CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT FOR TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH: AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

INTRODUCTION
Think College Transition staff and school partners created an action research project to increase community-based employment opportunities for transition-age students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As a professional development model, participants found action research to be an effective model for both learning and simultaneously implementing customized employment strategies.

THE CASE FOR A CUSTOMIZED APPROACH
Despite a growing number of initiatives aimed at improving employment outcomes for transition-age youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), there remains a distinct and persistent lack of paid employment opportunities for this population (Hughes & Avoke, 2010; Nicholas, Luecking, & Luecking, 2006). Customized employment represents a possible solution to better outcomes for many populations with employment challenges, (Griffin, Hammis, Geary, & Sullivan, 2008; Nicholas, Luecking, & Luecking, 2006), in large part due to its dual-focus on both the job seeker and employers.

OUR CHALLENGES
» Time constraints
» Employer reticence
» Mindset shift
» Transportation challenges
» Liability concerns (fading supports)
» Adult Services capacity
» Family engagement

OUR NEXT STEPS
» Further develop training series to scale
» Expand to other districts
» Develop products for online repository

REFERENCES

WHAT IS THE THINK COLLEGE TRANSITION PROJECT?
The TCT Project is an inclusive comprehensive college based transition project where students are fully included on campus in all aspects of a complete college experience, receiving supports as necessary (e.g., coaching and/or peer mentor, disability services office). This project offers an innovative approach to transition services for students with intellectual disabilities and autism by providing participation in inclusive academic and social environments of a college campus with same-aged peers rather than continuing to receive transition services in typical high school environments.

Think College at the Institute for Community Inclusion, at the University of Massachusetts Boston received funding from the US Department of Education, Investing In Innovation Fund (I3) to develop and implement the TCTP. Researchers at Education Development Center (EDC) will conduct the external evaluation of the TCT Model. Project matching funds have been provided by the Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation.

WHO WE ARE
Carole Carlson, Think College, Institute for Community Inclusion carole.carlson@umb.edu | 617.287.4289
Jenn Bedore, Transition Specialist Ludlow Public Schools
Patti Matthews, Education/Job Coach Agawam Public Schools
Naomi Murdock, Transition Specialist Ludlow Public Schools
Jenn Bedore, Transition Specialist Ludlow Public Schools
Patti Matthews, Education/Job Coach Agawam Public Schools