



Grafton High School: School to Life Program

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Introductions



- ▶ Charles Pirlot-Special Education Teacher
- ▶ Josiah Pledl-School to Life Coordinator

In the Beginning

- ▶ Problems with transition:
 - ▶ Lack of enthusiasm by staff
 - ▶ Culture was wrong
 - ▶ Community connections were lacking
 - ▶ Transportation

Lack of Enthusiasm

- ▶ Transition is too big of an idea
 - ▶ Teachers did not know where to start
- ▶ Teachers were reinventing the wheel
 - ▶ Several teachers and community members were doing the same thing
- ▶ Good ideas did not end in results
- ▶ Diffusion of responsibility
 - ▶ What should parents be doing? What should the school be doing?
 - ▶ Tomorrow never comes

The Culture Was Wrong

- ▶ Parent expectations
 - ▶ The parents had no expectations or watered down expectations
- ▶ Teaching models
 - ▶ Special education was isolated and the cognitively disabled students were isolated from the special education department.
 - ▶ The general education teachers did not feel like they had a role.
- ▶ Kids
 - ▶ They wanted parents to speak for them.
 - ▶ There was a fear of failure.

Community Connections



- ▶ The school was isolated from the community.
- ▶ The teachers did not know what resources already existed and how to access those resources.
- ▶ Numerous people wanted to help but did not know how to get involved.

Transportation



- ▶ We had very limited transportation options.
- ▶ We did not know who was responsible for transportation.

What We Did

- ▶ Identified a transition coordinator
- ▶ Identified the power players in the community and the school
- ▶ Held community conversations
- ▶ Got connected
- ▶ Taught soft skills directly
- ▶ Had deadlines
- ▶ Bought a van

Identify a Transition Coordinator

- ▶ We had to pick someone to head up the cause.
 - ▶ Someone needs to be the face or contact person to follow up with stakeholders.
 - ▶ Then need to set deadlines and bring closure to ideas.
 - ▶ You don't need to be a large school district. The staff needs to be flexible. Start small. Our transition coordinator was 25% at the start.
 - ▶ Specialize

Identify the Power Players

- ▶ In most communities the biggest power player is the school district. They can be role models for others.
- ▶ School board members
- ▶ Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Adult services
- ▶ Teachers and guidance counselors
- ▶ Secretaries, interpreters, aides and students

Community Conversations

- ▶ Have a formal community conversation meeting, but do not forget about all the informal conversations
- ▶ Everyone has connections
- ▶ Work closely with adult service providers. If you help them they will help you.
- ▶ Remember you are a power player for others.

Get Connected

- ▶ Teach less pull out classes and more co-taught classes. You must also have pull in classes (general education)
- ▶ Get kids involved-clubs, sports, musicals
- ▶ Do as many community outings as possible
- ▶ Have kids volunteer with non-disabled people from the community
- ▶ Use the foot in the door model-small things can lead to big things
- ▶ Connect with other schools
- ▶ Use the Best Buddies program as a connection
- ▶ Discovery method approach

Teach Soft Skills Directly

- ▶ Teach a self advocacy and/or social skills class
- ▶ Start in-school work placements such as a school store, coffee cart or popcorn cart
- ▶ Interview the students and help them prep for the IEP meeting

Have Deadlines

- ▶ People come up with good ideas but without deadlines the ideas will not become a reality.
- ▶ Deadlines do not have to be focused on consequences but rather what we can present by a set date.

Change the Culture

- ▶ People can come and go but the culture stays the same
- ▶ New people will not fall back into bad habits
- ▶ Discovery method and customized employment become what you do
- ▶ This is not just about the most sever students
- ▶ Remember to start early and have conversations often

Where We are Today at GHS

- ▶ Josiah Pledl-Full time School to Life Coordinator
- ▶ We branded the program so that it has more meaning to families and community connections.
- ▶ We are trying to eliminate it being referred to as a transition coordinator. Transition coordinator does not resonate outside of the special education community. School to Life does

Four Key Areas of Development

- ▶ Employment
- ▶ Social Development
- ▶ Benefits
- ▶ Continuing Education

Employment

- ▶ In school opportunities-Coffee Cart, Popcorn Sales, Food Services, Mail Courier
- ▶ Community Based Work Experiences-Fitness Club, CBRF, Food Pantry
 - ▶ All of our Cognitively Disabled kids are working in a community based experience.
- ▶ DVR-There is constant communication with our counselor. The DVR counselor is in the high school twice a month.

Employment

- ▶ We have established a positive relationship with the DVR vendors.
- ▶ Goodwill Industries-We have partnered with Goodwill to provide students with vocational support outside of school hours.
- ▶ Community Relationships-We are constantly connected to area businesses. We do this through the Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce and cold calling at local businesses.
- ▶ We have also created programming through out Occupational Therapy department to develop vocational skills in the middle school with our Cognitively Disabled students.

Social Development

- ▶ School to Life Field Trips-Apple orchard, sledding, basketball games
- ▶ Best Buddies-We encourage our students to participate.
- ▶ Black Hawk time social activities
- ▶ An area nursing home hosts a student to take part in social activities with their residents.

Benefits

- ▶ We established a strong relationship with the ADRC of Ozaukee County.
- ▶ We use them as a resource to provide students with any supports that are available.
- ▶ DVR
- ▶ We meet regularly with a wealth management firm and a disability attorney to educate them on what is going on in the schools. They are also available to provide support to any families.

Continuing Education

- ▶ There are FAFSA information sessions that were available to students and parents. The parent nights were held in the evening and the student sessions were held during Blackhawk time.
- ▶ College visits-SMART Experience with MATC, visit Moraine Park, and possible visits to 4 year institutions.
- ▶ Assist families through the application process.
- ▶ Networking with academic institutions.

Parent Communication

- ▶ School to Life bulletins
- ▶ Transition Resource Fair
- ▶ Email and Phone communications
- ▶ Allowing parents access to me