Project Report

2006 VICTORIAN EQUITY PROJECTS – AN OFFICE OF TRAINING AND TERTIARY EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Project title: A guide to transitioning from school to supported employment
Organisation/lead agency: Brite Institute
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Project summary
Brite Institute is a private RTO. The ‘guide to transitioning from school to supported employment’ is a resource for students with a disability. A separate resource has also been developed for parents/carers and teachers/careers teacher to increase awareness of the supported employment pathway. The guide aims to empower young people looking to exit school so that they can make a more informed choice about their post school options and improve employment outcomes.

The learners
This project targets young people with a disability between the ages of 16 and 18 in the Hume region and their parents, carers, teachers and careers teachers.

The challenge
This project focused on improving employment outcomes for young people with a disability by developing a resource to support the transition from special schools to employment, a transition phase critical to ensuring engagement. This is consistent with Bridging Pathways.

Students with a disability in their final years at school are at risk of becoming disengaged, isolated and welfare dependent even though they are eligible to gain employment in a supported workplace environment.

The resource was designed to inform the students, parents, carers, teachers and careers teachers about transitioning from school to supported employment and includes information about:

- what is a supported employment environment compared to an open employment environment
- the entry processes – eligibility criteria, Centrelink requirements, application and interview processes
• what to expect in a supported workplace environment – training and support provided, employment assistance planning and review, workplace behaviour management, wage assessments and pro rata wages

• the importance of the Disability Services Standards

• where to go to for further information and assistance

Your approach
The project methodology included the following techniques:

• face to face interviews with parents (groups and one to one)
• face to face interviews with teachers
• validation of the resource with people with an intellectual disability and parents of students with a disability
• Develop a resource guide for people with an intellectual disability and parents / carers / teachers based on validation feedback.

The results
Two separate guides were development. One for people with an intellectual disability and a guide for parents/carers and careers teachers.

• Key outcomes from the consultation and resource building stage included:
• Face to face consultations with key stakeholders worked best.
• Parents reported feeling fearful about the future for their children once special school finishes and had limited awareness of the range of post school options.
• Their knowledge of supported employment was heavily influenced by out dated and negative images of “sheltered workshops”. Parents expressed surprise when shown photos of young people working in supported employment, doing real work for real pay.

This research highlighted the need the resource developed through this project to present accurate and up to date information about the supported employment option.

Lessons learned
We know from other research that a young person making decisions about their future is heavily influenced by the key people in their lives and that the transition from school to work can be a difficult and frightening experience.

This project confirmed that whilst the same holds true of young people with a disability it is more pronounced. With respect to students with a disability we found that whilst the key influencers have significantly more influence they are poorly informed of the range of post school options particularly supported employment. We were concerned by the inaccurate image of supported employment held by some parents.

This further highlighted the need the resource developed through this project.
Contact details for queries regarding the project

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Product 1

Title: Where to now? A guide to transitioning from special school to supported employment.

Blurb

A resource to help students from special schools looking to transition from special school to supported employment. It provides detailed information about the supported employment environment and how to access employment in supported employment.

The resource includes a detailed guide for parents, carers, teachers and careers teachers, a plain English guide for students and an audio version of the plain English guide.

The resource is available for download from www.briteind.com.au