

Blog: Capabilities vs. Deficits

There are Two Sides of Transition

The school transition years for adolescents and young adults are often met with resistance and uncertainty for both the individual and the family. As students age out of school, we parents are often in a state of urgency for solutions that will direct our paths. More youth than ever before are moving through the educational system and in need of services and what I have named "broad creative supports" to help them move into post high school life.

Unfortunately, the school transition programs and plans are grossly inadequate, overly focused on test scores because of NCLB. Students with autism and other disabilities must have options of exposure to community settings, self advocacy, self determination and work skills. Without these, there is little promise held for the second half of transition, after high school ends.

Transition has two faces, the school side and post high school adult life. We parents question, "Where will this school transition plan carry my son? or my daughter? What does the other side of transition hold for my son? or our family?" I know this well because I have lived through the many negative and uncertain effects of the transition phase with my son Trent who has autism.

There is good news among all this uncertainty. Daily living for our son or daughter can be filled with increased activity and new experiences. Life can become enriching and more enjoyable than all the school years combined. How do I know this? Because I have lived it and I have heard the stories of those who have made it work, despite all the obstacles and setbacks. They shared with me their choices, the actions to guide their young adult, and the beliefs that drove their efforts. Indeed, successful outcomes do not just happen, it requires a combination of good funding supports, positive energy in planning, making decisions, and commitment toward action and most important people who acknowledge their challenges.

After high school ended, Trent and I endured and overcame the challenges of his isolation and obsessive behaviors that increased because of significant changes and crises within our family and in his own life. Despite the isolation and obsessions, and with help from several community coaches, Trent pursued interests and involvement in daily community living.

Trent is now 33 years old, has been successfully living in his own house

with a roommate and friend for over 10 years, and has held a 20 hour a week job at Meijer a large retail store for 8 years. He is also an award winning expressionistic artist.

We had hundreds of set backs and times where I asked "Where do I go from here?" I can tell you the solution is mainly due to "broad creative supports" and having his challenges and capabilities acknowledged by others. I offer a process that helps people get unstuck and get moving in life, that is what this face book page is all about.

I want to here from you.

Jackie

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