

family

A D V O C A C Y

Proposal to the NSW Department of Education WORK TRANSITION PILOT PROJECT using the DISCOVERY PROCESS

“...Students who have access to real jobs while they are in school and plans in place to meet their ongoing needs upon graduation...have a better chance of being employed after graduation.”

Individualized Career Planning for Students with Significant Support Needs Utilizing the Discovery and the Vocational Profile Process, Ellen Condon, Michael Callahan, Mark Gold & Associates

What is the Work Transition Pilot Project using the Discovery Process?

This Project incorporates a Discovery and Vocational Profile process (using the Customised Employment Model) for students with significant disabilities as a strategy for increasing access to employment planning and services while at mainstream school. Aimed for students in Year 9/10 which is the typical time to get a part-time job (but can be started earlier.)

Similar to **the iceberg analogy**, Discovery, allows us to see what is below the waterline, it inspires us to visualize the possibilities, it provides a deepening of information to provide really good, effective plans that lead to better employment outcomes.

What could happen if we can attain the visibility, see more information than we had previously -- in such a way that we can support students' with disabilities as they are going through school to work transition activities to fully access them and set a path to employment? It needs to be organic to who they are, and where they will be at their best! In Discovery, we refer to these aspects as conditions for success, interests towards aspects of the job market and potential contributions.

What are the goals of this project?

- Paid employment at the end of school for students with significant disabilities.
- Increasing parental expectations of their child being employed after graduation
- Using Discovery for Students to inform transition planning and services, and to ensure access to current transition services for students with significant disabilities
- Creating an infrastructure within the state of NSW to provide access to the Discovery process for Students
- Use work experiences to create **Discovery Profile**, which informs for a **Customised plan for employment (CPE)** and create a **Visual Resume (VR)**.

What is Customised Employment?

*Customized employment (CE) refers to Open Employment, for an individual with a significant disability, that is based on an individualized determination of the **strengths, interests, conditions and contributions** of the individual [...], is designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual [...] and the business needs of the employer, and is carried out through flexible strategies.*

So it's a WIN:WIN for the person looking for work and the employer!

What is Discovery from the Customised Employment model?

- A process that seeks to learn when a student is at their best, in a non-comparative, non-competitive manner:
 - **Strengths, Interests, preferences, skills and contributions**
 - **Conditions for success, including support needs, accommodations and effective support strategies**
- Spend time with the individual looking at their whole life, instead of testing or evaluating them, as a means of finding out who they are
- A common-sense strategy/process that involves getting to know people, before we help them plan
- These can give insight into how a student communicates, accesses information, is best able to participate in activities, including accommodations and technology that can increase their participation (i.e., from Speech and Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapist or Assistive Technology reports)
- Similar to everything else captured in Discovery, this information is captured in way that is non-evaluative, devoid of labels and medical jargon and *focused on the capacity of the student*.
- Discovered information can be used to individualize many aspects of the student's life and **includes a direction for possibilities for individualized employment**.
- How employment is defined is based on the age of the student.

We identify a direction for employment is based on a **translation of typical activities of the person's life** rather than on a comparison of the individual with others or with standards. This will look different for students at different ages depending on the age/grade, the personal, educational and vocational goals. Just as it would for students without disabilities – some of this will depend upon the priorities of the family as well. Is the goal about engaging in school activities/work? Is it about chores and entrepreneurial or volunteer activities at home? Or volunteering their time? Is it time to seek an after school/weekend/summer job?

What Discovery is NOT?

- Merely consolidating what we think we know about a student
- Filling out an inventory or checklist
- Used to screen students out of activities
- Asking 'what do you want to do?', which is often the case

Why the need for Discovery for Students with significant disabilities?

- Many students with significant disabilities are unable to access school to work services during secondary education experiences
- Many students need a more effective strategy to uncover their strengths, interests, conditions and contributions for success
- Families need to be provided with the opportunity and tools to envision, plan for and see their adult child achieve community employment.

Information learned about a student through Discovery: can be utilized to individualize school to work transition services, including work-based learning experiences and, translated into a vision of future employment.

Who can benefit from Discovery from the Customised Employment model?

Everyone, however particular people that have a more significant impact of disability, and/or additional life complexities beyond disability, for example, low socioeconomic area, living in out of home care.

How will this project work?

We invite the Department of Education to engage in a pilot project for 15-18 years old, Years 9 – 12 Age range in various settings - a metropolitan, regional and rural area. We are open to assisting the Department of Education in targeting particular schools given our connections with our School to Work Project. See below:

- Work with teachers, transition coordinators, Careers Advisors and administration in school system:
 - Provide comprehensive training and technical assistance on the Discovery process
 - Developed guidance to show where Discovery is aligned with and integrated into current education planning documents (Individualized Education Program, or Plan – IEP) for students
- Teach about Inclusion - Staff Teacher Professional Learning - run by support staff on what inclusion is, its importance and how we can achieve it.
- Teach about Inclusion - Student education - of what inclusion is, its importance and how we can achieve it.
- Work with parents/families: Provide information, resources to families to engage them in the Discovery/transition processes and activities. For example, provide The Family Transition from School to Work Guide.

Support Students Transition to Work

- Look at IEP goals from Year 9/10 - discuss Vision and involve the student and family.
- Year 9/10 - Start “Discovery” process- include value of work, start work experience in open employment as soon as possible with local agencies, community access during Terms 1-4 - community radio, community connections, with industry guest speakers
- Consider NDIS plans for supports to gain employment
- Year 9/10 - different places for 6 or so week blocks, staff/family organise
- Year 10/11 - work experience leading to paid work

- Potential subject for stage 5 Micro Enterprise, eg. Horticulture> staffing for support
Use all of these work experiences towards having Discovery Profile Developed to develop a Customised plan for employment (CPE) and create a Visual Resume (VR).

Community/Local Businesses/Family Connections Information Sessions/Support Groups

- Liaise with Council, Business Chamber, Service Providers, , primary and pre-schools
- Information session/s;
 - What inclusion is, its importance and how we can achieve it.
 - What is/importance open employment and customised employment
 - What employment services provide
 - NDIS how can be used to help with employment
 - Benefits for employers who employ people with disability
 - What support there is for employers who employ people with disability

What is the role of the family?

The role of the family is **mission critical**, their insights invaluable. Families need to be informed, heard, valued, empowered in the process. We need to listen to the family, capture their hopes and goals, along with the student, and help reach those goals.

What are the Elements of Discovery for Students?

It is important to highlight the idea that we are following the student's lead in terms of what they like to do.

- Initial Discovery, Visit to the Student's Home, Observation of Familiar Activities
- Participation in Unfamiliar Activities
- Expanded Discovery – a vital process at school to gather meaningful information
- Interviews – who knows you best?
- Discovery Profile - Documentation of Findings in Manner that is Complementary to Current Student Planning Process/ Documents & Consistent with Discovery Values/Processes
- Planning Meetings

What are the Values and Features of Discovery for Students?

- High expectations, Optimistic and leads to opportunities
- Used to show how student can participate in activities
- Identifies who the student is and the conditions in which they are most successful (at their best)
- Collecting and gathering information from individuals who know the student best through observation, interviews and activities
- Translating this into ideal conditions, interests, preferences, skills and contributions
- Competent performance into business terms and tasks

- Provides direction for matched, individualized and customized work and work experiences, etc. (depending on the age of the student)

What types of transition activities will take place?

Earlier education experiences

- Job exploration/counselling
- Work based learning experiences
- Post-secondary education counselling
- Workplace related skills training*
- Instruction in Self Advocacy

Types of experiences, work experiences, paid employment

- Chores at home, helping around neighbourhood, community
- Volunteering
- Participation in after school activities
- Job Shadowing/tours and conversations about what people do
- Service Learning/Internships
- Work Experience
- Self-employment experience/entrepreneurial experience
- Customized Work Experience

What is Expanded Discovery for Students?

Expanded Discovery involves utilizing additional strategies such as internships, work experience, post-secondary educational/training environments to gain additional information to enhance initial discovery.

Expanded Discovery is used as a lens through which to see richer life activities for the individual. Allows a no-fail opportunity for individuals to access Open Employment (CIE) regardless of traditional perceptions of “readiness” to work.

How long will the Discovery process take?

Done properly, the initial Discovery process will take 24 hours over a 4-6 week period. Facilitation based on observation, interviews, participation across all areas of the person’s life. This allows the Discovery Profile Developed which then helps inform the Customised plan for employment (CPE) to be developed and the Visual Resume (VR) to be created.