



Lessons for Effective Hybrid Professional Development: The Customized Employment Bootcamp for Transition Support

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Opportunity Brokers Consortium: George Tilson, Carol Burbank, Keith Bosco

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The most common complaints educators share about professional development are that trainers emphasize one-size-fits-all, theoretical concepts without grounding them in specific strategies that are sustainable, specific, and job-related, offering skills-development for all participants, whatever their roles might be. It's particularly important for educators supporting transition initiatives to experience effective professional development that builds team connections while sharing practical, evidence-based best practices that improve transition outcomes for all students. With lingering challenges from the pandemic, and increased vulnerabilities for high-risk students, it is vital that our professional development offerings increase collective and personal efficacy for teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, and students – in essence, all stakeholders in transition programs.

The Opportunity Brokers Consortium team, through the hybrid training, Customized Employment Bootcamp, is an example of grounded, engaging professional development. (We will summarize the program on page two of this white paper.) In alignment with recent literature about best practices in transition preparedness, we have designed an experience that:

- Builds both individual mastery and collegial relationships across districts, roles, and agencies (Donohoo, 2018; Bond, 2020; Cornelius & Murawski, 2020; Harvey et al., 2020; Saunders et al., 2021)
- Offers hybrid, personalized experiences that integrate theory, best-practices, and customized application of strategies (Bosverab & Voytek,

2015; Mangin, 2015; Romanillos, 2019; Wehmeyer, 2019; Charlier & Lambert, 2020; Foor, 2020; Toste, 2023; Dubois et al., 2023)

- Includes opportunities for continued professional development and follow-up coaching to increase participants abilities to measurably improve transition outcomes for their students (Buchanon, 2020; Carter, 2021; Gilson, 2021; Kucharczyk, 2022)

Our specific goals and evaluative follow-up focused on building skills in job-coaches, educators, counselors, work-based learning and customized employment opportunities for young workers with diverse disabilities. These goals included:

- shifting participant mindsets from deficit to asset assessment
- sharing evidence-based strategies for customized employment and work-based learning successes
- making the transition from school to work more sustainable through concrete tools for assessment and ongoing improvement initiatives
- creating opportunities for diverse stakeholders to collaborate and share resources, insights, and community-building transition practices
- establishing a foundation of customized transition practices that support ongoing engagement with at-risk youth, their families, local employers, and school career programming to support their interests, growing independence, and transition plans



Developing Authentic Customized Work-Based Learning Experiences and Jobs For Students and Adults with Disabilities

This training, combining asynchronous modules and in-person coaching with integrative activities and a workbook, meets customized employment's practical and immediate needs as we've grappled with pandemic realities. Developed and updated over the past 10 years with current research and best practices, it's evidence-based with clear core concepts grounded in the real world of job development and transition support. The training has consistently helped our teachers, paras, and administrators support CTE career paths for our struggling students with disabilities and other challenges.

The live coaching session includes three trainers, with tips that support each group's interests, challenges, and roles. The combination with the modules is effective because everyone comes in with a foundation of new knowledge, and then each person gets a chance to explore the applications that will help them be more effective.

The strategies we share to improve transition tools for customized work-based experiences for students and adults with disabilities are grounded in important, potentially complex, but powerful equity-focused, asset-based transition concepts:

- the power of coaching
- engaging and expanding community connections
- assessing the whole person
- acknowledging the dignity of risk for disabled individuals
- and maintaining high expectations in tandem with appropriate and evolving supports.

We have observed increased self-efficacy, confidence, and client/student engagement in our participants, with many returning to re-sit the experience, or requesting follow-up trainings to deepen the Bootcamp insights and application. (See evaluation results, page 4)

The modules cover relevant concepts with tools participants can apply immediately. They also open up strategies that work across multiple roles. They include:

- ♦ Cultivate a Mindset of Possibility
- ♦ A Career Coaching Approach to Vocational Support
- ♦ Whole Person Assessment
- ♦ Position and Pitch Yourself as a Business Person
- ♦ Build Your Employer Network
- ♦ Pave the Road to Customized Employment
- ♦ Workplace Supports (Part 1): From Job Coach to Workplace Consultant
- ♦ Workplace Supports (Part 2): Techniques Through a Career Coach Lens



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Boot Camp Survey Responses

Data collected from all the surveys from DE Boot Camp Sessions in FY 22-23

I really liked the content in the modules and the ability to go at your own pace. The activities went well with the content in the modules and I could relate them to the work I do. I found the examples and case studies beneficial. I felt prepared for the live session because of the Modules.

- L.K., U of D

"What I liked most about the training is listening to real experiences and using those to guide the career coaches towards a new perspective.

- T.B., Manager

The communication and explanations were very informative. The workbook was comprehensive following along with each of the modules. A Judgement free zone!

- A.E., Job Coach, Autism DE

I thought the videos were engaging. I really enjoyed the real-life illustrations that related to the content.

- J.H., Networks - Christina School District

I loved having a workbook to follow along so that I could maintain focus on the topics being discussed.

- T.P., DDDS/Pathways to Employment

The workbook was a wonderful resource. It was a great place to jot notes during the models and I know I will be referencing it often.

- R.K., Caesar Rodney School District

I learned new ways to support in job opportunities and create job opportunities that companies don't realize they need help in certain areas.

- B.R., Autism Delaware

Thank you all! This has been a great recap and positive boost to keep doing the work we are doing!

- J.R., Job Coach, Autism DE

Please continue to hold these trainings. My goal is to continue to grow and this training has answered a ton of questions in depth.

- D.M., Christina School District - REACH program

Participants often repeat Bootcamp, reportedly because of the ways the asynchronous modules dovetail with the active engagement of live coaching. Participants have included job coaches, CTE teachers, special education administrators, paraprofessionals, agency leaders, and supervisors in roles to support Work-Based-Learning. The collaborative coaching experience offers a variety of expertise to address real-world support for exceptional individuals.

Several participants have reported that their connections in the Bootcamp experience have provided networked opportunities for their own professional development and for job placement and career support for the people they serve.