Journal on Developmental Disabilities
Le journal sur les handicaps du développement
JoDD
Volume 24, Number 1, 2019

What's Next? Post-Secondary Planning for Youth With Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities

Authors

Anne Readhead,[1]
Lisa Whittingham,[1]
Katie McKay,[2]
Courtney Bishop,[1]
Jennifer Hope[3]

[1] Department of Child and Youth Studies, Brock University, St. Catharines, ON

[2] Contact Niagara for Children's and Developmental Services St. Catharines, ON

[3] Common Ground Co-operative Toronto, ON

Correspondence

areadhead@brocku.ca

Keywords

transitional aged youth, developmental disability, coordinated transition planning, employment

Abstract

Youth with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) have an increasing range of post-secondary training, education and employment options when they transition out of high school. This article describes pathways that youth who are interested in employment may take and the supports and processes necessary to help them to move toward their goal. Innovative approaches to skills training for transitional aged youth (TAY) and emerging models of employment and entrepreneurship are described. Unemployment and underemployment of youth and barriers to employment are reviewed. The central role of early individualized planning, experiential learning opportunities, ongoing coordinated mentorship, advocacy and support are discussed.

Introduction

The primary goal of secondary education is to provide students with the skills and experience necessary to live a meaningful and fulfilling adult life. Central to that goal is preparing students, with or without disabilities, for the world of work (Wehman, Chan, Ditchman, & Kang, 2014). However, youth unemployment is a concern. "The world's population of youth aged 15–24 reached 1.2 million in 2010 and, in that year, youth were three times as likely to be unemployed" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2012, as cited in DeLuca, Godden, Hutchinson, & Versnel, 2015, p. 183). Youth with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) are at an even higher risk for unemployment than their typically developing peers (Dague, 2012). In his Institute for Research and Inclusion in Society report, Crawford (2011) reported that, in Canada, only 15.5% of youth with I/DD aged 15–24 years were employed, while 49.8% of youth with other disabilities and 58.1% of youth without disabilities were employed (Crawford, 2011). Factors that contribute to this risk for unemployment include their insufficient competency in both educational and work-related skills (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2012, as cited in DeLuca, Godden, Hutchinson, & Versnel, 2015).

In the hope of closing this gap, a number of new youth employment options have been recognized as supporting both community inclusion and inclusive employment for youth with I/DD (Lysaght, Cobigo & Hamilton, 2012). The purpose of this article is to examine the various pathways to employment for transitional aged youth (TAY) with I/DD

for whom this is a chosen life goal. These pathways are illustrated in a descriptive model that includes pathways from secondary education through post-secondary education (PSE) and/or pre-employment training to various employment options. Barriers that can be encountered at each stage and supports that are necessary for youth to achieve the education, training and jobs to which they aspire are also described. Achieving employment goals begins with early person-centred and person-directed planning during the secondary school years and the provision of appropriate individualized supports through post-secondary training and employment.

Transition Planning During High School

There is an ample amount of research demonstrating the efficacy of work-related skill development programs for youth during their secondary education (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000; Corbett, Clark, & Blank, 2002). These programs are a part of the employment planning process that takes place during the high school years and play a significant role in favourable post-school employment outcomes in employment and independent living. For TAY in Ontario, Canada, the employment planning process is intertwined with each student's Individual Education Plan and supplemented with co-operative education and experiential learning opportunities. As illustrated in Figure 1, students may face barriers to employment-focused training during high school if they have limited community pre-employment or employment options available to them in the community. Other barriers include inadequate information being provided about career choices that may be available to them. If they do have work opportunities, they may have work supervisors or mentors who do not have the training necessary to prepare them to provide appropriate and individualized supports for high school students who had I/DD. These barriers can be mitigated by coordinated cross-sectoral transitional planning, Individual Education Plans, and consistent planning procedures that optimize youth participation in decision making and that include high school training that focuses on skill development. These factors can lead to successful entry to post-secondary education and/or pre-employment training with eventual achievement of employment goals.

Individual Education Plan. In Ontario, Canada, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process was developed by the Ministry of Education, in accordance with the Education Act (Section 1) and the Human Rights Code (Ontario Human Rights Code, s. 17(2)) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004). It is a province-wide, mandatory process for all students who have been identified as requiring additional supports by a school board Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC).

The primary goal of the IEP is to provide educators with a consistent approach to developing individualized plans that meet the needs of the individual students and their long-term goals (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004). The plan itself is "predominantly comprised of a description of a student's 'exceptionality,' a summary of their program and services, an explanation of goals and expectations, and an outline of how their progress will be monitored" (Boyd, Ng, & Schryer, 2015, p. 1538). With collaboration from youth themselves, their families, professionals and surrounding communities, an IEP can be developed to create opportunities for youth to develop the skills they require for employment and independence in a variety of settings, including school, the community, and the home (Davies & Beamish, 2009; Dyke, Bourke, Llewellyn & Leonard, 2013). Although great efforts have been made to provide individuals with I/DD with an education that will prepare them for life after high school, research on outcomes suggests that many of these students are less likely than students with other disabilities to aspire to attend PSE or to obtain competitive employment and are more likely to work in sheltered workshops or supported employment (Grigal, Hart & Migliore, 2011).

As a general planning process protocol, the IEP, as it is developed, does not direct the process toward any specific outcome, such as employment. Additionally, the documents that support the IEP are loosely structured and leave room for interpretation. Furthermore, with many people involved in the process, there is a risk of others' interests being placed above those of the individual (Boyd et al., 2015). Without specific guide-

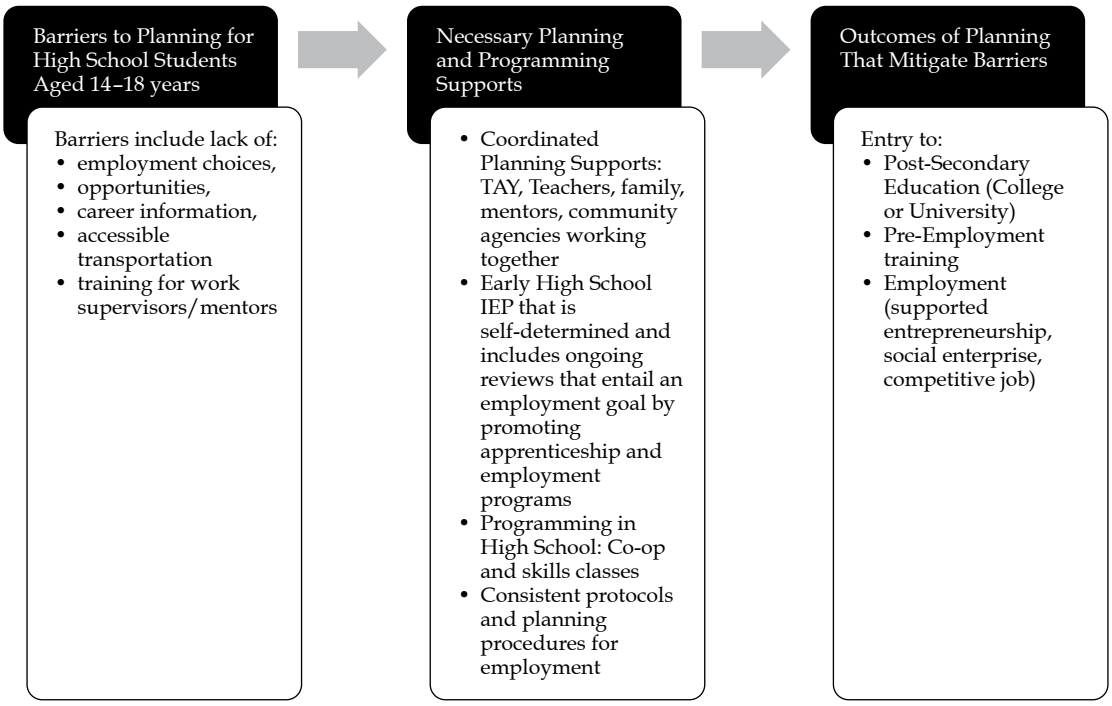

Figure 1. Supports and program options necessary to mitigate barriers to achieve successful outcomes for transitional aged youth during high school

lines or mandates focused on employment, many of those involved in this process may not plan for employment or explore the potential career pathways with the TAY they are supporting. This concern was supported by the Initial Report of the Ontario Government's Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities (2016) that suggested that the IEP process should include a focus on employment. Additionally, recommendations were made to recognize the importance of early work engagement and the availability of co-operative programs for youth with disabilities in the secondary education system.

Planning procedures. While there appear to be no universally accepted guidelines for transition planning with a specific focus on employment, there is a growing collection of transition planning protocols, handbooks, and resources available throughout Canada to help youth, families, and service providers to navigate the transition from child services to adult services (e.g., Healthy Child Manitoba, 2008; British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development, n.d.; Roebuck & MacLeod, 2006; Saskatchewan Association for Community Living, 2012). In Ontario, the Ontario Ministries of Education, Community and Social Services, and Child and Youth Services developed a tri-ministry transition protocol that outlines the roles and responsibilities of children's service providers, the school, and adult developmental services in developing a transition plan beginning when students reach age 14 years. As a general planning process protocol it does not direct the process toward any specific outcome, however it does specify that the transition plan will identify:

> goals for work, further education, and community living that reflect actual opportunities and resources that are likely to be available after the young person with a developmental disability leaves school and are likely to be achievable by the young person, given appropriate supports (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, & Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 8).

Handbooks and protocols outline various best practices for transition plans, such as the use of

a person-centred approach, collaboration, and early planning. However, the focus of many of these documents does not address specific employment planning and preparation guidelines. For instance, employment preparation programs, such as the cooperative education and experiential learning program, are rarely mentioned in these documents. There is also little mention of other employment preparation strategies, such as volunteering or career assessments that may help youth to gain a greater understanding of their interests, skills, and potential career options.

An individualized planning approach that includes a focus on specific preparation for employment options is required during the secondary school years. This is supported by research that highlights employment as a primary goal for many youth with disabilities (McConkey 2005 as cited in Crawford, 2012), studies supporting the efficacy of work-related planning during the secondary school transition (Hart, Mele-McCarthy, Pasternack, Zimbrich, & Parker, 2004) and evidence of poor post-secondary employment outcomes for youth with I/DD.

Transition planning that includes a focus on employment options could have the potential to eliminate many of the barriers to eventual employment. This planning should include youth, families, teachers, developmental service workers, community and transfer payment agencies that oversee the distribution of government funds to program recipients, and the greater community, such as local businesses, in keeping with the Ontario tri-ministry transition protocol. Comprehensive plans that outline a youth's interests, goals, and skills should be created, and opportunities to explore specific career options and to build employment skills should be outlined in these plans. Transportation and accessibility accommodations should also be included as these factors can present barriers to the post-school success of youth with disabilities. Information about all employment programs, both within the school and the community, should be given to families during the first transition meeting so that the employment planning process can begin early. These guidelines should be included in the transition protocols and handbooks that are already available and that continue to be developed.

The current protocols and resources that are available are a good starting point for improving the post-school outcomes of youth with disabilities, however placing a stronger emphasis on employer connections, employment exploration and work skill development experience during high school may help youth to achieve meaningful employment.

Cooperative education and experiential learning. Research has demonstrated that early work-related programs during high school, such as school-sponsored work experiences, vocational education enrolment, and after-school jobs, contribute to more favourable post-school employment outcomes for youth (Benz et al., 2000; Corbett et al., 2002; Landmark, Ju & Zhang, 2010). A number of options are provided to students attending Ontario secondary schools including: career talks/classroom visits, career fairs/career days, workplace tours, job shadowing and job twinning, work experience, mentoring, project-based learning, co-operative education, specialist high skills majors, school-work transitions, and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000). A description of these programs can be found in this document that outlines the details of each program's key elements. While these programs are not developed specifically for individuals with I/DD, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2000) does state that these programs can "assist all students, including exceptional students, who are bound for university, college, apprenticeship, or the workplace, in making career decisions as well as in developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are essential in today's society" (p. 6).

Although there is much evidence of the use of early work-related programs to improve post-secondary outcomes, the participation of youth with disabilities in these programs has been described as "generally uneven and fairly limited" (Carter, Trainor, Cakiroglu, Swedeen, & Owens, 2010, p. 19). In a study conducted by Carter et al. (2010) in the US, over half of the schools interviewed reported that students with disabilities participated in some form of short-term, work-related employment training (such as career or job counselling, career interest and aptitude assessments, tours of local businesses, and job fairs). However, fewer students were involved in cooperative education programs

in an unpaid, supported work environment. These findings were representative of the activities offered by the school, with more schools providing short-term, indirect programs than long-term cooperative or work-based experiences. Furthermore, it was noted that students with severe disabilities or emotional or behavioural disorders were much less likely to be involved in any type of additional work-related skill development programs (Carter et al., 2010).

Despite findings that suggest the need for, and the increased availability of, early work-related programs, the post-school outcomes experienced by youth with I/DD remain quite bleak, and suggest that "too many youths with disabilities are exiting school without the skills, attitudes, experiences, and linkages that will launch them successfully to the world of work and/or inform their career paths" (Carter, et al., 2010, p. 14).

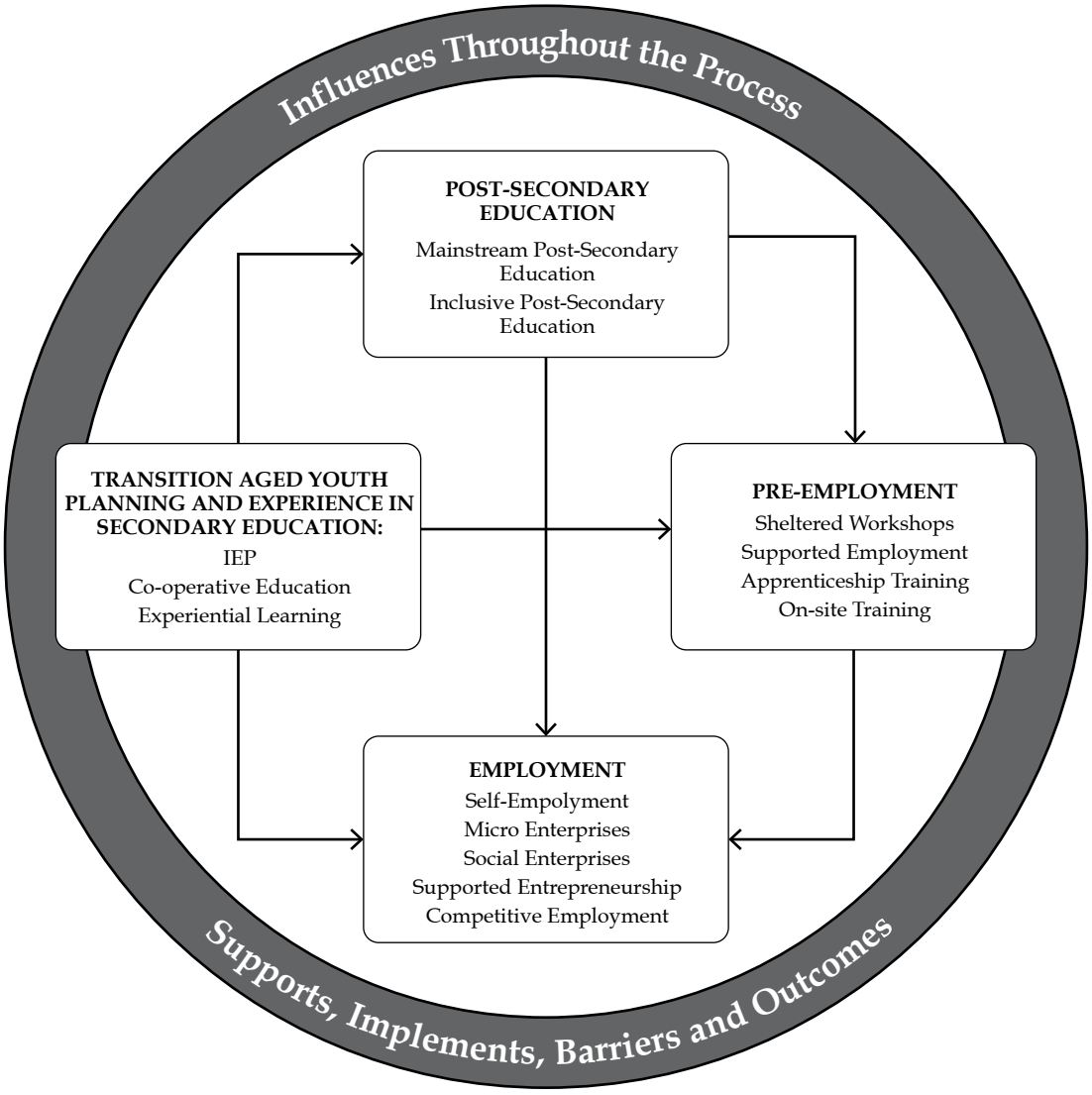

Figure 2. Pathways to employment from secondary education can be directly to employment or through post-secondary and/or pre-employment options

Post-Secondary Programs and Pre-Employment Training

Increasingly, students with I/DD are exploring the academic, social, workforce and community aspects of life after they leave high school (Mock & Love, 2012). As illustrated in Figure 2, due to changes in the public perception of disability and legislation that promotes inclusion, persons with I/DD are now able to pursue post-secondary education or to find pre-employment training, such as apprenticeship, that is similar to what is available to their typically developing peers (Bruce, 2011). Figure 2 illustrates how students with I/DD who pursue PSE have two possible avenues; they can enter a mainstream post-secondary program based on their interests (e.g., computer programming or culinary training) or they can enter an inclusive post-secondary education (IPSE) program that is designed for persons with disabilities. From there they may move into a pre-employment program or directly into a job.

Mainstream post-secondary education options. Ideally, students entering mainstream post-secondary programs attend courses with their typically developing peers; however, they receive course accommodations (e.g., extensions on due dates) and modifications (e.g., alternative forms of course materials) that increase the likelihood of their success (Harrison & Holmes, 2013). While these accommodations and modifications may be enough for students with learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia), post-secondary administrators recognize that they are unprepared to support persons with I/DD. For example, Harrison & Holmes (2013) surveyed the heads of Disability Services Offices at Ontario post-secondary institutions (both college and university) regarding their accommodations and modifications for students with mild I/DD and their accompanying success rates. The results indicated that neither college nor university programs were willing to make modifications to admission requirements; however, colleges were more willing to make in-class accommodations for students with I/DD than were university programs. Finally, they found that disability services offices' administrators estimated that fewer than half of students with I/DD graduated from post-secondary education. Given these barriers, it is not surprising that Grigal et al. (2011) found that only 11% of high school IEPs identified mainstream PSE as a goal.

Individualized post-secondary education options. Since the 1990s, Canadian colleges have focused on developing IPSE programs that provide opportunities for persons with I/DD. In terms of format, these programs range from inclusive individualized support to segregated classes (Bruce, 2011). In Ontario, many colleges have started to offer Community Integration through Co-operative Education (CICE) programs. Typically, these programs offer a hybrid model that combines life skills training with mainstream academic classes, based on student interest and support in response to the students' needs. In addition, students often participate in several co-operative placements that allow them to further develop workplace skills (Bruce, 2011).

Despite the academic accommodations made in CICE programs, transitions to employment for CICE students remain limited when compared to their peers who attend mainstream PSE programs. For example, Durham College (n.d.) reported that CICE graduates were less likely than mainstream students to find general employment (i.e., 71% employed compared to the 84% college total), and even less likely to find employment related to their area of interest (i.e., 14% working in related field compared to the 55% college total).

In addition, a variety of outcomes have been reported for the longitudinal employment outcomes of students who participated in IPSE programs. One study showed that after completing a PSE program, 37% of the students with I/DD were employed and 66% were doing volunteer work. Of the participants who were working, 100% were not employed in their desired field (Butler, Sheppard-Jones, Whaley, Harrison & Osness, 2016). However, there is some evidence that youth with more severe intellectual disabilities who completed PSE showed significantly increased participation in competitive versus sheltered workshop employment (Hart, Zimbrichj & Ghilori, 2001). Therefore, although IPSE programs appear to influence the ability of some persons with I/DD to secure employment, it tends not to be in their preferred field of interest.

Further research regarding the PSE programs and their impact on employment is needed. Petcu, Chezan and Van Horn (2015) identified that "as more and more students with I/DD attend PSE programs, research also needs to concentrate on examining the assessment procedures implemented by these programs to assess and monitor student progress and program effectiveness" (p. 371). Moreover, McEathron, Beuhring, Maynard, and Mavis (2015) determined that there needed to be a better understanding of the intersection among educational or program support, agency support, family support and financial or funding support.

Other pre-employment service options. An alternative or additional option for PSE students is to enrol in pre-employment services, which seek to provide students with a range of opportunities including workshops, vocational training, and on-site job-coaching (Canadian Association for Community Living, 2011). Although the range of pre-employment services is extensive, they all strive to provide on-site job-coaching to facilitate the development of both job-specific skills and other "soft-skills" (i.e., social skills) that are desired by employers (Butcher & Wilton, 2008; Canadian Association for Community Living, 2011). Two of the more common pre-employment options available for these students are employment supports, that may include various forms of training, and in jurisdictions where they are still operational, other youth may participate in sheltered workshops. As shown in Figure 2, youth may access these programs directly after leaving high school or they may participate in supported employment and work training programs after attending post-secondary programs.

Sheltered workshops. Sheltered workshops provide work activity in a segregated environment with stipend pay. Work sites tend to focus on simple assembly tasks with support provided by trained support workers. Although the intention is to provide students with the necessary training to find placements in the mainstream workforce, many sheltered workshop participants do not obtain outside paid employment (Canadian Association for Community Living, 2011; Hart et al., 2001; Parmenter, 2011). However, there is evidence that the movement away from sheltered workshops to a focus on community-based employment, while it can be challenging, "can result in new and fulfilling experiences for participants" (Dague, 2012, p. 10). The cessation of Ontario government funding of sheltered workshops was announced in 2015 (Welsh, 2015).

Employment supports. Employment supports are temporary on-site trainings that increase the likelihood a person with I/DD is able to secure and maintain competitive employment. These services are located in an integrated environment with paid wages, individualized supports and on-the-job training that matches the person's interests (Butcher & Wilton, 2008). During transition planning, youth with I/DD and their support teams are more likely to identify employment support programs as a desired trajectory for employment than post-secondary education. For example, Grigal and colleagues (2011) found that employment support was the goal in 45% of student IEPs. The shift from sheltered workshops to employment support programs reflects the desire to reduce segregation, and to provide on-site training to increase the likelihood that participants could ultimately obtain competitive employment. The guiding belief of this approach is that if persons with I/DD are able to acquire the skills desired by employers and to demonstrate the ability to complete tasks similar to their co-workers, they will be able to compete in the job market alongside persons without I/DD (Butcher & Wilton, 2008).

While the goals of many employment support programs are well-intentioned, many persons with I/DD report low satisfaction due to social isolation from co-workers and difficulty meeting productivity demands. Furthermore, the transition to competitive employment is rare because agencies responsible for employment supports are reluctant to allow participants to remain in the placements brokered for training purposes. In addition, if persons with I/DD do remain in a position, employers' expectations regarding the quality and quantity of work may be at a level that exceeds the participant's ability (Butcher & Wilton, 2008). For example, Butcher and Wilton (2008) conducted a qualitative analysis of participants' experiences in a pre-employment training program. They found that many employers were willing to provide placements because they wanted to help the community, however they put limits on what participants were allowed to

do because employees with I/DD were not able to work at the same pace as regular employees. They also found that participants identified that, while they were in a social environment (i.e., mingling with other people), they were not making social connections that lasted beyond work hours or the length of their placement. Finally, only one of six participants in their study was hired permanently at the job site, with the manager identifying that the budget was the reason for the lack of job openings (Butcher & Wilton, 2008).

Despite the popularity of pre-employment programs as a post-secondary option for youth with I/DD to acquire employment skills, there is varied evidence regarding the efficacy of these programs. For example, Rush and Dale (2002) examined the outcomes of twenty-three supported employment programs for individuals with I/DD in Southwestern Ontario over the course of a year. They found that 58% of participants who were seeking employment during the year were able to secure employment during the period of the study and 20% of participants were participating in other employment support services, likely due to efforts to secure on-going employment. Given that a large number of participants stay in supported employment to sustain their jobs or to continue to find work, these programs do not appear to provide enough support or knowledge for persons with I/DD to continue working with little to no agency support.

A hybrid alternative. Because post-secondary employment and pre-employment supports alone have limitations in addition to their strengths, a program that combines both inclusive job skills training and on-site apprenticeship at potential employment sites is an innovative alternative approach. Owen et al. (2015) examined the social return on investment of Common Ground Co-operative, an organization that provides educational, administrative, and job-coach support for adults with developmental disabilities through a co-operative model. The Foundations Program, embedded within Common Ground Co-operative (detailed description provided in the social enterprise section below), is an eighteen-week career readiness program where youth are engaged in experiential learning that combines in-class experience with direct hands-on training. Students participate in both classroom and co-op placements at one of five enterprises that provide on-site training. A youth who excels at the program may be invited to join the Common Ground Cooperative partnerships as an apprentice if a funded space for another partner is available or if the young person has Passport funding that is provided to them by the Ontario Government (Developmental Services Ontario, 2014). Passport is a program that helps adults with a developmental disability be involved in their communities and live as independently as possible by providing funding for community participation services and supports, activities of daily living and person-directed planning. The program also provides funding for caregiver respite services and supports for primary caregivers of an adult with a developmental disability.

A proxy comparison was made between the Foundations program and a College CICE program with the results indicating that the curriculum from the Foundations program was reasonably comparable to the CICE program. In addition to possibly being elected to remain part of the enterprises upon successful graduation from the Foundations Program, partners also have access to on-going education (e.g., financial literacy) and planned social events (Owen, Readhead, Bishop, Hope, & Campbell, 2015). Increased development and evaluation of programs like CGC may help to provide effective and sustainable models of employment for TAY.

Employment Options for Transitional Aged Youth

When considering what constitutes employment, Bradley et al. (2015) based their definition on the State Employment Leadership Network in the US. While there is variation among the States, they suggested that employment is, "an individual working at a job in a local business, earning the prevailing wage for that position or industry alongside peers that do not have disabilities" (p.5). The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) vision of employment equality is that "working-age adults with intellectual disabilities are employed at the same rate as the general population" (Canadian Association for Community Living, 2016). Included in the benchmarks

associated with this vision are foci on the need for supports for both persons with I/DD and employers, and the importance of persons with I/DD being free from "financial or other disincentives to seek and maintain employment" (Canadian Association for Community Living, 2016). Interestingly, participants in a case study of Common Ground Co-operative described what they do as work, even though they are not being paid minimum wage. This may be because they are earning a share of revenue of the business for which they are non-share capital partners (Owen, Readhead, Bishop, Hope, & Campbell, 2015; Readhead, 2012). As described in Figure 2, the range of employment options for youth with I/DD includes self-employment, micro-enterprise, social enterprise, supported entrepreneurship and competitive employment.

Self-employment and micro-enterprises. Self-employment and entrepreneurship models are relatively new options for persons with a disability (Maritz & Laferriere, 2016). They may involve the establishment of a small business with decision-making controlled by the person(s) with I/DD. These approaches tend to rely on the availability of start-up funds and need specific planning for business growth. Support can be provided by an agency, a job coach, or a family member (Parmenter, 2011). Natural supports, such as those available in family-based businesses, are commonly used for persons with higher support requirements. This situation provides the opportunity for employment status however it may limit community integration and, at times, provide no wages (Parmenter, 2011). An employment option that does provide wages and social integration is social enterprise.

Social enterprises and supported entrepreneurship. Social enterprises are businesses that combine social objectives with an employment goal. They have legal status and operate by returning a large portion of their profit to the business to expand it and to create employment for persons who would otherwise potentially remain unemployed, such as persons with I/DD (Parmenter, 2011). As discussed by Reddington and Fitzsimons (2013), employment for youth with I/DD through social entrepreneurship is not sought solely for income reasons; this employment option can also potentially be about improving quality of life and social connection to the community.

Supported entrepreneurship can provide an employment option that fosters growth in self-determination, personal skills and independence with appropriate supports. As mentioned previously, one example of supported entrepreneurship is provided by Common Ground Co-operative (CGC) in Toronto that provides administrative supports for five social businesses for which persons with developmental disabilities are non-share capital partners. The partners have given enthusiastic descriptions of their experience of social inclusion, their sense of ownership and empowerment, and their increased autonomy and well-being (Lemon & Lemon, 2003; Owen, Readhead, Bishop, Hope, & Campbell, 2015). In this innovative employment option, the partners support each other, train apprentices and new partners and assist in the hiring of the support workers. The financial supports required for this employment option to be available include start-up funds for the businesses (such as a social economy investment), the costs of administrative and job coach supports (such as government funding), and a cost effective location to operate the businesses. This employment option can be seen as a work environment that extends community connection and social inclusion without the high paced demand of competitive employment.

Competitive employment. Competitive employment involves typical work, regular wages and conventional hours in the mainstream labour force. This type of employment is often the desired outcome of employment supports (described above); attaining this goal depends upon the youth having a job coach and/or co-worker without a disability who can perform a mentorship role or provide natural supports during the training of the necessary work duties.

Family and social networks can be vital supports to the TAY with I/DD finding and maintaining employment. However, the long-term and ongoing dependency on family supports can lead to increased frustration and burnout for those who are tasked with the added responsibility of supporting their loved ones in the competitive employment market. That is, families' lives and their daily time can

become consumed with providing supports to ensure that the person with I/DD is able to find employment, is able to have transportation and other personal needs covered during employment and is able to maintain employment status. These long–term supports wear thin over the years as the parents' own needs are commonly neglected (Petner-Arrey, Howell-Moneta, & Lysaght, 2016).

Abbye and Rose (2010) described that the three main reasons that TAY with I/DD are motivated to work are monetary gain, social connection and feeling competent to work. Factors that contribute to successful employment for TAY include: assessing their motivation or desire to work, creating ongoing employment goals, creating a plan that is self-directed, coordinating youth and adult services, and providing on-going guidance.

An example of a competitive employment option is provided by Mark Wafer (Toronto, Ontario) who, since 1995, has opened six successful Tim Horton's locations. One of his first hired employees was a person with I/DD and, at last report, of his 250 employees, 46 are persons who have disabilities (Rushworth, 2014; Wafer, 2016). Wafer described that when he was starting his business and hired his first employee with a disability he realized that "I'm an expert at making coffee, but I'm not an expert at disabilities" so he worked with community partners who identified individuals who might wish to work with him and who helped him with training (Maldonado, 2012). All his employees receive the same wage and the same benefits (Wafer, 2015). This example of competitive employment opens the door to examining what criteria truly define this employment option and whether working full time hours is one of them. In addition, evidence appears to indicate that TAY with I/DD will require on-going support, to some extent, to remain on the job long-term (Parmenter, 2011). For example, Rush and Dale (2002) found that 67% of employed participants in their study were still receiving some form of employment support at the end of the evaluation period.

Transitional aged youth may seek employment options other than conventional work in order to accommodate their personal needs, such as health care or domestic responsibilities. Realistically, the demands of full-time work with a full work-load may not be possible for everyone. For instance in one study, "one parent described how full-time work was not feasible for her son, who lived independently, due to the time required for him to conduct his activities of daily living, like shopping and cleaning his apartment" (Petner-Arrey et al., 2016, p. 793). In other studies, working part-time hours was common and the lack of full time employment did not have an impact on the individuals' sense of satisfaction with their community connection (Blick, Litz, Thornhill, & Goreczny, 2016).

Regardless of which employment option TAY with I/DD choose, positive public perception plays an important role. This perception is shaped by communities being exposed to the work capabilities of persons with I/DD. Work capabilities are valued when TAY with I/DD enter an employment option with effective and necessary supports and with the ongoing development of outcomes, such as work skills; all essential aspects that begin at the secondary educational phase and build through the pathway options described in Figure 2.

Supportive Pathways to Employment

As TAY transition towards employment, the necessary supports (financial, professional, family and social) if implemented effectively, contribute to the development of personal outcomes. Barriers to implementation of supports hinder pathways to employment and can restrict achievement of desired outcomes if they are not mitigated by supports that are appropriate to the individual. Figure 3 describes the potential barriers to achieving their employment goals. These are similar to the barriers that they face during high school (see Figure 1). However, as described above, the range of possible employment models is growing. In order to succeed in any setting, youth need to have job coaches and employers who receive training in how to provide appropriate individualized supports. Appropriate individualized supports and work can help youth to develop work skills to work in settings that fit their interests and needs.

Regardless of trajectory, as illustrated in Table 1 youth need to have financial, professional, personal and social supports as well as early individualized planning and experiences of career

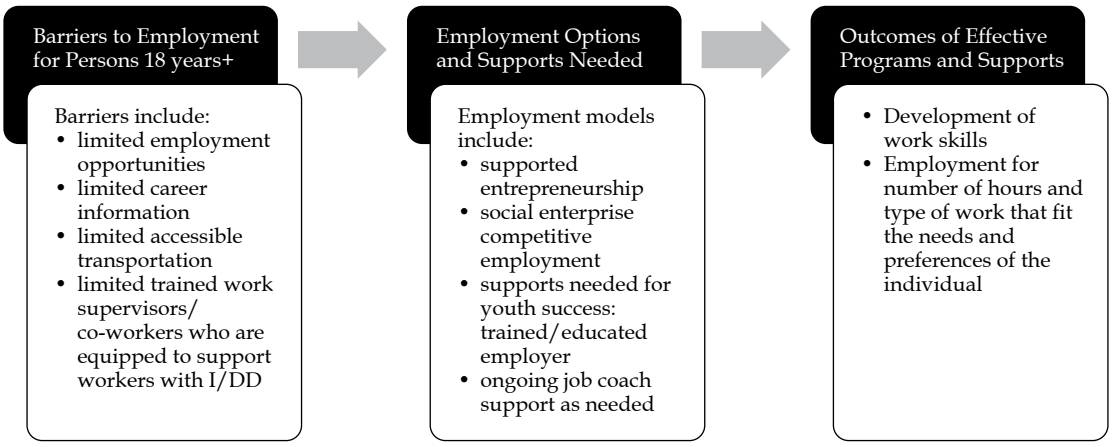

Figure 3. Employment barriers, options and supports for Transitional Aged Youth to achieve successful outcomes for transitional aged youth after high school

choices, such as co-op placements, that include skill assessments and development, during secondary school. It is important that those who provide support and the youth themselves collaborate to develop plans that are meaningful to the individual. Youth may be mentored and helped to develop self-advocacy skills through these processes. Barriers to implementation can hinder achievement of employment goals and desired personal outcomes. Best practices, protocols and written guidelines for professional and family use, that direct a collaborative approach to planning the transition phase, need to be in place and mandated to ensure consistency. In addition, early exploration of community-based opportunities, work experience and career counselling can facilitate youth participation in a transition plan. The IEP must be initiated early, be individualized, follow the student through the high school years and

Table 1. Influences on the Youth Transition Process Towards Employment

Supports

- Financial supports (government funding for programs and the person with I/DD)
- Professional supports (teachers, instructors, professors and support workers)
- Family supports
- Social supports (friends, neighbours, mentors, community connections)

Implementation of Supports

- Individualized planning
- Collaborating
- Advocating
- Mentoring

Barriers to Implementation

- Lack of supports
- Failure to enact elements of the transition plan
- Lack of exposure to employment options
- Negative community perception

Outcomes

- Educational skills
- Work skills
- Social skills

be supported collaboratively with consistent guidelines that focus on specific employment strategies. For youth who choose employment, planning should include a specific employment section in the secondary education plan, provided to the student at an early age that includes all employment and skills training program options that may be appropriate to the individuals' needs and interests.

There is a growing focus on best practices in this transition planning process (Grigal et al., 2011) with correlational studies identifying youths' self-determination as a necessary component (Kleinert, Mills, Dueppen & Trailor, 2014) and the need to take into account the employment goals and expectations of both the youth and their family. Expectations of teachers are also a valuable predictor of TAYs' future job outcomes (Grigal, et al., 2011; Holwerda, Brouwer, Boer, Groothoff, & Klink, 2015). A significant number of TAYs, when asked what they planned for their future, stated that they desired to have a paid job (Holwerda, et al., 2015). Thus, planning and continued supports are essential after high school. Post-secondary and job training options are viable pathways to attaining employment. The collaborative support systems and plans that lay out the pathway options from secondary to post-secondary and/or pre-employment training flow from the expectation that inclusive employment is feasible and attainable for those who wish to pursue it.

The purpose of accessing post-secondary employment and/or pre-employment is to improve and/or enhance employment skills and knowledge, community connections and, ultimately, to equip TAY to be ready for employment. With these enhanced skills, the social perception of TAYs' capacity to work will improve (Collin, Lafontaine-Emond, & Pang, 2013). Throughout the pathways model described in this article (see Figure 2), implementation of support that may improve inclusive employment opportunities should include an assessment of the strengths and needs that are unique to each individual (Carter, Brock & Trainor, 2014). Matching these individual needs and strengths, in a "customized" way, with the needs of the employer can improve employment outcomes and change "what it means to be 'qualified' to work competitively in the workforce" (Rogers, Lavin, Trans, Gantenbein & Sharpe, 2008 p.206).

However, barriers and challenges persist. In addition to aspects of an individual's specific disability that may prevent them from being able to accomplish the tasks associated with particular jobs, systemic barriers that hinder pathways to employment include: lack of financial support, lack of professional or family support, implementation of supports not being carried out, lack of informed choices, segregation, negative community perceptions, and lack of personal skills development. There is also a need for training of community work supervisors and co-workers to equip them to support persons with I/DD in the workplace (Burge, Ouellette-Kuntz, & Lysaght, 2007).

In Ontario, some pre-employment programs are offered by transfer payment agencies that are government funded. Access to these and other developmental services involves a process of applying to Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) that includes assessment and determination of approval of eligibility that is based on the range and level of the individual's disability (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2013). "The impact is the downtime for those who are transitioning from youth to adult services and others who are awaiting approval for funded services and supports" (Jennifer Hope, personal communication September 26, 2016). Even with PSE or IPSE and pre-employment experience, many youths remain unemployed. However innovative hybrid approaches, and an increasing focus on early and ongoing coordinated planning through the alternative pathways that are available to TAY, offer hope for the future.

Conclusion

Not all TAY are interested in employment. For some, personal needs or preferences may make employment undesirable or unrealistic. There is a growing focus on the importance of examining the nature of authentic engagement and inclusion for persons with I/DD that includes a range of activities that may include but is not limited to employment (Butcher & Wilton, 2008; Hall, 2004; Hall, 2005; Hall, 2010; Hall & Wilton, 2011). However, for

TAY who may wish to explore employment there is a growing range of options for them to consider with the support of coordinated planning beginning early in high school, and with training and ongoing support through the transition. Documents such as the Initial Report of the Ontario Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities (2016) highlights the need for government structural support of employment for persons with disabilities on the grounds that "It is an unacceptable failure of human rights for people with disabilities to be so underrepresented in our Ontario labour market" (p. 4). The right to work is well established (United Nations Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities, 2006), but its implementation is dependent on coordinated and individualized planning and effective supports.

Key Messages From This Article

People with disabilities. You have the right to choose what you want to do when you finish high school. You can choose to get job training during high school and after high school at a college or in a business with someone to support you.

Professionals. Individualized, collaborative planning for transition to post-secondary education and employment needs to start early and may include experiential learning opportunities during high school.

Policymakers. There is a need for an increase in high school experiential learning opportunities, specialized post-secondary career development programs and supported work transition programs.

References

Abbye, A., & Rose, J. L. (2010). A preliminary investigation of factors affecting employment in people with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 7*(4), 239–244.

Benz, M. R., Lindstrom, L., & Yovanoff, P. (2000). Improving graduation and employment outcomes of students with disabilities: Predictive factors and student perspectives. *Exceptional Children, 66*, 509–529.

Blick, R. N., Litz, K. S., Thornhill, M. G., & Goreczny, A. J. (2016). Do inclusive work environments matter? Effects of community-integrated employment on quality of life for individuals with intellectual disabilities. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 53–54*, 358–366. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2016.02015

Boyd, V., Ng, S., Schryer, C. (2015). Deconstructing language practices: discursive constructions of children in Individual Education Plan resource documents. *Disability & Society, 30*(10), 1537–1553. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2015.1113161

Bradley, V., Bershadsky, J., Giordano, S., Hiersteiner, D., Kennedy-Lizotte, R., & Butterworth, J. (2015). Employing people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (Eds.) *Way leads on to way: Paths to employment for people with intellectual disability* (pp. 3–30). Washington: American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development. (n.d.). *Transition planning for youth with special needs*. Retrieved from http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/support_guide.pdf

Bruce, C. (2011, May). *Inclusive Post-secondary Education for Diverse Learners: Supporting Transition*. Retrieved from https://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/IPSE_FinalPDF.pdf

Burge, P., Ouellette-Kuntz, H., & Lysaght, R. (2007). Public views on employment of people with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 26*, 29–37

Butcher, S., & Wilton, R. (2008). Stuck in transition? Exploring the spaces of employment training for youth with intellectual disability. *Geoforum, 39*, 1079–1092. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.11.002.

Butler, L. N., Sheppard-Jones, K., Whaley, B., Harrison, B. & Osness, M. (2016). Does participation in higher education make a difference in the life outcomes for students with intellectual disability? *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 44*, 295–298. doi:10.3233/JVR-160804

Canadian Association for Community Living (2016). *Employment equality.* Retrieved from http://www.cacl.ca/area/employment-equality

Canadian Association for Community Living (2011). *Achieving Social and Economic Inclusion: From Segregation to 'Employment First.'* Retrieved from http://www.cacl.ca/sites/default/files/Achieving%20social%20and%20economic%20inclusion_0.pdf

Carter, E. W., Brock, M. E., & Trainor, A. A. (2014). Transition assessment and planning for youth with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities. *The Journal of Special Education, 47*(4), 245–255.

Carter, E. W., Trainor, A. A., Cakiroglu, O., Swedeen, B., & Owens, L. A. (2010). Availability and access to career development activities for transition-age youth with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 33*(1), 13–24. doi:10.1177/0885728809344332

Collin, C., Lafontaine-Emond, I., & Pang, M. (2013). *Persons with Disabilities in Canadian Labour Market: An Overlooked Talent Pool.* Retrieved from http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/ResearchPublications/2013-17-e.pdf

Corbett, W. P., Clark, H. B., & Blank, W. (2002). Employment and social outcomes associated with vocational programming for youths with emotional or behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 27*, 358–370.

Crawford, C. (2011). *The Employment of People with Intellectual Disabilities in Canada: A Statistical Profile.* Retrieved from https://irisinstitute.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/intellectual-disability-and-employment_iris_cr.pdf

Crawford, C. (2012). *Youth with disabilities in transition from school to work or post-secondary education and training: A review of the literature in the United States and United Kingdom.* Retrieved from https://irisinstitute.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/youth_in_transition_iris_cr.pdf

Dague, B. (2012). Sheltered employment, sheltered lives: Family perspectives of conversion to community-based employment. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, *37*, 1–11. doi:103233/JVR-2012-0595

Davies, D. M., & Beamish, W. (2009). Transition from school for young adults with intellectual disability: Parental perspectives on "life as an adjustment." *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability, 34*(3), 248–257.

DeLuca, C., Godden, L., Hutchinson, N. L., & Versnel, J. (2015). Preparing at risk youth for a changing world: Revisiting a person-in-context model for transition to employment. *Educational Research*, *57*(2), 182–200. http://dx.doio rg/10.1080/00131881.2015.1030854

Developmental Services Ontario (2014). Passport program: Guidelines for adults with a developmental disability and their caregivers. Retrieved from https://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/documents/en/mcss/publications/developmental/passport/Passport_Program_Guidelines-en.pdf

Durham College (n.d.). *Graduate Employment Report: Class of 2014/Fall 2015.* Retrieved from www.durhamcollege.ca/wp-content/uploads/graduate-employment-report-2015.pdf

Dyke, P., Bourke, J., Llewellyn, G., & Leonard, H. (2013). The experience of mothers of young adults with an intellectual disability transitioning from secondary school to adult life. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability, 38*(2), 149–162.

Grigal, M., Hart, D., & Migliore, A. (2011). Comparing the transition planning, postsecondary education, and employment outcomes of students with intellectual and other disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 34*(1), 4–17. doi:10.1177/0885728811399091

Hall, E. (2004). Social geographies of learning disability: Narratives of exclusion and inclusion. In *Area*, *36*(3), 298–306. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ j.0004-0894.2004.00227.x

Hall, E. (2005). The entangled geographies of social exclusion/inclusion for people with learning disabilities. *Health & Place*, *11*(2), 107–115. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2004.10.007

Hall, E. (2010). Spaces of social inclusion and belonging for people with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, *54*, 48–57. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2788.2009.01237.x

Hall, E., & Wilton, R. (2011). Alternative spaces of "work" and inclusion for disabled people. *Disability & Society*, *26*(7). *https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09687599.2011.618742*

Harrison, A. G., & Holmes, A. (2013). Mild intellectual disability and the post-secondary level: Results of a survey of disability service offices. *Exceptionality Education International*, *23*(1), 22 – 39.

Hart, D. J., Mele-McCarthy, R. H., Pasternack, K. Zimbrich, & Parker D. R. (2004). Community college: A pathway to success for youth with learning, cognitive, and intellectual disabilities in secondary settings. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities 39*(1), 54–66

Hart, D., Zimbrichj, K., & Ghiloni, C. (2001). Interagency partnerships and funding: Individual supports for youth with significant disabilities as they move into postsecondary education and employment options. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 16*, 145–154.

Healthy Child Manitoba (2008). *Bridging to adulthood: A protocol for transition students with exceptional needs from school to community*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/publications/protocol_swsn.pdf

Holwerda, A., Brouwer, S., Boer, M. R., Groothoff, J. W., & Klink, J. J. (2015). Expectations from different perspectives on the future work outcome of young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, *25*, 96–104. doi:10.1007/s10926-014-9528-3

Kleinert, J. O., Mills, K. R., Dueppen, B. M., & Trailor, A.M. (2014). Self-determined goal selection and planning by students with disabilities across grade bands and disability categories. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, *49*(3), 464–477.

Landmark, L., Ju S., & Zhang, D. (2010). Substantiated best practices in transition: Fifteen plus years later. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 33*(3), 165–176. doi:10.1177/0885728810376410

Lemon, C., & Lemon, J. (2003). Community-based cooperative ventures for adults with intellectual disabilities. *The Canadian Geographer, 47*(4), 414–428.

Lysaght, R., Cobigo, V., & Hamilton, K. (2012). Inclusion as a focus of employment-related research in intellectual disability from 2000 to 2010: A scoping review. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, *34* (16), 1339–1350.

Maldonado, M. (2012). *Hiring those with disabilities easier than you think – Tim Hortons franchise owner.* Retrieved from http://accessibilitynewsinternational.com/hiring-those-with-disabilities-easier-than-you-thinktim-hortons-franchise-owner/

Maritz, A. & Laferriere, R. (2016). Entrepreneurship and self-employment for people with disabilities. *Australian Journal of Career Development, 25*(2), 45–54. doi:101177/1038416216658044

McEathron, M.A., Beuhring, T., Maynard, A., & Mavis, A. (2015). Understanding the diversity: A taxonomy for postsecondary education programs and services for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, *26*(4), 303–320.

Mock, M. & Love, K. (2012). One state's initiative to increase access to higher education for people with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, *9*(4), 289–297.

Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (2013). *Policy directives for application entities*. Retrieved from http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/publications/developmentalServices/policy_application/2_directives.aspx

Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, & Ontario Ministry of Education (2013). *Integrated transition planning for young people with developmental disabilities 2013–2014: Tri-Ministry implementation guide.* Retrieved from http://www.ocdsb.ca/calendar/AGENDA%20DOCS/2013%20DOCS/October%202013/SEAC%2023%20October/06a%20Transition%20Protocol.pdf

Ontario Ministry of Education (2000). *Cooperative education and other forms of experiential learning: Policies and procedures for Ontario secondary schools.* Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/secondary/coop/cooped.pdf

Ontario Ministry of Education (2004). *The Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide*. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/resource/iepresguid.pdf

Ontario Ministry of Education (2013). *Learning beyond the classroom: Information about school-work opportunities.* Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/job/passport/SchoolWorkChart.pdf

Owen, F., Readhead, A., Bishop, C., Hope, J., & Campbell, J. (2015). Common Ground Co-operative: Supporting employment options. In J. Quarter, S. Ryan & A. Chan (Eds.), *Social purpose enterprises: Case studies in doing business differently* (pp. 27–51*)*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Owen, F., Li, J., Whittingham, L., Hope, J., Bishop, C., Readhead, A., & Mook, L. (2015). Social return on investment of an innovative employment option for persons with developmental disabilities. *Non-Profit Management & Leadership, 26*(2), 209–220. doi:10.1002/nml.21187

Parmenter, T. R. (2011). *Promoting training and employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities: International experience.* Retrieved from http:digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi/article=1560&context+gladnetcollect.

Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities. (2016). *Initial Report*. Retrieved from https://www.ontario.ca/page/partnership-council-employment-opportunities-people-disabilities-initial-report

Petcu, S. D., Chezan, L. C., & Van Horn, M. L. (2015). Employment support services for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities attending postsecondary education programs. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, *28*(3), 359–374.

Petner-Arrey, J., Howell-Moneta, A. & Lysaght, R. (2015). Facilitating employment opportunities for adults with intellectual and developmental disability through parents and social networks. *Disability and Rehabilitation, 38*(8), 789–795.

Readhead, A. (2012). *Social economy and developmental disabilities: An employment option that promotes a form of authentic work and fosters social inclusion (*Master's thesis, Brock University, St. Catharines, Canada). Retrieved from https://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/4359/Brock_Readhead_Anne_E_2012.PDF?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Reddington, T. & Fitzsimons, J. (2013). People with learning disabilities and microenterprise. *Tizard Learning Disability Review, 18*(3), 124–131. doi:10.1108/TLDR-02-2013-0013

Roebuck, R. & MacLeod, C. J. (2006). *Connections: A guide to transition planning for parents of children with a developmental disability.* Retrieved from http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/Elementary/docs/SpecED/SpecED_Connections.pdf

Rogers, C., Lavin, D., Tran, T., Gantenbein, T., & Sharpe, M. (2008). Customized Employment: Changing what it means to be qualified in the workforce for transition-aged youth and young adults. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, *28*, 191–207.

Rush, B., & Dale, J. M. (2002). Regional application of standardized performance indicators for supported employment programs. *Journal on Development Disabilities, 9*(1), 67–82.

Rushworth, K. (2014). Business benefits drive 'inclusive employment.' *High River Times*. Retrieved from http://www.highrivertimes.com/2014/10/17/business-benefits-drive-inclusive-employment

Saskatchewan Association for Community Living (2012). *The School to Life Transition Handbook.* Retrieved from http://specialneedsproject.ca/resources/links-directory/266-school-to-life-transition-handbook

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). Retrieved from http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf

Wafer, M. (2015). People with disabilities deserve to be paid a legal wage. *The Toronto Star.* Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/03/30/people-with-disabilities-deserve-to-be-paid-a-legal-wage.html

Wafer, M. (2016). Employees with disabilities can have a positive impact on profitability. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-commentary/employees-with-disabilities-can-have-a-positive-impact-on-profitability/article28540451/

Wehman, P., Chan, F., Ditchman, N., & Kang, H. (2014). Effect of supported employment on vocational rehabilitation outcomes of transition-aged youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A case control study. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, *52*(4), 196–310. doi:10.1352/1934-9556-52.4.296

Welsh, M. (2015, November 29). Ontario's sheltered workshops to close forever. *The Toronto Star.* Retrieved from http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/11/29/ontarios-sheltered-workshops-to-close-forever.html