

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

Engaging Local Communities in New Ways to Identify Assets and Improve Outcomes for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Erik Carter, Olivia Raynor, Jenny Neugart,
Harold Kleinert, Jenn Bumble, & Elise McMillan

Connecting Aspirations to Opportunities



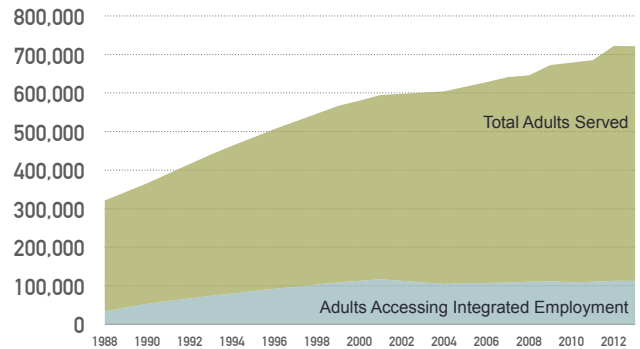
78%
OF STUDENTS HAVE
A TRANSITION GOAL
TO WORK IN THE
COMMUNITY

83%
OF PARENTS
CONSIDER SOME
TYPE OF PAID
COMMUNITY JOB TO
BE IMPORTANT

EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS

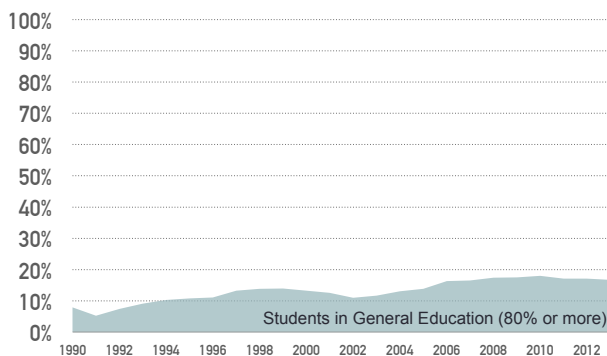
Sources: Blustein, Carter, & McMillan (2016); Shogren & Plotter (2012); www.nlts2.org

State of Stuck: Integrated Employment



Source: Butterworth et al. (2014); ICI National Survey of State IDD Agencies; www.thinkwork.org

State of Stuck: Inclusive Education



Source: U. S. Department of Education

New Approaches Needed

- Attention to the local level
- Thinking from beyond the service system
- Solution-focused approaches
- Individualization at the community level



Community Conversations



Sources: Carter et al., 2016
Carter, Swedeen, Cooney, Walter, & Moss, 2012

Session Overview

- Context for this Work (Carter)
- Illustrating the Approach (Bumble)
- Lessons Learned in Wisconsin (Neugart)
- Lessons Learned in California (Raynor)
- Lessons Learned in Tennessee (Bumble & McMillan)
- Lessons Learned in Kentucky (Kleinert)
- Some Key Themes Across Applications (Carter)
- Questions & Discussion



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Illustrating the Process

Jenn Bumble

<https://vimeo.com/128290120>

3 Critical Elements of a Community Conversation



Data

Action

Local Planning Team

1-2 lead organizers



Recruitment
Planning
Logistics
Ideas
Connections
Collaboration
Follow-up

Team members should be:
Committed Passionate Available

Extending Invitations

- Planning Committee
- Email Campaigns
- Phone Campaigns
- Outreach determined by community culture, resources and preferences



Structuring Engaging Conversations: Setting the Stage



Structuring Engaging Conversations: Setting the Stage

A graphic for an event titled 'Welcome' and 'the event'. It features a central text box with statistics for Chattanooga: '168,000 residents in Chattanooga', '32,000 of those residents have a disability', '5,000 of those residents have an intellectual and developmental disability', and 'Less than 900 of those 5,000 are employed.' Below this, it states 'The majority of the 900 are working part time and/or for less than minimum wages.' A small note at the bottom reads: 'These individuals remain below the poverty line and rely on the assistance of their families, community and governmental services to help provide the basic necessities of life.' The graphic is overlaid on a photograph of a man in a wheelchair speaking at a podium.

Structuring Engaging Conversations: Rounds 1 & 2

A graphic for 'Rounds 1 & 2' of an event. It includes a 'Question for Rounds 1 & 2': 'What can we do to create more job opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in our community?' and a 'Round 3 Question': 'What resources can we put in place in the next six months to work toward that?'. The graphic is overlaid on a photograph of people sitting at tables in a restaurant setting.

Structuring Engaging Conversations: Round 3

A graphic for 'Round 3' of an event. It includes a 'Question for Round 3': 'What resources can we put in place in the next six months to work toward that?'. The graphic is overlaid on a photograph of people sitting at tables in a restaurant setting.

Structuring Engaging Conversations: Harvest

Harvest

10-15 min

- Large-group discussion
- Table hosts or attendees share out the most promising ideas/ strategies they heard
- Ideas are recorded and posted



Conversation Wrap-Up and Data Collection



Table host notes
Placemats
Harvest notes
End-of-event surveys

Follow-up cards
Follow-up surveys
Interviews
Observations

WISCONSIN: LESSONS LEARNED

Jenny Neugart

Wisconsin Issues Being Addressed

- Identifying innovative ideas for increasing the number of youth with significant disabilities working in the community.
- Raising awareness of the issue with a variety of stakeholders.
- Making new connections and strengthening collaborations at the local level.
- Increasing the expectations of parents and other stakeholders for community based employment.



The Wisconsin Way

- Used with school pilot sites, project meetings, trainings
- Easily modified – no right or wrong way to do it
- Get people to commit to something – I Am Willing cards
- Extend personal invites to a variety of stakeholders

I am willing to...

Allow or help find job shadows for students with disabilities
 Speak to other businesses about the benefits of hiring students with disabilities
 Allow students with disabilities to do practice interviews with me/my business
 Be more involved with helping HHS promote the "Let's Get to Work" grant and its initiative
 Other: _____
 Business Name: _____
 Contact Person Name: _____
 Phone Number: _____ E-Mail: _____

The Wisconsin Way

Involving Youth with and without Disabilities

- Make centerpieces and other small gifts.
- Share their employment goals and stories.
- Make posters with their job goals to decorate the room.
- Show videos of local students working.
- Welcome participants as they arrive.
- Give a few opening remarks to kick off the event.
- Assign them to a table to provide their perspective.



The Wisconsin Way

- Variety of locations: country club, coffee shop, an ice arena, a community center, libraries, and a school cafeteria.
 - Restaurant that catered the event at a significant discount.
 - High school cooking class received funds to pay for the food; class cooked the meal.
- Evening event with a dessert buffet
- Potluck style!



Lessons Learned from Wisconsin

- Paid employment can be a direct result!
- Motivating and engaging the community is pretty easy.
- Schools make better connections – especially with employers.
- Local employers realize an untapped worker pool.
- Jump start to heightened awareness*

* After attending a CC, participants, including employers, reported they believe that a majority of youth with disabilities can be employed in integrated, community employment.



Lessons Learned from Wisconsin

- 5 Themes:
 - **School inclusion & transition services**
 - Benefits of inclusion and meaningful strategies
 - Visiting other successful schools
 - Peer mentoring
 - **Family engagement**
 - Use family members' network during job seeking
 - Provide families with info to understand transition process
 - **Employer & community outreach**
 - Gathering info on employer needs and matching those to youth
 - Setting up business tours, job shadows, internships



Lessons Learned from Wisconsin

- 5 Themes (continued):
 - **Call to action for multiple stakeholders**
 - Dispel myths and use facts and success stories
 - Explore opportunities for job exploration in the community
 - Market the youth's abilities
 - **Service system collaboration**
 - Better collaboration between schools and providers, especially to work out summer employment opportunities



Policy and Practice Implications from Wisconsin

- Valuable info for establishing new 18-21-year-old community-based transition programs, expanding community-based services to students with more I/DD, or developing a transition coordinator position.
- Better way to engage employers versus the "cold call".
- LEAs and SEAs can use CCs to improve several federally mandated special education performance indicators, including Indicator 8 (family engagement), Indicator 13 (transition planning), and Indicator 14 (post-school outcomes).



Policy and Practice Implications from Wisconsin

- Strong potential to develop educational champions among local, state, and federal policymakers. Exploring the topic together can lead to many policy changes.
- WI Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Youth On-the-Job-Training (OJT)
 - Committed funds to Business Service Consultants
- Local school commitments to fund community-based transition programs and hire transition coordinators.
- Bills sponsored by state legislators to improve transition supports.



CALIFORNIA: LESSONS LEARNED

Olivia Raynor

TENNESSEE: LESSONS LEARNED

Jenn Bumble & Elise McMillan



Tennessee Conversations



TennesseeWorks Partnership



Projects of National Significance: Partnerships in Employment Systems Change grant from the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

A collaboration of more than 50 organizations and agencies across the state that stand committed to changing the employment landscape for young people with disabilities.



The Community Conversation Approach

In the last 4 years we have been a part of 28 community conversations across our state.

By this time next year we will add another 15 to our total.

Employment for people with IDD

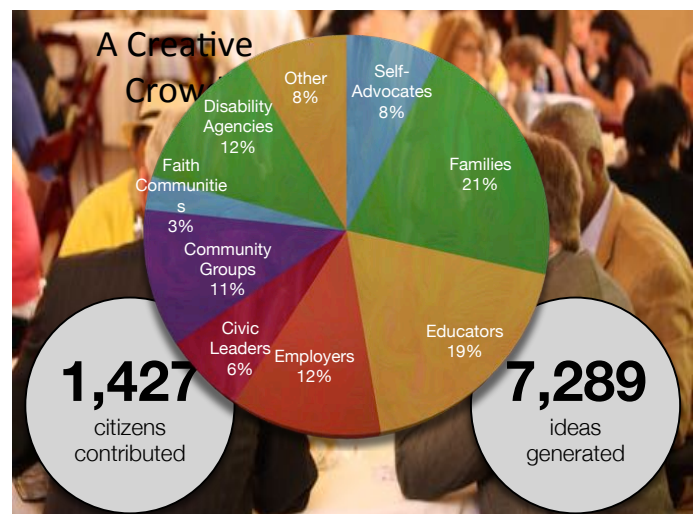
Faith Community Inclusion

Needs of Diverse Communities

Independent Living

Post-Secondary Education

Families & Caretakers



Developing employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit and train new employers Expand availability of community jobs Create formal collaborations Create accessible employment portals Mentor new employers
Undertaking community-wide efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share resources in the community Showcase possibilities and successes Improve public awareness and attitudes Provide transportation Inform community leaders of needed resources Advocate for policy change
Strengthening school and transition services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide career development and experiences Strengthen collaboration with others Improve transition assessment and planning Strengthen transition program quality Offer diverse diploma options
Equipping competitive applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build social and professional networks Develop relevant skills and attitudes Access formal and natural community supports Communicate strengths and experiences
Enhancing inclusive workplaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate and empower current employers Provide workplace supports, training, and accommodations Strengthen partnerships among employers
Supporting families in transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare families for transition Increase parent participation and support Educate families on disability services and availability Educate families about impact of working on benefits Equip families to advocate

What Motivates Communities to Launch Local Change Efforts?

"It's having enough employers and jobs...I think we have some pretty good job training programs now and my understanding is that even those really good programs still have trouble placing people."

"My son will be moving into a community-based education training program in another couple of years and I wanted him to have more options."

"Our goal ultimately was just making sure that we were able to discover what all was out there...I feel like I have a good grasp on what is available and I turn around and something has changed."



Improve employment outcomes



Increase community awareness



Streamline transition from high school to community

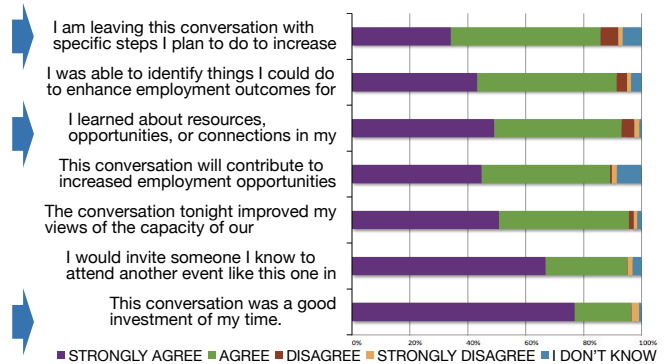


Connect with local supports and services

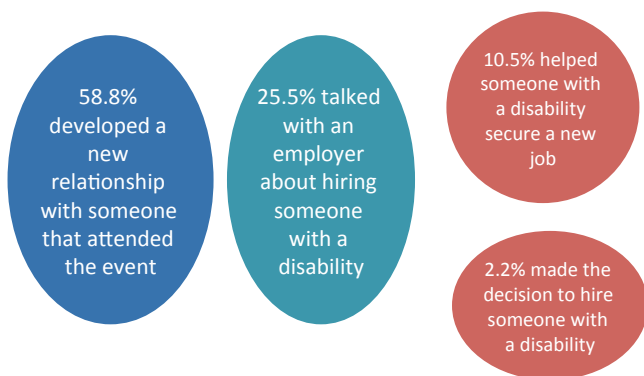
INGREDIENTS	DIRECTIONS
Effective planning team	Planning team included committed individuals with diverse strengths and roles, and began their efforts early in the planning process
Compelling atmosphere	The event space, energy, and organization contributed to a welcoming and positive atmosphere
Involvement of people with disabilities	People with disabilities were involved in the planning and implementation of the event
Mix of attendees	Attendees represented a diverse mix of stakeholders, perspectives, and experiences
Prepared table facilitators	Table hosts understood their role and effectively facilitated rich conversations
Clear structure	The management, facilitation, and pacing of the event contributed to an organized conversation
Targeted technical	Planning teams received trainings, resources, and

RECIPE 

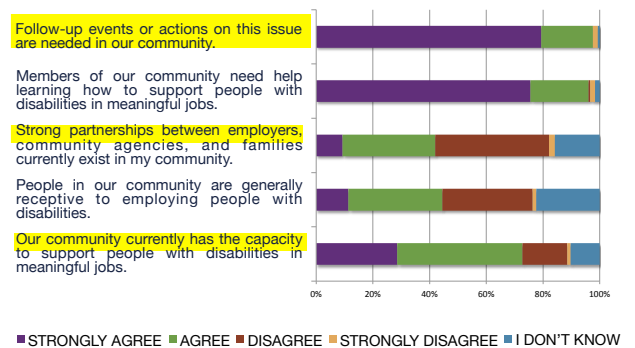
What Do Attendees Think of These Events?



Individual Follow Up Action?



What Do Attendees Think of Their Communities?



Community Follow Up Action?

- Held community transition fair with over 50 families, all special educators in the district, and seven providers from TN & VA.
- Began a community-based transition program with Baptist Hospital (internships & paid work)
- Member of planning team running for local office
- Holding a competition to choose the design of their employer branding campaign
- Set up a business advisory council with county schools to strengthen employer partnerships
- Created West TN Parent Leadership & Advocacy Group (FB outreach, trainings)
- Designed community asset maps to connect people with disabilities to employers, supports, and transportation



Practice Implications

- Schools play an important role in preparation for employment (DOE Grant)
- Consistently highlighted the need for better dissemination of information and resources
- Led us to some new partnerships with groups interested in applying the approach to related issues



Policy Implications

- Communications to broader audiences
- A way to show community or statewide support for legislative proposals
- A way to educate department, governor, and governor policy staff



KENTUCKY: LESSONS LEARNED

Harold Kleinert

KY Peer Support Network Project..

- The Critical Need for Friendships and Relationships....
- Funded by the Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Building Relationships between Students with Significant Disabilities and Their Peers
 - Learning Together in General Education Classrooms
 - Developing Friendships that Extend Beyond the Classroom to Other School and Non-School Activities

Building Community Partners to Support Relationships

- Community Conversation Events
- Round 1 and 2: "What could we do as a community to increase meaningful peer interactions and friendships between students with and without disabilities in our school and community?"
- Round 3: "What specific ideas could we begin to implement in the next two months that will lead to increased peer interaction and friendships between students with and without disabilities in our school and community?"

Community Conversations

- To date, we have held six Community Conversations in order to get input from stakeholders, including school staff, students, families, and the larger community:
- 10/21/2014 – King Middle School
- 10/28/2014 – Danville Independent Schools
- 12/04/2014 – Madisonville North Hopkins High School
- 1/22/15 – Central Hardin High School
- 8/27/15 – Simon Middle School
- 10/11/15 – Model Lab Middle School

Rate your level of agreement with the following	Simons Middle School	Danville High School	Field Elementary	King Middle School	CHHS
This conversation was a valuable use of my time and I was able to contribute	3.54	3.74	4.0	3.75	3.6
I feel this conversation will contribute to increased friendships and peer interactions for students with disabilities	3.63	3.52	3.89	3.8	3.45
This conversation improved my perceptions of the capacity of our community to improve friendships for students with disabilities	3.62	3.55	3.78	3.68	3.19

4-point, Likert-type scale: 4 = highly satisfied

Infographics of conversation results... Harvesting The Best Ideas



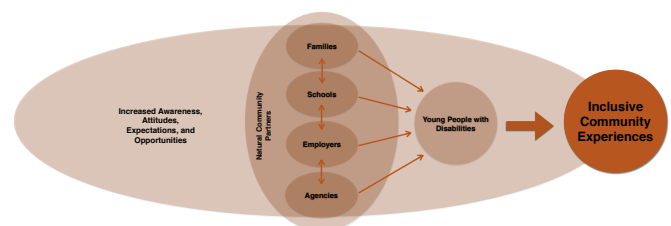
What Has Resulted?

- Inclusive service-learning projects (making blankets for families in need – two schools did this project; volunteering in the community to serve the elderly; collecting food)
- A community resource map of inclusive social and recreational opportunities
- Inclusive community and school social events (cook-outs, dinners)
- One school held a follow-up School Conversation event where just students could talk and generate their own ideas about how to expand inclusive social opportunities

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS: LESSONS LEARNED

Erik Carter

Making Movements Community-Wide

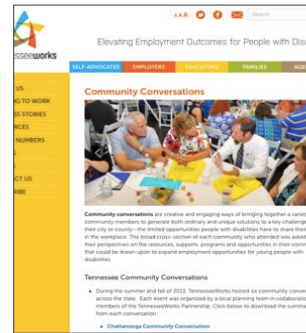


The Promise of this Approach

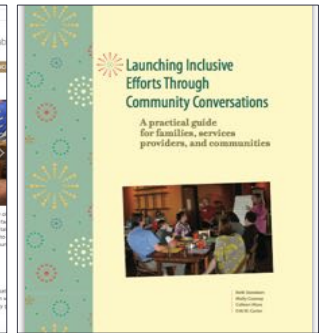
- Asset-based focus
- Configuration of stakeholders
- Involvement of new voices
- Localized ideas
- Iterative structure
- Solution-focused framing
- Awareness building
- Shared commitment
- Socially valid approach



To Learn More



[www.tennesseeworks.org/
communityconversations](http://www.tennesseeworks.org/communityconversations)



[www.waisman.wisc.edu/cedd/pdfs/products/
community/LaunchingInclusiveEfforts.pdf](http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cedd/pdfs/products/community/LaunchingInclusiveEfforts.pdf)

Available Studies

- Bumble, J. L., Carter, E. W., & McMillan, E. (forthcoming). Community conversations: A versatile approach to community-led change. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*.
- Bumble, J. L., Carter, E. W., McMillan, E., & Manikas, A. (in press). Using community conversations to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities in rural and urban communities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*.
- Carter, E. W., Blustein, C. L., Bumble, J. L., Harvey, S., Henderson, L., & McMillan, E. (2016). Engaging communities in identifying local strategies for expanding integrated employment during and after high school. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 121, 398-418
- Carter, E. W., Bumble, J. L., Griffin, B., & Curcio, M. (2016). *Community conversations on faith and disability: Identifying new practices, postures, and partners for congregations*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Carter, E. W., Swedeen, B., Cooney, M., Walter, M. J., & Moss, C. K. (2012). "I don't have to do this by myself?": Parent-led community conversations to promote inclusion. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 37, 9-23.
- Dutta, A., Kundu, M. M., Johnson, E., Chan, F., Trainor, A. A.,...Christy, R. (2016). Community conversations: Engaging stakeholders to improve employment-related transition services for youth with emotional and behavioral disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 45, 53-61.
- Mollenfer, N., Hartman, E., Swedeen, B., Neugart, J., Huff, S., Roskowski, M., & Schlegelmitch, A. (forthcoming). Harnessing the power of community conversations to expand opportunities for youth with disabilities. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*.
- Parker-Katz, M., Cushing, L., & Athamanah, L. (forthcoming). Fostering transition leadership to promote partnerships with families and communities. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*.
- Raynor, O., Hayward, K., Semenza, G., & Stoffmacher, B. (forthcoming). Community conversations to increase employment opportunities for young adults with developmental disabilities in California. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*.
- Trainor, A. A., Carter, E. W., Swedeen, B., & Pickett, K. (forthcoming). Community conversations: An approach for expanding and connecting opportunities for employment for adolescents with disabilities. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 35, 49-59.

Your Questions and Reactions