

# INTRODUCTION TO THE ISSUE

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When conceptualizing this special issue on career development, I realized that the number of issues that needed to be addressed were far too many for one issue. The development of a career obviously begins in an individual's early years in home and school and progresses through the educational process into young adulthood. Although the many aspects of career development cannot be addressed in this one issue, I have selected contributors who provide readers with a wealth of information and ideas relevant to some very important aspects of career development.

The initial article is a review of the "best practices" in providing longitudinal vocational training programs to people with moderate and severe disabilities. As becomes apparent in this review, there is agreement on program components, but not necessarily on how those components are designed and implemented. The implications are that more research and demonstration are necessary to develop valid decision-making systems for establishing meaningful experiences for students, when they are young, so that they will have positive, productive postschool outcomes.

To assist individuals with disabilities in making career choices, a critical component is knowledge of employment opportunities. Parent et al. explore the process of job development and address the interface between employment opportunities and the interests and skills of the individual. This article should be invaluable to those designing and implementing programs.

For those individuals who have difficulty expressing their interests and preferences in typical ways, service providers must explore alternative methods of assessment. Winking et al. developed and used a process for assessing preferences for job matching and placement that considers individual characteristics and communicative behaviors of students with severe disabilities. This contribution is long overdue.

As longitudinal programs for career development are designed, the desired long-range outcomes must be considered. These targeted outcomes provide service providers with the informa-

tion necessary to design programs for a range of individuals with varied strengths and needs. Nietupski et al. describe a supported employment model that can be targeted as a program outcome. These authors give service providers the steps in a process to achieve productive outcomes for a range of individuals with efficient use of program resources for support.

Fredericks et al. also address the varied needs of individuals in a job training program. This article explores the range of services needed for youth with severe emotional disturbances. The authors discuss the difficult issues facing the youth and their providers in employment training. The case examples help readers to understand the issues and recognize the difficulties, but give an optimistic outlook for future efforts. Similarly, Curl and Chisholm present a model for using natural supports—coworkers—in employment sites for individuals with mild disabilities. By addressing the needs for training both coworkers and program consumers, successful employment outcomes were demonstrated to be more likely.

Although making good job matches is crucial to success, without on-the-job training, success is not likely, particularly for individuals with significant challenges. Inge et al. provide readers with an excellent example of systematic approaches to determining and using teaching procedures at the employment site. Through the use of a multielement design, effective strategies for reinforcing productive work were identified and, by employing a changing criterion procedure, work production was increased dramatically. This article demonstrates the impact of using consistent, systematic methodologies and evaluation strategies.

In summary, although the many aspects of career development could not be explored in this issue, I believe these articles address a range of very important issues. The authors have been very thoughtful in their contributions, providing readers with effective strategies for program development.

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