

**LET'S
GET TO
WORK**

Launching Youth with Disabilities into the Workforce

A small AIDD Projects of National Significance grant equipped youth with the most significant disabilities, their families, schools, and local businesses statewide to find and keep jobs as they graduated from high school.



“

...we depended on (student interns). When they weren't there, we felt it.

Marian Thornburg, Manager of Environmental Services Pro Healthcare

”

Tripled the number of students with paid jobs in their communities in the first year.

More youth are working and those strategies are being used statewide:

- 89% had at least one paid job while in high school, which is shown to double the chance of obtaining paid employment as an adult.
- 82% Let's Get to Work school districts increased the percentage of youth engaged in community employment.
- More LGTW students are participating in typical school and community activities with their peers without disabilities (a nearly 50% increase in integrated activities, also shown to equip youth with disabilities for work¹).
- Doubled the number of parents who believe their child can work in the community¹.
- Data shows students quality of life improved when students worked in the community.
- Community members, 25% of whom were local employers, report they believe that youth with disabilities can be employed in their community².
- Number of local employers who hired students with the most significant disabilities nearly doubled within six months.
- Pay for Performance bill to incentivize schools who deliver positive employment outcomes passed giving schools extra money to improve their transition programs

Sustainability

Now, ALL youth with significant disabilities in our state can benefit from the evidence-based strategies used in the project as the state agencies charged with youth employment have adopted elements of the project permanently. Examples:

- Public Instruction's statewide transition team that supports school districts now uses its 7 staff as coaches in local schools, modeling the project's approach to help educators learn by doing.
- Public Instruction now uses the project's video employment series, Quick Guide for Teachers (simple strategies for transition teachers), community outreach to businesses through local conversations, and family training (all based on demonstrated improved outcomes) to raise employment expectations and overall youth employment outcomes.
- Public Instruction adopted the project's approach to replicate with 26 struggling schools. All received this project's strategies, tools and coaching, and outcomes have improved. These resources to aid transition teachers are being disseminated to all school districts in Wisconsin.
- Parent training shown to double parents employment expectations for their children is embedded in our statewide programming for all families, and is used with more than 1,000 PROMISE grant families to break the cycle of unemployment in Social Security by equipping youth on SSI at young ages for work.
- The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee is now offering a transition certification program to improve teachers ability to work with students on employment and postsecondary education as a result of project staff informing the State Superintendent of the need for better teacher training.



¹ Research demonstrates that high family expectations, participation in integrated activities, and having held a paid, community-based job while still in high school were all factors strongly correlated with post-school employment success (Test et al, 2009). Data analyzed every 6 months after baseline.

² Respondents rated this question a 4.7 out of 5.