

5-22-15

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Mike Maley, Statewide Employment First Coordinator

Re: Employment First: Transition Co-op in Bend

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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The [Transition Co-op](#) is a community-based transition program for young adults with disabilities, ranging in age from 18 through 21 years. The Co-op is part of the Bend-La Pine Schools Special Programs Department.



Teachers, educational assistants and other educators in Bend's Transition Co-Op work to help students become independent.

Photo: Cassy McCartney/Lightflies

The Transition Co-op assists students in defining their future goals in life and taking steps towards independence. Typically, students' goals involve:

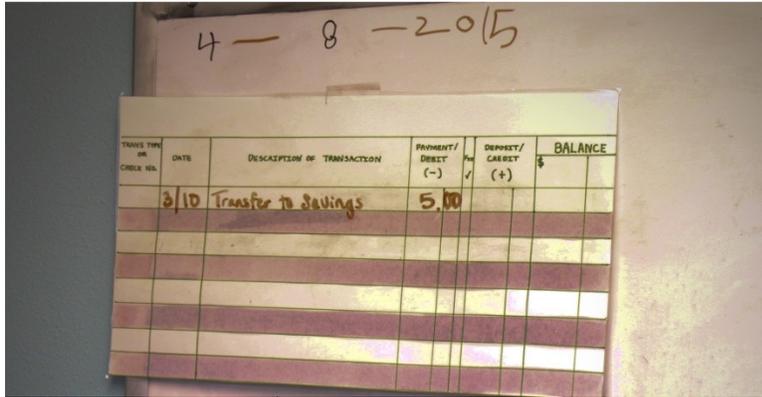
- Moving to their own home; and
- Finding a job; and
- Creating healthy relationships; and
- Recreation and social activities.

There are currently about 30 students in the

Transition Co-op. Employment, internships and work experiences in the community are a major part of the program's curriculum. Educators also work on life skills, such as meal planning, personal finances, as well as self-regulation skills and community safety and access.

“We also focus a lot on what we call self-management, which is really about self-determination and self-advocacy,” said Margey Vrbata, a teacher with the Transition Co-op. The Oregon Association for Vocational Special Needs Personnel (OAVSNP) recently named Vrbata as Outstanding Teacher of the Year.

The Transition Co-op has more than 19 community internship sites, which range from auto shops and gas stations to retail stores and the local hospital. Jim Mills said some students go through multiple internships before settling on a good job fit.



TRANS TYPE OR CHECK NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF TRANSACTION	PAYMENT/DEBIT (-)	DEPOSIT/CREDIT (+)	BALANCE
	3/10	Transfer to Savings	5.00		\$

Students in the Transition Co-op work on personal finance planning.

Photo: Cassy McCartney

“We tailor everything to the individual student,” he said.

Vrbata added: “If a student loves animals, we explore that. One student said he wants to be self-employed as a professional dog walker, so we’re helping him explore that and looking into self-employment strategies with VR. Everything should be

student-directed.”

The Transition Co-op is another example of creative action by local leaders. Vrbata, Cathy Laszlo and Jessica Jeffrey are the three teachers at the Co-op. The teachers said the collaboration between education, developmental disability services and the local Vocational Rehabilitation office in Bend is strong.



Kitchen space at the Bend Transition Co-op allows for students to learn life skills, including meal preparation.

Photo: Cassy McCartney

“The local relationship with VR is great,” Jeffrey said. “We are trying to make sure that students have paid work experience in the community, and that the work is customized to their interests.”

Thank you all for your continued involvement, support, and advocacy for services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Oregon.

If you have comments or other questions, please email them to employment.first@state.or.us.