

California Innovations Transition Work-Based Learning Initiative Summary

The California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) was awarded a five year, \$8.5 million grant, by the U.S. Department of Education. DOR is partnering with San Diego State University Interwork Institute (SDSU-II) to evaluate the effects and benefits of work-based learning experiences to prepare students with disabilities to enter post-secondary education (PSE) and obtain competitive integrated employment (CIE). DOR is the lead agency in partnership with the state Departments of Education, Developmental Services, and Employment Development for the **California Innovations Work-Based Learning Initiative (CA Innovations)**. Collaborations will also include Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) throughout California, led by Region Managers from the Vallejo Unified School District, Whittier Union High School District, Riverside County Office of Education and San Diego Health Sciences High & Middle College. Students with disabilities throughout these regions, between ages 16-21, with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 plans will be identified to participate in this project. Greater investment in building and sustaining high-quality work-based learning (WBL) programs for high school students is essential if we expect our young people to learn about work, gain maturity and develop employability skills in non-school environments, make informed career choices, and succeed in their path toward training and careers (Alfeld et al., 2013). CA Innovations will ensure a career relevant focus in the attainment of Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) and post-secondary education for students with disabilities.

Goal:

Increased economic self-sufficiency, through planned education, WBL experiences, and CIE for students with disabilities.

Objectives:

The goal is operationalized through six objectives:

- 1)** Design and implement the project for at least 800 students with disabilities who are between the ages of 16 to 21 and have either an IEP or 504 plan.
- 2)** Provide evidence of non-paid career focused internships for at least 90% of the participating students.
- 3)** Provide evidence of paid career focused internships for at least 75% of the participating students.
- 4)** Enroll at least 90% of the participating students in career pathways programs and/or collaborations.
- 5)** Ensure that at least 75% of the participating students enter a PSE program and/or obtain CIE in a career setting for a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- 6)** Implement a 5-year research and demonstration protocol that assesses formative, progress and outcome measures for students with disabilities.

Guiding Principles:

- **Student-centered:** We believe the development of a Person Driven Plan and an Individualized Career Action Plan for 100% of students will promote student-centered learning.
- **Career Goal-oriented:** We maximize career development experiences for students with disabilities to support career outcomes.
- **Student-engaged:** We value case management, WBL preparation, career experiences and career coaching to promote improved outcomes for students.
- **Industry-informed:** We develop career pathways, and WBL opportunities for all students by establishing regionalized business partnerships.
- **Partnership-enriched:** We invest in partnerships with the SDSU-II, selected Local Education Agencies, state departments, and other community partners.
- **Evidence-based:** We create research and demonstration protocols to assess WBL progress and outcome measures for students with disabilities.

Students will participate in three core interventions: pre-employment development skills, career pathway experiences, and academic performance monitoring to support the career pathway emphasis including high school preparation, A-G requirements, and college preparation. As part of the research design, students may receive the following individualized services but not be limited to career development, self-determination skills, and workplace technology development. The purpose is to integrate standards-based academics with a career-relevant curriculum that are aligned to high-growth, high-demand, or emerging economic domains. Thus, students with disabilities are better equipped to meet the needs of the current and future labor markets.

Through successful collaboration of community partnerships, the anticipated outcomes and benefits are promising for the next generation of workers with disabilities, potential employers, schools and the community. Students can benefit from the application of classroom learning in a real-world setting, development and practice of positive work-related habits and attitudes including the ability to think critically, solve problems, teamwork, and the assessment and understanding of the expectations of the workplace etc. Employers benefit by obtaining a pool of skilled and motivated potential future employees, which may improve employee retention and reduce recruitment/training costs. Schools and the community can anticipate outcomes related to promoting and advancing interaction with the business community and contributing to shaping a more productive local economy. The mentioned anticipated outcomes and benefits ultimately contributes to the overall goal of increasing self-sufficiency by achieving a viable source of income and/or pursuing higher education for students with disabilities.

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