

Making lifelong connections

MISD makes special connections for students with special needs

Andy bags lunch items for the Meals on Wheels program. Randy cleans offices and Beth processes mailings for a school office. Like their high school peers across the county, these students are learning skills that will help prepare them to join the work force. However, what makes their job preparation different from other career-training programs is that these students are in special education schools operated by the Macomb Intermediate School District.

If you have job training opportunities for students, call Lutz School for Work Experience at (586) 286-0230 or Neil Reid High School at (586) 469-1590.

Students in MISD programs at Lutz School for Work Experience and Neil Reid High School are placed into work environments best suited to the interests and abilities of each student. The greater the care taken aligning those connections, the more likely the success for students with special needs.

Lutz School transitions students from school to work

Lutz School for Work Experience prepares young adults ages 18 to 26 with cognitive impairments to make the transition from school to work and community living.

Training programs in 14 fields teach students the tasks needed for a variety of jobs, including custodial maintenance, fast-food service, retail support, food preparation, grounds and garden, hospital housekeeping, laundry, human services, production and assembly, and greenhouse.

What students learn in school is applied at job-training sites throughout the community. Lutz School collaborates with about 50 local entities, including businesses, service organizations, churches, restaurants, nursing homes and recreation centers, to provide real-world work experiences for students.

Students also learn how to prepare for the work day — getting dressed, being on time and being ready to work. They also learn what a worker does — staying on task, following the structure of the workday, building relationships and resolving conflicts with co-workers.

Assistance to students at school and at the training site varies. Some students need someone to be close at hand to offer guidance, while others are able to work with little supervision.

When students are ready to get a job they can enter the world of work in a number of ways. If the student has an idea of what he or she wants to do,



Kim Magee, 25-year-old student at Lutz School for Work Experience, mists ferns for use in flower arrangements. Magee is applying work skills she learned in the Lutz greenhouse vocational program to her on-the-job experiences at Courtyard Flowers in Mount Clemens.

Students connect to work step-by-step



Neil Reid High School junior, 17-year-old Nick Mundy, wipes down the fish tanks at PetSmart. Mundy's experience is part of the school's Pre-employment Program, which gives students real world work experiences with local businesses.

Lutz staff work with the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth to find just the right job. MDLEG also provides the student with training and transportation needs.

If the student is ready to work but doesn't have a specific job in mind, MDLEG will conduct a work evaluation, providing an opportunity to "try out" several different types of jobs to see what the student likes and is

able to do. Once the field is narrowed down, then MDLEG looks for a specific job for the student.

Regardless of the way students enter the world of work, Lutz staff and MDLEG assist with helping students and families establish the long-term connections with community service agencies that will provide assistance to the students for the rest of their adult lives.

Neil Reid students connect academics to career opportunities

The Neil Reid High School vocational program approaches work training in a way that moves students progressively toward less supervision and greater independence.

In the Pre-employment Program, high school students get

hands-on work experiences while learning work-related academics. PEP has been in place since 1981. Currently up to 30 businesses countywide provide job-training opportunities for students at Neil Reid High School.

Students "apply" for a job from 20 possible placements. Once they're placed in a job, they spend 2 1/2 hours of their day at the job site for 15 weeks. They're visited daily by school staff who


help them solve both work and personal challenges. They concentrate heavily on how to cope appropriately with the social aspects of work — carrying on a conversation, fitting in and getting along with co-workers. This is critical to Neil Reid students who have emotional impairments that make it harder for them to deal with everyday situations. If it's a good fit, introductory PEP classes can sometimes lead to full-time employment for some students. If not, students move on to a more intense vocational work experience, refining skills in areas of greatest interest and aptitude. Evaluation by school staff is weekly, rather than daily, giving students greater independence.

After completion of PEP and vocational training, a student can participate in a work-study program. While the school provides PEP and vocational training opportunities, the student can find his or her own job for work-study. Once the school has approved the placement, the student receives school credit for hours at the work site. At this stage, the student is totally independent, with the employer providing all direction and work evaluations.


According to school staff, these experiences are immensely valuable because they let students try their wings step-by-step in a safe environment with lots of support from school staff and employers. Additionally, this gives students another way to be successful.

M A K I N G T H E

connection




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MISD
Macomb Intermediate School District

to Career Technical Education

For more information about CTE or to share your thoughts about the "Making the Connection" series, contact Karen Johnston at the Macomb Intermediate School District **586/228-3469** or emailjohnston@misd.net



MCTEAA
Macomb Career and Technical Education Administrators Association



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