

Community Conversation Summary

Hartland, WI

January 24, 2008



Prepared by:

Project Summer

On January 24, 2008, 30 members of the Hartland community came together for a Community Conversation to discuss employment for youth with disabilities. The event was hosted by Arrowhead High School and the Hartland Area Chamber of Commerce.

Background:

The Community Conversation was modeled after the World Café process, which is a community-building tool used to discuss important issues impacting a community. “World Café is an easy-to-use method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in service of the real work. It has become a movement to support conversations that matter in community settings. This process allows for us to see new ways to make a difference in our lives and work by listening to the conversation.” (www.theworldcafe.com)

“The Café is built on the assumption that people already have within them the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most difficult challenges. Given the appropriate context and focus, it is possible to access and use this deeper knowledge about what’s important.” (www.theworldcafe.com)

The World Café process begins with small groups of 4-5 individuals at tables. Each table discusses a question that is posed. After a set amount of time, the participants change tables, bringing along the ideas discussed at their previous table. At the new table, participants are asked to summarize the conversation they just participated in, then discussions continue. At the end of the small group discussion rounds, the large group comes together to share new ideas and insights.

Overview:

The goal of this evening was to gather local ideas, resources and connections that could lead to improved employment and community involvement for youth with disabilities and, ultimately, to a stronger community.

The Hartland/ Community Conversation was held at the Ironwood Golf Course Clubhouse. It was facilitated by staff from Project Summer, a project through the University of Wisconsin at Madison and Milwaukee. Over thirty community members were in attendance, including parents, students, business owners, teachers, and service providers. For two hours, those in attendance explored issues and generated solutions around employment opportunities for youth with disabilities in the Hartland/ area. The evening began with a presentation by Project Summer staff about the current employment situation for youth with disabilities and information about the workforce in general. Following the presentation, small group discussions occurred. Specifically, those in attendance discussed the following questions:

1. What can we as a community do to open up summer employment opportunities for youth with disabilities?
2. What would I be willing to do to facilitate summer employment opportunities for youth with disabilities?

After several rounds of small table conversations, the large group “harvested” their ideas, bringing together ideas and suggestions that came from the small group discussions.

At the end of the evening, attendees were also given a community resource map (see link at end) that provided information on different resources in the community. This map is a living document, and additions can be made through the Project Summer website.

Discussion Summary

Among the issues and solutions presented by participants:

- Transportation

Issue

Difficulty in getting to and from jobs

Solutions

Use of volunteer or group carpools (parents or students)

Use of other community transportation already available, such as expanding current cab service for the elderly

Write a grant through the county for transportation expenses

Use of Arrowhead District vans during summer months

- Businesses

Issues

May not be aware of how or why to hire individuals with disabilities

Concern about high training costs or high turnover

Solutions

Introduce businesses to hiring individuals with disabilities and resources through the Chamber of Commerce newsletter and website links. Ask businesses to sponsor new employees.

Highlight local businesses that employ individuals with disabilities, and encourage those who do to join the Chamber if not already a member.

Place information regarding hiring youth with disabilities on the Chamber of Commerce website

Utilize media, including links from Chamber website, newspaper and newsletter articles that highlight businesses or issues and solutions, cable access television

Give presentation to Chamber and businesses by teachers, parents, students, businesses already employing individuals with disabilities

Send a mailing to businesses explaining the advantages (and tax incentives) of employing individuals with disabilities, possibly coupled with a survey/questionnaire to gain insight into employer needs and potential employee matches

Introduce success stories, and discuss job shadows with the potential of future paid employment

Set up an employment database with potential employees and employers

- **Individuals**

- Issues**

- May need support initially or on an ongoing basis

- May not know where to start looking for jobs or how to market themselves

- Solutions**

- Form a club to learn job interview skills, and look into existing clubs, such as DECA

- Teach students to advocate for themselves and be able to describe their own strengths.

- Be upfront with employers about needs of students, especially health-related concerns

- Educate others about natural supports, and how coworkers can help one another.

- **Other Solutions to encourage employment opportunities**

- Community Members**

- Network with business owners, finding potential employment opportunities.

- Encourage business owners to hire those with disabilities and support businesses that do.

- Parents**

- Set up a way for parents to network, including parents willing to drive youth to jobs or job-related activities

- Schools**

Set up a system of communicating with local businesses and Chamber

Next Steps

Investigate transportation alternatives and options

Develop avenues of communication with businesses about successes and how to go about employing individuals with disabilities

Consider how a central database and resource center could be developed

Additional Resources

Project Summer

www.projectsummer.info

World Café

www.theworldcafe.com

Community Resource Map

www.projectsummer.info/Project_Summer/ResourceMaps_files/Arrowhead%20external.pdf

Tax Incentives for Hiring Individuals with Disabilities

<http://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/>

10 Reasons to Hire Youth With Disabilities (available as download)

http://www.projectsummer.info/Project_Summer/Schools.html

Summary of Participant Evaluation Responses

Roles of Individuals Attending:

School staff	21.7%
Employer or business community	8.7%
Human services agency or organization	13.0%
Parent or family member of a youth with disabilities	34.8%
Youth	13.0%
Other	17.7%

Summary of Participants' Responses to the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
1. Tonight's conversation was a valuable investment of my time.	--	--	47.8%	52.2%	--
2. Tonight, I learned about resources, opportunities, or connections in my community that I <i>previously did not know about</i> .	4.3%	13.0%	43.5%	39.1%	--
3. Tonight's conversation will contribute to better employment opportunities for youth with disabilities in my community.	--	4.5%	50.0%	45.5%	--
4. I was able to identify things I could do to enhance the employment opportunities for youth with disabilities as a result of this	--	--	77.3%	22.7%	--
5. I would invite someone I know to attend another event like this if one were held in the future.	--	4.3%	47.8%	43.5%	--
6. Employers in my community are generally receptive to hiring youth <i>with</i> disabilities in after-school or summer jobs.	4.7%	23.8%	47.6%	9.5%	14.3 %
7. My community <i>currently</i> has the capacity to support youth with disabilities in jobs.	--	18.2%	54.5%	18.2%	9.1%
8. Strong partnerships between schools and employers <i>currently</i> exist in my community.	--	22.7%	50.0%	13.6%	13.6%
9. Numerous employment opportunities exist in my community for youth with disabilities <i>in the summer months</i> .	--	38.1%	28.5%	9.5%	23.8%
10. Employers in my community may need help learning how to support youth with disabilities on the job.	4.5%	4.5%	36.4%	54.5%	--
11. I believe that my community leaders believe it is important to improve employment opportunities for youth with disabilities.	--	13.6%	42.9%	28.6%	14.3%
12. Follow-up events or actions on this issue are needed in our community.	--	--	39.1%	60.9%	--
13. The conversation this evening improved my perceptions of the capacity of our community to improve work outcomes for youth	--	9.1%	45.5%	45.5%	--
14. I work with people with disabilities regularly as part of my job.	--	19.0%	33.3%	47.6%	--

I wish the following people from our community had been present at tonight's event: (summary)

- more businesses
- more employers from Hartland downtown area
- larger companies
- more employers of youth with disabilities
- more high school representation
- more parents
- city representatives
- Hartland Village administration
- Village Recreation

