



LOW HANGING FRUIT

College and Career Readiness for All

By Gina Persichini

Idaho educators are frequently reminded of the goals set by the Idaho State Board of Education for 60% of Idahoans between 25-34 years of age will have a post-secondary degree or certificate by 2020.¹ With over 30,000 students in Idaho with exceptionalities of some type², it is important that we consider the college and career preparation of these students to reach Idaho's goals.

Anyone considering college has more opportunities now than ever with distance learning. Courses available online can be beneficial for learners who aren't able to transport themselves to the physical classroom. They also provide advantages over in-person learning for individuals with hearing and vision impairments, particularly when course providers implement up-to-date accessibility standards. Plus, online learning can remove the stigma that some feel when their exceptionalities are visible to others.

The same online learning benefits carry over to the online workplace. As more jobs are accomplished with remote workers, businesses that rely on telecommuters have a potentially wider talent pool to draw from. In the physical space, providing an accessible learning environment and workplace is easier now ever. By incorporating Universal Design principles, all individuals can have access to opportunities to succeed.

Universal Design refers to creating environments that are accessible to all people regardless of age, ability, or location. Technology tools for telecommuting also make it easier for staff with disabilities to access needed resources. Building design allowing for wheelchair access also provides easier access for strollers, deliveries with wheeled carts, and customers holding large bundles. Video with closed captioning also benefits viewers that need to mute audio when in a public space or working in an open-concept office.

Once we recognize the college and career opportunities available to all students, there is a lot of support available to help them achieve their goals. The Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (<http://vr.idaho.gov>) serves those with disabilities to help them become employed or maintain employment. The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability provides a curriculum for youth with disabilities to help them make informed decisions disclosing a disability. Next Steps Idaho guides students from 8th grade and on to prepare for college entrance. These tools, plus more you can access through your library, can make a difference in helping a student to transition to their dream future. Talk with your school librarian about how to access the tools listed in this issue.

¹ "Complete College Idaho." *Complete College Idaho*. 1 Jan. Web. 22 Dec. 2017. <<https://boardofed.idaho.gov/education-initiatives/complete-college-idaho-a-plan-for-growing-talent/>>.

² "State Child Count and Percent Served." *Public Reporting*. Idaho State Department of Education, 1 Jan. . Web. 22 Dec. 2017. <<https://www.sde.idaho.gov/sped/public-reporting/files/child-count/State-Child-Count-and-Percent-Served.pdf>>.

LINKS TO MORE LEARNING



The 411 on Disability Disclosure

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/411-on-disability-disclosure>

A workbook for youth designed to help them determine whether or not to disclose their disability and understand how their decision may impact employment, education, and social life.

Get the Job...Keep the Job!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GosoTn_D8nY

A youth work readiness video created by the Regional Center for Independent Living (Rochester, NY) covering how to apply for a job, interview, and request accommodations.

Going to College

<http://www.going-to-college.org/>

Information about college life for students and parents with activities to explore expectations and prepare for college. Created by Virginia Commonwealth University.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS



Soft Skills to Pay the Bills

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>

Use this curriculum designed by the Office of Disability Employment Policy to introduce activities for mastering soft skills to young adults. Content and activities cover topics of Communication, Enthusiasm & Attitude, Teamwork, Networking, Problem Solving & Critical Thinking, and Professionalism. The curriculum can be used with all students and is freely available online with PDFs to print the lesson plans and activity guides.

DIGITAL TOOLS



From LiLi.org:

<http://lili.org>

WorldBook Discover is designed as a high-interest, low vocabular research database to support student learning.

LearningExpress Library provides practice tests and study guides to prepare for college entrance and workplace skills.

Next Steps Idaho

<http://nextsteps.idaho.gov>

Follow the steps from 8th grade and up to prepare for post-secondary education and career decisions.



