Building Meaningful, Data Driven, Work-Based Programs while Addressing Common Barriers to Employment

ICTW Symposium
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Introductions

- **Jessica Denst**, College and Career Coordinator
- **Katie Morgan**, Student Employment Coordinator
- **Christine Turner**, Case Manager

Program Overview

- Ray Graham Training Center High School first opened in 1974 as a high school for students with disabilities In Chicago, Il.
- Ray Graham Training Center shifted into a "Transition Center" in 2019.
  - All students enrolled at Ray Graham are 18-22 years old and have met graduation requirements.
  - Students are placed at Ray Graham from all over the city by Chicago Public Schools.
- Ray Graham opened a 2nd campus in 2020 and now serves approximately 260 students between both sites.

Program Overview

- Ray Graham provides individualized programming and specially designed instruction aligned to student's post-secondary goals in classroom and community settings.

- Community Based instruction (CBI) and Work Based Learning (WBL) experiences are incorporated into student learning each week with activities building from career exploration and awareness to supported and competitive employment.

Work Based Learning

- NSTTAC (2013) has found that providing students with access to following services and supports while they are still in school directly links to positive Post-Secondary Outcomes in the area of Employment:
  - Career Awareness
  - Occupational Courses
  - Paid Employment/Work Experiences
  - Vocational Education
  - Work Study
  - Community Experiences
  - Participation in a Transition Program

Why Is Work Experience So Important?

- Youth with disabilities are more likely than their same age, non-disabled peers to drop out of school, be unemployed and experience poverty as adults (National Organization on Disability, 2004).
- The U.S. Department of Labor (2013), found that only 26% of students with disabilities are employed after graduation.
- When students are able to engage in paid work, paired with education as part of the curriculum or as an ancillary activity, these youth are considerably more likely to obtain and retain employment as adults (Wagner et al., 2005).

Ray Graham Training Center Pathways

- A Student Pathway is a student's desired post-secondary goal paired with the level of support needed for success. It is a way for staff to provide individualized learning experiences aligned to students needs and interests as we prepare them for life after graduation.

- Under each pathway, students are exposed to a range of experiences and activities throughout their learning journey that connect to their post-secondary outcomes.

Employment Pathway Progression

Pathway Progression

Years	Activities
Year 1	Students will explore vocational, educational, and independent living interests in classroom and community settings in order to increase awareness of post-secondary opportunities
Year 2	Students will participate in continued exploration in vocational, educational, and independent living opportunities through community integrated experiences in order to develop self-determination skills.
Year 3	Students will engage in targeted activities including vocational, education, and independent living activities aligned to their post-secondary goals and based on the pathway.
Year 4	Students will increase their independence and community integration in preparation for graduation as indicated in their pathway.

Using Transition Assessments

- A comprehensive battery of assessments are completed to identify student skills, abilities, interests and preferences.
- Students are provided with the opportunity to explore a wide range of careers through classroom and community experiences such as job shadows, volunteer experiences, and internships.
- As students move through the program, students develop stronger self-determination skills which can lead to better employment outcomes as their goals become more focused and aligned to skills and interests

Transition Assessments

Interests and Preferences

- Assessing these areas determine the student's post-secondary goals

- **Sample Assessments:**
  - [Pictorial Interest Inventory](#)
  - [Online Interest Inventory](#)

Skills and Abilities

- Assessing these areas determine a student's level of support (Pathway)

- **Samples Assessment:**
  - [College and Career Skills and Abilities Checklist](#)

Transition Assessments

Transition Assessments

| Outcome	Goals	Supported Need
Employment	Student identified post-secondary goal	• Customized • Supported • Independent
Education/Training	Student identified post-secondary goal	• Customized • Supported Employment • Independent
Independent Living	Student identified post-secondary goal	• Customized • Supported Employment • Independent

College and Career Program

- The College and Career Program was created in 2020 to address and support work and education programs - THE GOAL- COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT

College and Career Pathway

Volunteer Experience → Off Site Internships-Unpaid → Off Site Internships- Paid → Independent Employment
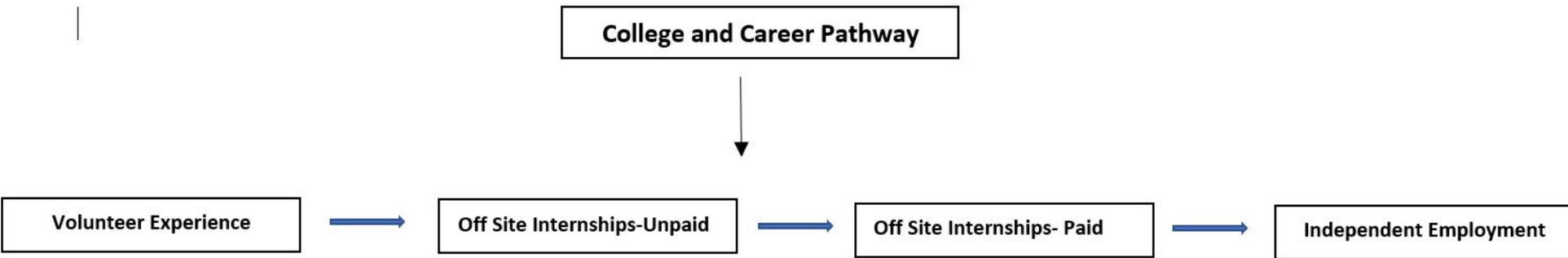
Referral Process and Aligning Supports

- RGTC Student Referral Form

- Data obtained from the student referral is then used to identify TIAs (targeted areas of instruction) to promote student success and instruction in deficit areas.

- Ray Graham Training Center Career Clusters Internships and Competitive Employment

- Our school sets an annual school budget for "STUDENT WORKERS." This allows us to use these funds to pay students as they engage in internships at other sites

Progression of College & Career Pathway


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                    │  College and Career Pathway │
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┌──────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────────┐    ┌────────────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Volunteer        │ →  │ Off Site Internships-    │ →  │ Off Site Internships-  │ →  │ Independent Employment  │
│ Experience       │    │ Unpaid                   │    │ Paid                   │    │                         │
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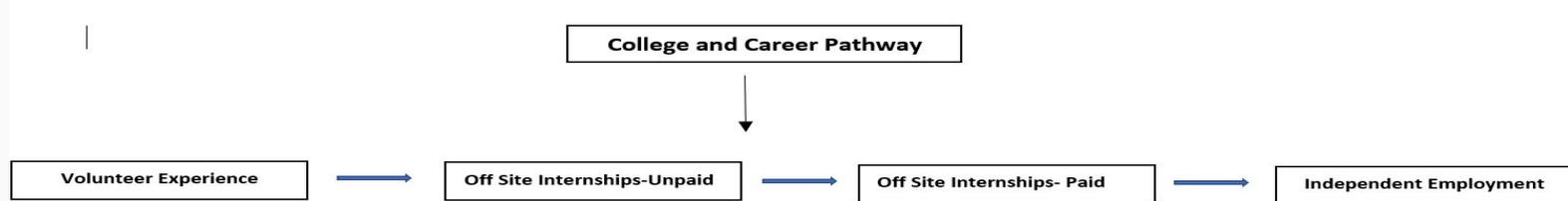
Training Programs

Students earned a Certificate of Completion and great experience to add on their resumes!

Building Student's Resumes

SIGN UP FOR EVERYTHING - knock on doors- speak with everyone! Get business cards created!

- Eventbrite - google
- Chicago Public Schools
- City Wards/Municipal Offices
- Park District
- Local churches (St Sabina Job Fairs)
- Skilled Trades Expos
- Public Library
- Community College or Large Universities

Partnerships to Build Social-Emotional and Communication Skills

Mount Carmel High School

- Unified Sports (Flag Football, Basketball, Bocce & Bass Fishing)
- Recreational Leadership and SEL Activities

Saint Ignatius College Prep

- Circle of Friends
- Unified Special Olympics
- Washington DC Trip

Urban Autism Solutions

- Social-Emotional, Vocational,
- Communication groups and CBI

Program Barriers

- **Challenge:**
  - The College and Career Pathway did not serve all students and needed to expand.
- **Barriers included:**
  - Lack of knowledge around post-secondary funding and supporting agencies for all staff members
  - Community connections were managed by a small group of staff and not all teachers. Including:
    - Transportation resources
    - Documents required for work (ID, Birth certificate, SS card)

Barriers

How to Overcome Common Barriers and Resource (links)

A	B
Barrier	**How to Address Barrier**
Loss of SSI	Disability Benefits 101 Mayors Office for People with Disabilities
Wanting to work	Matching students interests to job
Undocumneted	Customized emplyment - volunteer opportunities (step up program)
No Open DRS Case	School based job observations, shadowing, and experiences {custodial, luncroom, classroom assistant (culinary, technology, agriculture, security, office,} - customized employmnet
ELL	Personal Interpreter Services | LanguageLine Solutions - Google Translate - Secure in-person interpereter
Support Beyond HS	DRS - Based on your districts STEP contract - DRS Agency Search
Social/Emotional	School job coach - DRS
Transportation	Public Transportation (CTA, PACE), Ride Share/Private Transportation (Uber, Lyft, Taxi), Jobs within walking distance (travel train)

Focus on Building Social Capacity

Building social capacity involves strengthening the ability of individuals, organizations, and communities to work together and address challenges effectively, including managing change, resolving conflict, and improving coordination.

It's a process that goes beyond training and focuses on developing skills, knowledge, and attitudes to empower people to shape their own futures.

Creation of Post-Secondary Leadership Team

Customized, Supported, or Competitive Employment

Targeted Career Exploration with Supports

Job Shadowing and Ongoing Career Exploration

Career Awareness and Exploration

Outcome	Goals	Supported Need
Employment	Student identified post-secondary goal	• Customized • Supported Employment • Independent

Post Secondary Leadership Team Action Plan

- Last school year, Ray Graham developed a Post-Secondary Leadership Team that supports students in transition and after graduation. This team identified the following goals to better support students:
  - Staff capacity building
  - Exposure visits
  - Ensuring that every graduate is connected to an agency
  - Additional parent meetings beyond IEP/Summary of Performance (SOP)
  - Created Family Exit Plan
  - Ongoing alumni support for 2 years after graduation
  - Alumni Luncheon

Post Secondary Advising Plan
2024 BOY Impact Goal Data

SY24 TRACKING: TARGETS & BENCHMARKS (Guide to Data Sources)

		SY22 EOY Data	SY23 EOY Data	SY24 EOY Target	Q1PRG Data	Q1 Data	Q2PRG Data	S1 Target	S1 Actual	Q3PRG Data	Q3 Data
IMPACT GOALS *Instructions: copy/progress monitor after completing the "Impact Goals" tab*											
By the end of SY24, we will have an increase of 90% of students who are linked to an agency on the community connections data sheet *Note: It will likely make sense to work backwards to this statement after completing the Components below*											
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS/AGENCIES and SERVICES											
PUNS				90%	0	0	21		21		
DRS (Dept of Rehab Services)				90%	0	0	41		41		
Park District				90%	0	0	8		8		
SSI Benefits				90%	0	0	26		26		
Medicade				90%	0	0	18		18		
Disabled State ID				90%	0	0	41		41		
Linkage to Community Travel Supports- parent transport, Rides Free, Travel Trained, PACE				90%	0	0	24		24		

Staff Capacity Building

- Additional training on community agencies for all staff
- Embedded the facilitation of community connections as a required component of the curriculum
  - Transition Instruction and Preparation Skills (TIPS) class
  - Ongoing monitoring of data and discussion of connections during department meetings
- Host two Transition Fairs per year where agencies are on site at our school

Community Connections

- RGTC created a Data Collection Tool that each homeroom teacher uses to track community connections
  - Updated monthly at department meetings
  - Discussed and updated at IEP meetings
  - Discussed and updated at Parent Teacher Conferences and Report-Card Pick Up
- [EXAMPLE Community Connection Data Sheet](#)

Exposure Visits

- Planned and executed three exposure visits for all graduates
  - Community Day Program
  - CILA (Community Integrated Living Situation)
  - Harold Washington College
  - Special Olympics site at Ada S McKinley and Park District

Parent Meetings & Family Exit Plan

- Determining a student's pathway can also guide families in determining funding resources that align with support need.
- **The RGTC Family Exit Plan-** is an additional tool can help families stay on top of connections and any action items needed.
- Moved from whole group parent meetings to individualized 1:1 sessions

DHS Funding → DRS → Voc Rehab
DHS Funding → DRS → Home Based
DHS Funding → DDD → CILA
DHS Funding → DDD → Home Based
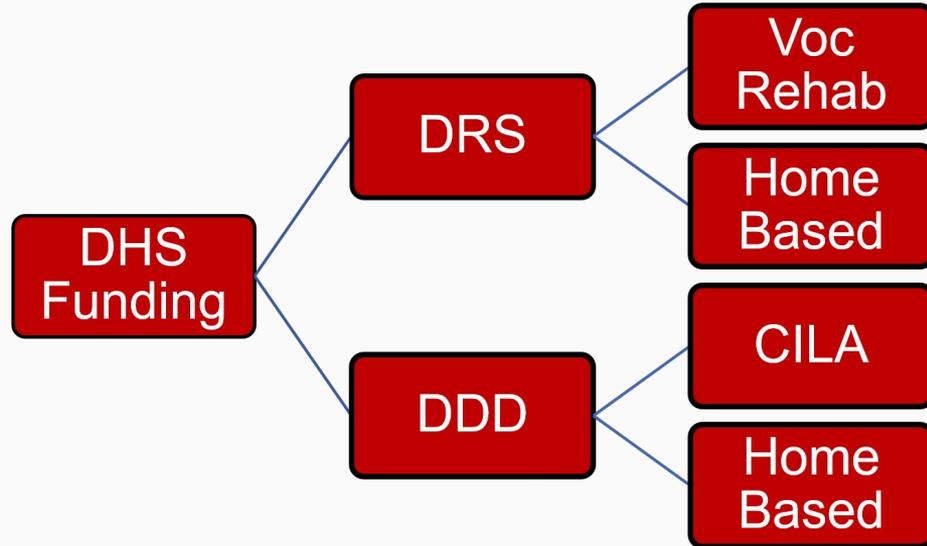
Ongoing Alumni Support

Support Sessions: Focus on alumni from past two years

- Winter Sessions 16 weeks- 5 hours a week
- Summer Sessions 8 weeks-10 hours a week

Confirmed Destinations:

- 2022 Confirmed destinations for alumni- approximately 12%
- 2023 Confirmed destination for alumni-approximately 17%
- 2024 Summer Goal is 25%

# Student Interview

[Student Interview- Anahi](#)

Q&A and Resources

Ray Graham Presentation Resources

Follow us on Social Media!
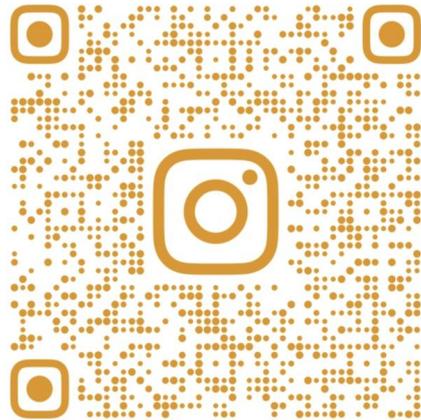
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