The Value of Work-Based Learning:
What Families Have to Say

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Participant Outcomes

Participants will learn about:
- The relationship between family involvement and youth work experience outcomes
- Family expectations, concerns, and barriers to engaging and collaborating in career planning
- Key strategies to promote family engagement in work experiences

Family Involvement

- Family involvement in youth transition complements other supports for youth to promote positive youth outcomes

- Consistent positive association between family involvement and youth outcomes

e.g., Carter et al. 2012; Mazzotti et al. 2016; Wagner et al. 2012

Family Involvement

Family involvement is a feature of evidence-based transition frameworks for youth with disabilities:

- having high expectations for youth
- having information about the transition process and disability issues
- knowing about and being connected to services for the youth
- accessing a network of supports for themselves and their youth
- partnering with school and other staff on transition planning and services

e.g., Mazzotti et al. 2016

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Purpose

- Learn how family members are engaged in helping their teen secure a **work-based learning experience**

1. How family members are engaged;

2. Why family members are engaged; and

3. Strategies that worked/would work best to communicate and involve family members in work-based learning experiences planning process

Method

- Focus Groups
- School contacted family members of students in *TREATMENT* condition across 7 local school systems
- Screened for eligibility & gained consent
- Conducted REMOTE focus groups via Zoom or Webex
- Audio recorded and notetaker
- 1 hour long in length

Focus

- Understanding family's role in the WBLE process
- Understanding parental perspectives about the utility of WBLEs for their children
- Understanding parental perceptions of effectiveness of participating agencies
- Identifying aspects that would increase effectiveness of service deliver from parental perspectives

Data Analysis

Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) approach (Hill, 2012)

- Summarization of data to draw conclusions through objective measures
- Addresses research bias
- Addresses other limitations of qualitative analysis

Design

- Documenting personal bias
- Develop a list of domains and auditor reviews the list
- Developing core ideas into each domain,
- Identifying categories and sub-categories
- Placing core ideas into categories
- Auditor Review

Research Team

- 3 researchers and 1 auditor.
- 4 Females
  - 2 White, 1 Black, and 1 Asian Indian
- 3 researchers are experts in the field of vocational rehabilitation and one of the researchers is a graduate student with research experience in CQR and is in the vocational psychology field.
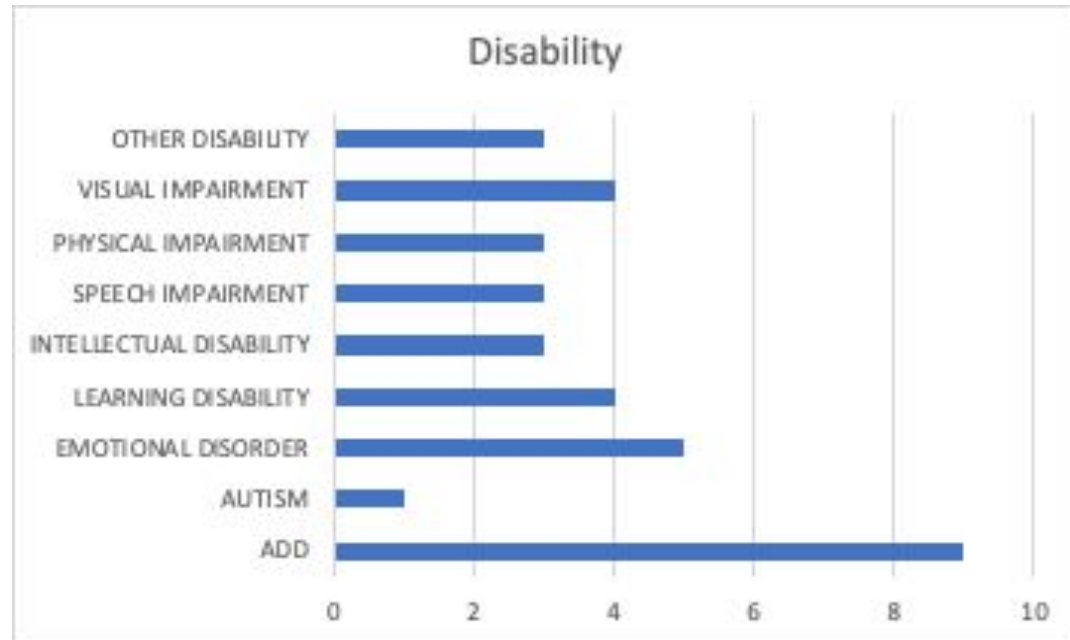
Sample

Parents -

- 15 participants
- 13 Female, 2 Male

Students -

- Race -8 White, 3 black, 1 Asian, 2 Multiracial
- Atleast 1 WBLE

Disability

Results

8 Domains

1. Youth Learning experiences through WBLES from parents' perspective
2. Aspects of WBLES process from parents perspective
3. Parental perception of effectiveness of the participating agencies
4. Perceptions of the role of parents
5. Hopes of parents for their children
6. Parental Recommendations for increasing effectiveness of the WBLE process
7. Impact of COVID
8. Other

Domain/Categories/Sub-Categories	Frequency
Youth Learning experiences through WBLES from parents' perspective	
Learning on the job skills (6)	Variant
Employability and Self-Determination Skills (8)	Typical
Clarifying career interests, abilities, and goals (9)	Typical
Job-Search Skills (4)	Variant
Aspects of WBLES process from parents perspective	
Job Application and Selection Process (11)	Variant
Emotional Impact (6)	Typical
Benefits or Other Supportive Factors (6)	Typical
Challenges	
Transportation (6)	Variant
On-the-job Expectations (8)	Typical
Job Search (9)	Typical
Scheduling (4)	Variant
Parental perception of effectiveness of the participating agencies	
Effective	
Collaboration and Communication (12)	General
Service Delivery (13)	General
Ineffective	
Lack of Collaboration and Communication (7)	Variant
Service Delivery (12)	General
Staff Turnover (7)	Variant
Lack of Information (2)	Rare
Other Perceptions/ Neutral (8)	Typical
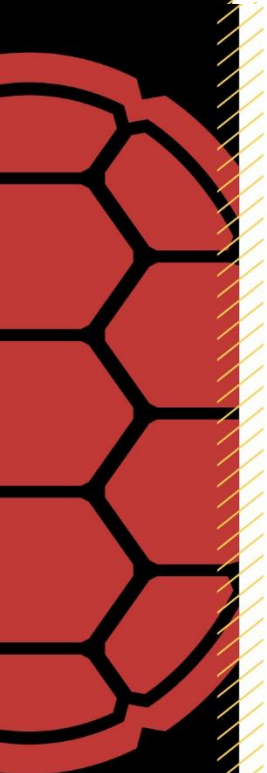
Perceptions of the role of parents	
Initiate and Maintain Collaboration with Agencies (6)	Variant
Transportation (5)	Variant
Advocacy (8)	Typical
Support (7)	Typical
Hopes of parents for their children	
Opportunities and Participation in Work experiences	
Exposure (7)	Variant
Training/Support (2)	Rare
Mentorship (1)	Rare
Building Confidence (3)	
Parental Recommendations for increasing effectiveness of the WBLE process	
Collaboration with Partners (5)	Variant
Disseminate Information (4)	Variant
Building Systems Capacity (6)	Variant
School and Work Schedule (4)	Variant
Parental Engagement and Advocacy (6)	Variant
Impact of COVID	
Changes to work experience (9)	Typical
Changes to Post-school plans (4)	Variant
Related circumstances (4)	Variant
Other	
Local Culture (4)	Variant
Miscellaneous (11)	Typical
Post-WBLE/School Process (9)	Typical
Personal Context (5)	Variant

Youth Learning Experiences through WBLE
Domain 1:

Learning on the job skills (6)

"Learned to better deal with customer service, assisting people, better conversation skills, work diligently and quickly"

Employability and Self-Determination Skills (8)

"Learned how to accept guidance from a mentor, still have a relationship with his mentor. Navigating work world – how to request things, interact with other workers, more confidence, she now trusts him to fix their cars."

Clarifying career interests, abilities, and goals (9)

"I think it was an awesome opportunity for our kids. … [my son] went through the auto body. Like I said, he realized [he] do not want to do that for the rest of [his] life but he definitely built some skills so that he can make some money … It just lets you weed out what you do like, what you don't like and to stick with it even if you don't like something. … Ok, it is a learning experience - I didn't like it and I learned that I don't want to do that."

Job-Search Skills (4)

Aspects of WBLE Process
Domain 2

Job Application and Selection Process (11)

Emotional Impact (6)

Benefits or Other Supportive Factors (6)

"Especially getting paid as a stipend so that it doesn't go on to the employer was fantastic. Not having it not taxed."

Aspects of WBLE Process
Domain#2 (continued)

Challenges

- *Transportation (6)*
  - "I think transportation was the big one, [my child] doesn't have his driver's license yet, so just trying to make sure we could coordinate him getting to his work experience and then I was able to pick them up in the evening when he was finished. So, really? That was the biggest challenge and we, we actually ended up using uber."
- *On-the-job Expectations (8)*
- *Job Search (9)*
  - "And maybe that's, you know, my own child's personality that he likes some kinda continuity and structure. And it was hard for him, you know, stopping and starting the different experiences"
- *Scheduling (4)*

Effectiveness of the Partner Agencies
Domain 3:

Effective

- Collaboration and Communication (12)
  - "DORS has been a lot more hands on. We have [] right now, and she's been working with us. We communicate. We do video not video phone conferences. She applies him for applications, For jobs, and she actually asked him, you know, do you want me to apply for this?"

- Service Delivery (13)
  - "So, [employment specialist] picked up on [teen's interests] right away. So, they again were trying to look for work opportunity that involves computers, of course, you know, entry level. That's how he ended up doing data entry for populating the database."

Other Perceptions/ Neutral (8)

- "I didn't have any type of interaction, other than the initial meeting where we signed the documents, but that was, that was my only experience with the school."

Effectiveness of the Partner Agencies
Domain 3 (continued)

Ineffective

- Lack of Collaboration and Communication (7)
  - "I, when the school found out that we were in way to work. They said all that's wonderful great program, but they were not the ones that directed … And they really didn't direct me to DORS at all."

- Service Delivery (12)
  - "…she probably put in ten different applications. And without having a lot of these employers be aware of the program beforehand, and have a partnership with way to work, it was very difficult for her to get a job …."

- Staff Turnover (7)
  - "And they unfortunately took and changed [employment specialist] position. Like, overnight we got like a day's notice that she was off of [our case]. She was no longer, our case manager."

- Lack of Information (2)
  - "… I didn't know that my son could have had summer internships through the AA county summer internship program that I guess"

Role of Parents
Domain 4:

Advocacy (8)

- "just to keep up and be an advocate for your child because there's many times, I know there's another person in the program that follow up and we're mama bears you're gonna keep fighting for your kids you have to if you can't if something drops, you know, you have to follow up, follow up continuously. So, there's so many entities involved here. You have to keep them rolling and it's up to the parents and the child to make sure that that happens."

Initiate and Maintain Collaboration with Agencies (6)

- "I definitely had to call on [name] at DORS often to kinda get the ball rolling."

Transportation (5)

Support (7)

- "From my part, I actually think that a lot of the I found it really easy to help my daughter with application process. Because that's familiar to me, I do that too."

Hopes of Parents for their Children
Domain 5:

Opportunities and Participation in Work experiences

- Exposure (7)
  - "Like help him find that true desire …[he is] just working a job. He gets to see what they were like, but now he is out of high school he is going into the adult world. You don't need just a job he needs to start finding career and there's no real talks of that."

- Training and Support (2)
  - "He just needs a shot. I know he can do some of these jobs with the proper training and with the proper people that believe in him. He can do it."

- Mentorship (1)

Building Confidence (3)

- "To me, it is about that confidence and when they are out on their own and not relying on their parents."

Parental Recommendations for Effectiveness
Domain 6:

Parental Engagement and Advocacy (6)

"…form that relationship with DORS, as soon as possible. Just to get that all in the works .. yes, it's been a learning process."

Building Systems Capacity (6)

"Anything that they can connect with organized training with local communities or community business that would be very very helpful."

Collaboration with Partners (5)

Parental Recommendations for Effectiveness
Domain 6 (continued):

Disseminate Information (4)

"…it should start with a brochure a brochure …so that the parents actually get an understanding of the program and say, oh, this program may better fit my son and his career, or job placement aspirations. And then how the school actually plays into that and who to contact. Because one part, his counselor in one avenue may not support the same program as someone else facilitating within that school region."

School and Work Schedule (4)

Impact of COVID
Domain 7:

Changes to work experience (9)

- "for [my child] not because he, as soon as [COVID] hit, he kinda lost a job he was working at. And then, as soon as it open that up, he was able to go back to work. But, the whole thing is just a lot to deal with."

Changes to Post-school plans (4)

- "Because he really wanted to go to school and because he's not good with online learning. He doesn't he can't go to school. So, he's, I think he's a little upset about that for (…) school purposes? Not work purposes."

Related circumstances (4)

- "It has impacted her anxiety but not her job search; she was just starting to blossom and go out with friends and go to galleries; not as high strung, but now her anxiety is returning. Her job search was fine and she interviewed and she felt fine and she got the job."

Other
Domain 8:

Local Culture (4)

"When everything shut down. She thought about wanting to go to Carroll vocational technical school, but they Couldn't do anything. Couldn't get connected because nobody was working. Things she has looked at they are not taking applications. If they do take applications, she falls at the bottom of the list because she does have special needs. So, she is always at the bottom of the list and she never makes the cutoff."

Miscellaneous (11)

Post-WBLE/School Process (9)

Personal Context (5)

"Even with my, my oldest son disabilities are much more severe and he has, he has really struggled to find and all the job. And part of it is, because it is very hard for me to be the 1st to say, you can't take all this break that you need to do this. You need to do it this way. That's where it would have helped."

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In Conclusion

The study supported the understanding of how WBLEs prepare youth for post-school careers

- Helped them develop necessary skills (e.g., job search, technical/employability, self-determination)
- Helped clarify career interests and goals

What Parents Expressed

→ Careers v. jobs
  - Long-term career planning (i.e., "consider life after high school")

→ A variety of placements (e.g., all aspects of industry)

→ Matching experiences to the students' interests (no job stuffing)

→ Mentorship

→ Balancing the needs of the family and the job seeker - not having a one size fits all outlook

→ More after WBLE, post-school support

Strategies that Worked

- Transportation stipend
- Support from community
- Earlier engagement in WBLE
  - more opportunity for summer work
- Collaboration between school and agencies
  - Local interagency team/individual student planning (MIAT)
  - consistency and stability with the staff
  - More information regarding WBLE as soon as students enter high school
- Parental role – advocate and collaborator
  - Do NOT want to lead the process

Discussion

Impact of COVID

→ Some essential workers
→ Exacerbated already existing issues
  • Cancellation of work experiences
  • Disconnected from services
  • Career plans impacted
→ Important to normalize anxiety about making career choice

Tips for Engaging Families

→ Be the lead but keep families engaged
  - Contact families earlier in the WBLE planning process

→ Follow-through with what you say you are going to do

→ Tailor service approach to the families

→ Communicate to keep everyone in the loop
  - Text , call, and email often

→ Be flexible
  - Evenings and weekends
  - Visit families at their home or other public place

→ Make sure families are connected to services

Questions?

References

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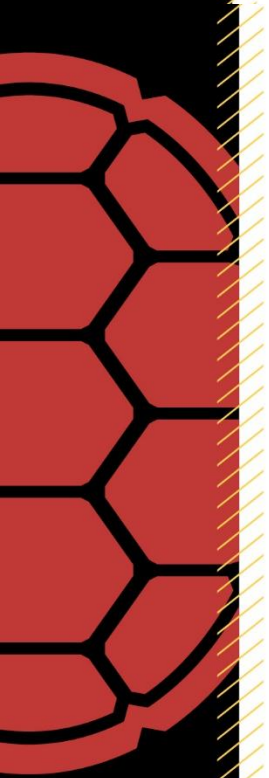
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