



# PROMISING PRACTICES

NUMBER 1

## Implementing an Inclusive Transition Club that Promotes Postsecondary Education for Youth with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities: Lessons Learned from Wakulla High School

### Program Background

The transition period to postsecondary education and/or employment is a critical time for all youth, including those with intellectual or other developmental disabilities (IDD). Optimizing post-high school outcomes requires an array of innovative planning strategies. Implementing a transition club is a low or no cost strategy for school professionals. [Wakulla High School's Club Soar](#) in Crawfordville, Florida has become a forum for college and career exploration. Club Soar has created a platform for mentoring and peer support.

### Implementation

Sonia Clark-Rosier leads the *Club Soar* program. She began planning *Club Soar* by identifying mentors. Sonia recruited students from a previous transition club to collaborate. She explained how the club would expand to include students with IDD. She also identified mentors through an inclusive sports team in the community, and through outreach to siblings of youth with IDD at the high school and in the community. With mentors on board, Sonia held a club orientation. Cleverly scheduled just before a school football game, many students and parents attended the orientation while they were already on campus for the game.

*Club Soar's* first activity included the election of officers. Students with and without disabilities became officers. Club members decided to meet monthly following the completion of the day's classes, and engage in ongoing communication with one another and with Ms. Clark-Rosier through group text. Next, club members completed career interest inventories and used their results to plan club activities. For example, to learn about the array of postsecondary education options, *Club Soar* planned an extensive set of college tours that included public and private universities, as well as community colleges and technical schools. When possible, club members identified alumni from Wakulla High who attended the respective postsecondary institution to participate in the tour. Prior to each visit, the students reviewed electronic campus maps to acquaint themselves with the different buildings, residence halls, and other resources. After each visit, students engaged in reflective journal activities to record their reactions. Students used these journals to complete assignments between monthly meetings.

In addition to college tours, *Club Soar* invited guest speakers to join their meetings, including a counselor from their local State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) office, a representative from Easter Seals, and a contact from their local Career Source. The representative from Career Source joined every other month to help students create accounts for Career Source job postings, prepare resumes, and search for jobs.



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## Impact

*Club Soar* provided the opportunity for students to work together to identify and explore college and career opportunities, engage in mentoring, develop college and career transition plans, and participate in events and activities within the school, community, and at nearby postsecondary institutions. *Club Soar* offered a natural platform for students to connect. As club members connected via text, phone, and monthly activities, students with and without disabilities formed friendships. Students and parents were able to learn about the range of options and supports available to students exploring post-school education and training. Employment-related community supports (such as VR and Career Source) developed relationships with many of the students who continue to seek support after high school completion.

## Suggestions for Replication

- **Identify a staff sponsor** to support students to learn and explore career pathways and postsecondary education options. Ms. Clark-Rosier had a vision for supporting students inclusively.
- **Tap into both school resources and external opportunities** to provide students with focused activities related to career and college preparation (e.g., engaging VR and Career Source, and taking college tours). School staff can make themselves aware of community partners to support their goals.
- Although *Club Soar* was able to conduct their college tours in-person, this can be cost-prohibitive. Others clubs can *be creative* by:
  - » engaging in virtual college tours with admissions staff who are often available via a web-based platform such as Zoom
  - » asking representatives from Career Source and/or VR to educate students about the importance of soft skills and to conduct mock interviews
  - » holding a school-based college and career fair with local college representatives and employers
  - » scheduling student visits with local employers.

These are just a few ideas that may be appropriate for a transition club!

## Additional Resources:

The [Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities \(FCSUA\)](#) invites public and private high schools in Florida serving students in grades 9-12 to apply for funding to establish a College and Career Transition Club (CCT Club) at their school.

**For more information on Wakulla's Club Soar, contact:  
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