training, and experiential learning opportunities that focus on
   - social skills development;
   - goal setting and attainment;
   - problem solving and decision making;
   - understanding and expression of rights;
   - school-to-work transition planning;
   - identification of needed accommodations and modifications;
   - conversation, listening, and nonverbal communication skills training; and
   - identification of self-advocacy mentors and role models.

2. Integrate role-playing into different self-advocacy training situations. Role-playing gives youth the opportunity to practice confronting specific situations in a supportive environment. In addition, it provides them with opportunities to observe how others act when interviewing for a job, negotiating a salary, obtaining a needed accommodation at school, arranging for time off from school to participate in a job shadowing activity, or convincing an employer of the need for an internship program at his/her worksite. Consider holding a debate on “To disclose…or not to disclose…your disability.”

3. Hold a discussion among HS/HT participants on topics of personal growth.

   Examples of Discussion Topics Addressing Personal Growth and Youth Development
   - Ability to work with others to accomplish goals
   - Vision and social responsibility
   - Awareness of own strengths/weaknesses
   - Ability to motivate others
   - Integrity and honesty
   - Determination and perseverance
   - Demonstration of personal values through behavior
   - Sensitivity to the community
   - Respect for diversity and individual differences
   - Effective problem solving and decision-making skills
   - Ability to communicate
   - Critical thinking
   - Conflict resolution
• Willingness to share power
• Honesty
• Accountability

**Online Resources to Consider**

“ChoiceMaker Self-Determination Curriculum & Lessons” are designed to teach secondary students the self-determination skills they need to be successful in adult life. Visit: http://web.uccs.edu/education/special/self_determination/cmcr_curriculum.html.


**Component 4: Leadership Opportunities**

One way to help youth with disabilities develop leadership skills is to encourage them to get involved in school clubs, student chapters of professional organizations, disability interest/advocacy groups, and programs offered at community-based organizations.

**Service Learning**

While services learning was discussed in Section 3 as an aspect of work-based learning experiences, it is examined here as a method for the development of youth leadership skills. Providing services to the community gives youth with disabilities a chance to apply academic and social skills while also meeting real community needs. Service learning challenges students to address issues in their community, while increasing their self-esteem and growing personally, socially, and intellectually. Service learning also encourages the inclusion of a “youth voice,” in the community through engaging the perspectives and ideas of young people.

By adding a service and volunteer component to the HS/HT program, participants will learn more about their communities while their knowledge of science, math, and technology to foster positive change. Thus, students develop an ethic of civic responsibility and learn that conditions can be changed. In addition, participation in service and volunteer related activities introduces students to additional career paths and provides a broader context for making decisions about future employment.

Research shows that the benefits of service learning include increased commitment to schoolwork, improved school-community relations, and better interpersonal relations. Service learning also allows nonprofit organizations to get involved in partnerships with HS/HT. A HS/HT service-learning project might “adopt” a local river, study ecology and biology, and make recommendations to the conservation commission in the community to preserve the quality of the water.
Online Resource to Consider

“Service-Learning Resources for Teens, Parents, and Teachers” is sponsored by the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, a program of Learn and Serve America and the Corporation for National and Community Service. Youth, parents, and teachers can visit it to explore service-learning, find project examples, and investigate opportunities in service-learning. Visit: http://www.servicelearning.org/resources/kids_teens.

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentors can provide coaching, listening, and advice in a formal or unstructured, manner. When HS/HT students become peer mentors, they learn leadership skills. A peer mentor may be a senior or recent HS/HT graduate who has proven his/her abilities to be successful while participating in the HS/HT program and who is interested in helping others. Outcomes of peer mentoring may include increased positive personal relationships, improved academic skills, and development of or improvement in other important life-skills such as increased self-advocacy skills. They may keep peers posted on upcoming workshops and encourage them to get involved with other HS/HT activities. Many universities are implementing peer-mentoring programs that link older students with incoming, first-year students.

Program operators can integrate peer mentoring into HS/HT programs by:
- running a workshop on how peer mentoring works;
- matching peers with mentors who have similar interests;
- finding good matches early on by creating social opportunities where people can meet and mingle; and
- encouraging youth to serve as role models or tutors for local elementary and middle school students.

Leadership Training

Many programs nationwide help to promote youth leadership development. The following programs focus specifically on leadership development for youth with disabilities. Nonetheless youth in HS/HT should be encouraged to participate in all types of leadership development programs.

- The Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) assists states in providing youth leadership training for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities. Students selected as delegates attend a four-day event in their state capitals to develop leadership, citizenship, and social skills. By providing a framework of history and an atmosphere of encouragement, the forums offer peers opportunities to learn from one another as they explore common challenges and experiences. For more information, visit the website for the Association of Youth Leadership Forums at: http://www.montanaylf.org.

- The National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN), which is dedicated to advancing the next generation of disability leaders, provides a national voice for young leaders with disabilities and special health needs. Originally sponsored by several federal agencies and led by the
U.S. Department of Education, NYLN promotes leadership development, education, employment, independent living, and health and wellness among young leaders. Now a non-profit organization, the Network’s activities include an annual National Youth Leadership Conference, mentoring opportunities, and more. For more information, visit: http://nyln.org.

- Youth Information Centers (YICs) are 15 organizations funded through the Projects of National Significance (PNS) grant program authorized under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) and administered by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. These youth-led organizations received grants to develop information, resource and training centers for youth (ages 13-17) and emerging leaders (ages 18-30) with developmental disabilities. For more information, visit: http://www.addyic.org.

Organizational Leadership

Leadership development helps young people develop the necessary skills to take charge of their lives and make a positive impact in their communities. Active involvement in leadership organizations provides members with opportunities to develop, practice, and refine their leadership skills. Young people who show initiative and interest should be encouraged to run for offices in youth organizations, civic groups, and student clubs, and to become members of the HS/HT advisory board.

Encourage youth to research and become active in organizations such as:
- Junior Achievement
- Career-Technical Education Student Clubs
- Boys & Girls Club
- National Council on Youth Leadership
- 4-H Teen Leadership
- Prudential
- National Youth Leadership Network
- National Youth Leadership Council
- Youth Leadership Forum
- Girl Scouts of America
- Boy Scouts
- Rotary International
- Young Leaders On-Line
- Awesome Youth Leadership Training
- Rising Stars Program
- After school clubs

Online Resources to Consider

“Boys and Girls Clubs of America” contains program descriptions of services to promote and enhance the development of boys and girls up to age 18. Club programs and services promote
and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and influence. Visit: [http://www.bgca.org](http://www.bgca.org).

“Do Something” is a “website community” where young people learn, listen, speak, vote, volunteer, ask, and take action to make the world a better place. It provides a place for young people to connect and to be inspired, supported, and celebrated. It contains resources and information on community projects to help youth turn ideas into action. Visit: [http://www.dosomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org).

“National 4-H Headquarters” provides information on 4-H Programs of Distinction, youth development programs that are occurring in communities across the United States. Search the program abstracts database and read the in-depth program descriptions. Visit: [http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov).

“National League of Cities Sponsors Youth as City Leaders” is a place for young people from all around the country who are active in the life of their city or town to connect with each other. The website also serves as a resource to youth who would like to be engaged in public policy in their community. Visit: [http://www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org).

“National Youth Development Information Center” (NYDIC) contains information on youth development in the areas of funding, research, program development, career development, evaluation, policy, and more. It is a project of the National Collaborative for Youth. Visit: [http://www.nydic.org/nydic](http://www.nydic.org/nydic).

“The Innovation Center for Community & Youth Development” connects thinkers and leaders of all ages to develop fresh ideas, forge new partnerships, and design strategies that engage young people and their communities. Visit: [http://www.theinnovationcenter.org](http://www.theinnovationcenter.org).

**Getting Organized**

To prepare for leadership development activities, HS/HT program operators should consider the following:

- **Create and maintain** a database of contacts when networking to set up various preparatory and work-based experiences. HS/HT staff will have ample opportunities to meet potential role models and possible mentors for youth.

- **Invite** your local Workforce Investment Board and Youth Council to provide a workshop on leadership roles within the community and work with the Youth Council to develop a set of coordinated leadership development opportunities for all youth as required under the WIA legislation.

- **Identify** community instructors from institutions of higher learning, civic organizations, faith-based groups, and others who would be willing to serve as instructors in the areas of goal setting, self-advocacy, and conflict resolution.
• **Involve** HS/HT students in a resource mapping exercise to identify the services available in the community and the gaps in local services, and use this information to identify a range of service learning opportunities.

• **Promote** social and recreational opportunities for HS/HT participants along with the local recreation departments, the YWCA/YMCA, and Independent Living Centers.

• **Involve** HS/HT youth in designing service learning and other activities and projects.

• **Encourage** seasoned HS/HT participants and graduates to serve as peer mentors for new participants in HS/HT.

• **Invite** HS/HT youth to be voting members of your advisory council.

• **Use** HS/HT youth as ambassadors for your program.

*HS/HT Student Advisory Committee*

Most HS/HT programs have involved students with disabilities in some type of advisory capacity to provide guidance for the program. For example, CO HS/HT has convened a Student Advisory Committee that is led by students and functions for students. The quarterly meetings provide opportunities for leadership training that focuses on mentoring and advocacy. Participating students take a proactive role in designing, implementing and marketing their own HS/HT program. The students are also responsible for developing goals and establishing measurable outcomes and timelines for achieving them.
Exhibit: Qualities of an Effective Mentor

The National Mentoring Center has identified ten important features of successful mentors’ attitudes and styles.

1. **Be a friend.** Don’t act like a parent. Don’t try to be an authority figure. Don’t preach about values. DO focus on establishing a bond, a feeling of attachment, a sense of equality, and the mutual enjoyment of shared time.

2. **Have realistic goals and expectations.** Focus on the child or youth and his or her overall development. Especially early on, center your goals on the relationship itself. Throughout the relationship, emphasize friendship over performance.

3. **Have fun together.** Many youth involved in mentoring programs have few opportunities for fun. Having fun together shows your mentee that you are reliable and committed. Focusing on “fun” activities early in the relationship can lead to more “serious” activities later.

4. **Give your mentee voice and choice in deciding on activities.** Give a range of choices concerning possible activities. Create an “idea file” together. Listen. Emphasize to your mentee that her or his enjoyment is important to you. Negotiate. Feel comfortable about setting clear limits on the amount of money you will spend.

5. **Be positive.** Offer frequent expression of direct confidence. Be encouraging even when talking about potentially troublesome topics, such as grades. Offer concrete assistance.

6. **Let your mentee have much of the control over what the two of you talk about—and how you talk about it.** Don’t push. Be sensitive and responsive to your mentee’s cues. Understand that young people vary in their styles of communicating and their habits of disclosure. Be direct in letting your mentee know that she or he can confide in you without fear of judgment or exposure. Remember that the activities you do together can become a source of conversation.

7. **Listen.** “Just listening” gives mentees a chance to vent and lets them know that they can disclose personal matters to you without worrying about being criticized. When you listen, your mentee can see that you are a friend, not an authority figure.
8. **Respect the trust your mentee places in you.** Respond in ways that show you see your mentee’s side of things. Reassure your mentee that you will be there for him or her. If you give advice, give it sparingly. If you give advice, be sure it is focused on identifying solutions. If, on occasion, you feel you have to convey concern or displeasure, do so in a way that also conveys reassurance and acceptance. Sound like a friend, not like a parent.

9. **Remember that your relationship is with the youth, not the youth’s parent.** Maintain cordial but distant contact with family members. Keep your primary focus on the youth. Resist families’ efforts to extract help beyond providing a friendship for the youth. Be nonjudgmental about the family.

10. **Remember that you are responsible for building the relationship.** Take responsibility for making and maintaining contact. Understand that the feedback and reassurance characteristic of adult-to-adult relationships is often beyond the capacity of youth.

(Source: Jucovy, Linda. (2001, April). *Building relationships: A guide for new mentors* (Technical Assistance Packet #4). Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, National Mentoring...
Section 5. School-Based Preparatory Experiences

This section explores School-Based Preparatory Experiences. While HS/HT programs are locally housed in any number of places (schools, Career Technical Education programs, Independent Living Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation offices, One-Stop Centers, etc.), and may involve activities during the school day, after school, on weekends, and during the summer, HS/HT is intended to be an enrichment program that complements what students are learning in school. School-based preparatory experiences identify those things that are necessary to ensure a high quality educational system and are primarily the responsibility of the schools. There are six components to this section:

1. Programs based on standards
2. Qualifications of teachers and transition staff
3. Assessments and graduation standards
4. Universal design of learning
5. Supporting learning environments that are small and safe and include extra supports such as tutoring
6. Helping students use their individual transition plans to drive their personal instruction

Component 1: Programs Based on Standards

For educational programs, the Guideposts call for academic programs that are based on clear state standards, and career and technical education programs that are based on professional and industry standards. While HS/HT programs have no direct control over such standards, HS/HT representatives can help support these concepts. When such standards are being developed or revised, or when high school reform efforts are underway, the Program Coordinator can ask for a seat at the table and provide input into such initiatives in an effort to ensure that no child is left behind, particularly youth with disabilities.

HS/HT activities can also be designed to guide youth in the selection of programs of study that are grounded in state, professional, and industry standards, and that provide the educational prerequisites for pursuit of the STEM careers. HS/HT staff may need to recruit people who are working in STEM careers to volunteer to look at what students are taking in school to ensure that their classes include the prerequisites and are sufficiently rigorous to prepare them for the careers they are interested in pursuing.

Component 2: Qualifications of Teachers and Transition Staff

High quality educational experiences require access to and supports from highly qualified staff. This is another area where, although the schools have the lead role, HS/HT can play a supportive role. While the country is currently experiencing a significant shortage in qualified special education teachers, both the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 stress the importance of teacher qualifications. Thus, schools and educational agencies must provide for appropriate professional development to ensure high quality teachers. Being in touch with both the educational system and a variety of community resources, HS/HT staff may be able to assist schools and educational agencies in
identifying existing opportunities for professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals, both in general education and special education.

Students with disabilities need to be supported by highly qualified transition support staff that may or may not be school staff. Many schools employ specialized staff functioning as transition coordinators for special education and 504 students (i.e., students with less severe disabilities than special education students). Many do not. Even when a school employs specialized transition staff, they may not be aware of all the resources available in the community to assist students with disabilities as they transition to adult life. To ensure access to the full range of transition services, HS/HT can assist schools by linking students with disabilities to qualified transition staff employed by other agencies such as postsecondary education institutions, One-Stop Centers, and Vocational Rehabilitation agencies.

**Component 3: Assessments and Graduation Standards**

School-based preparatory experiences also include access to an assessment system that includes multiple measures and graduation standards that include options. IDEA 2004 requires State Education Agencies (SEAs) to use universal design principles in administering assessments (see more about universal design under Component 4). NCLB requires schools to include students with disabilities in their standardized assessments to measure student achievement. In early April 2007, final regulations were published addressing the inclusion of students with disabilities in tests to determine the achievement of high academic standards. Prior to the publishing of these regulations, states were permitted to provide 10 percent of special education students (i.e., those with the most significant disabilities) with alternative tests to measure their academic achievement and have those results counted toward the school’s annual progress under NCLB.

Under the new regulations, a school is allowed to give another 20 percent of students with disabilities modified tests to measure their academic achievement. These modified tests are targeted for students whose disabilities are not severe but who are still having difficulty and are unable to keep pace with typical students. States can define modified academic achievement standards so long as those standards are: 1) aligned with the state’s academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled; 2) challenging for eligible students, although they may be less difficult than the grade-level academic achievement standards; 3) include at least three achievement levels; and 4) are developed through a documented and validated standards-setting process that includes broad stakeholder input. Prior to the issuance of these regulations, these students had to be given either the same tests as their non-disabled counterparts or the alternative tests being given to students with the most significant disabilities. For many students with disabilities, these tests would either be too difficult or too easy. It is believed that the new regulations which address this middle ground will provide greater flexibility for and more accuracy in tracking academic achievement. With the issuance of these regulations, approximately 30 percent of students with disabilities will now be able to take more applicable tests.

HS/HT program coordinators should monitor students to ensure they are being included in the school’s assessment system and that, as appropriate, these students have access to the accommodations they need to successfully participate in the school’s standardized assessments.
In some cases, program staff may be more familiar with the needs of a particular student and may be able to offer suggestions on the most effective ways to accommodate a particular student during assessments. When a school determines that a student with a disability cannot participate in the school’s standardized assessment system, the HS/HT program coordinator may want to ensure that any alternative measures being used constitute an appropriate measure of that student’s accomplishments.

Another key component of a high quality educational system is the existence of graduation standards that include options. As discussed earlier, such options can unfortunately have negative consequences for the young people who do not receive regular diplomas. An alternative diploma or certificate of participation may not be of much value when a young person begins looking for work, particularly in the STEM careers. While graduation standards are the responsibility of the educational system, a HS/HT program coordinator may want to advocate on behalf of a student to ensure that he or she is being provided with appropriate graduation options.

**Component 4: Universal Design of Learning**

All learners, including students with disabilities, need an education that provides access to and participation and progress in the general education curriculum. IDEA 2004 promotes the idea of universal design by requiring education agencies to support the use of technology, including technology with universal design principles. It also requires State Education Agencies (SEAs) to use universal design principles in administering standardized assessments.

To ensure a high quality education, particularly for students with disabilities, curricular and program options must be based on universal design of school, work and community-based learning experiences. According to the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), universal design of learning (UDL) means teachers need to customize their teaching to address individual differences. This may includes such things as:

- *multiple means of representation* to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge;
- *multiple means of expression* to provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know; and
- *multiple means of engagement* to tap into learners’ interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn.

A comprehensive approach to UDL applies these alternative approaches to different aspects of education, including the development of objectives/benchmarks, instructional materials, teaching methods, and assessments. (Source: [http://www.cast.org/research/udl](http://www.cast.org/research/udl))

HS/HT programs need to be familiar with and incorporate aspects of UDL as they prepare their program of activities, especially given that HS/HT targets youth with all types of disabilities, some of whom need accommodations and/or use assistive technology. Chapter 5, Connecting Activities, explores the need to determine individualized accommodations to ensure a student’s meaningful participation in HS/HT activities and as they apply to settings other than educational settings. See Exhibits for an Assistive Technology Checklist that can be used to assist students.
as they explore their needs for reasonable accommodations and assistive technology in a variety of settings.

**Online Resources to Consider**

**“Alliance for Technology Access (ATA)”** is a national network of technology resource centers, organizations, individuals, and companies that provide public education, information and referral, capacity building in community organizations, and advocacy/policy efforts, enabling people to acquire and use standard, assistive, and information technologies. An interactive information service provides quick and efficient access to information on assistive technology tools and services to consumers, families, and service providers worldwide. Visit: [http://www.ataccess.org](http://www.ataccess.org).

**“Association of Tech Act Projects (ATAP),”** is a national, membership organization comprised of Statewide Assistive Technology (AT) Programs funded under the Assistive Technology Act. It promotes the collaboration of AT Programs with persons with disabilities, providers, industry, advocates and others at the state and national level and to increase the availability and utilization of accessible information technology and AT devices and services for all individuals with disabilities in the United States and territories. Visit: [http://www.ataporg.org](http://www.ataporg.org).

**“Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST)—Universal Design for Learning”** is a nonprofit organization that works to expand learning opportunities for all individuals, especially those with disabilities, through the research and development of innovative, technology-based educational resources and strategies. Frequent visits to the CAST website keep the reader abreast of advancements in the application of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. Visit: [http://www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org).

**“National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum (NCAC)”** was established by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) to provide a vision of how new curricula, teaching practices, and policies can be woven together to create practical approaches for improved access to the general curriculum by students with disabilities. Visit: [http://www.cast.org/policy/ncac](http://www.cast.org/policy/ncac).

**“Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D)”** is a nonprofit volunteer organization, and the nation's educational library serving people who cannot effectively read standard print because of visual impairment, dyslexia, or other physical disability. Their mission is to create opportunities for individual success by providing and promoting the effective use of accessible educational materials. Visit: [http://www.rfbd.org](http://www.rfbd.org).

**Component 5: Supporting Learning Environments That Are Small and Safe and Include Extra Supports Such as Tutoring**

To ensure a high quality education environment, the *Guideposts* also call for learning environments that are small and safe and include extra supports such as tutoring. Although there
have been lots of discussions about the value of smaller classroom sizes, there is no national trend towards smaller classes. As a result, this is an area where HS/HT can have a real impact.

To support students in making the most of their high school experience and to increase the likelihood of their success in post-school activities, HS/HT programs can do a number of things, including:

- reinforcing the lessons learned in school with after school and summer programs;
- incorporating creative and engaging activities that are designed to supplement what students are learning in the classroom;
- involving students in small and large group discussions;
- providing opportunities for students to develop their listening skills and practice their oral and written communication skills in small group settings where they feel safe;
- teaching students active listening skills and exposing them to the spoken and unspoken rules of conversation and group discussions (e.g., the role of body language, being polite, not interrupting, taking turns, raising hands to speak, focusing attention on the speaker, etc.);
- encouraging students to reflect on where and when they should use their listening skills and encouraging them to practice their listening skills (e.g., at home, in school, in church, while watching a movie or listening to the radio);
- asking students to present information to groups of students and to summarize information from oral presentations in writing;
- involving students in writing exercises and introducing students to prewriting strategies (e.g., developing a focus, developing an outline to ensure the proper sequencing of ideas, creating diagrams, etc.);
- incorporating activities that expose students to different types of writing (e.g., creative writing, journalism, reflective compositions, etc.) and the use of correct punctuation and grammar;
- encouraging students to try new things such as working in teams and experimenting with different presentation styles in a setting where individualized attention and additional support is readily available;
- helping students connect what they are taught in school to the world of work and the expectations they will face as adults; and
- incorporating service learning activities to demonstrate the application of math and science in the community.

Funds appropriated under Title V, Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) may be used for supplemental educational services, which are defined as additional academic instruction designed to increase the academic achievement of students in schools that have not met state targets for increasing student achievement (adequate yearly progress) for three or more years. These services may include tutoring and after-school services, as well as activities to promote consumer, economic, and personal finance education. Consequently, this is a potential source of funding for tutoring services in some schools and, if the HS/HT program has a strong tutoring component, possibly a source of funding to help ensure the sustainability of HS/HT.
Providing Extra Support for Developing Computer Skills

With an emphasis on exposing students to high-tech careers, HS/HT programs incorporate many opportunities for students to practice the computer skills they are learning in school and develop additional skills. The HS/HT experience includes opportunities to do research online (e.g., exploring different careers and their prerequisite qualifications); develop documents online (e.g., resumes, marketing materials, etc.); create prototype websites, databases, and graphics; and troubleshoot hardware and software problems. Exhibit 2.3 includes a list of websites that provide interesting and engaging ways to reinforce what students are learning in school, particularly with regard to math and science. Some HS/HT programs partner with local community colleges to give participants the opportunity to take computer courses or use a college computer lab while they are still in high school. Some programs take students to local One-Stop Centers to learn about online computer training programs. In a few cases, the emphasis on computer literacy is so embedded in HS/HT that some schools have incorporated the HS/HT program into the school’s general educational curriculum as a for-credit course.

Tech-Now in OK uses a standardized curriculum for HS/HT throughout the state. Tech-Now partners with a number of schools in OK to provide the HS/HT curriculum as a for-credit class during the school day (i.e., Computer 1 or Technology 1). Students participate in the class five days a week, for 55 minutes a day. Students who complete a full year of the program receive a minimum of ½ of a Carnegie credit that can be applied towards Oklahoma’s standard graduation diploma. The Carnegie Unit is 120 hours of class or contact time with an instructor over the course of a year at the secondary school level. In some OK schools, students participating in Tech-Now can earn two complete credits towards their graduation requirements.

Component 6: Helping Students Use Their Individual Transition Plans to Drive Their Personal Instruction

In order to be successful in post-school activities, a special education student needs to use the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) required under IDEA to drive the personal instruction s/he receives while still in school. IDEA 2004 requires the development of an ITP for each special education students who has turned 16 years of age. The ITP is the part of the IEP that focuses on what the student needs to successfully prepare for the transition from the secondary educational setting to adult outcomes. Transition services are a set of coordinated activities that assist students with disabilities as they move from school into self-determined, post-graduation activities including postsecondary education, vocational training, competitive employment, supported employment, continuing and adult education, independent living, adult services, and participation in the community. Students with mild disabilities may only need limited services in one or two areas while students with severe disabilities may need extensive services in all areas.

From a legal standpoint, the IEP team is required to consult with the student and his/her parent(s) in determining the transition services the student will receive. These services can include an array of educational and vocational options, some occurring within the school setting, some in the community, and some through other service providers. Available vocational options range
from work-related high school classes to entry-level work in the community with assistance through a Transition Program.

Transition services are based on students' needs, preferences, and interests and include: instruction; related services; community experiences (e.g., volunteer work and service learning); functional vocational evaluation/assessments when appropriate; employment; independent living objectives; and daily living skills.

To determine the transition services to be included in an ITP, the student should go through a Transition Planning Interview to identify his/her strengths, skills, abilities, capabilities, interests, and needs. The IEP team is then responsible for developing an ITP based on that interview. The ITP is designed to accomplish the student's stated post-school goals based on this interview. The ITP is part of the students' IEP and includes important information about the student, including:

- post-high school goals;
- interests, strengths, and vocational goals;
- activities to help reach goals in the areas related to career development, self-advocacy, interpersonal/social skills, and independent living;
- school and post-school services that will facilitate the accomplishment of those goals;
- notice of rights a year before reaching Age of Majority; and
- recommendations for next year.

The HS/HT program coordinator needs to know what is in a student’s IEP and ITP to make sure it is in line with the student’s expressed interests and goals. Through an ongoing personal relationship with a student and the student’s school, the HS/HT coordinator can help the student formulate appropriate goals and objectives for the future.

The HS/HT coordinator can also work with the student to complement what the school is doing to address the student’s remedial needs and to identify the most appropriate supports and services (e.g., accommodations, assistive technology, tutoring, etc.) that will help the student succeed in accomplishing his/her post-school goals. Through self-advocacy training, the HS/HT coordinator can help a student develop the skills needed to advocate for his/her goals and objectives within the IEP process and for the services and supports that will ensure his/her academic success.

In some cases, school personnel and members of the IEP Team may not be aware of all of the resources available in the community to assist a student through the transition process. The HS/HT program can be a great source of this type of information. In addition, HS/HT coordinators can use the Guideposts for Success to assist a student through the transition process. The comprehensive framework for transition services contained within the Guideposts can help students think through all aspects of their goals for the future and help them identify the services and supports they may need to accomplish those goals.
Using Career Planning Portfolios to Record Student Accomplishments

An important aspect of the school-based preparatory experiences is getting students to learn how to reflect on their school work, extracurricular activities, and life experiences in a way that demonstrates their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Some programs use this information to assist students in creating Career Planning Portfolios. A Career Planning Portfolio is a comprehensive collection of student work that illustrates the student’s efforts, progress, and achievements throughout high school. It is a tool to help students and parents with educational and career decision making. A portfolio is sequential and usually addresses five different levels of development: self-awareness; educational and career exploration; educational and career planning; achievement; and transition. A portfolio can provide an alternative method of assessing a student’s performance and provide reliable and valid information on the student’s accomplishments. As a student completes new course work and becomes involved in new activities, these accomplishments are added to the portfolio and are used to identify connections between post-high school plans, high school course plans, extracurricular activities, and guidance activities.

Online Resources to Consider

“Education World” is a free resource available to educators, school administrators, and others involved in educating children. It includes a search engine dedicated solely to educational websites; original content, including lesson plans; practical information for educators; information on how to integrate technology in the classroom; and articles written by education experts. The goal of Education World is to make it easy for educators to integrate the Internet into the classroom. Visit: http://www.education-world.com.

“All-Learners: The Website for Exploring Inclusive Education” lists and connects to a wide variety of resources for educators, administrators, and parents who are working to provide an inclusive education to all students. Visit: http://www.infinitec.org/all-learners/resources.html#Anchor-Math-23522.

“P.R.O. Filer Personal Portfolio & Filing System” is an innovative tool designed by students for students that provides a way to organize important documents, keep records of school and community learning opportunities, and create a personal portfolio to showcase the student’s accomplishments. Published by the Institute on Community Integration, the P.R.O. Filer includes a manual and dividers for storing information about accomplishments, education, finances, support services, transportation, vocational/work issues, etc. Visit: http://ici.umn.edu/all/helptool.html#profiler.

Getting Organized

There are several tasks that HS/HT staff can undertake to ensure that students are able to access the educational programs, services, and supports available at their schools, and to identify HS/HT program components that will complement and supplement what the students are learning in school. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it is a good place to start.
- **Review** existing information on each HS/HT student (e.g., school records, the IEP, and the ITP). Don’t forget, you will need written permission from parents to access information found in school records, medical records, etc.

- **Determine** whether a student needs tutoring and, if so, what type of tutoring would best meet the needs of that particular student and where are those services available in the local community.

- **Poll** HS/HT participants to identify their interests as they apply to science, technology, engineering, and math, and to identify what they are being taught in school. Use this information to identify activities of interest to students and to complement what the students are learning in school.

- **Use the information** you have gathered to identify the individualized supports each student needs to promote his/her academic achievement and to determine the nature of any group activities to be undertaken by the HS/HT program.

- **Identify** any assistive technology needs, materials that need to be available in alternate formats, or other reasonable accommodations needed by your students. Ask each student directly about his/her needs and preferences.

- **Recruit** volunteers who are working in STEM careers to talk to HS/HT students about what they are taking in school, to see if it matches the prerequisite courses needed to enter particular STEM careers.

- **Partner** with the schools where your HS/HT students are located and ask to be invited to appropriate IEP, 504, or transition planning meetings, as well as other appropriate general education-related activities.

- **Stress** the importance of good grades and, based on the student’s plans for the future, stress the importance of taking prerequisite courses in high school.
Section 6. Connecting Activities

This section examines the connecting activities necessary to assist HS/HT participants as they transition to their next phase in life — one that will hopefully include additional technical training, postsecondary education, and/or work leading to economic self-sufficiency. As such, this section focuses on the services and activities requiring support from individuals or organizations outside of the educational setting, such as tutors to improve academic performance, assistive technology to address accommodation needs, and transportation. Youth participating in HS/HT programs will also need to work with other agencies as they pursue options in postsecondary education and high tech careers.

There are seven components in this section:
1. Mental and physical health services
2. Transportation
3. Academic tutoring
4. Financial planning
5. Connecting to continuing education opportunities and the workforce
6. Connecting to other programs and opportunities
7. Assistive technology

Component 1: Mental and Physical Health Services

Although all students need easy access to mental and physical health services, students with disabilities may require such services on a more regular basis. To address the needs of youth with disabilities, including those with mental health needs, HS/HT program coordinators need to work closely with the schools to make sure the mental and physical health services they have are readily accessible to students with disabilities. Consider that youth with mental health needs often face unemployment, underemployment, and discrimination when they enter the workforce. Employment data indicate that individuals with serious mental illness have the lowest level of employment of any group of people with disabilities. Large numbers of youth with both diagnosed and undiagnosed mental health needs who are transitioning into young adulthood, to the world of work, and to postsecondary education are therefore likely to experience significant difficulties. Research has also shown that youth with mental health needs are over-represented in the foster care and juvenile justice system, in school disciplinary cases, and among high school dropouts.

Recently, a growing number of strategies and resources have been emerging to support youth with mental health needs in achieving independence, self-sufficiency, employment, and postsecondary education goals. Some of these strategies have found that, similar to youth with other types of disabilities, youth with mental health needs clearly benefit from exposure to career preparation and related youth development activities such as mentoring. As these youth have gained entry into the workforce, their experiences have shown that youth with mild to moderate mental health needs often require minimal or no employment supports.

While HS/HT staff may be able to identify youth who may be in need of mental and physical health services, staff may not have the expertise or credentials to provide such services.
Therefore they need to be knowledgeable about the mental and physical health services that are available in the community, and know how to refer youth participating in HS/HT to those services when deemed appropriate. In some cases, this may mean working with medical facilities and community mental health groups to ensure that their services are fully accessible to youth with disabilities.

HS/HT staff should also be aware of the “Healthy and Ready to Work” (HRTW) initiative funded as part of the Social Security Act, Title V Maternal and Child Health Block grant to states, under the Division of Services to Children with Special Health Care Needs. One goal of HRTW is to help states develop effective mechanisms to achieve a system of care for children and youth with special health needs and their families by 2010. The following six national performance measures (NPM) serve as a guide to states in meeting this HRTW goal. The performance measures include:

- early and continuous screening;
- families and youth as partners in decision making;
- medical home;
- health insurance;
- organization of services; and
- transition to adulthood.

The needs of transitioning youth are infused throughout all six performance measures, with a particular emphasis on the sixth measure, “Transition to Adulthood,” which has a number of sub-measures, including: Youth Advisory Committees; youth develop skills and become spokespeople; staff members talk directly to youth; youth involved in independence building and work experiences; person-centered planning and mentoring programs; work opportunities; independent living training, transportation and technology; and connecting youth to other youth and adult mentors. For additional information visit the HRTW National Resource Center at: [http://www.hrtw.org](http://www.hrtw.org).

In addition to generic health and mental health services, youth with disabilities, particularly those with significant disabilities, may need personal assistance services (PAS). Depending on the nature and severity of the disability, a young person may need assistance in locating attendants and personal assistance services, readers, interpreters, or other such specialized services.

**Online Resources to Consider**

“Center for Personal Assistance Services” provides research, training, dissemination, and technical assistance on issues of personal assistance services (PAS) in the United States. The information covers: the relationship between formal and informal PAS and care giving support, and the role of assistive technology (AT) in complementing PAS; policies and programs, barriers, and new models for PAS in the home and community; PAS workforce issues related to development, recruitment, retention, and benefits; and workplace models of formal and informal PAS and AT at work. Visit: [http://www.pascenter.org](http://www.pascenter.org).

“Medicines in My Home” was developed to help middle school students learn about the safe and effective use of over-the-counter medicines. The website, which is sponsored by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), is designed for use in health education courses. Visit: http://www.fda.gov/medsinmyhome.

“Personal Assistance Services in the Workplace,” a publication by the Job Accommodation Network, discusses personal assistance services in the workplace (WPAS) and answers frequently asked questions about WPAS, including its use as an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It contains examples of WPAS to accommodate job applicants and current employees with limitations due to sensory, cognitive, physical, or mental health impairments. It provides a list of WPAS resources and a glossary of WPAS-related terminology. Visit: http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/PAS.html.

“Tunnels and Cliffs: A Guide for Workforce Development Practitioners and Policymakers Serving Youth with Mental Health Needs,” a publication by NCWD/Youth, was developed as part of ODEP’s initiative to help workforce practitioners, administrators, and policymakers enhance their understanding of youth with mental health needs and the supports necessary to help them transition into the workforce successfully. It includes practical information and resources for youth service practitioners at local One-Stop Career Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, youth programs funded under the Workforce Investment Act, school transition programs, and mental health agencies. It also provides policy makers with information to help them address system and policy obstacles in order to improve service delivery systems for youth with mental health needs. The Guide can be purchased from NCWD/Youth or downloaded for free at: http://www.ncwd-youth.info.

**Component 2: Transportation**

Although there are 62 federal programs that fund transportation services, transportation continues to be one of the biggest barriers to full integration and employment facing individuals with disabilities. It is also one of the greatest challenges facing HS/HT programs. Students need access to transportation to participate in HS/HT events, particularly when they are scheduled on weekends and during the summer. Even when HS/HT is conducted as an after-school club, students do not always have access to transportation to get home. For example, some schools reserve their after-school activities buses solely for use by students participating in sports. HS/HT students also need transportation to participate in industry site visits, job shadowing activities, internships, and part-time employment. Unfortunately, providing transportation can become a drain on the fiscal resources of a HS/HT program.

Logistics regarding transportation for HS/HT activities must be planned well in advance, as youth often need transportation to and from activities and public transportation is not always an option. Individual arrangements must be made using creative approaches that provide dependable, affordable transportation, such as car pools, volunteers, bicycles, negotiated discounts with taxi companies, and subsidies from cities or counties.
To address the transportation challenges facing HS/HT students and all of the partners need to work together to find transportation solutions so that youth will be able to fully participate in program activities. Each HS/HT sites needs to check with their state’s department of transportation and with local government offices to determine if their community is involved in initiatives designed to improve access to transportation for persons with disabilities.

For youth with disabilities, particularly those who are blind or visually impaired, access to community orientation and mobility training can be critically important to facilitating independence. Such youth may need assistance in finding accessible bus routes, negotiating bus routes or the subway system, finding accessible housing, and getting to the local health clinic. HS/HT programs should include travel training as a component of the program so youth can learn to travel on public transportation. This can be done by asking someone from an adult disability organization (e.g., a Center for Independent Living) or a program for the visually impaired (e.g., the National Federation of the Blind or the American Council of the Blind) to lead a session on travel training.

Vocational Rehabilitation can also be an excellent resource. Many states offer accessible transportation programs with reduced fares for people with disabilities. Consider inviting representatives of public transportation centers to participate.

*Consider the following:*

- If public transportation is an accessible option, work with the family and ask them to practice with the young person.
- If the student has a valid driver’s license and a mode of transportation, he or she can supply transportation.
- Parents/guardians might be able to provide a car pool.
- The job site might have information available on car pooling.
- Conduct your HS/HT activities after school during the same time frame as other clubs and sports activities so that students can use the school’s after school activities bus.
- Partner with a school system to secure a school bus during off-school hours to provide transportation within the district. Depending on the circumstances, the HS/HT program may be asked to pay the salary of the school bus driver for the time spent transporting students, or the school district may cover this cost.
- Partner with a disability community organization that provides transportation to its clients.
- If HS/HT program staff use their cars to provide transportation for students, make sure they have appropriate liability coverage.
Online Resources to Consider

“CTAA,” the Community Transportation Association of America, has a publication, “Linking People to the Workplace: Transportation Strategies and Practices,” that provides technical assistance, practices, and strategies to assist workforce development professionals and other professionals in providing accessible transportation services for low-income individuals and persons with disabilities in their communities. Visit: http://www.ctaa.org.

“Easter Seals Project ACTION,” Accessible Community Transportation in Our Nation, promotes cooperation between the transportation industry and the disability community to increase mobility for people with disabilities. Project Action maintains a clearinghouse and offers various resources, training and technical assistance, including resources specifically designed to facilitate the use of public transportation for students and young adults with disabilities. One such resource, Public Transportation: The Route to Freedom A Transportation Education Program for Students with Disabilities in Grades 8-12, provides curriculum developed to teach students in secondary schools about concepts, skills, and behaviors necessary to use public transportation. Visit: http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ESPA_resources_supporting_young_adults.

“United We Ride,” a five-part collaborative initiative of the Departments of Transportation, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education, is designed to break down the barriers between programs and set the stage for local partnerships that generate common sense solutions to transportation challenges. Their Framework for Action is a self-assessment tool that states and communities can use to identify areas of success and highlight the actions needed to improve the coordination of human service transportation. This tool can be used to conduct resource mapping exercises to assess the transportation systems in communities. Visit: http://www.unitedweride.gov.

Component 3: Academic Tutoring
Tutoring was discussed in Section 3 as a part of School-Based Preparatory Experiences. The content of this section focuses on HS/HT’s role in connecting students with disabilities with tutoring resources available in the community that they can access after they leave the program. Since tutoring is available through many organizations in the community, including schools, HS/HT program staff will need to “scan the environment” to identify and access the tutoring services that work best for a particular HS/HT student. Below are some suggestions on where to find tutoring services.

- If the young person is currently enrolled in high school, check with the school’s guidance department for a list of qualified tutors.
- Tutors may also be obtained through local adult education programs and institutes of higher education.
- Link to after-school programs (often supported by Federal funding under the 21st Century Learning Communities Act).
- Link current participants with other youth who have successfully completed coursework or who have graduated from high school and exited the HS/HT program.
• There may be business-community partnerships or community-at-large mentors who may be qualified and interested in providing tutoring services.
• Program staff can work with school personnel, community organizations, and youth and families to identify areas where academic supports are needed.

Component 4: Financial Planning
Like any young person, HS/HT students can also benefit from training in or exposure to financial planning and management. In some cases, HS/HT students might participate in classes or training programs available to anyone. In other cases, financial planning can be built into a HS/HT activity. For example, participants may be asked to select a job and then be given a salary based on the comparable salary of people currently employed in that job. The students could then be asked to develop a personal budget for one month, including tracking expenditures for rent, utilities, food, transportation, insurance, clothing, and recreation. This exercise is particularly enlightening for youth who have never had responsibility for paying their bills.

Component 5: Connecting to Continuing Education Opportunities and the Workforce
Another important linkage HS/HT programs can assist with is connecting youth with postsecondary education and adult services workforce preparation programs. It is important, however, that the youth drive this process by being the primary decision makers concerning their own learning and future work endeavors. When youth carry this responsibility, they learn more about the range of their own strengths and abilities. This knowledge can then translate into a greater sense of confidence and personal adjustment, as well as academic and professional success.

Postsecondary Education
While Section 3 (Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences) emphasized educating HS/HT participants on available postsecondary options in the context of what they would need to pursue their career-related goals, this section emphasizes the importance of actually linking the youth to postsecondary institutions themselves, including career and technical training facilities, while they are still involved with HS/HT.

Upon leaving secondary school, the protections and services mandated by the IDEA no longer apply to the educational setting in which students with disabilities may find themselves. However, the protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act do apply to postsecondary education programs. Most community colleges and four year colleges and universities have responded to the requirements of the ADA and Section 504 by establishing Offices of Disability Support Services (DSS or a similar name) to address the needs of students with disabilities. However, students with disabilities are not automatically referred to the DSS office. Although DSS offices provide services free of charge, a student with a disability must initiate contact with the DSS office and establish eligibility for services prior to receiving accommodations and/or specialized services and supports while enrolled at the institution. This means a student must disclose his/her disability in order to receive services. If the student chooses not to disclose, accommodations will not be provided.
Although not standardized, the eligibility criteria used by DSS offices are primarily based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and ADA guidelines. Examples of eligibility criteria for disability-related support services include:

- verification of diagnosis and severity of your disabling condition prepared by a qualified professional; and
- a detailed description of how this impairment significantly limits you in a major life activity in an educational setting.

Since each category of disability may require different documentation to prove eligibility, students should be instructed to contact the DSS office at the schools they are considering to get information on the school’s specific documentation guidelines. For example, almost all postsecondary institutions require documentation of a learning disability or a mental health condition to have been verified within the last five years. However, this timeframe may vary from institution to institution.

Consider some of the following activities as ways to introduce HS/HT students to the range of postsecondary education options:

- contacting local community colleges and universities and inviting their admissions officer to talk with students about the school’s admission requirements;
- discussing with the students different options for financing postsecondary education, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), different types of scholarships, and possible assistance from Vocational Rehabilitation;
- conducting site visits to as many community colleges, colleges, and universities as possible;
- arranging for youth with disabilities to meet with Disability Support Service representatives from local colleges and universities;
- connecting the youth and the program to faculty interested in helping steer the participants into technology-based jobs and promising STEM careers;
- finding mentors from postsecondary institutions to work with HS/HT participants;
- developing a feeder program arrangement for postsecondary projects that are promoting careers in the STEM careers for youth with disabilities, such as those sponsored by the American Association of Advanced Sciences;
- negotiating the use of computer laboratories on campus for use by the HS/HT participants;
- arranging visits to college and trade fairs;
- assisting youth in identifying specific college and training programs related to their career interests and experiences;
- using college facilities for HS/HT summer programs; and
- writing letters of recommendations for youth to be used in college applications.

MD HS/HT has a local site located at the University of Maryland (UMD). The UMD site sponsors a summer program where HS/HT students stay on campus for three weeks. During this time the students experience campus life, become familiar with Disability Support Services, participate in campus social life and recreational activities, and take one course in a high tech area for three college credits. This program is followed by an internship where each student receives a stipend from the ODEP grant funds. The internship may or may not extend into the school year.
Online Resources to Consider

“America’s Career Resource Network (ACRN)” consists of state and federal organizations that provide information, resources and training on career and education exploration. ACRN provides useful information on financial aid resources for post-high school education. Visit: http://www.acrnetwork.org.

“Financial Aid Center,” sponsored by Career OneStop, has information on financial assistance for college students. It also has resources for workers who need training. Visit: http://www.careeronestop.org/FINANCIAL/FinancialAidHome.asp.

“U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid (FSA) Programs” are the largest source of student aid in America. They provide about 70% of all student financial aid. Visit: http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english.

Connecting to Workforce Preparation Programs

Students with disabilities may need assistance in securing services from adult service providers who administer workforce preparation programs. The most significant difference between receiving disability services in school and receiving services post-school is that school-based services are mandated through federal civil rights laws while adult services are not. It is important to prepare youth for the transition from the entitlement to services prior to graduation from high school to eligibility-based services available through the adult services system which can be time consuming and difficult to access.

Connecting activities to help youth access adult services and workforce preparation programs might include:
- visiting a local One-Stop Center and helping youth identify existing job openings in the community (See Exhibits for detailed information on the services available through One-Stop Centers and on how to locate the One-Stop Center nearest you);
- helping youth identify staff positions within companies that provide internships;
- helping youth develop lists of personal resources and references such as workplace mentors and collaborating partner organizations;
- assisting students in developing resumes and completing job applications;
- arranging meetings with local VR Counselors to determine the young person’s eligibility for VR services prior to exiting high school (See Exhibits for detailed information on the services and supports available through the VR program and on how to locate local VR offices); and
- identifying other community-based job placement resources that youth might access.

Component 6: Connecting to Other Programs and Opportunities

Connecting to Programs Available to All Youth

Young people enjoy being involved in recreational activities, participating in team sports, and becoming members of clubs. Youth with disabilities are no different; however, they may need
assistance in making connections with programs available to all youth. Consequently, HS/HT coordinators should explore what is available in the community in terms of recreational activities, sports, clubs and other opportunities of interest and approach those programs about including HS/HT students. Several HS/HT programs have developed partnerships with groups like Junior Achievement, AmeriCorps, Job Corps, and Youth Leadership Forums. Some HS/HT sites have sponsored teams of students to enter in competitions where youth with disabilities have not previously participated.

**Online Resources to Consider**

“Intelitek” contains educational product lines such as Mechatronics and Automation, and covers subjects such as CAD, CAM, CNC, robotics, machine vision, FMS, CIM, hydraulics, pneumatics, PLC, sensors, and process control data acquisition. Intelitek offers blended e-learning solutions designed to prepare students for careers in technologically advanced business environments. Intelitek’s products are used in FIRST® FRC, robotics competition. Visit: [http://www.intelitek.com](http://www.intelitek.com).

**Connecting to Disability-Specific Programs**

HS/HT students can also benefit from connections to disability-specific programs, services, and supports such as those available through Independent Living Centers (ILCs) and other consumer-driven, community-based support service agencies. In some places, HS/HT sites are housed in ILCs, to easily facilitate such connections. In other places, a visit to the local ILC or a presentation by staff from an ILC can facilitate such connections. To locate the ILC closest to you, visit: [http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory](http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory).

HS/HT students may also benefit from connections to Parent Training Centers, which are located in every state. These Centers provide training and information to parents of infants, toddlers, school-aged children, and young adults with all types of disabilities and the professionals who work with these families. This assistance helps parents participate more effectively with professionals in meeting the educational needs of their children and youth. The Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers (the Alliance) coordinates the delivery of technical assistance to the Parent Training Centers and the Community Parent Resource Centers through six regional centers located in New Jersey, North Carolina, Florida, Ohio, Colorado and California. For more information, visit: [http://www.taalliance.org/PTIs.htm](http://www.taalliance.org/PTIs.htm).

HS/HT students receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits should be made aware of benefits-planning counseling services. SSI is a federal income supplement program designed to help individuals who are aged, blind, and/or disabled, who have little or no income. It provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. For more information on SSI, visit: [http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi). Medicaid is a federally-funded, state-run program that provides medical assistance for individuals and families with limited incomes and resources. It pays for your health care costs, including, among other things, doctor and dentist services, clinic and hospital services, home health care, family planning services, mental health care, prescription drug coverage, and optometrist services and eyeglasses. For more information on Medicaid, visit: [http://www.cms.hhs.gov/home/medicaid.asp](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/home/medicaid.asp).
Since eligibility for both SSI and Medicaid is based on being low income, determining the impact of employment on cash assistance and on access to specific services, such as personal attendant care, is an important consideration for some youth with disabilities as they plan for the future. You can find benefits planning information in a number of places. Federally-funded Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA), formally called the Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach (BPAO) programs, can be found throughout the country in a number of organizations (visit http://www.ssa.gov/work/WIPARFA.html). The goal of the WIPA Program is to better enable SSA beneficiaries with disabilities to make informed choices about work. Many State VR agencies also have benefits planners on staff. A benefits planner can help:

- explain what will happen to the benefits someone receives when they go to work;
- individuals plan for work and greater independence;
- individuals take advantage of work incentives (such as Plans for Achieving Self-Support, known as PASS Plans) that will increase the amount of income available to them;
- tell individuals about programs that may allow them to keep necessary cash or health benefits when they go to work or school;
- explain notices received from Social Security that are often difficult to understand; and
- teach individuals how to report their earnings, if necessary, to Social Security.

**Online Resources to Consider**

To locate the WIPA Program in your state, visit: http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work/ServiceProviders/WIPADirectory.html


**Component 7: Assistive Technology**

Assistive technology (AT) was referenced in Section 3, School-Based Preparatory Experiences, as it applies to universal design in learning and the need for AT while a young person is still in high school. Here, AT is examined as it applies to individualized accommodations that can ensure the meaningful participation of young adults in programs and activities within their communities.

Thousands of AT devices are available, ranging from the very simple, low-cost or low-tech products — such as calculators or book holders — to high-tech solutions such as voice-activated speech synthesizers. In addition to helping students succeed in school, such devices allow youth with disabilities to maintain or improve their functional capabilities, become more independent, and pursue opportunities for postsecondary education and employment. AT devices are compensatory tools, not luxuries or a means to gain unfair advantage over others. Rather, AT helps to create a level playing field for youth with disabilities.

AT devices can be purchased off the shelf from the local computer or hardware store, or can be designed especially for youth with disabilities and marketed through catalogues or specialty stores. In addition to devices, the term “AT” also refers to related services such as assessments, training, maintenance, and repair of equipment and devices. AT assessments are used to identify...
what particular devices would help an individual with a disability based upon the evaluator's opinion of the individual's functional strengths and abilities, preferences, and the proposed usage. A proper AT assessment also addresses the related services needed to support use of the device. Assessments and other services are critical to the successful selection, acquisition, and use of appropriate AT.

You can identify what types of AT devices or services a young person will need as s/he participates in HS/HT activities by considering the following.

- Ask the youth what devices or services they have used in the past. What worked and what didn’t work?
- Review any vocational and/or AT assessments the student has had. If the student has not had an AT assessment, recommend that s/he include the need for an AT assessment in his/her Individualized Transition Plan, IEP, or 504 Plan.
- Interview parents and teachers to see how needs have been sufficiently met at home and in school.
- Use the checklist in exhibits following to get a clear understanding of the range of assistive technology devices, materials, and services that have been or can be used by a particular student. As you will see, this checklist can be used to explore a student’s need for reasonable accommodations in a variety of settings.
- Help the young person find needed assistive technology by searching for adaptive equipment on the Internet, making a referral to the Statewide Assistive Technology Project, and/or working with a community-based organization that specializes in assistive technology.

Commercial AT can significantly enhance the quality-of-life, independence, and employability of youth with disabilities. While a lot of AT is cheap and easy to obtain, some is relatively expensive and, as a result, many individuals cannot afford it. While schools will often purchase the AT that a student needs to facilitate learning, most schools maintain ownership of the AT. In some cases, students with disabilities are even precluded from taking the school’s AT home with them to complete homework assignments. In almost all cases, students who graduate from high school no longer have access to the AT that contributed to their success and independence while they were in school.

Free AT is available to help to mitigate these situations. The OH HS/HT program has dedicated and maintains a portion of its website to include links to various sources of free AT. Access this valuable information at: [http://www.onlineconferencingsystems.com/at.htm](http://www.onlineconferencingsystems.com/at.htm).

**Online Resources to Consider**

“**Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**” specializes in helping people find the accommodations needed to succeed in the workplace and have an extensive database for Internet searches. JAN staff are available to research various assistive technology solutions for callers. Visit: [http://www.jan.wvu.edu/](http://www.jan.wvu.edu/).

“**Statewide Assistive Technology Projects,**” authorized under the Assistive Technology Act, provide an array of AT services and have a range of AT equipment available for people to try. Many have AT loan or recycle programs. Visit: [http://www.resna.org](http://www.resna.org).
Getting Organized

There are several organizational tasks HS/HT staff may wish to pursue when connecting youth with different types of support services.

- **Plan** an active role for HS/HT participants throughout ALL connecting activities (i.e., having students make phone calls to gather information, set up appointments, etc). This will increase each student’s level of self-sufficiency for the future and promote the concepts of self-determination and informed choice.

- **Find out** what tutoring programs are available through the school system and in the community.

- **Poll students** to determine how many are participating in tutoring programs, have visited their local One Stop Center, have contacted VR, have visited a college campus, etc.

- **Solicit** peer tutoring support from existing participants and from graduates of the program. Find out if any of these people have areas of academic “expertise” and are willing to work with other HS/HT students.

- **Coordinate** mentoring efforts locally by contacting other programs in the community.

- **Assure** that assistive technologies are provided to meet the individualized needs of each participant. If you feel a student may benefit from assistive technology but has not explored the issue, contact the Statewide Assistive Technology Project to set up an opportunity for the student to explore using different assistive technology devices.

- **Develop** a transportation plan for each participant (with their input), arranging for travel training, and, for orientation and mobility training if appropriate.

- **Obtain** information, including the eligibility criteria, on the youth, adult, and VR programs available through local workforce organizations.
Exhibit: Making Connections to One-Stop Centers

This exhibit focuses on the services and supports available at One-Stop Centers through the programs authorized under Title I of WIA.

Within the federally-funded One-Stop system, adult services are divided into three categories: 1) Core Services; 2) Intensive Services; and 3) Training Services.

Core Services are available to all adults 18 years of age and older, and include, but are not limited to:
- determination of eligibility to receive additional services beyond the services defined as WIA core services;
- outreach, intake, and orientation to information on the array of services and training opportunities available through the workforce system;
- initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, and abilities, as well as an assessment of the need for any specialized or supportive services;
- job search and placement assistance, and where appropriate, career counseling;
- consumer information regarding the availability of supportive services (e.g., transportation services) available in the local area and referrals to such services;
- information on how to apply for unemployment compensation claims;
- assistance in establishing eligibility for programs and services not funded under WIA;
- statistical employment information relating to local, regional, and national labor market areas, including job vacancy listings, information on the job skills required for these positions, and information relating to local occupations in demand, the skills required, and earnings potential;
- information on the performance and program cost of eligible providers of training services; and
- follow-up services, including workplace counseling for participants who meet certain eligibility requirements.

Although Core Services are generally viewed as “adult services,” many One-Stop Centers provide these same services to youth between the ages of 14 and 18.

Intensive Services are available to adults who are eligible for WIA adult services, have received at least one core service, and are:
- unemployed and have been unable to obtain employment through core services, and have been determined by the One-Stop staff to be in need of more intensive services to obtain employment; or who are employed, but who are determined by One-Stop Center staff to be in need of intensive services in order to get or keep a job that allows them to become economically self-sufficient.

Intensive services include, but are not limited to:
- comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs, which may include diagnostic testing;
- in depth evaluations to identify the barriers a participant might face in securing employment and to help identify the participant’s employment goals;
• development of an individual employment plan to identify appropriate objectives and the right combination of services to assist someone in achieving their employment goal(s);
• group counseling;
• individualized career planning;
• case management for participants seeking intensive and training services;
• short-term pre-vocational services including development of skills in learning, communications, interviewing, punctuality, personal hygiene and dress, and professional conduct to prepare the participant for unsubsidized employment or training;
• assistance in keeping a job and moving to a better position within a company after initial placement on the job; and
• supportive services such as childcare, transportation, and assistance with work- and training-related expenses.

Training Services for eligible individuals are provided through a type of voucher, referred to as an Individual Training Account (ITA), which allows participants to choose among eligible training providers pre-approved by Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) through a competitive process based upon performance-related information. These accounts are equivalent to vouchers that can be used to secure services from any eligible training provider. At a minimum, a participant must receive at least one intensive service before receiving training services. A determination of the need for training services will be identified in the participant’s service plan, comprehensive assessment, or through other intensive services. Training services include:
• occupational skills training, including training for non-traditional employment;
• on-the-job training;
• programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs;
• training programs operated by the private sector;
• training to upgrade skills and retrain for a different job;
• education on how to establish and operate your own business;
• adult education and literacy activities provided in combination with other training services; and
• customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ you upon successful completion of the training.

Supportive Services may be provided under certain circumstances to enable an individual to participate in program activities and to secure and retain employment. Examples include assistance covering:
• local transportation costs;
• childcare and dependent care costs;
• housing and food; and
• relocation and out-of-area job search expenses.

Retention Services (or Follow-Up Services) include services that are classified as post-employment or job retention services and include such things as supportive services, counseling, and certain kinds of training. These services are expected to assist an individual in maintaining
and succeeding in a job, as well as assisting in increasing their salary and moving towards greater economic self-sufficiency.

WIA emphasizes that general employment and training services can meet the needs of people with disabilities. The legislation and regulations state specifically that One-Stop Centers are to be designed to serve all people, including people with disabilities.

**WIA Youth Services**

Youth with disabilities typically receive services under the youth funding stream in Title I of WIA. WIA youth services are available for youth ages 14 to 21. Eligibility is based on being low income and one or more of the following:

- deficient in basic literacy skills;
- a school dropout; homeless, a runaway, or a foster child;
- pregnant or a parent;
- an offender; and/or
- an individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment.

Even if the family of a youth with a disability does not meet the income eligibility criteria, the youth may be considered a “family of one” if the youth's own income meets the income criteria. In addition, up to five percent of the youth served in a local area can be exempted from the low income requirement, if they meet certain criteria.

Youth activities are available to youth who are in-school as well as youth who are not. WIA requires that 30 percent of youth funds be used to address the needs of out-of-school youth. The WIA definition of “out-of-school” includes youth who have dropped out of school, as well as youth who have graduated from high school or hold a GED but are deficient in basic skills, unemployed, or underemployed. To be defined as “out-of-school,” the young person must not be enrolled in school or any alternative educational program when s/he registers for WIA services; however, the young person may be placed in an educational program, such as a GED program or alternative school, as part of the service strategy after registration.

Youth services are available through One-Stop Centers, but are frequently delivered throughout local communities by eligible youth service providers chosen by LWIB through a competitive process.

**Online Resources to Consider**

“Amercia’s Service Locator” can be used to find the One-Stop Center nearest you. Visit: [http://www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org).

“DisabilityInfo.gov” is the federal government's one-stop website for information of interest to people with disabilities, their families, employers, service providers and many others. It provides information regarding services for people with disabilities, including One-Stop Centers. Visit: [http://www.disabilityinfo.gov](http://www.disabilityinfo.gov).
“The U.S. Workforce Website” contains information about WIA and can be used to locate the One-Stop Center nearest you. Visit: http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/training/onestop.htm.
Exhibit: Making the Connection to Vocational Rehabilitation

State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies (VR) have a wealth of resources related to employment options for individuals with disabilities. VR assists individuals with disabilities who are experiencing barriers to employment. The intended outcome of the receipt of VR services is the attainment of employment that is consistent with the individual’s strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

Although anyone who has a disability can apply for VR services, to be eligible for VR services a person must:

- be an individual with a physical or mental impairment that makes it difficult to get or keep a job;
- expect to get or keep a job as a result of the services and supports received from VR; and
- require VR services to prepare for or engage in employment that is consistent with his/her abilities, capabilities, and interests.

Thus, to establish eligibility for VR services, a person must provide information about his/her disability, any barriers to employment resulting from the disability, and information demonstrating the ability to benefit from VR services. VR must also collect documentation that proves the person can legally work in the U.S. Individuals who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are automatically eligible for VR services as long as they are pursuing employment. However, these individuals must still go through the process of applying for services.

Similar to special education services, VR services are individualized based on the needs of eligible individuals. Once a person has been determined eligible, a VR counselor will assist that person in identifying appropriate vocational goals and in identifying the services and supports needed to achieve those goals. Individuals applying for VR services may be asked to participate in formal evaluations or assessments to identify their strengths, abilities, capabilities, and interests as they apply to employment.

Once a person has completed these assessments, a VR counselor will work with him/her to identify one or two career choices that are in keeping with the assessment results. The counselor should also provide the person with information on the array of services VR has to assist individuals in pursuing employment goals. This type of information is extremely important for VR consumers to exercise their right to informed choice throughout the VR process.

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

An IPE is a written agreement between the eligible individual and the VR agency. The IPE describes an eligible individual’s vocational goals; lists the services and supports that will be needed to accomplish those goals; explains how those services and supports will be provided or purchased; and identifies the providers of those services.

The services and supports that an individual may receive from VR may include:
• evaluations and assessments to determine the extent of the individual’s disability and the types of services and supports s/he will need to pursue competitive employment and to overcome functional limitations resulting from the disability;
• vocational evaluation, counseling, and guidance services to explore the individual’s interests, skills, abilities, potential, and limitations;
• work adjustment training to help the individual understand his/her vocational needs and abilities, and to identify the types of jobs and careers that s/he is likely to handle successfully;
• job-related services (job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up, and follow-along services);
• specialized support services such as interpreters, note-takers, transcription services, TTYs, Braille, and large print materials, when such things are needed to communicate with the individual’s counselor, participate in a training program, or engage in work;
• vocational training and other types of training, including assistance in pursuing a college education;
• assistive technology devices and services;
• transportation services;
• supported employment services;
• assistance in setting up a small business;
• independent living skills training that supports an employment goal; and
• transition services.

Transition Planning with VR Involvement

The following definition of “transition services” applies to the VR program and outlines the scope of services that a VR agency may provide to transition-age youth who have been determined eligible for services.

Transition services are defined as, “a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.”

[Section 7(37) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1998, Public Law 105-220]

As clearly indicated in this definition, Congress intended that VR agencies be involved in transition planning for special education students. For a variety of reasons, the way VR approaches transition services varies significantly from state to state. Thus, VR’s involvement in transition planning may range from getting to know a young person in order to provide transition services at a later date, to actually providing services while the youth is still in school. If a youth with a disability is still in school and is not involved with VR, the youth may want to consider
applying for services or talking to his/her teacher or guidance counselor about involving a VR counselor in his/her transition planning.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is required to include an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) for special education students beginning at age 16. It makes sense to include a VR counselor in the development of the IEP whenever employment issues are being addressed. VR counselors have a great deal of expertise in addressing barriers to employment resulting from disabilities. They are also familiar with different types of vocational and functional assessments that can help a young person identify his/her strengths, abilities, skills, functional limitations, and vocational interests. In addition, VR counselors should be familiar with the programs and services in the local community available to assist youth in overcoming barriers to employment and in finding and keeping a job. Based on differences in VR agencies, counselors in some states will join students’ transition teams and attend ITP meetings two or three years before a special education student leaves high school. In other states, counselors are not likely to get involved in ITP meetings until students have started their senior year of high school.

There Are No Guarantees

Although VR agencies are funded by the federal government, they are operated by the states and have lots of flexibility in how they use their federal funds to meet the employment and training needs of individuals with disabilities. For example, some VR agencies will assist an eligible youth with the costs of college without looking at the income and resources available to the youth’s family. Others will look at the income and resources of the youth’s family prior to providing financial assistance for college. In a state that looks at the person’s family’s income and resources, the person may be asked to pay for part or all of his/her college expenses depending on the family’s financial situation.

Since most VR agencies do not have the resources to serve everyone who could potentially benefit from services, the length of time that a person has to wait to actually receive services may be determined by an “Order of Selection” (OOS). An OOS is a system of prioritization that requires the VR agency to serve eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities first, when the agency’s resources are not adequate to serve all who might be eligible for assistance. Thus, even if a person is determined eligible for VR services, s/he may have to wait for some time before receiving assistance if s/he lives in a state where VR is under an OOS.

Getting Help Using VR

A VR consumer has the right to appeal any negative decisions affecting his/her eligibility for and access to VR services whether s/he is applying for services, or has been determined eligible and is receiving services. A negative decision is, for instance, a finding that a person is not eligible for VR services, a decision that an eligible individual will not receive a specific service that the individual believes s/he needs to achieve his/her vocational goals, or the termination of services that an eligible person is already receiving. VR has both formal and informal processes for appealing such decisions. VR counselors are required to provide VR applicants and consumers with information on these processes. If a consumer has gone through the informal mediation
process offered by the state VR agency and is not happy with the outcome, s/he has the right to go through a formal appeals process.

Anyone who feels they need assistance in pursuing either the informal mediation process or the formal appeals process may request assistance from the state’s Client Assistance Program (CAP). CAP receives money from the federal government to assist VR applicants and consumers when they disagree with something VR has done in connection with their requests for assistance. VR is required to provide information on how to contact CAP when a person applies for services and when s/he signs an IPE.

**Online Resources to Consider**

To locate the VR office closes to you, visit one of the following websites: [http://www.jan.wvu.edu/SBSES/VOCREHAB.HTM](http://www.jan.wvu.edu/SBSES/VOCREHAB.HTM) or [http://www.rehabnetwork.org](http://www.rehabnetwork.org).

To obtain contact information for the CAP in your state, visit: [http://www.ndrn.org/aboutus/PA_CAP.htm](http://www.ndrn.org/aboutus/PA_CAP.htm).
Section 7. Family Involvement and Supports

This section examines the fifth and final Guidepost, Family Involvement and Supports, and its positive effect on youth with disabilities, particularly with respect to success in school and improved post-school outcomes. Research has shown that the involvement of parents, family members, and/or other caring adults promotes the social, emotional, physical, academic, and occupational growth of young people, and leads to better post-school. There are four components to this section:

1. High expectations
2. Ensuring access to and progress in the general curriculum and understanding how a youth’s disability might impact his/her education, employment, and daily living options
3. Taking an active role in transition planning
4. Having information on programs, services, supports, accommodations, rights, and responsibilities

Rapidly changing demographics, combined with the disproportional number of minority students served in special education, furthers the need for programs and staff to create a climate conducive to increasing the involvement of all family members. Sometimes the goals of a program, such as independent living, self-determination, and self-sufficiency, may be in disagreement with the cultural values of the family. In some cultures parental involvement in a school or an education program is viewed as inappropriate. Since culture can play such an important role in family involvement and support, HS/HT program coordinators need to be informed about the cultures of the students they are serving. In some cases, it may be necessary to identify a cultural broker from a particular community to help make necessary connections to the parents of youth enrolled in HS/HT.

Despite the many impediments to family involvement, it is important that HS/HT program coordinators make every effort to enlist the support of parents, family members, and other caring adults as their support greatly contributes to the successful transition of youth to adulthood. One way to do this is to provide parents and family members with examples of how they can support their children in their academic endeavors and in their social and emotional development. For example, HS/HT program coordinators might suggest that parents and family members:

- read to or with their children;
- assist their children with their homework assignments and/or monitor the completion of homework assignments;
- spend time with their children going over materials and instructions provided by teachers;
- tutor their children;
- help their children develop good study habits;
- ask about what their children are learning in school each day;
- ask about their children’s social relationships at school;
- use TV shows and commercials to demonstrate good/bad behavior and discuss morals;
- regularly discuss things that happen in the news with their children;
- assign their children regular chores around the house;
- talk to their children about their vocational interests;
- emphasize the importance of volunteer work and community service; and
talk with their children about options for postsecondary education and training after high school.

Component 1: High Expectations
For many youth, achieving success depends to a large extent on the expectations of those closest to them. When parents and family members communicate low expectations to a young person, that youth is not likely to expect much of him or herself. Conversely, if the caring adults in a young person’s life have high expectations for that youth, s/he is likely to strive to meet those expectations.

As our culture still tends to have low expectations for youth with disabilities, HS/HT program coordinators need to communicate the value of high expectations to participant’s family members. Help parents build upon their son/daughter’s strengths, abilities, capabilities, and interests in communicating the young person’s potential. Of course, merely having high expectations is not enough. HS/HT program coordinators must encourage parents and family members to communicate those expectations, not only to their sons and daughters on a regular basis, but also to their sons’ and daughters’ teachers, guidance counselors, and other professionals.

The local coordinator for Hendry/Glades HS/HT site in FL schedules monthly meetings with the parents of HS/HT students. Flyers are taken home by the students. While the parents are meeting in one room, participating youth are meeting as the Student Advisory Council in another room. During the later part of each meeting, the parents and students come together as a single group where the parents share their issues, the students report on their discussion, and the date for the next meeting is set. This process has proven to be an effective way to open up communication between the teens and their parents. The next day the local coordinator calls the parents who missed the meeting and provides them with a progress report on their sons/daughter’s involvement in HS/HT. This lets them know they were missed.

The local coordinator believes this is a vital part of the site’s success. It provides regular communication with parents and multiple opportunities to remind parents how important it is to tell their sons/daughters that they are proud of them. The average attendance at these monthly meetings is 23-25 people, a notable accomplishment given that the site covers two counties with some parents traveling as much as 70 miles roundtrip to attend. The coordinator rotates the sites for these meetings to be fair to those who must travel such distances.

One effective way of getting parents and family members to see their children’s potential is to invite HS/HT students who have successfully transitioned to adult life to talk to the parents of participating youth. As these youth describe how HS/HT helped them overcome different challenges to complete high school and enter postsecondary education or employment, they can help the parents of participating youth see new possibilities for their children’s futures.
Component 2: Ensuring Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum and Understanding How a Youth’s Disability Might Impact His/Her Education, Employment, and Daily Living Options

HS/HT program coordinators can play an important role in helping parents and family members understand the importance of ensuring that their children have access to and progress in the general education curriculum. Parents may need to be encouraged to be proactive in providing the school with information on their son’s/daughter’s strengths, particularly as those strengths can be used to master aspects of the school’s curriculum. The HS/HT program coordinator therefore should help parents gain a better understanding of their children’s strengths, particularly as they apply to vocational interests, team work, leadership skills, and other transition skills needed for independent living.

HS/HT program coordinators can help parents understand how their son/daughter’s disability might impact his/her learning, potential for employment, options for daily living, and opportunities for socialization experiences. If the program coordinator has been working with the young person over a period of time, s/he may be more familiar with the types of accommodations that will work best for that particular youth in an educational setting. When such information is shared with parents, they are better prepared to work with teachers and members of the child’s IEP team to advocate for the use of the most effective instructional strategies and the most appropriate individualized supports to promote that student’s participation and progress in the general curriculum. When a problem arises, the HS/HT coordinator may be able to assist the parent in determining the source of the problem, in identifying activities that can be undertaken at school and at home to address the problem, and in identifying services available in the community to address the problem.

What Information Families Want and Need

Surveys conducted by the PACER Center (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights) in 2001 indicate that families seek information on a variety of issues including:

- helping youth develop self-advocacy skills;
- balancing standards-based academic instruction with functional life skills training;
- inclusive education practices at the secondary level;
- postsecondary options for young adults with developmental and cognitive disabilities;
- pre-employment experiences and employment options that lead to competitive employment;
- financial planning;
- resources available to youth through the workforce investment, vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, and Social Security systems;
- better collaboration with community resources;
- housing options; and
- interacting with the juvenile justice system.

In addition to helping parents understand various aspects of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the HS/HT program coordinator can also assist parents in understanding the provisions under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act that apply to including students with disabilities in the state’s standard assessment and when a student might be considered for alternative assessments. Parents who understand the interplay between IDEA and NCLB and the issues related to including students with disabilities in assessments can play a critical role in
ensuring that their children are included in standardized or alternative assessments, as deemed appropriate, and in ensuring that their children have access to needed accommodations during assessments.

**Component 3: Taking an Active Role in Transition Planning**

The 2004 amendments to IDEA place new emphasis on transition planning for special education students. Of particular importance to HS/HT is the fact that they clarify the all too often misunderstood fact that one of the goals of special education is employment. For the first time, states receiving funding under IDEA are required to report on the “percentage of youth aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the child to meet the postsecondary goals.” Referred to as “Indicator 13,” measures of success in meeting this indicator examine a variety of factors, including the following:

- Is (are) there a measurable postsecondary goal or goals that covers education or training, employment, and, as needed, independent living?
- Is (are) there annual IEP goal(s) that will reasonably enable the child to meet postsecondary goal(s) outlined in the IEP?
- Are there transition services in the IEP that focus on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child to facilitate his/her movement from school to post-school?
- For transition services that are likely to be provided or paid for by other agencies, is there evidence that representatives of applicable agencies were invited to the IEP meeting (i.e. with the consent of the parents and/or youth)?
- Is there evidence that the measurable postsecondary goals were based on age-appropriate transition assessment(s)?
- Do the transition services include courses of study that focus on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child to facilitate his/her movement from school to post-school?

Furthermore, IDEA 2004 requires states to report on the “percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school.”

In addition to the transition planning that must now occur within the IEP team and be recorded in the IEP, youth with disabilities and their parents and family members can benefit greatly from learning how to use individualized planning tools to assist the youth in achieving their transition goals and objectives. HS/HT program coordinators can help youth with disabilities and their parents and family members identify individualized planning tools that are designed for transition-age youth. Program coordinators can also help youth and their family members better understand how to use these planning tools to drive the development of the transition component of the young person’s IEP.

HS/HT coordinators should encourage parents to become active members of the various “planning” teams that are working with their sons/daughters. For example, they should be encouraged to become active members of their child’s IEP team, attending meetings and
providing information on the child’s disability, learning style, accomplishments, strengths, interests, likes, dislikes, and more. The HS/HT coordinator may be able to assist youth and their parents in coming up with specific recommendations regarding additional people to include as members of the IEP team when transition planning begins. By providing youth and their parents with information on employment options, the importance of and options for further education and training, and the services and supports available through the adult services systems and available in the community to assist young people as they move towards adulthood, the HS/HT program coordinator has provided them with the tools they need to be active participants in transition planning. As needed, the HS/HT program coordinator can serve as an important source of information regarding medical, professional, and peer support networks that are available to assist young people as they try to establish their independence and work towards self-sufficiency.

While HS/HT program coordinators will want to encourage parents to get involved in identifying the annual IEP goals for their children and the ways that their children’s progress towards meeting those goals will be measured, they should also encourage parents to assist their children in pursuing self-determination to the maximum extent possible. Ultimately, the student should be the driving force throughout the transition planning process. The HS/HT program coordinator can point out the benefits of the multiple opportunities for the student to use his/her skills in self-determination, self-advocacy, and informed decision making within the transition planning process. The HS/HT coordinator can help parents identify the types of information that a young person would need to facilitate his/her ability to make informed decisions, and then encourage them to step back and let the student take the lead in making the decisions that will impact the rest of his/her life.

Component 4: Having Information on Programs, Services, Supports, Accommodations, Rights, and Responsibilities

Some youth with disabilities need to access programs, services, supports, and accommodations that are not found within the school setting (e.g., medical, mental health, independent living, and employment services). HS/HT program coordinators can serve as a valuable source of information on what is available in the community, and can assist youth and their parents as they try to access needed programs, services, supports, and accommodations.

HS/HT program coordinators can provide young people and their families with critically important knowledge about the rights and responsibilities associated with specific disability programs as outlined in disability-related legislation. Some HS/HT programs provide orientation and/or training programs to help parents understand the educational and related services available to special education students under IDEA, and to familiarize them with a student’s rights and responsibilities under both NCLB and IDEA. Such training usually includes information on, among other things, the standardized assessments called for under NCLB, provisions related to accommodations and alternative assessment for students with disabilities under NCLB, and on the mediation and appeals processes spelled out in IDEA. This type of information will enhance the ability of family members to advocate on behalf of their children within the educational system and teach their children how to advocate for themselves.
As a student moves into the transition years, both the family and the student need to become familiar with the programs and authorizing legislation and governing regulations that apply to programs that are available to assist people with disabilities as they move from the entitlement to services in the special education setting to the “eligibility-based” adult services delivery system. For example, HS/HT staff provide youth and their families with information on the services available to all youth through each state’s system of One-Stop Career Centers and on the services and supports offered through State VR agencies to assist individuals with disabilities in securing employment (see Exhibits). Many program coordinators encourage participating youth and their parents to seek the involvement of VR counselors when IEP meetings are dealing with vocational issues.

HS/HT program coordinators can also help youth and their family members understand the issues surrounding disability disclosure outside of the secondary school setting and the implications of disclosing one’s disability in different settings, including postsecondary education, employment, and social settings. Since many young people with disabilities enter postsecondary educational settings with no understanding of how to obtain needed accommodations, HS/HT programs commonly include exposure to Disability Support Services in the orientation they provide to postsecondary education.

The HS/HT program in Columbus, GA uses The 411 on Disability Disclosure, produced by NCWD/Youth in collaboration with ODEP, to help parents and students learn to shift responsibility for disclosure from the parents to the students. Meetings are planned where parents and students are brought in to discuss the students’ future career plans. The discussion looks at the feasibility of accomplishing the students’ vocational goals and the steps that are needed to accomplish those goals. Since some students have no interest in self-disclosure, this group setting is used to discuss the benefits of disclosure, particularly as it applies to maximizing one’s college experiences. This approach, which is used to help graduating seniors explore disability disclosure, has proven to be quite enlightening to all who participate.

**Getting Organized**

There are many things that HS/HT programs can do to assist family members in taking an active role in a young person’s education and transition planning, and to support a young person’s involvement in HS/HT.

**Keep Parents, Family Members, and Caring Adults Informed**

- **Conduct** an evening session designed specifically to inform parents and family members about the HS/HT curriculum and activities.
- **Plan** a transition class that will inform parents and family members about the requirements under NCLB and IDEA and the services and supports available through special education, and to help them understand what to expect in the IEP process.
- **Invite** parents and family members to a presentation by a Disability Program Navigator where they can learn about the services and supports available in the community and the employment and training programs that can help a young person find and keep a job.
Develop/disseminate informational flyers on a variety of topics (e.g., the IEP and other individualized planning tools, rights and responsibilities under disability laws, the steps to applying for postsecondary education, etc.).

Get Parents, Family Members, and Caring Adults Involved
- **Encourage** parents to participate in HS/HT activities by asking them to serve as chaperones, facilitators, presenters, or trainers.
- **Ask** parents to provide transportation to HS/HT events.
- **Encourage** parents to participate with the student in conferences and workshops being sponsored by HS/HT.
- **Invite** parents to serve on the HS/HT board of directors or advisory body.
- **Encourage** parents to serve as ambassadors for the program when interacting with other parents in their community.
- **Involve** parents and family members in fundraisers and recruitment efforts.

Ask Parents, Family Members, and Caring Adults to Supplement What You Are Doing
- **Ask** parents to keep track of the HS/HT activities in which the student is involved.
- **Ask** parents to engage the student in discussions about his/her HS/HT experiences.
- **Ask** parents to talk with their sons/daughters about the results of vocational exploration and assessment activities undertaken as part of the HS/HT program.
- **Ask** parents to provide the students with information about any jobs they have had; what it took to get those jobs; and what responsibilities were involved in each job.
- **Ask** parents to help the children explore options for additional training and education beyond high school, particularly postsecondary education.

Ask Parents, Family Members, and Caring Adults to Promote High Expectations and Self-Determination.
- **Ask** parents to undertake activities to foster self-determination and develop decision-making skills by providing information on options and encouraging youth to make their own decisions.
- **Ask** parents to encourage their children to increasingly take on responsibilities such as inviting people to participate on their IEP teams, leading their IEP teams, scheduling meetings with service providers and support personnel, and completing their homework assignments without assistance.
- **Ask** parents to provide their children with information on options for postsecondary education and employment, and to discuss those options with their sons/daughters to help them identify the pros and cons of each option. The ultimate goal would be for the young person to make his/her own decisions based on the information that has been gathered.
Exhibit: Online Resources to Promote Parental Involvement in Transition Planning

Below you will find a sampling of the many online resources that family members can use to find information on transition planning for youth with disabilities.


“Fanning the Flame,” a product of the National Dissemination Center on Children with Disabilities (NICHCY), can help parents fan the flame of individuality, interest, and talent in their child. Accompanying workbooks are designed for students and for the many folks who support them in this quest. Visit: http://www.nichcy.org.

“IEP & Transition Planning” is sponsored by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition and the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. It provides information on strategies to support students, families and professionals to participate in developing a student’s IEP and transition plan. Visit: http://www.ncset.org/topics/ieptransition/default.asp?topic=28.

“Measuring Transition Success: Focus on Youth & Family Participation,” a brief produced by the PACER Center in collaboration with the National Post-School Outcomes Center (NPSO), describes the importance of engaging families, youth, disability advocates, and parent centers in the design of state post-school data collection system. Visit: http://psocenter.org.

“PACER Center” (Parent advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights) was created by parents of children and youth with disabilities to help other parents and families facing similar challenges. The mission of the Center is to expand opportunities and enhance the quality of life of children and youth with disabilities and their families, based on the concept of parents helping parents. The Center houses a number of projects including the FAPE (the Families and Advocates Partnership for Education) Project that provides information on IDEA for families and advocates with the goal of improving education outcomes for youth with disabilities, and the TATRA (Technical Assistance on Transition and the Rehabilitation Act) Project that provides training, information and materials to inform families of youth with disabilities about transition, independent living, and vocational rehabilitation services. For more information, visit: http://www.pacer.org.


“Parenting Postsecondary Students with Disabilities,” a guide from the HEATH Resource Center, a clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities, discusses how to become the mentor, advocate, and guide your young adult needs. Visit: http://www.heath.gwu.edu.

“SchwabLearning.org” is a web site dedicated to understanding the challenges of raising a child with a learning disability. It provides reliable parent-friendly information from experts and parents. Topics addressed include, “Components of Effective Reading Instruction,” “Finding a Good Reading Tutor,” “Technology that Supports Learning,” “Working with the School,” “IEP & 504 Plans,” “Preparing for Life After High School,” and lots more. Visit: http://schwablearning.org.

“Transition Toolbox,” sponsored by New York’s Vocational and Educational Services for People with Disabilities Special Education Division, provides tools and resources such as checklists, how-to guides, helpful hints, and brochures, to assist students, families, schools, and community agencies in developing and implementing effective transition planning and services. These tools, frequently developed by local schools, community agencies, and families in collaboration with the Transition Coordination Sites are among the favorites when preparing youth with disabilities to live, learn, and earn in the community as adults. Visit: http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/transition/toolbox/home.html.

“To Work or Not to Work,” a fact sheet from the Virginia Commonwealth University RRTC on Workplace Supports and Job Retention, addresses frequently asked questions by individuals with disabilities and their family members as they begin to think about going to work in their local communities. It provides answers to dispel the concerns parents have about their youth entering the workforce. Visit: http://www.worksupport.com/resources/viewContent.cfm/501.

Appendix A  Performance Indicators for Technology-Literate Students

National Educational Technology Standards for Students

The National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) Project is an ongoing initiative of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) and a consortium of distinguished partners and co-sponsors. The primary goal of the ISTE NETS Project is to enable stakeholders in PreK-12 education to develop national standards for educational uses of technology that facilitate school improvement in the United States. The NETS Project will work to define standards for students, integrating curriculum technology, technology support, and standards for student assessment and evaluation of technology use. Two sets of standards have been developed that are of particular interest:

- Technology Foundation Standards for Students, describing what students should know about technology and be able to do with technology http://cnets.iste.org/students; and

Summary of the Standards for Students:

Numbers in parentheses following each performance indicator refer to the standards category to which the performance is linked. The categories are:

1. Basic operations and concepts
2. Social, ethical, and human issues
3. Technology productivity tools
4. Technology communications tools
5. Technology research tools
6. Technology problem-solving and decision-making tools

Prior to completion of Grade 12, students will:

1. Identify capabilities and limitations of contemporary and emerging technology resources and assess the potential of these systems and services to address personal, lifelong learning, and workplace needs. (2)
2. Make informed choices among technology systems, resources, and services. (1, 2)
3. Analyze advantages and disadvantages of widespread use and reliance on technology in the workplace and in society as a whole. (2)
4. Demonstrate and advocate for legal and ethical behaviors among peers, family, and community regarding the use of technology and information. (2)
5. Use technology tools and resources for managing and communicating personal/professional information (e.g., finances, schedules, addresses, purchases, correspondence). (3, 4)
6. Evaluate technology-based options, including distance and distributed education, for lifelong learning. (5)
7. Routinely and efficiently use online information resources to meet needs for collaboration, research, publications, communications, and productivity. (4, 5, 6)
8. Select and apply technology tools for research, information analysis, problem-solving, and decision-making in content learning. (4, 5)
9. Investigate and apply expert systems, intelligent agents, and simulations in real-world situations. (3, 5, 6)
10. Collaborate with peers, experts, and others to contribute to a content-related knowledge base by using technology to compile, synthesize, produce, and disseminate information, models, and other creative works. (4, 5, 6)

**Essential Conditions to Make It Happen**

Successful learning activities, such as this, depend on more than just the technology. Certain conditions are necessary for schools to effectively use technology for learning, teaching, and educational management. Physical, human, financial, and policy dimensions greatly affect the success of technology use in schools.

A combination of essential conditions are required to create learning environments conducive to powerful uses of technology, including:
- Vision with support and proactive leadership from the education system
- Educators skilled in the use of technology for learning
- Content standards and curriculum resources
- Student-centered approaches to learning
- Assessment of the effectiveness of technology for learning
- Access to contemporary technologies, software, and telecommunications networks
- Technical assistance for maintaining and using technology resources
- Community partners who provide expertise, support, and real-life interactions
- Ongoing financial support for sustained technology use
- Policies and standards supporting new learning environments

These web pages are designed to provide teachers, technology planners, teacher preparation institutions, and educational decision makers with frameworks, standards, and performance indicators to guide them in establishing enriched learning environments supported by technology. These new learning environments provide rich opportunities for students to find and utilize current information and resources, and apply academic skills for solving real-world problems. These environments engage students in activities that have educational technology skills and relevant curricular content interwoven.