



# Arkansas Transition Services Newsletter

## Summer 2015

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## What VR Can Do For You

by Amy Jones

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services has the mission of reaching out to Arkansans with disabilities and preparing them to work and lead productive and independent lives.

Services include funding to assist in attending career and technical training, transition from school to work or postsecondary education, and on-the-job training that a client may need for successful employment, among many others. Every case is unique, and will be treated as such. Any individual with a documented disability that has a goal of gainful employment, and are not already receiving comparable services are eligible to receive services.

Transitional services are services offered in order to prepare students with disabilities with the

skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to achieve successful transition from high school to adult life.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor will work with the client to uncover their interests and goals. The VR Counselor will work with the school and/or community to discover resources to support the client in his/her training and development. The VR Counselor will make appropriate referrals and work with businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations to discover job-training opportunities.

Overall, Vocational Rehabilitation is a service that can be used by many, but is taken advantage of by few.

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# The Road Map of Transition a.k.a. Assessment

by Carrie Tuttle

Now that we have entered the middle of summer and almost everyone has been on a family trip or is going on a family trip, it got me thinking about road maps. I remember going on family vacations growing up and one of my major memories is my mother being the navigator for my dad using a big Rand McNally map book that was always under the front seat of the car. It didn't seem to matter where we were going -- my mom had a map. So, by now you are thinking what in the world is the point? I'm getting there I promise! Maps are wonderful things, some are even considered great pieces of art. You can find them in museums highlighting major historical discoveries and explorations. Remember Lewis & Clark? How about all those great adventurers who charted the seas?

In the Transition process, Assessment is a major component of creating a

realistic, attainable map to a student's desired Post School Goals. Every map could and should look different. Yes, the starting point may look the same but the final destination for each of your students will typically look vastly different.

Make sure you are using a variety of relevant assessments to provide new information on the student, or to confirm and support what you already know. Assessment is a tool to assist you in gaining knowledge of the best route for the student to take in reaching their individualized Desired Post School Goals.

The variety of assessments that are out there are limitless. Ask yourself these questions when deciding which assessments to administer:

What do I already know about this student? (Is it supported by data?)

What do I still need to learn about this student? (strengths, weaknesses, health care needs, etc.)

Where can I get the information?

If you will go to <http://arkansastransition.com/> and click on Assessing Tools you will find tons of information that will help you chart quality maps for your students. Make sure you use a good variety of assessments and you are really focusing on the individual destinations your students are trying to reach.

There are many routes that will lead to the same final destination, some are faster than others but you still arrive at the desired location, in this case, a positive Post School Outcome. Let Assessment be the foundation for your Transition planning, let it guide you in creating the best maps possible for each of your students.

## Agency Resource Spotlight: Real Life Arkansas

Real Life Arkansas is an excellent tool produced by Arkansas Department of Workforce Services. It makes learning about real life fun (actually students probably won't realize they are learning)! Real-Life Arkansas is an interactive lifestyle budget calculator for students and job seekers that can be used to help discover how education impacts earnings and to learn about different occupations. The website's objective is to inspire students, through a "real world" exercise, to take education seriously and pursue higher education/training after high school. This tool will be back up and running soon—we missed it tremendously, so keep an eye out, this site will be up soon!! [www.real-life.arkansas.gov](http://www.real-life.arkansas.gov). The Department of Workforce Services has a variety of information, tools and resources for teachers to use in their classrooms—just call them and ask or go to their website (<http://dws.arkansas.gov/>)



# Bringing the Community into the Classroom

by Jennifer Williams

We often assume students have knowledge of and can perform many basic life skills. However, when reflecting on our own experiences as young adults, there were probably many times when we wished someone had shared with us how to (fill in the blank)! An excellent way to foster independent living, social and employability skills for students is to make it real by bringing the community into the classroom.

**Real world-** Invite the President to your classroom to speak! Okay, maybe not THE President, but having the president of local groups and organizations speak would be a great way to introduce students to leisure activities outside the school, community volunteer opportunities, and information about local support/advocacy groups. (i.e., Chamber of Commerce, Local Car/ Motorcycle Club, Junior Auxiliary, Autism Support Group, Special Olympics, Disability Coalition, etc.)

**Real government-** Invite the mayor, judge, city council members, state representatives, police chief, fire chief, county officials, and government agencies (social security, housing authority, health department, etc. ), to your classroom. An elected/appointed official could share his or her role in the community, the importance of civic duties, voting, rights/responsibilities, and consequences for not following the law. Various government agencies could explain benefits, services, and eligibility requirements to students they may need in the future.

**Real local-** Invite representatives from the bank, post office, insurance agency, car dealership, grocery/retail store, auto repair shop, laundry mat, dentist, physician, and tax/accounting firm to come and share what most would consider common knowledge (i.e., opening a bank account, making an appointment, credit scores, renting a post office box, getting insurance, buying a car, basic car maintenance, filing taxes, budgeting, interviewing skills, filling out an application, etc. ). Have students read local newspapers to find times/dates for local events and search classified ads for jobs, housing, and vehicles. Also, sale circulars from local retail and grocery stores could be an avenue to introduce budgeting, meal planning and sales gimmicks (BOGO, % off, 2 for 1, etc.). Invite students' family members with extraordinary skills/talents/or hobbies to share with the class. (i.e., singers, artists, extreme couponing, sewing, woodworking, etc.)

By bringing the community into the classroom, we can help make a relevant connection between the real world and the student's world, therefore, promoting positive post-secondary outcomes by improving independent living, social, and employability skills.

Share the most helpful tip or resource from the Professional Development you received this summer:

Send it to Jennifer Harte at [jennifer.harte@arkansas.gov](mailto:jennifer.harte@arkansas.gov)!