



Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center

Building Positive Futures for Virginia's Children

Challenging Tradition through Life Long Learning

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Life long learning provides both formal and informal experiences. Formal opportunities could include taking adult education courses, attending a community college, or receiving tutoring to build skills. Informal opportunities are typically self-paced and involve an individual's areas of interest. For example, informal learning could include web-based inquiries, print and multimedia materials, or discussions with individuals who share common interests. The importance of ongoing learning is critical in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Life long learning can enhance obtaining and maintaining employment, provide opportunities to earn a higher annual income, and create pathways for life long independence (Stodden & Dowrick, 2000; Wilson, Getzel, & Brown, 2000).

Postsecondary education provides both formal and informal opportunities for life long learning. Postsecondary education can include technical schools, community colleges, four year universities and colleges, military, internships, and business-based training programs (Willie-Gregory, Graham, & Hughes, 1995). There are three main types of postsecondary education program models on two and four year college campuses (Hart, Grigal, Sax, Martinez, & Will, 2006). They include:

- **Mixed/hybrid model:** Individuals with disabilities are involved in social activities and/or academic classes (for credit or audit) with students without disabilities. They also participate in classes with other students with disabilities including life skills or transition programs. Employment experiences are offered both on and off campus.
- **Substantially separate model:** Students with disabilities are on campus, but are only in classes with other students with disabilities. Access to socializing with students without disabilities is part of the model through opportunities outside of the classroom. Employment experiences are typically in pre-established employment settings on and off campus.
- **Inclusive individual support model:** Students with disabilities receive individualized services (e.g. an educational coach, tutor, or technology supports) in college classes, certificate programs and/or degree programs (for credit or audit). It is not a program based model, instead courses are selected on students' career goals and employment



experiences. Interagency teams (including student and family) identify a range of services and share costs.

Virginia Commonwealth University's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (VCU-RRTC) has implemented a supported education model which assists students with disabilities in postsecondary education environments (Getzel & McManus, 2005). The model is designed to provide services and supports outside of the classroom setting. The model is student directed and individualized to meet the students' academic needs. Students with disabilities meet with an Educational Coach enabling them to identify and prioritize their areas of academic need and effective strategies to assist them. Students are encouraged to develop learning strategies that are effective in both the college and work environment. Students also meet with staff to identify services and supports on campus and in the community.

There are many new options for individuals with disabilities to participate in life long learning opportunities. It is important to consider the individual and his/her unique needs when considering further training or education. Individuals with disabilities participating in life long learning activities are able to build on skills learned, pursue interests, continue or increase involvement in the community, or enhance employment skills.

References

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From "Challenging Tradition through Lifelong Learning & Economic Empowerment" webcast—
a partnership between PEATC and VCU/RRTC. For a free download please visit:

<http://www.worksupport.com/training/webcastDetails.cfm/123>

Supported by a grant from US Department of Education #H235F070018


Regional Resource and Federal Centers

The Federal Resource Center for Special Education (FRC)
 Academy for Educational Development
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 Washington, DC 20009
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 TTY: 202.884.8200
 E-mail: frc@aed.org
<http://www.rrfcnwork.org>

Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC)
 Learning Innovations at WestEd
 20 Winter Sport Lane
 Williston, VT 05495
 Phone: 802.951.8218 | Fax: 802.951.8222
 TTY: 802.951.8213
 E-mail: kreedy@wested.org
<http://www.rrfcnwork.org/nerrc>

Mid-South Regional Resource Center (MSRRC)
 University of Kentucky / IHDI
 1 Quailly Street - Suite 722
 Lexington, KY 40507
 Phone: 859.257.4921 | Fax: 859.257.4353
 TTY: 859.257.2903
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 School of Education
 Auburn University Montgomery
 PO Box 244023
 Montgomery, AL 36124-4023
 Phone: 334.244.3100 | Fax: 334.244.3101
 E-mail: ebeale@mail.aum.edu
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North Central Regional Resource Center (NCRRC)
 Institute on Community Integration
 University of Minnesota
 5 Pattee Hall
 150 Pillsbury Drive, SE
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Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center (MPRRC)
 Utah State University
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 Logan, UT 84341
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 E-mail: John.Copenhaver@usu.edu
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Western Regional Resource Center (WRRRC)
 1268 University of Oregon
 Eugene, OR 97403-1268
 Phone: 541.346.5641 | Fax: 541.346.0322
 E-mail: wrrc@uoregon.edu
<http://www.rrfcnwork.org/wrrc>

Secondary/Postsecondary

National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with
 Disabilities
 Clemson University
 209 Martin Street
 Clemson, SC 29631-1555
 Phone: 864.656.2599 | Fax: 864.656.0136
 E-mail: lboost@clemson.edu
<http://www.ndpc-sd.org>

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center
 UNC Charlotte
 9201 University City Boulevard
 Charlotte, NC 28223-0001
 Phone: 704.687.8606 | Fax: 704.687.2916
 TTY: 704.687.6327
 E-mail: chfowler@email.uncc.edu
<http://www.nsttac.org>