Creating Connections

A study in building meaningful relationships between students and Chapter 688 Referral agencies

Presented by:
Jennifer Garcia M.Ed.
Cambridge Rindge & Latin School
&
Joanne Baldassari MS, CRC
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

April 24, 2013
The Evolution of a Partnership

“Hi, nice to meet you...let’s work together!”

- **Winter 2008 – Inviting myself over**
  - Set up an introductory meeting at MRC Office
  - Discussed past experiences and future expectations

- **Spring 2009 – Constant Contact**
  - Identifying the needs of my students and families
  - Emails/Calls/Meetings with families/MRC staff
  - Connecting the dots

- **Fall 2009 – Increasing the Connection**
  - Building the bridges
  - Streamlining the process

- **Fall 2010 – Building the Program (through today)**
  - Providing support to students and families
  - Increasing school-wide knowledge base
  - Making stronger connections
Connecting to the Fundamentals

“It’s just good professional practice.”

- Welcoming All Stakeholders (Fundamental 1)
  - A. Respectful Atmosphere
  - B. Personal Relationships

- Advocating for Each Child and Youth (Fundamental 4)
  - A. Grow Understanding of Rights and Responsibilities
  - C. Resources and Supports for College and Career Readiness
  - D. Smoothing the transition, ensuring readiness

- Partnering with the Community (Fundamental 6)
  - A. Linking to Community Resources
  - B. Partnering with Community Groups
  - C. Making school the Meeting Place

*Massachusetts Family, School and Community Partnership Fundamentals (June 2012)*
Practices and Procedures

The Essentials:

1. Get to know your agency contacts
2. Put a procedure in place for tracking Chapter 688 referrals
   1. Follow along in process
   2. Involve family and student
3. Increase stakeholder knowledge
   1. Talk about Chapter 688 Process in IEP meetings
   2. Collaborate with school staff/departments
   3. Hold information sessions/parent seminars/professional development opportunities
   4. Be a resource
Practices and Procedures

The Nice Extras:

1. Student Data Collection Sheets
   1. Personal Information Sheet
   2. Post-Secondary Options Sheet

2. Follow up communication
   1. Emails/Calls to Parents and Students

3. Pre-scheduling the next meetings
   1. Scheduling out meeting days and meetings

4. Classroom Meetings
   1. Meeting referred students in their comfort zone
Inter-Department Connections

“Playing nice in the school yard”

- Make necessary connections
- Talk about agency supports
- Include all stakeholders in discussions
- Be flexible
- Listen and learn
- “Coordinated Set of Activities”
Chapter 688 Referrals

- Completed by the school district (LEA)
- Filed at least 2 years prior to graduation OR turning 22 years old
- Designed for specific student group
  - Automatic Eligibility:
    - SSI and/or SSDI recipients based on disability
    - Registered with Massachusetts Commission for the Blind
  - All Referrals MUST be:
    - Receiving special education services paid for by school district
    - Need for continued services due to the severity of disability
    - Unable to work 20 or more hours per week competitively
- Creates connection to agency prior to graduation
MRC Referrals

- Massachusetts resident, who is authorized to work in the United States and has a barrier to employment can apply for services at their area office
  - Barriers to employment include:
    - Learning Disability
    - Physical Disability
    - Psychiatric Disability

- Applicants must attend information session
- Applicants wait three months for services
Continued Connections
(Number of students with one or more follow up after CRLS)
The Continued Process

Future Plans
- School to Career Class
- Coordinating Events

Current Barriers
- Time Management
- Connection to Out Placed Students