

delAware – Summer 2010 – Transition

CBEA Students Develop Skills to Transition to Adulthood

Students with disabilities in three New Castle County 18- to 21-year old programs are enhancing their education through real-world experience, thanks to a collaborative partnership between the Center for Disabilities Studies and these school districts. The Community-based Education Alliance (CBEA) is an integral component of the CDS Transition Education Employment Model (TEEM). It helps young adult students transition from school to adult life and work while they are still enrolled in their respective schools.

CBEA began as the Transition Partnership Project in the mid-1990s with an agreement between CDS and the Meadowood Program of the Red Clay School District. It was expanded a few years ago to include additional school districts, involve the students in University of Delaware activities, and provide job training at campus sites.

CBEA kicked off the 2009-2010 school year with a new mission and a completely revised program. Individual schools in the partner districts select students whom they believe will benefit from the opportunities offered by the CBEA program. TEEM's Pathways for Life team members teach independent living skills and TEEM Employment Services staff members focus on employment skills.

During the independent living skills track, students learn about self-determination, goal setting, decision making, problem solving, communication, navigation, money management, and safety in the home and community. Success with independent living skills is important for moving into the employment track, according to Debbie Bain, program coordinator of Pathways for Life.

Student Experiences

Andrew (Drew) Netta, an 18-year-old student from Delcastle Technical High School, was a first-year CBEA student during the 2009-2010 school year. He noted that one of the most valuable skills he learned during the fall semester independent living track was how to pay bills on his own.

At the beginning the spring semester, Drew completed the first half of the CBEA employment track, which involves career exploration, job skills training, portfolio development, and job shadowing. He then progressed to the second half, transition into work sites that are on or near the University of Delaware (UD) campus. In this track students select three work sites, interview with department managers at each of them, and are then selected to complete their unpaid internship at one of these sites on or around campus.

Drew was helping to set up for a banquet at the Marriott Courtyard Newark-University of Delaware when he was interviewed for this article. He was in his first week as an intern with the food and beverage department. Drew said he selected the Marriott because of the diverse opportunities it provides and the wonderful work environment. He will revisit his goals during

the next two years of CBEA, and through hands-on experiences, he will get to know his strengths and job preferences.

Brittney Ciamaricone, a student at William Penn High School, also enrolled in CBEA in September 2009. She said that she enjoyed learning such skills as how to interact with people and how to budget.

During the first phase of employment training, Brittney's interest in doing clerical work in an office setting was confirmed. She interned at UD's Cooperative Extension in the spring, helping with filing, stuffing folders, and other clerical jobs. Brittney says that the experience was "great" and she really enjoyed it.

In addition to supporting individual students, CBEA staff members help support parents of students enrolled in the program. Workshops assist parents in supporting their children as they work to gain independence.

The Center for Disabilities Studies values the partnerships it has established with New Castle County school districts. Together, they are giving students the opportunity to have a productive transition into adulthood and find meaningful employment.

For more information about these partnerships or the CBEA program, contact Bev Stapleford, TEEM unit leader, at 302.831.4688.