

# WSU Model Demonstration Project

## Planning and Development of the Washington Transition Program

Marcus Poppen, Holly Whittenburg, Lauren Bruno & Don McMahon



Artwork by Rohan Srinivasan

# Overview and Agenda

- Importance of Collaboration between Schools and DVR
- Core Features of Successful Models of Collaboration
- Qualitative Evaluation of Washington Specific Challenges, Needs and Strategies
- Model Demonstration Project Program Description



# Collaboration between School and DVR

What we Know

*Ro's Tree of Joy* by Rohan Srinivasan



# Collaboration between School and DVR

- Despite decades of targeted interventions, young adults with disabilities continue to experience poorer post-secondary employment outcomes than young adults without disabilities (U.S. Department of Labor, 2020).
- Since 1973, state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies have been required to coordinate with education officials. However, until the reauthorization of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014* (WIOA), the level of involvement of VR agencies with schools and students with disabilities has varied widely (Honeycutt et al., 2015).
- Coordinating school-based transition services with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is one strategy that has been shown to increase positive employment outcomes for young adults with disabilities (Awsumb, et al, 2020; Benz, et al., 1997; Lindstrom, et al., 2013; Poppen et al., 2017; Shandra & Hogan, 2008)



# Successful Models of Collaboration

*Morning Cuppa!* by Rohan Srinivasan



# **Pre-Employment Transition Services: A Guide for Collaboration Among State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies and Education Partners (NTACT):**

This guide explores some fundamental needs in order to have a successful VR and school collaboration to implement Pre-ETS. It provides some guidance on essential features. Potentially most importantly it provides several detailed appendices examples and templates of forms and planning documents.

NTACT Guide emphasizes the following four Themes/Chapter.

**Shared Understanding of Transition Services**

**Building Your Local Partnership**

**Coordination and Collaboration for Individual Student Planning**

**Partnering with Families: Reimagining the Possibilities.**



# **NTACT (continued)**

## **Shared Understanding of Transition Services**

- IEP transition services
- Pre-ETS activities
- The continuum of VR services
- Importance of coordinating Individual Education Plans (IDEA) and Individual Plans for Employment (VR)
- These should complement and reinforce not replicate each other

# **NTACT (continued)**

## **Building Your Local Partnership**

- Guidance on effectively building local partnerships and improving communication between schools, VR, and VR contractors
- Strong emphasis is placed on the need to improve processes and logistics to allow for regular collaboration between the students and teachers in the schools and the VR counselors
- This includes coordination and outreach to other community partners including businesses, Independent living centers, Developmental Disability Agencies, and other relevant stakeholders



# **NTACT (continued)**

## **Coordination and Collaboration for Individual Student Planning.**

- Planning and making time for collaboration is critical for improving transition services
- Student participation is also critical in this process. Eventually moving toward the student taking a leadership role in this process

# **NTACT (continued)**

## **Partnering with Families: Reimagining the Possibilities.**

- While family engagement is not one of the Pre-ETS activities defined in WOI A it can potentially positively impact these services by helping to shift mindsets away from caring for people with disabilities to **SUPPORTING** people with disabilities.
- This is critically important when working to improve outcomes for students with disabilities who are from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Partnering with CLD families can help ensure they are aware of resources to support their learner with disabilities as they transition to adulthood.



# Circles

CIRCLES has a detailed model of implementation. The CIRCLES model involves three levels of interagency collaboration including a **Community Level Team**, a School Level Team, and an **IEP Team**.

- Designed to address common failings in current transition planning in K-12 which put the emphasis on teachers to contact possible providers to attend IEP meetings.
- Providers have more potential clients than possible to attend all those IEP meetings plus they have to deliver their agencies direct services as well. Additionally, many Special Education teachers are not aware of all the local resources potentially relevant to their students.

# Circles (Continued)

- CIRCLES addresses this challenge by shifting the collaboration focus from being special education teacher or VR counselor initialed processes to a community based one.
- Interagency workgroups share information, resources, and engage to active collaboration to address the diversity of students VR and post school needs.
- Circles includes suggested self determination and assessment measure to help teams measure the effectiveness of their efforts.



# Oregon Youth Transition Program

Established in 1990, the Oregon Youth Transition Program (YTP) is a collaborative partnership between Local schools, the office of Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation, Oregon Department of Education, and the University of Oregon

- YTP's purpose is to prepare youth with disabilities for employment or career related postsecondary education or training
- Began as a three year federal grant to seven schools has spread into a majority of Oregon high schools over the last 25 years
- Very detailed connections explaining IDEA and DVR policy and procedures and what to do when things are not going well

# Oregon Youth Transition Program

## Basic Steps of organizing

- 1. Identify the YTP team
- 2. Develop roles and responsibilities for each team member
- 3. Meet regularly as a team and create a format for documenting supervision and collaboration among team members
- 4. Develop strategies for collecting student information and tracking student progress



# **Connections Between these Models and Opportunities to inform our Model Demonstration project**

These three selected models have several similar features and recommendations

A limitation of the currently identified models is a lack of specificity in program hours, Pre-ETS curriculum and activities, and policy and procedures

Clear need for Strategies to help people engage in Communication and collaboration

# What Stakeholders Say about School/DVR Collaboration in Washington

*Ro's Tree of Joy* by Rohan Srinivasan





# Overview and Purpose



Identify **current challenges, needs, and strategies** with School/DVR Collaboration



9 focus groups and interviews with more than 25 people



Multiple stakeholder groups (educators, regional transition consultants, DVR counselors, and vendors)



# What's Happening Now?

- Shared importance of the work
- Collaboration
- Inconsistency and disconnectedness
- Service details

*Basically, we have a contractor...that provide services in school during the school day. And so what that looks like, is either during, uh, an elective time or integrated with a classroom time, a contractor or myself will come in and deliver a workshop, usually in job exploration or workplace readiness training, because those two areas are kind of the higher need with some of the schools that I'm working with.*

*Everyone wants the same thing for these kids, it's just how do we get there*

*That concept of the trifecta ... I mean, when you think about ... trying to connect the schools, the contractors and DVR, and kind of playing in a role where you're supporting that.*

# Strengths and Strategies

- Establishing connections
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Flexibility and innovation
- Starting small
- Advanced planning
- Summer programming
- Working virtually

*Because now even when there's hybrid, I'm doing a Zoom, they put me up in front of the class where the kids all log in and hit mute, and then they're all engaged anyway ... And bringing in guest speakers is, you know, a lot better. You know, the whole, everything is shifted now. The paradigm is shifted from where it used to be.*

*So just having a game, uh, that kind of game plan and getting everything set up, uh, as a year's ending and having meetings the first week of school kind of thing, right? Or, or very close to it, uh, or even beforehand with, you know, some, some of the administration. So, um, you know, we tell them our plan and we, we, we kind of tell the bells and whistles or whatever, like here are all the things that we can do for the students if we engage in this plan and kind of having some buy-in, um, as a school ends and before it begins, uh, it has been helpful for that continued growth.*

# Barriers

- Doing the work
- Relationships
- Policy and procedures
- Professional skills and knowledge
- Staff turnover

*Pre-ETS have... has created a culture of just like, "We don't know what it is." And, therefore, anytime we talk about it amongst staff, it's just... it feels like a lost cause. Like no one thinks... no one sees a light at the end of the tunnel at this point, because it's gone so off the rails.*

*Um, I do know that they support students who are on 504s, um, err--that SLD, I mean, all, all levels of, um, disabilities but it's, it's not... I don't know what gah--actually what that means. So, um, I think it's spotty, in my, my area. Um, I know they've like offered to do presentations, videos, um, interviews... but... [shrugs and throws her hands up]. That's my experience.*

*My other piece, is like, retention is always in my brain, if like, if I hold this, this system is a poor system who falls because I leave. So, how can, how can we maintain a system that doesn't revolve around me doing the work? Um, and what the heck that looks like, because like, every time someone quits. It's like, great we've got to recreate this wheel, that obviously is already created but like, how can DVR hold that, so that way, that transition, is more seamless to the next body that comes in, because it's not a matter of my skill and my ability to hold it, it's just DVR and like "here the things we offer, this we've been doing, great." We're going to move forward with this thing.*



# Values and Beliefs

- Importance of collaboration
- Importance of providing needed services
- Importance of being in schools
- Importance of communication

*I think that there's the creativity and the willingness to, um, to think in different ways to serve this population, um, is exciting.*

*And there's a lot more we could do. Um, we're certainly not there yet with, you know, a full breadth of services that would, that would serve and, and, um, be, you know, effective with this population*

*Um, glad to be here, glad to... I think these conversations are really cool, they're important*

*I'm very excited to have this conversation, because this is an area of weakness. Um for me professionally, and just to support our kids, so I think this is, this is great. I love working with students, and I think Pre-ETS, it's, it's, it's a great program is, we just need to figure out how to, um, how to deliver it more efficiently*

*Regional transition consultants have really been the ones to kind of hold and make those introductions for us to schools. And so, um, we are trained to be really respectful of those relationships and make sure that we are adding value to them.*

# Recommendations for the Future

- More guidance and support from leadership
- Professional development and training
- Improved collaboration
- Reducing barriers and "red tape" to services

*Clear guidance, we need clear guidance. And we need the tools. If you were to ask me, what are the two things you need to do your job effectively, clear guidance, and I need the tools. What would help me understand it better is just more exposure to seeing what pre-ETS look like. Um, it's really not clear to me.*

*I'm going to go big, uh, I just think -- we need contact, we need consistent contact. Um, I think, they need to be checking in, numerous times, our kids ebb and flow, in and out, we get new ones all the time. I just, I just think, starting at Ground Zero, anything is an improvement. Um, I, I, like I said I don't even know who to contact, err, I mean I could, I'll figure it out, I'm resourceful, but I don't feel like I should have to work that hard to get some service that is already supposed to be provided to my students. Um, I shouldn't have to work that hard. Um.. So, I guess. Uh.. It's been so inconsistent with personnel, and I understand that. Um.. So I think it's just a part. They need to figure that out, [scoffs] in their department. So, it's, I don't know, consistency?*

*..the default point of view from educators, parents, even VR, um, is that when we're talking about disability community resources, or employment support, what we're talking about are our most high needs students, are most significantly disabled students, we're not...*

# Next Steps



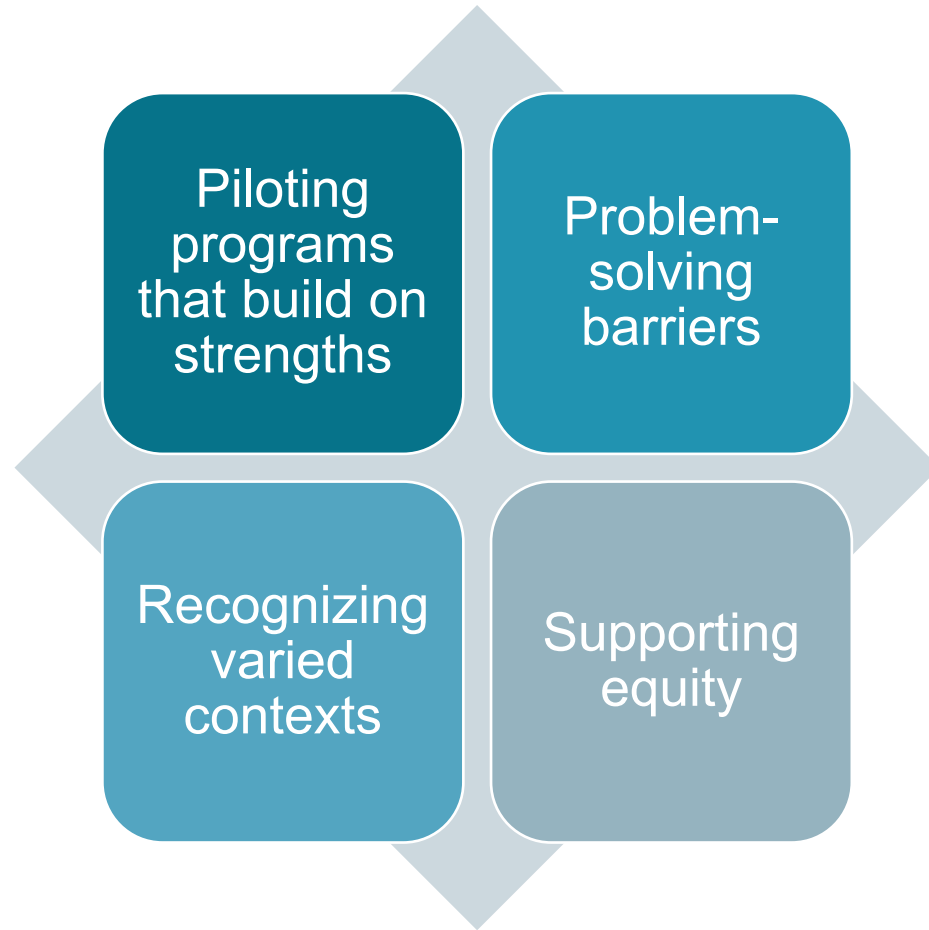
Finalize themes

Member checks

Report findings



# Discussion/Implications



# Washington Transition Program

Model Demonstration Project

*Morning Cuppa!* by Rohan Srinivasan



# Overview and Purpose



Connecting what we hear is needed and what is working, with what we know about different models of collaboration



Reduce barriers and improve the services that are being delivered to students



Build off prior efforts to support teams and address needs through technical assistance and professional development

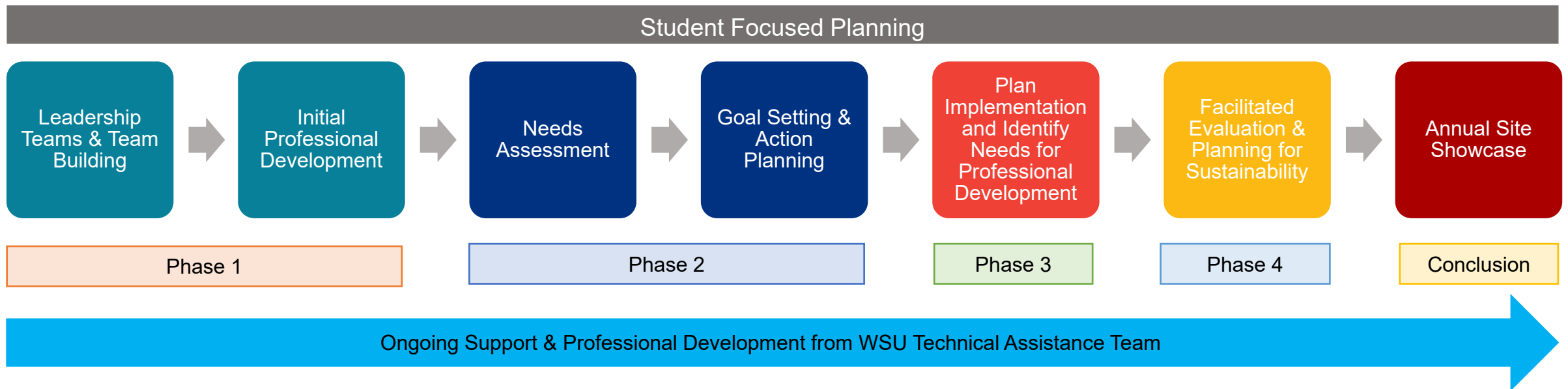


# Washington Transition Program (WTP) Model Demonstration Project



- Build local capacity to improve coordination between schools and Vocational Rehabilitation to increase the availability and accessibility of coordinated transition services for youth and young adults with disabilities
- Development of *Transition Leadership Teams* at 3-5 schools that includes stakeholders involved in the decision-making process and implementation of career exploration, work-based learning, and other transition related services for youth and young adults with disabilities
- WSU Technical Assistance team will guide the Transition Leadership Team through a series of team building, self-assessment, action planning, and evaluation activities focused on improved coordination and delivery of services and promote cross site learning

# Essential Features of the Washington Transition Program



# Site Recruitment

- Recruitment of 3-5 sites is under way
- Site Requirements include:
  - Educator, Regional Transition Consultant, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, etc.
  - Shared value of collaboration
  - Can commit 2-5 hours a week to improve coordinated transition service in a single site
  - Administrative support
- If you or your team would like to put your site forward for consideration, please email [marcus.poppen@wsu.edu](mailto:marcus.poppen@wsu.edu) for more information.







# Thank you!



Artwork by Rohan Srinivasan

# Presenter Contact Information

Marcus Poppen, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Special Education

Washington State University

marcus.poppen@wsu.edu

Holly Whittenburg, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Special Education

Washington State University

holly.whittenburg@wsu.edu

Lauren Bruno, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Special Education

Washington State University

lauren.bruno@wsu.edu

Don McMahon, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Special Education

Washington State University

don.mcahon@wsu.edu