

YES!

For Some Youth In Transition, Job Placement Is Spelled YES!

“Ryan” is a young adult with intellectual disability. He had experienced a series of unsuccessful community-based job placements. He had been described as lacking in motivation to perform work. Unfortunately, this was an easy impression to develop because Ryan’s behavior had been consistent across several lackluster job placements. Often, he arrived at work unshaven with shirttail out, as if to announce, “I’d rather be most anywhere but here.” When asked to identify his favorite job, Ryan would name a list of jobs from which he had already been fired! Perhaps we should have asked what his least favorite jobs were!

Ryan watched the YES (Your Employment Selections) video-based job preference program. YES shows 2-4 minutes of video on a job as a narrator describes the key tasks. It allows youth to select preferred jobs that can be used to guide transition planning. After watching the YES program, Ryan identified “Hotel Housekeeper” as a desired job. He seemed really excited about it. Although skeptical, staff made arrangements for a temporary placement at a motel. Within three weeks, Ryan had become one of the fastest and most dependable housekeepers on the motel’s staff. His employer was so impressed with his work that she asked if we had other youth with disabilities looking for employment. Within six weeks of his start date, Ryan was awarded Employee of the Month and was given a cash bonus. Less than two months after starting the job, he was promoted to “floor supervisor” and received a raise. Today, Ryan supervises the work activities of a crew of typical employees on the entire wing of the motel.

“Enrique” is an 18-year old with intellectual disability. He attended a sheltered workshop where he engaged in vocational tasks. Enrique seemed satisfied with his placement, although he had very limited exposure to community employment opportunities. His workshop staff assumed that community jobs would present so many formidable challenges to Enrique (e.g., extensive training in complex skills, performance of tasks at a high

rate, quality standards beyond his comprehension) that he would be destined to fail. Nevertheless, Enrique agreed to participate in the YES program. He identified “Gardener” and “Nursery Worker” as preferred jobs. Staff noted the similarity in tasks performed on these jobs. They also pointed out that Enrique was the “green thumb” in the workshop, watering plants on a daily basis and nursing the staff’s sick plants back to health. Enrique is now working at a local nursery learning new skills related to pruning, soil composition, fertilizer mixture, and customer assistance. His motivation for learning is extremely high. The workshop staff are quite impressed, although their plants are at serious risk without Ryan’s daily care.

Ryan and Enrique are two success stories in progress. Both participated in the YES program, which shows motion video of specific jobs so that youth in transition can identify preferred ones. Programmed on 7 CD-ROMs, YES places technology at the fingertips of youth in transition. Youth watch two jobs in sequence. After the second job, a narrator says, “Click on the picture of the job you like.” The youth can select job 1, job 2, or neither. After several job pairings, the result is a “short list” of potential placements or jobs deserving closer scrutiny.

We are not suggesting that the YES program is the answer for youth who are difficult to place in community employment. In fact, the credit goes to Ryan and Enrique who found employment environments that allowed them to display their skills and interests. The role of the YES program is simply to provide brief video information regarding a variety of jobs. Unfortunately, it is this exposure to employment that so many youth do not



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otherwise receive. Job try-outs and situational assessments are expensive and labor intensive (West & Parent, 1992). Plus, they are usually arranged without thorough exploration of alternatives. High school transition programs on limited budgets are hard-pressed to arrange community-based job placements. This presents a dilemma for educators interested in providing best transition practices. Brolin (1982) describes five key stages of career development: (a) awareness, (b) exploration, (c) preparation, (d) placement/follow-up, and (e) continuing education. Ironically, for youth in transition, the first two stages are sometimes neglected because of logistical problems. The YES program allows youth to gather basic information about jobs and express their preferences. The youth and the IEP Team can then use a short list of potential job placements to guide transition planning and to identify training targets.

The program was evaluated at 11 sites across the U.S., including Ogden, Granite, and Davis Districts in Utah. After three years of evaluation, YES program is now available to high school transition programs. A PC computer with 24-speed CDROM and 256 MHz processor are required. Here are some features of the program.

YES includes a variety of jobs. Twenty of the jobs in the YES program are auto detailer, baker, child care worker, dry cleaner, electrician, floral designer, grocery worker, hair stylist, insulation worker, janitor, library worker, manicurist, nursery worker, order clerk, plastics machine operator, rental clerk, sheet metal worker, telemarketer, upholstery worker, and welder. That leaves a remainder of 100 additional jobs! The 120 jobs are arranged based on 6 working conditions. A youth starts the program by selecting preferred working conditions (such as indoor versus outdoor work, working alone versus working with the public, light versus heavy work, etc.), then 20 jobs that match those conditions are presented.

YES includes suggestions for job modifications. Most of us modify our jobs in some way. We delegate responsibilities and identify ways to make existing tasks more efficient. We can do the same for

youth with disabilities who may not have sufficient skill to perform all tasks in a job. The YES program includes recommendations for job modifications by presenting answers to questions such as:

- Can the youth perform one or more of the essential tasks in the job while another worker performs the remainder of it?
- Can one or more essential tasks be modified to accommodate the participant?
- Can a new job be created with different tasks?
- Can a small group of workers combine their skills to perform the various tasks required of one job?

YES includes a 300-page manual with print-based information and pictures about each job. A teacher or transition specialist can assist the youth by locating information on each job in the manual, including typical wages, working conditions, job outlook, training and educational requirements, qualifications, related occupations, advancement opportunities, and tasks that comprise a job. Youth and transition specialists can also view pictures of key tasks in each job. These pictures help youth and specialists identify preferred and nonpreferred tasks and training targets.

YES was developed with youth and IEP Teams in mind. Field sites helped us make YES user-friendly. First, the program is “reading free” so it can be used with youth for whom printed text is a significant challenge. On the other hand, the manual allows the teacher or transition specialist to provide the youth with a wealth of supplemental information. Second, a youth and facilitator can expediently complete the program in 45-90 minutes (1-2 sessions). Third, a printout or a fill-in-the-blanks form provides results for the IEP Team and student file. Fourth, the program is portable. It can be used on any compatible PC computer with as many youth as necessary. Finally and most important, parents are encouraged to participate and work with their children as they explore potential jobs. ■

For more information about the YES program, go to www.tri.sped.org/transition or call 1-877-722-3991.

