

# HUNTLEY COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT 158

Creating a Pathway to Customized Employment in Illinois Schools

*April 24, 2025*

*ICTW Symposium*



We're the "AND," not the "OR"

&

# Introductions

Dede Gill, Assistant Superintendent for Special Services

Jill Shadel, Family Engagement Liaison

Keith Panke, LIGHT Program Principal



# What You'll Take Away from This Session

## ❑ **A Visionary Framework for Competitive Employment**

*Understand how district leadership can align people, resources, and partnerships to create a sustainable “All-In” model for customized employment pathways*

## ❑ **Practical Tools to Build the Pathway**

*Gain knowledge of evidence-based practices like discovery, resource mapping and person-centered planning to shift from traditional employment models to meaningful, individualized opportunities.*

# What You'll Take Away from This Session

## ❑ **Family Engagement as a Cornerstone**

*Learn how early and consistent family engagement, professional development and collaboration can break down barriers and expand transition readiness across a district.*

## ❑ **Actionable Steps to Start or Strengthen Your Work**

*Leave with specific strategies and examples, such as creating a vision, surveying staff and connecting with community partners to bring competitive integrated employment to life in your own setting*

# Today's Agenda & Presenter Roles

## **Part 1: Building the Vision & Framework** *(Assistant Superintendent)*

- Why This Work Matters
- Foundations of a Sustainable Framework
- The “All-In” Model
- Aligning People and Resources
- Shifting the Model
- Key Tools for Building the Pathway
- Practical Application

# Today's Agenda & Presenter Roles

## **Part 2: Family Engagement** (Family Engagement Liaison)

- Engaging Families and Community Early and Often
- Districtwide Family & Staff Learning Opportunities
- Connecting Families to Community Resources
- Building Independence from Early Ages
- Reflections and Challenges/Barriers

# Today's Agenda & Presenter Roles

## **Part 3: Putting it into Practice** (LIGHT Program Principal)

- Program Overview and Evolution to New Vocational Center
- Implementing Supported and Customized Employment Principles
- Student Outcomes and Ongoing Challenges
- Professional Development and Strategic Learning
- Key Takeaways from Our Journey



# Part 1: Building the Vision & Framework



# Why This Work Matters

- Stagnant employment outcomes persist for individuals with disabilities (National Disability Institute, 2023)
- Systemic challenges include discrimination and low expectations (Lindsay et al., 2018)
- Shifting from sheltered workshops to supported employment is crucial (Wehman et al., 2016)
- Evidence-based practices support competitive integrated employment (CIE) (Rogan & Banks, 2017)
- Individualized pathways improve post-school outcomes (Test et al., 2009)

# Foundations of a Sustainable Framework

## Key Structures for the Delivery of Transition Services

- **Program Model:** The design and what it is meant to accomplish
- **People:** Who is delivering, receiving and/or supporting the program
- **Plan:** What is the vision and what steps are you taking to get there

# The “All-In” Model

## A Districtwide Commitment to Customized Employment











- All students deserve a pathway to meaningful work
- Requires district and state leadership alignment
- Resources are for all **and** they are shared
- Includes general educators, special educators, families and agencies

# The “All-In” Model

## **What it looks like: Huntley Community School District 158**

- “All students always”
- Moving away from grouping students in tiers
- Multiple locations for targeted instruction
  - McHenry County College: Education/Training
  - Deicke Park District: Independent Living
  - Vine Street: Employment

# The “All-In” Model

TRADITIONAL	PERSON-CENTERED		
 Employment Education/Training Independent Living   	 Employment 	 Education/ Training 	 Independent Living 

***Key Considerations for LIGHT Program locations***

# Aligning People and Resources

## **Leadership-Driven Change**

- Role clarity: administrators, transition teams, coordinators
- Leverage state and federal policies and practices
- Creating a mindset of presumed competence
- Embed employment in IEP goals and transition planning

# Aligning People and Resources

## **What it looks like: Huntley Community School District 158**

- Superintendent and school board support
- Dedicated principal
- LIGHT Steering Committee
- Strength-based teaching assignments
- Targeted professional development related to role



# Shifting the Model

## What are we moving toward

Creating a pathway to customized employment means shifting:

**AWAY FROM:** Sheltered workshops, low expectations and one-size fits all

**TOWARD:** Competitive integrated employment through strengths-based discovery, person-centered supported and customized employment

# Shifting the Model

## **What it looks like: Huntley Community School District 158**

- Creating a vision of change through strategic planning
  - Including transition in district and building strategic plans
- Meaningful inclusion
  - Defining what this means in our district
  - How it translates into better outcomes for employment
- Expanding Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLEs)

# Key Tools for Creating the Pathway

## What it looks like: Huntley Community School District 158

- **Program self-assessment**
  - Predictor Implementation School/District Self-Assessment (PISA)
    - National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT)
- **Targeted professional development**
  - Illinois Center for Transition and Work (ICTW)
    - School to Work Transition Guide & Transportation Solutions
    - FACT Sheets
    - Regional Workshops
    - Targeted Technical Assistance

# Key Tools for Creating the Pathway

## Evidence-Based Practices that drive CIE



- **Discovery:** Uncovering interests, skills and conditions for success
  - Getting to know the whole person
- **Person-Centered Planning:** Individualized vision, supports and outcomes
- **Resource Mapping:** Connecting supports across systems

# Practical Application

## **Think Big, Start Small**

- Begin with a vision and build alignment
- Use the tools to develop pathways, not just plans
- Empower staff, students, families and communities to co-create the future
- Partner!

# Part 2: Family Engagement



## Future Ready for ALL

College, Career and Transition Fair  
3 events in 1 night for HHS students and families!

**Huntley High School IACAC Regional College Fair**  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
East Gym  
Approximately 100 colleges and universities will be represented at this year's college fair. Stop by the booths to learn about each school's offerings.

**Transition Resource Fair**  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
Central Gym  
The transition resource fair will provide students and families an opportunity to learn about employment, education, college, career training, and independent living from a variety of community partners and adult service agencies that include resources for all abilities.

**Family Learning Series: Going to College with a Disability**  
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM  
Virtual event and "watch party" in the cafeteria  
Presenters Annie Tulkin, founder and director of Accessible College, and Adrienne Fumberg, founder of Lighthouse Guidance, will provide tips and guidance for students and families on how students with disabilities can thrive in a college environment with the right support and accommodations. Hosted by the Huntley 158 Special Services team, this virtual presentation will be held live via Zoom. There will also be a viewing "watch party" of the presentation in the HHS cafeteria for those attending the fair.

# Engaging Families & Community (Early & Often)

- Engaging Families builds partnerships to strive towards outcomes together.
- Engaging Families considers the whole person transitioning more to person centered employment.
- Engaging Community takes steps to create acceptance in our community
- Engaging Community partnerships with opportunities for our students.

# District Family & Staff Learning Opportunities

- Inclusive Schooling
- Self Advocacy
- Inclusion: Supporting Students with Accommodations
- Understanding and Responding to Anxiety
- Executive Functioning
- Assistive Technology
- Transition Planning 101
- IEP training
- Going to College with a Disability
- Essential Skills for the Modern Workforce
- Parent CPI Training
- Building Social Emotional Skills



# Connecting Families to Community Resources

- Mental Health Fair
- Transition to Adult Resource Fair Partnered with College Fair
- Inclusive Practices in our Community Event
  - A focus on inclusion in the workforce
- Monthly presentations by community partners that support employment as well as Independent living and Education

# Building Independence from Early Ages

- Creating a relationship of parent voice and team membership from the initial IEP
- Develop a mindset to overcome barriers to build independence across settings
- Encourage and empower families to utilize skills and build confidence in their child's routines at home and in the community
- Setting the stage for expectation of self advocacy for our students

# Reflections and Challenges/Barriers

- Administration -Values Family Engagement Approach
- Framework- The Engagement Process has to have Framework
- Mindset shift for staff- collaboration/early discussion of long term goals
- Staff Education on resources
- Building mutual trust between staff and families through SEAC
- Parent follow through on action steps/interactive planning
- Effective communication
- Accessing input on needs from staff and parents

# Part 3: Putting it into Practice



# Program Overview and Evolution to New Vocational Center

## **Who are we and how are we evolving?**

- 3 buildings in the community: Life is not a “One Stop Shop”
- About 60 students with a wide range of needs
- Staff Structure
  - Vocational Emphasis
- Vocational Center = Prerequisite Instruction and Hands on Experience
  - Flexible Space/Furniture
  - Store Front
- Community Utilization
  - Increases personalized and more authentic opportunities

# Implementing Supported and Customized Employment Principles

## **How are we creating a pathway?**

- Utilize Transition Professional Organizations (ICTW, NTACT)
- Focus on Job Development Process
  - Student & Employer Profiles
- Community Education
  - Business Leader Advisory Committee
- Staff Collaboration Opportunities
  - Weekly Late Start Staff Collaboration Time

# Student Outcomes and Ongoing Challenges

## **How are we measuring success?**

- The focus: Employment outcomes are more customized and sustainable (indicator 14)
- Capacity of the Community
  - Advocacy Group
- Mindset: All students can obtain competitive employment
- Logistics, Continuity, Cohesiveness
- Data Driven Decision-Making
  - AFLS
- Family Ownership

# Professional Development and Strategic Learning

## **How are we building capacity and sustainability?**

- Engage in Targeted Professional Development (PD)
  - PD workshops tailored to customized employment and transition services
- Accessing Professional Resources
  - NTACT, ICTW, TTA
- PD Structure
  - Late Start = Collaboration Time
  - District Early Release Days/Staff Development Day = Targeted PD



# Key Takeaways from Our Journey

## **What we want to encourage:**

- Well Established Vision
  - A student's last day in LIGHT is as close to the first day without us
  - Authentic activities in the community related to a student's post-secondary outcomes
  - The environment/structure of LIGHT for a student is commensurate to the student's future community environment
  - The program provides flexibility and fluidity to adjust a student's experience
- Partnerships Established (i.e. ICTW Technical Support)
  - ICTW Technical Support
  - Local Adult Agencies (Extended Trials)
- Visiting/Consulting with Other Transition Programs
- Community Engagement
  - Chamber of Commerce, Business Leaders, DelWebb, Park District

# References:

- Lindsay, S., Cagliostro, E., Albarico, M., Mortenson, W. B., & Lysaght, R. (2018). A systematic review of the experiences of youth with disabilities transitioning to adulthood. *Disability and rehabilitation*, 40(23), 2661-2676.
- National Disability Institute. (2023). The financial health of people with disabilities.  
<https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/the-financial-health-of-people-with-disabilities-report-final-0923.pdf>.
- Rogan, P., & Banks, P. D. (2017). *Competitive integrated employment: What it really means*. Brookes Publishing Company.
- Test, D. W., Mazzotti, V. L., Mustian, A. L., Fowler, C. H., Kortering, L., & Kohler, P. (2009). Evidence-based secondary transition predictors for post-school success. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 32(3), 160-181.

# References:

Wehman, P., Chan, F., Ditchman, N., & Kregel, J. (2016). Transition from school to work: Pathways for youth with disabilities. John Wiley & Sons.

# Resources & Contact Information:

Illinois Center for Transition and Work: ICTW: **[ictw.illinois.edu](http://ictw.illinois.edu)**

National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT): **[transitionta.org](http://transitionta.org)**

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Thank you for your sharing in our journey!



***ALL STUDENTS ALWAYS***