How Can Conductive Education Programs Improve Employment Outcomes for Adults with Physical Disabilities?

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Great Advances in Access to Education

• The U.S. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 resulted in significant gains in educating children with physical disabilities 😊
But Sadly...

- In the U.S., 70% of adults with physical disabilities are un/underemployed, 30% live in poverty
- In Europe, 50-70% are un/underemployed
- In developing countries, 80-90% of people with disabilities are unemployed
Employment

• Only 11% of parents of adult children with disabilities report their child is employed full time (or 19% part time)

*The Easter Seals Living with Disabilities Study of 2010*
Worldwide Recession

• From 2010 to 2011 the employment-population ratio for persons with a disability fell from 18.6% to 17.8%
Some Positive Changes!

- President Obama’s Recent Changes to the Rehabilitation Act:

  7% of all employees of Federal Contractors and subcontractors must be qualified individuals with disabilities! (September 2013)

New rules are similar to those that protect women and minorities against discrimination.
Why you should care!

• Failure of the child to achieve gainful independence as an adult impacts our *entire* community by:

  – Separation from workforce and community
  – Expensive lifestyle with over-reliance on caregivers and government assistance

• The US would gain ~$224 million in economic revenue by transforming tax users into taxpayers

*$Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*
Employment

People with disabilities want to work as adults... training needs to start in early childhood!!
How can CE improve Employment Outcomes for adults with physical disabilities?
Self-Determination

• Youth and Young adults with disabilities who have strong self-determination skills have:

  – Enhanced academic performance and more active participation¹

  – Improved employment and independent living opportunities²

  – More positive quality of life and reported life satisfaction³

¹: Gilberts, Agran, Hughes, & Wehmeyer, 2001; ²: Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003; ³: McDougall, Evans, & Baldwin, 2010
Self-Determination

• Self-determination is thought to be the most significant factor in successful transition to college and ultimately employment.

• More significant than:
  – Accommodations
  – Funding
  – Disability Support Services and…

  …Even the ability to perform a motor function!

*John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Kessler Foundation (2011)*
Self-Determination is “focused on the processes through which a person acquires the motivation for INITIATING new behaviors and for maintaining them over time…

…a sense of autonomy and competence are critical to the processes of internalization and integration, through which a person comes to self-regulate”

*Deci & Ryan, University of Rochester, New York*
Certain skills predict successful transition to University and employment such as the ability to identify and express:

- goals
- desires
- limits
- disability awareness
- persistence
- self-direction
- coping skills
- social skills
- and the ability to make positive choices
Intention = Self-Determination?
Conductive Education = Intention
Intention = “I”
Intention is an “Essential Element”

“The focus on changing, creating and developing intention is an essential element within CE: one which stands CE apart from other systems/interventions for people with motor disorders which tend to focus primarily on the achievement of function.”

-Melanie Brown
Intention is an “Essential Element” of Conductive Education

• Research and measurement within the field of Rehabilitation has shifted focus from measuring “Function” to measuring “Self-Determination”

• “Any change in Function, as a result of CE, are by-products of change in intention – a change to intentional action”

- Melanie Brown
What can we DO???
1. Set Measurable CE Goals that include improvement in Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy (Intention).

Tools to access Self-Determination including:

- AIR Self-Determination Assessment (American Institute for Research in collaboration with Columbia University.)

- Several Self-Determination Assessment Tools can be found at the Zarrow Venter for Learning Enrichment – Univ. of Oklahoma
CFI’s most recent Parent Satisfaction Survey reports that children display better confidence, a stronger self-identity and can participate in one or more daily self-care skills.
2. Set Measurable CE Program Goals that increase self-reliance and encourages positive “risk taking” which promotes and develops inner resources and ultimately “intention”.

For example: Goal to eliminate or reduce the personal 1-1 assistant within the classroom school setting.
3. Encourage and promote post-secondary education of CE students.

- ...50.6% of U.S. college graduates with disabilities are employed, still significantly lower than college graduates without disabilities at 89.9%*

- In 2012, 78% of students graduating from CFI transitioned into college/university.

*National Council on Disability 2011
4. Establish Job Training Programs within the Conductive Education setting.

• CFI offers an “Aide-in-Training” program, which includes experience in volunteering, resume writing, mock interview skills, etc.
Kelly graduated from CFI and is now attending Illinois State University. She said that CE taught her the following skills: “I am good at problem solving; I can advocate for what I need; my disability does not prevent me from participating – I know how to adapt.”
5. Lead by example by employing people with disabilities in your Conductive Education program.

How can we expect employers to hire people with disabilities if WE do not??
Thank you!
Questions?